




# VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY STATE ACTORS

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
16 DÍAS DE ACTIVISMO CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO  
16 JOURS D'ACTIVISME CONTRE LA VIOLENCE DE GENRE  
25 NOV - 10 DEC <http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu>



State militarism (see sheet on “*What is Militarism*”) flourishes due to privileging of violent masculinity, encouraging stereotypical aggressive, macho behavior for men, and submissive, docile behavior for women. With society divided into such a binary, anyone who dares move beyond the set norms, and question the use of violence risks harm to themselves. This affects the safety and security of women, men, and children, and allows for violations of human rights, such as child and forced marriage and the lack of economic independence and education for women.

 Violence by State actors against civilians occurs during violent conflict and during “peacetime,” and States justify the increasing militarization of society and political agendas in different ways, but with similar results.

States use gender terminology with claims of “protecting the motherland”, to support and justify weapons spending and military bases, violating civil liberties, and practicing non-transparency surrounding government agencies. Violence by State as well as non-State actors, including national armies, UN peacekeepers, paramilitaries, militias, and private-for-hire groups, happen in public and private spaces, on- and offline, in refugee camps, police stations and police custody, prisons, and in the military.

## Advocate for an end to impunity

Engage with policymakers who are willing to listen and who work at the local, national, and regional level, as well as with the United Nations and other influential international bodies to make ending gender-based violence a priority and success marker for national development.


Document and publicize instances of violations against human rights defenders, journalists, indigenous and marginalized groups. Share information about violations of human rights of targeted groups locally and internationally, and demand justice from influential governments, regional and international governmental and justice mechanisms.

## Build Awareness

Write about the way prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and the ways survivors, communities, and State actors are or aren't addressing the issues. Write to bring local and international awareness and force the stigma of sexual violence and gender-based violence out of the shadows. Speak to the traditional media (newspapers, radio, and television) and use social media (Facebook and Twitter) to inform ordinary people at the local and international levels about the realities women human rights defenders and other rights activists are facing in your area.

The inequality created by political and economic hierarchies of power is often protected by the State. Hierarchy of power is a key element of “structural violence”, and is supported by inequality and discrimination based on age, class/caste, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, militarism in practice uses violence to address and enforce political, social, economic interests and disputes, both within national borders and international relations.

Women who are unafraid of the social and political structures impressed upon them are individuals to be feared by the State and by non-State actors alike. They challenge the current power structures related to patriarchy and militarism. For this reason, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) especially face gendered violations, extreme insecurity, including sexual violence and death. WHRDs are identified by their gender, and due to this face sexuality baiting, sexual harassment, or sexual assault.

 Emboldened by the State's disregard for its responsibility to protect and promote women's human rights, non-State actors also engage in sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination in areas under their control.

When State actors are able to act with impunity, non-State actors can use this to bolster their own violent practices

against women, men, and children, knowing full well that the arm of the law and justice will not reach after them.

Non-State actors are occasionally utilized by some States to do the soldiering, and when their human rights violations committed often perpetrators are not held accountable. Such a partnership between some State actors, non-State actors, and/or the private sector ensure that impunity from prosecution and punishment continues to be the rule in many parts of the world.

Peace, security and the legitimization of State force (violent or insidious such as spying) is based on militarism, where the State holds power and authority to exert its will by oftentimes violent force upon populations within and sometimes outside its borders. Addressing this requires unraveling the gender dynamics and normalization of violence underlying the system, as well as investing in nonviolent peace and security mechanisms. This requires a shift from state security to human security, taking gender equality and human rights as a basis.



**Militarism and the pervasiveness of impunity must end, and State governments must be held responsible and accountable for monitoring and supporting equality and human rights.**

## Strengthen the Work of WHRDs

Bring your community and surrounding communities through conversation on women's human rights and the use of sexual violence and gender-based violence against activists and mobilize all to demand accountability from State perpetrators through national, regional, and international mechanisms. Approach these communities to collectively stand behind these activists in the face of State and non-state violence. Strengthen the work of WHRDs through improved communication, information sharing, and documentation of instances of violations at the national, regional, and international levels. Encourage men to play a role in supporting the end to sexual violence and gender-based violence against women activists by State actors by simply being present during marches, demonstrations, and other public activities. Help men hesitant to join see that they and the society they live in will benefit from an end sexual and gender-based violence by individuals, groups, and State actors.

States have a duty to bear in their responsibility to investigate, prosecute, and punish perpetrators of violence, and national, regional, and international mechanisms must hold State actors, as well as non-State actors accountable for violations of human rights of all in the population.

## Resources

### Engaging with Policymakers

- DCAF Toolkit on Gender and Security Sector Reform: <http://www.dcaf.ch/Series-Collections/Gender-Tools-and-Resources>
- United Nations Procedure for Complaints by Individuals Under the Human Rights Treaties: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/TBPetitions/Pages/IndividualCommunications.aspx#proceduregenerale>
- Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx>

### Women Human Rights Defenders

- United Nations Resolution on WHRDs: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/68/L.64/Rev.1](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/C.3/68/L.64/Rev.1)
- Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative : <http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Women-Human-Rights-Defenders>
- Front Line Defenders. (2005) "Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders" <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/manuals/protection>

### Relevant Organizations

- Committee to Protect Journalists: <https://www.cpj.org>
- Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org>
- Women Peacemakers Program: [www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org](http://www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org)
- Women Under Siege: <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org>
- Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition: <http://defendingwomen-defendingrights.org>

### Campaigns

- Day to End Impunity: <http://daytoendimpunity.org>
- Take Back the Tech: <https://www.takebackthetech.net>