



THE
CARTER CENTER



November 26, 2018

Joint Letter in support of the Report by OHCHR Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences

To: Member States of the United Nations General Assembly

Your Excellencies:

We, the undersigned civil society organizations, support the acknowledgement by the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly of the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Report (A/73/301) on Violence Against Women in Politics. The report sends a vital message that violence against women in politics (VAWP) contributes to the underrepresentation and political disempowerment of women worldwide. **We urge all Member States to make concrete and accountable commitments to pursuing the recommendations of the report.**

Women's political participation has made global progress over the last 100 years. However, women remain underrepresented at all levels of political decision-making. An important form of gender-based violence (GBV), VAWP violates women's human rights to live free from GBV, women's civil rights to protection from discrimination based on gender, and women's political rights to participate in credible elections. VAWP threatens gender equality and the building of robust and resilient democratic institutions, which is a key objective of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

VAWP is a universal problem that is not tied to any specific socioeconomic level or "degree" of democracy. It has unique manifestations in each context where it occurs. VAWP is not only a manifestation of inequality, but – significantly – a mechanism that formally institutionalizes women's subordinate position in society by coercively excluding them from state governance. It affects women's participation as voters, candidates, election officials, activists and political party leaders, and undermines genuine and inclusive democratic processes.

Different types of violence call for different types of responses. Based on the recommendations of the report, we call on Member States to emphasize research to establish baselines for VAWP and eradicate it wherever it occurs. Member States must work across state institutions and in partnership with civil society and other community stakeholders to address the root causes of VAWP, provide justice for its victims and end impunity.

VAWP often falls between the gaps in legal frameworks for either violence against women or political violence. Many countries lack clearly defined and sanctioned legal codes on VAWP, and where laws exist, enforcement often is weak and perpetrators act with impunity. Ending impunity for VAWP ensures that victims are protected and obtain an effective remedy, while at the same time deterring future crimes, forcing government action and investigation, driving legal reform, and compelling action by business and political parties to end or prevent abuses.

We recognize that VAWP also often occurs in online spaces, such as social media, and adversely affects a range of civic and political actors, such as candidates, civic activists, journalists and public administrators. As the Special Rapporteur's earlier report on online violence against women and girls (A/HRC/38/47) documents, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilitated violence against women, including online threats, harassment, and intimidation, are often used against women in politics, and requires specialized legislation and protections.

We call on all UN Member States to support the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women on the issue of VAWP as presented in A/73/301. Recognizing the collective power of your voices, we ask for your support to convey that the international community is genuinely invested in gender equality, resilient democracy and human rights.

Sincerely,

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems, The Carter Center, and our distinguished partners:

Advocacy for Women in Peace
and Security in Africa
Advocacy for Women With
Disabilities Initiative
Akhaya Women
Allamin Foundation for Peace
and Development
Amara Cambodia Woman
Network for Development
Arr Man Women Development
Organization
Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no
Labarik
Association des Femmes
Tunisiennes pour la
Recherche sur le
Développement
Association Djazairouna des
victimes du terrorisme
Association of War Affected
Women
Association pour la Promotion
du Droit a la Difference
Atide
Atta Al-Khair Foundation, Libya
Bougainville Women's
Federation
Coast Education Center
Democracy Resource Center
Nepal
Eastern Highlands Family Voice
EqualityNow
Federation of Muslim Women
in Nigeria
Futures Without Violence
Gender and Development for
Cambodia
Global Rights for Women
Hornbill Organization
International Action Network
for Gender Equity & Law

International Alliance of
Catholic Social Justice
Organizations
International Civil Society
Action Network
International Women's
Development Agency
Iraqi Firdaws Society
Justice, Human Rights and
Gender Civil Association
Leitana Nehan Women's
Development Agency
Liberia Election Observation
Network
Libyan Women Forum
Manara Foundation for Rights,
Freedoms and Humanitarian
Works from Libya
Mothers' Strength Women
Development School
Myanmar Capacity
Development Institute
Myanmar Independent Living
Initiative
Myanmar Network Organization
for Free and Fair Elections
National Association of Social
Workers
National Democratic Institute
National Organization for
Women Foundation
National Union of Organizations
of the Disabled
New Myanmar Foundation
Ofyia
OPEN ASIA/Armanshahr
Foundation
Organization for People that
Suffer from Paralytic Strokes
PAIMAN Alumni Trust
Peace Track Initiative

Peace X Peace
Reactor- Research in Action
Rede Feto Timor Leste
Regional Center for Mediation
and Dialogue
Shan Women's Action Network
Smash Strategies
Social Actors' Group
SoS Colombe RDC
Ta'ang Women's Organization
Tounissyet
Tunisian Association of
Democratic Women
Union de l'Action Féminine
US National Committee for UN
Women
Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict
Transformation Center
Wide Bay Conservation
Association
Witness Somalia
Women and Girls Advancement
and Resources Center
Women Enabled
Women for Afghan Women
Women Graduates-USA
Women in International
Security
Women in International
Security- Canada
Women Watch Afrika, Inc.
Women's Action for New
Directions
Women's League of Burma
Women's Local Resource Center
Women's Refugee Commission
Yaung Chi Thit
Zimbabwe Women Lawyers
Association
Zonta International