

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) appeals to governments, legislators, civil society, and individual citizens to mobilise, unite and act for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls

Geneva, Switzerland 25 November 2014 – Today on [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), the International Federation of University Women (IFUW) draws international attention to the ongoing, widespread and systemic culture of violence against women and girls that is present in all countries and regions. IFUW calls on states, international bodies, justice, health and education sectors to develop, implement and enforce holistic plans of action, including the introduction of legislation and specialised training of first responders, to protect the victims and end the impunity of the perpetrators. National law must include adequate criminal sanctions and civil remedies, and states should ratify regional and 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](#).

President of IFUW, Catherine Bell, highlighted the gravely concerning statistics on the frequency and severity of violence against women and girls worldwide: “Up to [70%](#) of women will suffer violence in their lifetimes, where alarmingly, it is often intimate partners or family members that carry out the attacks with devastating effects. Research has shown that [half](#) of all cases of femicide are carried out by partners and husbands. What is more worrying still is the extremely low rate of complaint in cases of violence against women, where only [13 -14%](#) of the most serious cases are reported to the police, with many such reports not resulting in legal proceedings and conviction. Law enforcement, health professionals, teachers and social workers need to be properly trained in treating and protecting victims of violence so that girls and women feel safe and empowered to come forward and share their ordeals.”

It is not just adult women who are being targeted; schoolgirls are a particularly at-risk group in many countries, where they often face sexual violence and harassment on the journey to or from school, or while on school premises. This results in many girls being kept at home to avoid the potential harm, which effectively denies them access to learning. Governments and education providers must prioritise the security of girls by ensuring safe passage and secure school campuses, including gender-segregated toilets.

Violence against women manifests itself in a multitude of forms including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic. It occurs in the domestic context and in public, and affects women and girls of all ages and backgrounds. Trafficking, forced and early child marriage, female genital mutilation and rape as a weapon of war are all specific forms of violence that disproportionately affect women and girls. Violence against women is a [violation of human rights](#) and a form of gender discrimination. Human rights education should be provided in school curricula to help raise awareness in girls *and* boys of the fundamental rights to bodily integrity, dignity and non-discrimination.

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW 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. IFUW is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

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