



UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman invites you to
Say NO to Violence against Women
www.saynotoviolence.org



International Day to End Violence against Women

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Women have fought for decades to break the silence and end impunity for violence against women. Today, ending violence against women is on the human rights agenda, the development agenda and the security agenda. International and regional agreements uphold the right of all women to live free of violence; the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights has a special rapporteur to report on violence against women and recommend actions to end impunity; in 2000, the Millennium Declaration recognized the links between violence, poverty and exclusion and the need to “combat all forms of violence against women”; and Security Council resolution 1325 called on “all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse.”

Nationally, too, women’s rights advocates are beginning to see results. Whereas four years ago only 45 countries had legislation on domestic violence, today at least 89 countries have some legislative provisions on this issue. In addition, 104 countries have made marital rape a crime, 90 have provisions against sexual harassment, and 93 prohibit trafficking in human beings. In Sierra Leone, where an estimated 257,000 women were raped during a brutal civil conflict, the Special Court this year sentenced three senior members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council to 45 and 50 years imprisonment for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape. The presiding judge noted that the defendants had been found guilty of “some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history.”

Laws, policies, statutes, special rapporteurs and coordination mechanisms hold the potential to transform the way we act on and think about violence against women. But seizing this potential is the challenge. Assigning sufficient resources, training police, judicial and health officials, monitoring legislation and providing serious responses when women report such violence has to be much higher on the agenda. A multi-country study by WHO found wide variation in the extent of reported violence against women, depending in part on how they expect their societies will respond. Among the reasons women gave for not seeking help included the fear that they would face more violence and that their stories would not be taken seriously.

For national and global commitments to have an impact in the lives of women on the ground, women must know they will be listened to, heard, and responded to. This makes it critical to make all of our voices heard, to bring together the widest possible constituency to say NO to violence against women. UNIFEM and Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, along with a growing number of partners, are launching an Internet-based global advocacy effort, urging individuals and organizations around the world to “raise their voices by lending their names” to promote the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence. The goal is to get hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people to add their names to a “virtual” book and demonstrate the growing demand for concerted action to end violence against women.

The Internet site also highlights the work of the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, which shows that such violence can be stopped. Over the past ten years, the UN Trust Fund has supported a total of 263 initiatives in 119 countries to formulate laws and national plans to end violence against women, institutionalize measures to ensure their implementation and develop capacities of governments and civil society to monitor progress.

UN Trust Fund grantees have shown us that concerted action by countries and communities has the power to uproot entrenched patterns of violence and gender discrimination. At the start of the 16 Days Campaign, UNIFEM joins with thousands of partners in more than 150 countries who are calling for concerted implementation of the visionary commitments to end gender-based violence.