



OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



The elimination of violence against women

Commission on Human Rights resolution 1996/49

The Commission on Human Rights,

Reaffirming that discrimination on the basis of sex is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international human rights instruments, and that its elimination is an integral part of efforts towards the elimination of violence against women,

Recalling its resolution 1994/45 of 4 March 1994 in which it decided to appoint a special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences,

Welcoming the adoption by the General Assembly, in its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which recognizes that violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and expresses concern about the long-standing failure to protect and promote these rights and freedoms in relation to violence against women,

Deeply concerned at continuing and endemic violence against women, and noting that the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women sets out various forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women,

Bearing in mind that violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Mindful that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23), adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, affirmed that gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and must be eliminated,

Deeply concerned that some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, the girl child, women with disabilities, elderly women and women in situations of armed conflict, are especially vulnerable to violence,

Alarmed by the marked increase in acts of sexual violence directed notably against women and children, as expressed in the Final Declaration of the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, held in Geneva from 30 August to 1 September 1993, and reiterating that such acts constitute grave breaches of international humanitarian law,

Stressing that the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women will contribute to the elimination of violence against women and that the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women strengthens and complements this process, and welcoming the significant progress achieved in relevant sections of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20), such as those on violence against women, women and armed conflict and the human rights of women,

Noting with appreciation the Special Rapporteur's active participation in the preparatory process for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace and in the Conference itself,

Welcoming the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/166 of 22 December 1995 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women,

Bearing in mind that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action calls for action to integrate the equal status and human rights of women into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity, stresses the importance of working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, and urges the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women,

1. Welcomes the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and takes note of her report (E/CN.4/1996/53 and Add.1 and 2);
2. Encourages the Special Rapporteur in her work on violence in the community;
3. Commends the Special Rapporteur for her analysis of violence in the family;
4. Condemns all acts of gender-based violence against women, and in this regard calls, in accordance with the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, for the elimination of gender-based violence in the family, within the general community and where perpetrated or condoned by the State, and emphasizes the duty of Governments to refrain from engaging in violence against women and to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, to punish acts of violence against women and to take appropriate and effective action concerning acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons and to provide access to just and effective remedies and specialized assistance to victims;
5. Also condemns all violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict, recognizes them to be violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and calls for a particularly effective response to violations of this kind, including in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy;
6. Takes note of the procedures established by the Special Rapporteur to seek information from Governments concerning specific cases of alleged violence in order to identify and investigate situations of violence against women, its causes and its consequences, in particular standard information forms;
7. Stresses the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur that States have an affirmative duty to promote and protect the human rights of women and must exercise due diligence to prevent violence against women, including violence against women in the family, and calls on States:
 - (a) To work actively to ratify and/or implement international human rights norms and instruments as they relate to violence against women, including those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
 - (b) To include in reports submitted in accordance with the provisions of relevant United Nations human rights instruments information pertaining to violence against women and measures taken to implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women;
 - (c) To enact and/or reinforce penal, civil, labour and administrative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress the wrongs done to women and girls who are subjected to any form of violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community or society, bearing in mind the Special Rapporteur's suggested guidelines;
 - (d) To create, improve or develop, as appropriate, and fund the training programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social, educational and police and immigrant personnel, in order to avoid the abuse of power leading to violence against women and sensitize such personnel to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence so that fair treatment of female victims can be assured;
 - (e) To enact and enforce legislation against the perpetrators of practices and acts of violence against women, such as female genital mutilation, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and dowry-related violence, and give vigorous support to the efforts of non-governmental and community organizations to eliminate such practices;

(f) To condemn violence against women and not invoke custom, tradition or practices in the name of religion to avoid their obligations to eliminate such violence;

(g) To promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence, relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women, and encourage research into the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women;

(h) To cooperate with other competent mechanisms, such as the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudiciary, summary or arbitrary executions, in relation to violence against women;

(i) To enact and enforce legislation protecting girls from all forms of violence, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, genital mutilation, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography;

8. Reminds Governments that their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women must be fully implemented with regard to violence against women, taking into account General Recommendation No. 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session, and calls upon those countries which are still not parties to the Convention to work actively towards ratification of or accession to it;

9. Requests Governments to support initiatives of women's organizations and non-governmental organizations all over the world to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination;

10. Welcomes the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fortieth session, to renew the open-ended working group established to develop an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking into account the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur in regard to an optional protocol;

11. Requests all Governments to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the performance of the tasks and duties mandated, to supply all information requested and respond to the Special Rapporteur's visits and communications;

12. Requests human rights treaty bodies, other special rapporteurs responsible for various human rights questions, United Nations bodies and organs, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, to cooperate with and assist the Special Rapporteur in the performance of the tasks and duties mandated, and in particular to respond to requests for information on violence against women, its causes and its consequences;

13. Renews its request to the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Special Rapporteur with all necessary assistance, in particular the staff and resources required to perform all mandated functions, especially in carrying out and following up on missions undertaken either separately or jointly with other special rapporteurs and working groups, and adequate assistance for periodic consultations with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and all other treaty bodies;

14. Also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the reports of the Special Rapporteur are brought to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women to assist in the Commission's work in the area of violence against women, as well as to the attention of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

15. Decides to continue consideration of the question as a matter of high priority at its fifty-third session.

52nd meeting, 19 April 1996

[Adopted without a vote]