



CALL TO ACTION- Human Rights Day

December 10, 2013

Older Women Victims of Gender Based Violence and Ageism

Call for the Elimination of Violence against Older Women.*

Twenty Years of Silence Regarding Violence Against Older Women Must End:

Two decades ago, a *Declaration on The Elimination of Violence against Women*, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/48/104. However, it took no notice of the ageing demographics of the 21st Century, that by 2050 over 20 percent of the world's population will be 60 years of age or older, and that women older women outnumber older men. The drafters failed to acknowledge the multiplicity and severity of human rights violations older women victims of violence endure. That the failure to address violence across the lifecycle reveals a body of evidence:

- “women continue to experience different forms of violence in old age and that the cumulative effect of a lifetime of violence can have profound impacts on all areas of their lives”. (Sleap, B, HelpAge International, INPEA, Proposed Amendments to Draft Agreed Conclusions 57th CSW)
- harmful and discriminatory widowhood laws and practices such as denying widow's inheritance, and accusations of witchcraft based on gender stereotypes, beliefs and behavior can result in extreme forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women of all ages.^{1 2}
- poverty curtails older women's and men's right to live a life of dignity,...lack of capacity to retain control over resources... leads to financial dependency and vulnerability to poverty, reduces their voice and bargaining power within family, communities and institutions. ³,
- few if any Reports by Member States include mention of older women, CEDAW General Recommendation No 27.⁴, or collect data on violence against women over the age of 49 years.

¹ Report on gender-based extrajudicial killings, Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and its consequences, A/HRC/20/16

² UN DESA, EGM on Neglect Abuse and Violence of older Women: Concept Note, Nov2013

³ UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, *Population Dynamic Thematic Think Piece*, May 2012, UNDESA, UNFPA, p.3

⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 27 -- forty-seventh session, 2010 - Older women and protection of their human rights

- as with the experience of the MDG's where areas not explicitly covered ... may have contributed to neglect of marginalized groups and widening social and economic inequalities, so it is with the failure to recognize and explicitly reference older women in the 1993 *Declaration on The Elimination of Violence against Women*, A/RES/48/104, and in all UN documents addressing gender violence, equality and empowerment.⁵
- If the Post-2015 development agenda is to respond effectively to violence against women and girls and gender equality it must take into account the impact of population ageing and address violence against girls and WOMEN OF ALL AGES.⁶
- Existing international human rights standards do not adequately protect older women's right to freedom from violence and abuse nor clearly articulate what measures States need to take to meet their human rights obligations in this area.

THEREFORE, we call for a new Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons, to strengthen and protect older women's and men's rights. We demand the inclusion of a Stand-Alone Goal on Eliminating Violence against Girls and WOMEN of ALL AGES within the Post-2015 Development Framework and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). We urge all Member States to take immediate affirmative action to explicitly address violence against older women as a human rights violation. We encourage UN DESA to continue the work of the Expert Group on Violence against Older Women, along with other NGO stakeholders to enumerate the forms and types of violence, inequalities and injustices that are unique to older women, to support research to identify and prevent violence against older women and to develop services that meet their specific needs.

*On the occasion of the 65th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, (UDHR) 1948, the forthcoming 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action, and in light of the recent 10 year Review of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, The Fourth Meeting of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing, in anticipation of the 58th CSW, and the Post 2015 Development Agenda

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, (INPEA)

⁵ A Transformative Stand-Alone Goal on Achieving Gender Equality: Women's Rights and Women's Empowerment p. 6.

⁶ Ibid., p. 25