



# Socialist International Women

## SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2022

### DECLARATION

In these intensely turbulent times the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women creates a powerful focus on the continuing unacceptable levels of physical and mental suffering of women and girls and the urgent need to intensify our responses to the global scourge of gender based violence. In support of this aim, Socialist International Women stands in firm solidarity with all victims of gender based violence and remains strongly committed to its total elimination worldwide.

It is a deeply saddening fact that the impact of the destabilisation of many of our political establishments and economies, as well as our rapidly changing global climate, have been powerful triggers for alarming increases in all types of violence against women. Unfortunately, this current era of widespread uncertainty, upheaval, deprivation and frustration is likely to be with us all for some time to come. With so much at stake, it is our collective responsibility as both human beings and social democrats to proactively challenge misogynistic behaviours, as well as socio-political constructs and legal frameworks which allow, enable or encourage gender based violence. It is vital that we work together to promote and sustain the necessary changes needed to create societies where women and girls can flourish in personal safety to enable them to fully benefit from equality of opportunity in parity with men.

There is no denying that there are immense challenges. For example, the after effects of the economic and social damage wreaked by COVID-19 continue to negatively impact women and girls far more severely than men. Millions of previously working women lost their jobs or were forced out of work to perform un-paid carer and domestic work within the home, resulting in far too many of our sisters being left lower educated, impoverished and wholly dependent through lack of their own income. This has reversed hard won freedoms and made many women much more isolated and acutely vulnerable to brutality, exploitation and dreadful practices even within their own families, such as girl children being sold into marriage or trafficked into sexual or domestic slavery. This lack of access to paid work and the deterioration of personal safety are issues which affect all types of societies, as evidenced by recent figures showing that in 166 countries women's presence in the workforce remains below pre-pandemic levels and 49 per cent of women feel unsafe walking around in cities since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>\*1</sup>.

War and civil unrest, including the current conflict in Ukraine, continue to be horrific breeding grounds for cruelty and sexual violence against women. This can be exacerbated as women risk violence and exploitation while fleeing their aggressors to become refugees, often on foot, with no protection from either family or state agents, in an attempt to reach safety for themselves and their children. In the wider context, we have also experienced acutely the effects of war on increasing food and fuel prices, which negatively influences home finances and creates the kinds of tensions which are well known triggers for increased levels of both domestic and general public gender based violence.

The effects of natural disasters and the results of climate change have also been felt intensely over most of the globe over the past year. These extreme events have destroyed homes, businesses, crops and livestock as well as causing numerous fatalities. This has affected global food availability, particularly for staples such as wheat, and has drastically affected affordability as prices soar. The on-going effects are likely to impact food costs and security for years to come, as well as being a reason to make perilous migration journeys, which as always will impact women the most. For many women, the loss of home, family and livelihood is

already too much to bear, but will be made even worse as frustration and hopelessness leads to violence from within their own families and communities.

There is simply no excuse not to prioritise the specific needs and concerns of women and girls, particularly in regard to gender based violence. Despite this fact, at present progress on gender equality issues in general is sadly not yet anywhere near good enough. If we continue at our current pace of change, it will take 286 years to completely reform legal frameworks so that they consistently and coherently promote and maintain gender equality in the public sphere<sup>\*2</sup> and by 2030 over 2.1 billion women and girls will live in countries that have not yet reached any key gender equality targets<sup>\*3</sup>. There are also huge gaps in funding in some areas for gender relevant initiatives, with a current estimated shortfall of \$3 billion<sup>\*4</sup>. This means a number of desperately needed initiatives will simply not happen. It is therefore imperative that women collectively continue to push forward to insist on accountability for failures and secure adequate funding to implement urgently needed initiatives which produce concrete, tangible changes in the daily lives of women worldwide.

Socialist International Women remains firmly committed to increasing the participation of women in all key decision making processes, particularly in relation to active participation in local and national government processes. To this end, SIW strongly supports all initiatives which promote the achievement of gender equality in all its forms, including the most recent UN Women's initiative, the Generation Equality Forum<sup>\*5</sup>. Its ambitious plan to bring together a wide range of governmental, public and NGO agencies with the express focus of achieving gender equality is in complete alignment with SIW's vision of achieving a global society where all aspects of public and private life are gender inclusive, respectful and mutually beneficial. SIW warmly welcomes and supports all efforts to accelerate the rate of change towards meaningful gender equality measures and the elevation of the status and social, economic and political participation of women and girls. SIW strongly believes that achieving gender equality will ultimately eradicate violence against women for good, to the benefit and enrichment of all citizens.

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1. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2022-en.pdf> p.3

2. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Generation-Equality-accountability-report-2022-en.pdf> p.10

3. <https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UNW%20-%20GAP%20Report%20-%20EN%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf> p.4

4. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Generation-Equality-accountability-report-2022-en.pdf> p.27

5. <https://forum.generationequality.org/home>