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Georgia

More shelters desperately needed

“For the first time in eight years I was able to sleep properly.”

Tamuna (not her real name) was married to her husband for eight years and was in constant fear of doing something to make him angry. He would beat her for the slightest reason, such as for sleeping when he could not sleep. If she woke him in the morning he would beat her. If she let him sleep he would beat her as well.

Eventually someone told Tamuna about the crisis centre run by the Anti-Violence Network of Georgia (AVNG). In October 2005 she moved into the group’s shelter. At last she was able to sleep without fear.

AVNG has run a shelter offering protection to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking since 2003. It is located in a flat in Tbilisi, Georgia’s capital, and can accommodate up to 10 people.

A second shelter in Tbilisi, run by Saphari, another non-governmental organization, was opened in July 2006 and has room for a maximum of two women and four children. Saphari offers services to survivors of domestic violence, their families and friends, and to offenders as well. There is only one shelter outside Tbilisi, in a village in Akhaltsikhe region; it can house up to eight people.

There is a desperate need for more shelters in Georgia. Although the recently-adopted Law on Domestic Violence stipulates that shelters should be set up under the Ministry of Labour, Healthcare and Social Protection, action to implement this has been postponed until 2008.

Meanwhile the queue of women waiting for a place gets longer. Eliso Amirejibi, the AVNG’s regional coordinator, recently said: *“The demand is so high. How can we cope? We desperately need more shelters now.”*

[Call to action]

Write to the Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs urging him to provide more shelters for women suffering from violence in the home.

[Sample letter]

Dear Minister of Labour, Health and Social Affairs,

I am writing to express concern that women in Georgia suffering from violence in the home do not have protection owing to the insufficient number of shelters available.

As a state party to international and regional treaties, I call on the government to take immediate action to guarantee protection for women by ensuring that shelters are set up across the country in collaboration with non-governmental organizations experienced in this work. As a short-term goal, there should be a minimum of three new shelters established including one in Tbilisi and one each in cities in eastern and western Georgia before May 2007 - the first anniversary of the Law on Domestic Violence.

I also urge you to make funding available for the new and existing shelters, as well as use your influence to encourage local authorities' funding for such shelters.

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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