



Solidarity Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Today, as WLUML marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we specifically express solidarity with the strength, resilience and courage of many women and girls in Afghanistan and Iran, where we have focused much of our activism in 2022.

However, we acknowledge that male-perpetuated wars and male-dominated regimes, militant groups or fundamentalist ideologies continue to further their agenda of controlling women's bodies and minds. We pay homage to those women and girls all around the world who have been killed, violated or suffered trauma, in what has been a year of proliferated gender-based violence. War continues to ravage across countries including Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. Sexual and physical violence continues to be weaponised against women in such contexts, forcing many women to flee their homes or go into hiding to survive. Many have given birth in dangerous and unhygienic locations.

Over the last 15 months, many women and girls in Afghanistan have had their lives completely derailed by the Taliban regime. Their militant ideology continues to deny them education and working rights, with many girls banned from going to school. For those who have continued to defy such prohibitions, many women and girls across Afghanistan have been either killed or maimed at schools, universities and their places of work - caught up in bomb blasts perpetrated by the Taliban or other violent groups - killed on the streets, and even targeted in their own homes.

Under Taliban rule, women are coerced into compulsory hijabs and niqabs, with many unable to go out in public without a male member of their family accompanying them. Through talking to people from Afghanistan who have become refugees in escaping the Taliban, we have listened to accounts of violence against women and refusal to grant them basic human rights. Yet, these accounts are also stories of courage, resilience, and a determination to advocate for women peacebuilders both at the national and grassroots level.

The murder of Mahsa Amini by the morality police was a painful reminder of the violence and oppression women and girls face in Iran. This includes the continuation of child brides, enforced hijab - with many women imprisoned or even killed for removing the hijab in public. Yet, they remain defiant in the face of violent oppression, risking murder or torture for participating in street protests, or open rebellion in classrooms and campuses.

Women around the world are making a powerful point - that the violence women like Mahsa experienced is a daily reality for countless women in every part of the globe. Her death has become a defining moment in history and a symbol of true feminism, leading to global women-led movements, all calling for an end to brutality against women.

