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Action needed to end 'pervasive' violence against women in the Pacific

Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting this week need to take urgent action to end violence against women.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is being held in the Cook Islands, and leaders from countries in the region will be discussing key issues affecting the area.

In 2009, Forum Leaders committed to eradicating sexual and gender based violence and set up a Forum Reference Group to address this issue. Amnesty International believes it is now imperative that leaders make clear and time-bound commitments to implement laws and policies aimed at reducing violence and discrimination against women, including by investigating and prosecuting alleged perpetrators.

Two out of every three women are affected by violence across the Pacific. In March 2012, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women visited Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and described it as a 'pervasive phenomenon' that must be addressed.

Ending violence against women is one of Amnesty International's key focus areas for the Pacific. Others include the right to adequate housing and strengthening legal protection of human rights including freedom of expression.

Amnesty International remains concerned about freedom of expression, association and assembly in Fiji and urges respect for human rights in Fiji's constitutional consultation process.

Amnesty International also welcomes the commitment of a number of Pacific Island countries to establish National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI). The credibility and effectiveness of such institutions depends on their compliance with the 1991 Paris Principles relating to the Status and Functioning of NHRIs. Amnesty International urges leaders to ensure that NHRIs are adequately resourced and have the mandate to independently monitor and investigate human rights violations. Notwithstanding this, discussions around creating a regional human rights mechanism which meets international human rights law and standards should also continue.

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