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Ireland

Stop cutting funds for women's shelters

Thousands of domestic violence helpline calls are missed every year in Ireland due to funding cuts. Women survivors of rape are forced to wait months for counselling.

The government of Ireland is systematically failing to protect women from violence in the home. It must fulfil promises to fund a shelter for women in County Sligo, and to increase funding across a range of services for women. Yet the Department of Health and Children, which funds services addressing violence against women, has had its budget frozen at 2003 levels for the third consecutive year.

One in five women in Ireland is abused at the hands of a husband or partner. Since the beginning of 2005, 124 women have been murdered, 72 per cent of them in their own homes. Most were killed by men, just under half by a partner or former partner.

Ireland has 18 women's refuges with a capacity to house 111 women and 353 children. They are critically important as a frontline response to the threat of violence and homelessness, offering a temporary safe space where women can make decisions about their lives and access support.

Yet for every two women given shelter, three are turned away. A lack of resources prevents refuges from fulfilling the needs of more women or meeting basic standards of accommodation.

In 2005 the WAVES Women's Support Services in the Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan region was able to find temporary accommodation for only 30 survivors of domestic abuse out of 87 who appealed for a place of safety. The Department of Environment and the Health Service Executive have backed its urgent call for a crisis refuge, but a late 2007 completion date seems unlikely to be met for lack of funding.

[Call to action]

Write to the Irish authorities urging funding to complete the building of a crisis refuge for the women of Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan.

[Sample letter]

Dear Sir,

Thank you for supporting the proposal for a crisis refuge for the women of Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan.

Please urge the government of Ireland to honour its commitment to fund this shelter. In 2005 the WAVES Women's Support Services was able to provide temporary accommodation to only 30 survivors of domestic abuse in the region, out of 87 who appealed for a place of safety.

In July 2005 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women criticised the “inadequate funding for organizations that provide support services to victims” in Ireland.

This appeal is part of Amnesty International’s worldwide campaign to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, focusing on shelters for women who suffer domestic violence.

Yours sincerely,

[Target contact details]

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