

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

19 November 2014

AI Index: IOR 40/007/2014

UN Member States must adopt a strong resolution on ending violence against women and girls at this year's General Assembly

This week, United Nations Member States are due to adopt a resolution on ending all forms of violence against women and girls. The focus of the resolution, which will be adopted in the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, is on ensuring accountability for acts of sexual and gender-based violence. Amnesty International is urging all Member States to support a strong resolution in line with their international obligations to uphold the human rights of all women and girls, as well as to prevent, investigate, punish and redress all forms of violence against women and girls.

Amnesty International is calling on UN Member States to address the following key points in the resolution:

- **Women's rights are human rights:** The resolution must reaffirm Member States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights of all women and girls, including their right to live free from discrimination and violence, as well as their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The resolution must recognize women and girls in all their diversity, in particular young women, adolescents and girls; women and girls of minority or Indigenous status; women and girls who are lesbian, bisexual and transgender; and women and girls living in poverty or belonging to marginalized groups. The resolution must also acknowledge and address the specific risks faced by migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and girls.
- **Multiple forms of violence:** The resolution must reaffirm Member States' obligations to effectively prevent and address all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence and intimate partner violence, sexual violence in conflict, as well as gender-based violence and other human rights violations justified by tradition, custom or religion, such as forced, early and child marriage, female genital mutilation, and crimes committed in the name of so called 'honour'. The resolution must reflect States' obligation to eradicate discriminatory social attitudes and gender stereotypes that condone violence against women and girls. Member States must resist any attempts to water down language on gender equality and women's rights under the guise of references to 'traditional values', 'protection of the family' or 'cultural specificities'.
- **Access to services:** The resolution must urge Member States to ensure that survivors of sexual and gender-based violence have access to the full range of support services, including legal assistance, psychological support and counselling, as well as sexual and reproductive health information and services, including emergency contraception, HIV counselling, testing and post-exposure prophylaxis, safe and legal abortion and post-abortion care, and maternal health support.
- **Girls and adolescents:** The resolution must acknowledge Member States' obligation to provide special protection for girls and adolescents from all forms of violence. The resolution must urge Member States to ensure that all girls and adolescents can live free from sexual and gender-based violence, including harmful practices such as

female genital mutilation and forced, early and child marriage. The resolution must urge Member States to guarantee that girls and adolescents are empowered to enjoy their human rights including through provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, and age-appropriate, evidence-based sexuality education and information.

- **Accountability:** The resolution must reflect Member States' obligations to guarantee accountability for sexual and gender-based violence crimes as well as access to justice, truth and reparation for survivors. States must take effective measures to investigate and prosecute gender-based violence and bring perpetrators to justice, in line with international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty. The resolution must reaffirm the definition of sexual and gender-based violence as set out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and show support to the ICC chief prosecutor's recent undertakings to strengthen efforts to combat impunity for sexual and gender based violence. Moreover, the resolution should welcome such initiatives as the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict held in London in June 2014, as well as the Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict launched on that occasion.
- **Arms Trade Treaty:** The resolution must recognize the intrinsic link between illicit arms proliferation and violence against women. It must explicitly welcome the adoption and entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, and should encourage Member States to ratify and fully implement its provisions, in particular those on gender-based violence.
- **Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs):** The resolution must recognize the key role WHRDs play in promoting and defending the rights of women and girls, including in efforts to address violence against women and girls. Member States must address the particular risks and threats faced by WHRDs, and establish effective protection measures as called for by the UN General Assembly resolution 68/181 focusing on women human rights defenders.
- **Post-2015 development agenda:** In view of the negotiations on the future development agenda, the resolution should welcome goal 5 on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, as proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and urge Member States to mainstream women's rights across all final goals to be adopted. Ending all forms of violence against women and girls is crucial for empowering women and girls, and enabling their full and effective participation in development efforts and outcomes. The resolution must urge Member States to maintain and strengthen their commitment to end all forms of violence against women and girls in the post-2015 development agenda, in line with their international obligations to protect and promote women and girls' human rights.

Background

The 69th regular session of the UN General Assembly takes place from 16 September – 19 December 2014. The General Assembly is the main deliberative organ of the United Nations, and is composed of all 193 UN Member States, each of which has one vote. While the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are not legally binding, they represent the moral authority of the international community. Resolutions reaffirm and seek to advance Member States' commitment to universal human rights.

The resolution entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls" is presented every two years, and was last adopted on 20 December 2012 (see General Assembly [resolution 67/144](#)).

The draft resolution discussed at this session is available [here](#). The text is first negotiated and

considered by the General Assembly's Third Committee, which discusses human rights issues. The resolution is then endorsed by the General Assembly Plenary in mid-December.