

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence 1994

"Awareness, Accountability, Action: Violence Against Women Violates Human Rights"

ACTION*CALL TO ACTION*CALL TO ACTION*CALL TO ACTION*CALL TO ACTION*CALL TO

Efforts around the world to advance female human rights have secured many concrete gains at the international and regional policy levels towards addressing gender-based violence as a human rights violation. These include: the acknowledgement in the Vienna Declaration that violence against women is a violation of human rights, whether perpetrated by public or private actors (June 1993); the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women by the Commission on Human Rights (March 1994); the adoption of a UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (Dec. 1993); the adoption of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (April 1994); and the appointment of a Focal Point on Women's Human Rights at the UN Centre for Human Rights who is to initiate the task of integrating gender perspectives into the UN human rights machinery. (See reverse side of enclosed petition for more details).

In the process of making these advances, women have enhanced their influence around human rights issues, built more international linkages, and achieved greater visibility for their local work. Still, the effective implementation of the gains made to date, and the further development of women's human rights, depends upon the continued political mobilization and vigilance of diverse women and their organizations. Since 1991, the annual international campaign of **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** (Nov. 25 - Dec. 10) has played an instrumental role in raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue and in building the political pressure necessary to secure commitments to women's human rights. We urge all supporters of women's human rights to use the 1994 **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** to continue pressuring for the implementation of women's human rights, and where possible, to publicly ask what actions governments are taking to secure women's human rights and to provide suggestions for such implementation.

During previous **16 Days** campaigns many women organized diverse events that challenged the invisibility of women's human rights concerns locally and internationally. Past campaigns have involved more than 120 countries and events that included petition drives, speakouts and hearings, vigils, rallies, film festivals, radio or television programs, national legislation lobbying campaigns, or the production of special editions of newsletters, magazines, posters, T-shirts or buttons. The 1994 **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence**, using the slogan "**Awareness, Accountability, Action: Violence Against Women Violates Human Rights**," will continue to raise awareness of female human rights abuse, as well as demand accountability and action from governments and the international human rights community towards the implementation of women's human rights.

The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, Sept. 1994) is a contentious arena for women's human rights and bodily integrity. It is also a timely opportunity to focus on the links between violence against women and violations of reproductive health as an area of human rights abuse. The testimonies on violations of women's human rights that have been gathered as part of the Global Campaign and the Global Tribunal in Vienna, demonstrate that when women are vulnerable to physical, emotional or sexual violence, they are also vulnerable to violations of their reproductive rights and health. For example: the minor-aged incest victim who cannot procure a safe abortion, the woman who is paralysed by contaminated anaesthesia during childbirth, the pregnant woman who is beaten by her husband who does not want her to have the child,

or the woman raped and forced to give birth as part of a military policy of ethnic cleansing. The 1994 **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** is an important vehicle for organizing events which will bring attention to the violence associated with violations of reproductive health, highlight the positive outcomes from Cairo, and protest those which are inimical to women's human rights.

The International Hearings Campaign to Document Violations of Women's Human Rights that was launched during the **16 Days** campaign in 1992 also continues. The **16 Days 1994** can be used to bring greater attention to popular hearings or tribunals that address locally relevant women's human rights issues. For example, Women in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean are currently organizing hearings around issues such as domestic violence, trafficking in women, and violence against women who are dispossessed following the death of a spouse. In addition, the Center and others are convening hearings at the forthcoming UN world conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing. (More information on the hearings campaign is available upon request).

The ongoing **Petition to Promote and Protect the Human Rights of Women** expands the worldwide petition campaign launched in 1991. The petition continues to be a vital tool of the Global Campaign and calls upon the United Nations and its member governments to report back on the implementation of women's human rights at the the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). The petition now has over 2000 sponsoring groups and more than half a million signatures from 124 countries. The first version of the petition was translated into 23 languages--we now invite new sponsors to join the petition drive and call upon them and current sponsors to translate, copy, and circulate the enclosed revised version. (A complete list of petition sponsors is available upon request).

Please join the 1994 **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** to strengthen the movement for women's human rights, and to draw upon international support for your local work, by organizing activities or dedicating already scheduled events to the campaign. Send a brief description with dates of your planned activities for the **16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence** by October 15, 1994 to **Niamh Reilly, Center for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Avenue, Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, USA. Fax: (908) 932-1180.** We will be happy to include your activities in a 1994 International Calendar of Campaign Events. We will then send you the calendar which can be utilized to highlight your efforts as part of a broader Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights. We will also send you names and fax numbers of other people organizing **16 days** events so that participants in the campaign can exchange letters of solidarity and support and where possible work together in the future.

In addition a number of women who participated in the Center's 1994 Women's Global Leadership Institute are eager to plan some regional **16 Days 1994** activities. If you are interested in joining them please contact: Meena Poudel, WATCH (Nepal), Fax: (977-1) 474-492; Nadia Reveles, Foundation to Stop Violence Against Women (Suriname), Fax: (597) 410555; and Dolores de Vargas, Centro Integral de la Mujer (Bolivia), Fax: c/o (66) 44184.

THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE IS PART OF THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS. THE INITIAL 16 DAYS CAMPAIGN IN 1991 WAS COORDINATED BY THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP WITH PARTICIPANTS OF THE FIRST WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ON WOMEN, VIOLENCE, AND HUMAN RIGHTS (JUNE 1991). NOV. 25 IS INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DECLARED BY THE FIRST FEMINIST ENCUESTRO FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN 1981 (BOGOTA, COLUMBIA). THE DAY COMMEMORATES THE MIRABEL SISTERS WHO WERE BRUTALLY MURDERED BY THE TRUJILLO DICTATORSHIP IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN 1960. DECEMBER 10 CELEBRATES THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, PROCLAIMED IN 1948. THE PERIOD ALSO INCLUDES WORLD AIDS DAY (DEC. 1) AND THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE MONTREAL MASSACRE WHEN A MAN GUNNED DOWN 14 WOMEN ENGINEERING STUDENTS FOR BEING "FEMINISTS" (DEC.6). THE CAMPAIGN IS PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATED AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

THIS ANNOUNCEMENT INCLUDES MANY SUGGESTIONS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED FROM PARTICIPANTS IN PREVIOUS
16 DAYS CAMPAIGNS.