



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

Graduate Women International appeals to governments, legislators, civil society, and individual citizens to mobilise, unite and end all forms of violence against women

Geneva, Switzerland, November 25, 2016 -- On this International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women (VAW), Graduate Women International (GWI) voices concern and raises awareness about the ongoing battle women internationally face against physical, sexual, and psychological violence every day. GWI calls for implementation of stronger legislation that will protect women from all forms of violence. Women across the globe are subjected to violence in many different forms including forced marriage, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), human trafficking and rape. Gender based violence increases the possibility of women and girls living a life in poverty. Of huge concern is the large percentage of women experiencing violence or harassment who decide not to report the crime or seek help. GWI encourages legislative language changes and Member States to take actions that help women feel more comfortable and confident about coming forward and reporting their attacks. By working together, and with enough political will, governments and people in positions of influence can educate women that there is no negative stigma to reporting violence.

An increasingly alarming problem is the high rates of violence against refugee women and girls. Traffickers exploit the vulnerability of female refugees through kidnapping, assault, rape, and sexual harassment. Due to their refugee status, these women have very few people advocating for their protection. It is imperative that all women, including refugee and migrant women, do not lose their basic human right to live a life free from violence.

GWI President Geeta Desai states: "All women deserve the right to be protected and to feel safe. Around the world, half of the victims of sexual violence are fifteen years old or younger.¹ Sadly, young girls who are displaced are more likely to be exposed to these acts of sexual violence and exploitation. GWI advocates for the protection of these women through education and medical care. States need to enforce action that will help protect these refugee and migrant women who are risking their lives in the hope of a better future."

In order to protect women in the future and aid those who have been harmed, states need to pass laws that incriminate these actions and to ratify international instruments that address the issue, including the Council of Europe [Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#), the [International Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women](#) and the United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels.

¹ Lackey, Jonathan. "Facts & Figures." Women's Refugee Commission. Accessed October 27, 2016. <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/empower/resources/practitioners-forum/facts-and-figures>.



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GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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For more information please contact: Amy Paunila,
T: +41 22 731 23 80; Email: ap@graduatewomen.org