

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

November 25 - December 10, 2003



Violence Against Women Violates Human Rights: Maintaining the Momentum Ten Years After Vienna (1993-2003)

A Timeline of Key Moments in the Women's Human Rights Movement¹

- ❖ **1946** - **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** is established as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) by resolution 11(II) on 21 June 1946 to prepare recommendations and reports to the Council on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. The Commission also makes recommendations to ECOSOC on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights.
- ❖ **1948** - **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The document outlines the basic human rights of all people.
- ❖ **1952** - **Convention on the Political Rights of Women** is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
- ❖ **1974** - **ISIS International**, an NGO dedicated to women's information and communication needs, is founded in Rome and Geneva. It later moves to Chile, Philippines and Uganda.
- ❖ **1975** - **International Women's Year** is declared by the United Nations.
- ❖ **1975** - **The First United Nations World Conference on Women in Mexico City, Mexico** declares the United Nations Decade for Women; NGO Tribune held parallel to official conference.
- ❖ **1976** - **International Women's Tribune Centre** is founded to follow up on NGO tribune contacts and activities.
- ❖ **1976** - **International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women** is held in Brussels; organized by feminist activists who brought over two thousand women from forty countries together to hear testimony about experiences of female oppression and violence against women and to denounce the abuse of women in its many forms.
- ❖ **1979** - **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, is adopted by the UN General Assembly, is often described as the international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and thirty articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets standards and international recommendations for national action to end such discrimination.

The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by

¹ Compiled by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, June 2001. Updated June 2002.

women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

- ❖ **1979 - International Women's Workshop in Bangkok** on *Feminist Ideology and Structures in the First Half of the Decade for Women* brings women (over half from Third World Countries) under the auspices of the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Women and Development to make recommendations for the agenda of the Second World Conference on Women.
- ❖ **1980 - United Nations Mid-Decade World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, Denmark** adopts a **Programme of Action**; NGO Forum held parallel attracts over 10,000 participants.
- ❖ **1981** - The first **Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro** (Conference) is held in Bogota, Colombia where **the 25th of November is declared as 'Dia de La No Violencia Contra La Mujer.'** This date commemorates the deaths in 1960 of the three Mirabal sisters who were tortured, raped, and killed by the police for their opposition to the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic. These regional meetings of Latin American and Caribbean activists have continued to be held every 2-3 years since in different countries in the region.
- ❖ **1983** - April 6-15 "**International Feminist Networking against Female Sexual Slavery**" International workshop is held in Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- ❖ **1984 - Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)** is founded in preparation for Nairobi World Conference on Women.
- ❖ **1984 - International Solidarity Network of Women Living under Muslim Laws** is founded.
- ❖ **1985 - UN End of Decade Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya** adopts "The Forward Looking Strategies" document, "a blueprint for action to advance the status of women in national and international economic, social, cultural and legal development to the year 2000. It contains specific recommendations for policy with regard to equality, peace, development, health, education, employment, violence, etc. NGO Forum held with over 15,000 participants spawns a number of global networks and collaborative projects. One event, **The Third World Forum for Women, Law and Development**, leads to the establishment over the next few years of three regional networks: **The Latin American Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM)**, **The Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)**, and **Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)** and **Women, Law and Development International**. The **International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRRAW)** is founded at the World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Convention).
- ❖ **1989 - Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)** is founded.
- ❖ **1991 - Center for Women's Global Leadership 1st Annual Women's Global Leadership Institute**
- ❖ **1991 - 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign** is launched. The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute. Participants chose the dates, November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates including December 1, which is World AIDS Day, and December 6, which marks the anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

- ❖ **1991 - The Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights** - The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna became the unifying public focus of a worldwide Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights—a broad and loose international collaborative effort to advance women's human rights. The campaign launched a petition calling upon the World Conference "to comprehensively address women's human rights at every level of its proceedings" and to recognize "gender violence, a universal phenomenon which takes many forms across culture, race, and class... as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action." The petition was eventually translated into 23 languages, and was used by over 1,000 sponsoring groups who gathered a half million signatures from 124 countries.
- ❖ **1992 - Earth Summit and NGO Forum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil** the Women's Caucus organized by WEDO wins acknowledgement of women's critical role in sustaining the environment.
- ❖ **1992-1993** - Women's groups organize regional events to call attention to women's human rights and influence government preparations for Vienna, such as "**La Nuestra**" in **Costa Rica**.
- ❖ **1993 - World Conference on Human Rights and NGO Forum held in Vienna, Austria** - women gain recognition of women's rights as human rights and of violence against women as a human rights abuse. A "Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights" organized by CWGL is held at the NGO Forum.
- ❖ **1993 - Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW)** is adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993. It recognizes that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women".
- ❖ **1994 - International Conference on Population and Development and NGO Forum held in Cairo, Egypt** - The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is a watershed event, with representatives of over 180 nations agreeing to the centrality of women's rights in all discussions of population and development.
- ❖ **1994 - InterAmerican Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women** is adopted in Belem do Para, Brazil.
- ❖ **1994** -Creation of the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences** whose mandate is to report acts of gender-specific violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.
- ❖ **1995 - World Summit on Social Development and NGO Forum held in Copenhagen**—women force governments to acknowledge the devastating impact of economic policies on women and commit to involving them in efforts to eradicate poverty.
- ❖ **1995 - 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing** attended by over 12,000 with parallel NGO Forum in Huairou where over 38,000 people registered for—and at least 30,000 attended—the Forum, making this the largest UN gathering in history. The Beijing Platform for Action covers twelve critical areas of concern, affirming women's rights as human rights in all these areas.
- ❖ **1998** - The diplomatic conference to establish an **International Criminal Court** meets in Rome and adopts **The Rome Statute** by a vote of 120-7. Codifies rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity for the first time in history.

- ❖ **1999** - The General Assembly passes a resolution that officially designates November 25 **International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**. Introduced by the Dominican Republic with the support of more than sixty governments, the resolution stems from the work of the women's movement in bringing this issue to the world's attention.
- ❖ **1999** - The five-year review of ICPD seeks to assess the progress in implementing the 20-year ICPD Programme of Action and to articulate strategies for moving forward. Known as "**ICPD+5**," the review process - though fraught with conflict - resulted in a negotiated document that was an important reaffirmation of the principles agreed to in 1994.
- ❖ **2000 - Beijing +5** is held as a Special Session of the General Assembly entitled "**Women: 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century**." The Special Session reviews and assesses the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted in 1985, and the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It also considers future actions and initiatives for the year 2000 and beyond.
- ❖ **2000** - October 24, **United Nations Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security** - Resolution 1325 calls on all actors involved in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements to take into account the special needs of women and girls and to include women at every step of conflict resolution and peace negotiation.
- ❖ **2000 - Tokyo Tribunal: Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery**: Emperor Hirohito and the government of Japan are found guilty of "rape and sexual slavery as a crime against humanity" in the case against the Japanese military's abuses of "comfort women" during WWII.
- ❖ **2001 - The World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR)** Women's groups from around the world decry the intersectionality of oppressions which women face, including racism and sexism and all forms of discrimination.
- ❖ **2002** - April 11, ratification of the **International Criminal Court**, which is the first ever permanent, treaty-based, international criminal court. Seven out of the eighteen judges elected are women.
- ❖ **2003 - Tenth Anniversary of the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights and NGO Forum and Vienna Declaration.**