



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 where ever 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 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 of Electoral Systems, The Carter Center, and our distinguished partners:

Advocacy for Women in Peace and Security in Africa	International Alliance of Catholic Social Justice Organizations	Peace X Peace
Advocacy for Women With Disabilities Initiative	International Civil Society Action Network	Reactor- Research in Action
Akhaya Women	International Women's Development Agency	Rede Feto Timor Leste
Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development	Iraqi Firdaws Society	Regional Center for Mediation and Dialogue
Amara Cambodia Woman Network for Development	Justice, Human Rights and Gender Civil Association	Shan Women's Action Network
Arr Man Women Development Organization	Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency	Smash Strategies
Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik	Liberia Election Observation Network	Social Actors' Group
Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement	Libyan Women Forum	SoS Colombe RDC
Association Djazairouna des victimes du terrorisme	Manara Foundation for Rights, Freedoms and Humanitarian Works from Libya	Ta'ang Women's Organization
Association of War Affected Women	Mothers' Strength Women Development School	Tounissyet
Association pour la Promotion du Droit a la Difference Atide	Myanmar Capacity Development Institute	Tunisian Association of Democratic Women
Atta Al-Khair Foundation, Libya	Myanmar Independent Living Initiative	Union de l'Action Féminine
Bougainville Women's Federation	Myanmar Network Organization for Free and Fair Elections	US National Committee for UN Women
Coast Education Center	National Association of Social Workers	Wi'am: Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center
Democracy Resource Center Nepal	National Democratic Institute	Wide Bay Conservation Association
Eastern Highlands Family Voice	National Organization for Women Foundation	Witness Somalia
EqualityNow	National Union of Organizations of the Disabled	Women and Girls Advancement and Resources Center
Federation of Muslim Women in Nigeria	New Myanmar Foundation	Women Enabled
Futures Without Violence	Ofyia	Women for Afghan Women
Gender and Development for Cambodia	OPEN ASIA/Armanshahr Foundation	Women Graduates-USA
Global Rights for Women	Organization for People that Suffer from Paralytic Strokes	Women in International Security
Hornbill Organization	PAIMAN Alumni Trust	Women in International Security- Canada
International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law	Peace Track Initiative	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