

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### Commission on Human Rights, 60th Session (15 March - 23 April 2004) Agenda item 12 (a): Violence against women ORAL STATEMENT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Delivered by Marianne Lilliebjerg

Mr Chair,

In December 1993, the UN General Assembly, acting by consensus, proclaimed that States should pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, a policy of eliminating violence against women. In the ten years since the adoption of the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, some progress has been made towards the realization of this goal. But it has been far from enough. Today, from birth to death, in times of peace as well as war, women face violence at the hands of the state, the community and the family.

Women and girls suffer from violence in the home, often inflicted by partners or relatives. During armed conflicts, violence against women, in particular rape, is used as a weapon of war, in order to dehumanize the women themselves, or to persecute the community to which they belong.

This Commission must do more to eliminate this affront to the human rights of one half of the world's population.

The underlying cause of violence against women lies in the discrimination that denies women equality with men. Violence both derives from discrimination and serves to reinforce it. Discrimination and violence deepen poverty and marginalization. In some countries, discrimination against women is written into the law; in others the laws are inadequate, and even where the laws are not discriminatory, the practices of government authorities often foster discrimination and violence against women.

Violence against women is a universal phenomenon and needs to be address by each and every government. Many communities are complicit in excusing or condoning violence against women. Sometimes the state itself is responsible for acts of violence against women. However, whether the aggressor is an official or a private actor, it is the government's responsibility to bring them to account and to provide redress to the victims.

Mr. Chair,

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and her predecessor have observed that

notwithstanding achievements in awareness-raising and standard-setting, women continue to suffer violence. In her report to this Commission, Mrs Erturk highlights the need to implement the existing standards. She calls for a common framework to monitor violence against women and States' efforts to eliminate it. Amnesty International welcomes this initiative and is committed, through our global campaign to stop violence against women, to work closely with the Special Rapporteur.

Amnesty International urges governments to take concrete steps to eliminate violence against women and to promote women's rights. In particular, Amnesty International urges governments:

- To enact, reinforce or amend domestic legislation in accordance with international standards to protect women from violence;

- To take special measures to protect women and girls in situations of armed conflict, including through full and speedy implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security;

- To contribute substantively to the study by the Secretary-General on violence against women;

- To ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and withdraw any reservations; and

- To support the Special Procedures of the Commission in their efforts to address violence against women, including by implementing their recommendations fully and without delay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair