

FINAL DECLARATION

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: CRIMES AND IMPUNITY

Regional Conference,
Amman, 11-12 November 2013

1. The Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), together with the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS), the Sisterhood Is Global Institute Jordan (SIGI/J) and the Mizan, Law Group for human rights, gathered 120 representatives of women's rights organisations in the Euro-Mediterranean region, on 11-12 November 2013 in Amman. This conference aimed to assess violence against women from a regional perspective; remind States of their national, regional and international commitments to fight gender-based violence and make concrete recommendations to States for ending impunity.
2. Referring to international instruments¹ on women's rights, in particular the UN Declaration of 1993 on the elimination of all kinds of violence against women which defines violence as "comprising any violent action targeting women and causing or which might cause any physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such actions, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in the public or private life"²;
3. Noting that violence and crimes against women remain largely unpunished and that sexual violence has increased in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries going through armed conflicts or political transitions;
4. Noting as well, that women, notably in Europe, are the first to suffer from unemployment, precariousness and budgetary cuts in health and education, caused by the governments' austerity measures;
5. Noting that rape is being used as a weapon of war in the armed conflicts, notably in Syria, and that violence is being used as a political weapon in order to exclude, stigmatise and intimidate women and also to prevent them from participating in the political transition processes and the shaping of their countries' future, such as is the case in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia;
6. Noting that, in a context of escalating violence, increased militarisation and radicalisation of the conflict in Syria, women, who very often take the sole responsibility for their children, also suffer severely from the physical and psychological consequences of the war. They are victims of rape and sexual abuse, forced and early marriages, prostitution and crimes of honour as well as repudiation. This is particularly the case for internally-displaced persons as well as refugees inside and outside refugee camps in neighbouring countries;

¹ Such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Platform (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995), as well as the International Covenant on civil and political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural Rights (1966), the Millennium Development goal n°3, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)

² Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: Physical, sexual and psychological violence, including battering, rape, marital rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; sexual-oriented based violence occurring in the family, within the community, perpetrated or condoned by the State, as well as economic and political violence

7. Noting that Palestinian women are still submitted to all kinds of violence resulting from the Israeli occupation, and that the blockade of Gaza worsens their precarious situation, making them even more vulnerable to violence;
8. Noting that discrimination against women, in particular in personal status laws, penal codes and labour laws, remains widespread in the Mediterranean countries;
9. Recalling States of their international and regional commitments;
10. Noting the weak engagement by the governments, in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, in relation to fighting impunity and adopting laws that criminalises violence against women; and in Europe in relation to the implementation of laws on violence against women;
11. Noting the important role of media in raising awareness about all forms of violence against women including those which constitute crimes, fighting impunity, and contributing to a change in patriarchal attitudes that perpetuate this situation;

In the framework of this conference on *Violence Against Women: Crimes and Impunity*, the participants urge the States, the governments, the interim governments, as well as the transitional bodies, in the Northern, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean to:

- Reject /put an end to any kind of impunity and urgently develop, adopt and implement legislation to combat gender-based violence by adopting national and regional frameworks against all kinds of sexual violence, and ensure that perpetrators of violence against women are prosecuted;
- Adopt and implement legislation criminalising violence against women and preventing any justification for sexual violence against women, whatever perpetrators;
- Ensure adequate and effective protection mechanisms for women victims of violence, such as shelters; medical and psycho-social services, including economic assistance to reintegrate them into society;
- Develop functioning gender-sensitive judicial systems, including- but not limited to- civil and penal systems, to which women are granted proper access;
- Integrate gender equality at all levels of the education system and gender-sensitive language in all curricula; and allocate budgets targeted specifically at combating violence against women;
- Guarantee equal participation and representation of women and men in the legislative, judicial and executive bodies, including in security services, as well as in decision-making positions, by adopting gender parity measures or minimum quotas, empowerment programs, granting financial support as well as gender mainstreaming of all policies and projects;
- Guarantee the full and equal participation of Palestinian, Syrian, Kurdish and other women living in transitional countries in conflict resolution and mediation efforts, in accordance with the commitments outlined in Resolution 1325 and following resolutions of the UN Security Council;

- Reinforce and ensure women's economic independence by adopting public policies and programmes that guarantee equality in women's access to the job market and economic initiatives; including equal pay for equal work, and also by ensuring their right to dispose freely of their own resources;

In the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), they urge the UfM to:

- Support the setting up of an independent regional observatory to regularly document, monitor and evaluate legislation and initiatives on violence against women, including the implementation of the measures decided by the Ministerial UfM conferences;
- Support the creation of a rehabilitation program for victims of violence, in particular of sexual violence, including service provision and compensation;
- Promote the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) without reservations, and the Rome Statute which establishes the International Criminal Court (ICC), by all States, as well as the integration of their provisions in national legislation;
- Integrate the fight against gender-based violence in all cooperation programs and all national action plans and establish criteria to measure the implementation of commitments;
- Strengthen political and financial support to women's rights organisations and movements for gender equality that are at the forefront of fighting violence against women ;

In the framework of EU's External Action and Neighbourhood Policy, they urge the EU to:

- Strengthen the implementation of EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them , and make public the national human rights strategies aiming at ending violence against women and promoting gender equality;
- Develop specific budget lines within the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to combat violence against women at all levels including prevention, investigation, the judiciary, rehabilitation and assistance; and make implementation of national action plans a condition for EU support;
- Include in the ENP progress reports an assessment of EU financial support to combat violence against women;
- In the framework of the Syrian crisis, and with a view of sharing the responsibilities with the neighbouring countries hosting refugees from Syria, to guarantee the right to asylum in the EU for refugees from Syria, notably women victims of violence, and ensure adequate conditions for asylum seekers.