

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: ACT 77/019/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 302
24 November 2006

Domestic violence occurs in every Council of Europe member state: Let's take action together!

Amnesty International welcomes the initiative of the Council of Europe in launching a campaign against domestic violence throughout Europe, on 27 November 2006. The launch of this campaign shows the commitment of Council of Europe together with governments, parliaments and local authorities in the 46 member states of Council of Europe to join forces with local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to eradicate domestic violence.

In March 2004 Amnesty International launched a worldwide campaign to "Stop Violence Against Women". Since then, the organization has been working with women and men activists and communities across the world to reinforce the message that violence against women is a human rights violation, which must be stopped.

Amnesty International's research has shown that domestic violence is widespread in Europe and is not confined to any particular political or economic system, but is prevalent in every society in Europe, cutting across boundaries of wealth, race and culture.

It is essential that awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence is highlighted, and acted upon by states and society as a human rights issue. Governments, parliaments and local authorities, in the 46 member states of Council of Europe, must ensure that they are acting with due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish domestic violence. Moreover, women must be provided with short-term and long-term protection against such violence.

"He was holding the child in his arms and beating me... You know it is really terrifying when the child's clothes are covered in blood and he is laughing and saying: 'There, you'll get on your knees now and beg me not to kill you'."
Yelena, a victim of violence in the family.

Government officials and many in society do not recognize domestic violence as a human rights violation, but as a private matter, and therefore fail to engage with it as such. There is an acceptance and tolerance of domestic violence within many societies, which directly impact on the ability of women to seek protection and redress.

In many countries domestic violence is not identified as a gender-based crime. Where laws do exist to address domestic violence they are often not implemented: including because relevant authorities are not sensitized and adequately trained, and because sufficient funding is not provided to fulfil governments' obligations.

On the launch of this campaign the Amnesty International calls on the Council of Europe and its member states to ensure that the Council of Europe campaign, *Stop domestic violence against women*, achieves its objectives.

Amnesty International calls on the Council of Europe to ensure that a European methodology for the systematic collection of statistical data on domestic violence disaggregated by sex, type of violence and perpetrator, as well as by the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim is elaborated and made available for implementation to the Council of Europe member states by the end of the campaign, March 2008.

The organization calls upon all the European governments, parliaments and local authorities to engage fully with the Council of Europe on the campaign.

The organization calls on governments, parliaments and local authorities in the 46 member states, in cooperation with local NGOs, to plan and implement specific and concrete measures during the campaign, in working towards the eradication of domestic violence.

Finally, Amnesty International urges each of the Council of Europe member states to initiate a nation wide campaign, which engages the public in debate about prevailing gender stereotypes, discriminatory cultural norms and the acceptability of domestic violence.

