

International Solidarity Network

26th June 2008

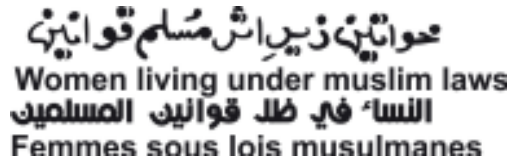
Subject: Murder of Ms. Laxmi Bohara, member of National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders

Dear Madams/Sirs,

The Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) network, the Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women! and the International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) are deeply concerned to learn about the recent death of 28 year old Ms. Laxmi Bohara on 6th June 2008 in the Kanchanpur District of Nepal. Ms. Laxmi Bohara died after she had been severely beaten by her husband, Tek Raj Bohara to whom she had been married for 12 years, and her mother-in-law, who then forced her to take poison. Ms. Laxmi Bohara was a member of the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD), as well as a health volunteer and Secretary of Women's Empowerment Center in the Kanchanpur District

According to reports received by colleagues in Nepal, prior to her murder, Ms. Laxmi Bohara had repeatedly been thrown out of the house by her husband, who, along with her mother-in-law, frequently beat her. Based on information received from NAWHRD in Nepal, Ms. Laxmi Bohara's murder occurred in the Kanchanpur district which has high cases of domestic violence, numbering at least two to three cases a day. The status of women in this particular area appears to be insecure and lowly – with women frequently being dispelled from their homes at the onset of menstruation following the tradition of 'Chaupadi'. The work of women's rights activists like Ms. Laxmi Bohara is not always well-received with activists and women human rights defenders facing death threats, attacks and harassment. In fact, Ms. Laxmi Bohara's work as an activist was a major source of contention between her and her husband and in-laws due to the interaction with men and women it entailed.

The Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women!, which was launched in November 2007 on the occasion of the UN International Day to Eliminate Violence



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Against Women, seeks to end the persistent misuse of religion and culture to justify the torturous killing and maiming of women as punishment for transgressing culturally-imposed 'norms' of behaviour. The Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women! is currently hosted by Women Living Under Muslim Laws which is an international solidarity network that provides information, support, and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. WLUML and the International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders, of which WLUML is a member, express our collective concern over the murder of this human rights defender, and we urge you to address the following issues:

1. Take steps to ensure independent and thorough investigations in which alleged perpetrators are brought to justice in a timely fashion;
2. Ensure that Ms. Laxmi Bohara's surviving children are well and safe;
3. Immediate assurance that steps are being taken to end the intimidation and harassment of all other Women Human Rights Defenders who are fighting for social justice and to ensure that Women Human Rights Defenders will not face further violence and threats;
4. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially its Article 9 on the Right to Remedy/Justice for violation of Rights;
5. Take adequate measures to address all forms of domestic violence throughout Nepal.

Yours Sincerely,

- Women Living Under Muslim Laws – International Solidarity Network
- Global Campaign to Stop Killing and Stoning Women!
- International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders, which is represented by the following 18 organisations:
 - Amnesty International (AI);
 - Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia);
 - Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD);
 - Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL);
 - Front Line International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Front Line);
 - Information Monitor (Inform);
 - International Service for Human Rights (ISHR);
 - ISIS-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE);
 - The Latin American and Caribbean Committee for the Defense of Women's Rights (CLADEM);

International Coordination Office, P.O. Box 28445, London, N19 5NZ, UK
Tel: +44 207 263 0285 Fax +44 207 561 9882
Email: wluml@wluml.org Website: www.wluml.org

- Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML);
- World Organization against Torture (OMCT);
- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID);
- Baobab for Women's Human Rights;
- Human Rights First;
- International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH);
- MADRE (an international women's human rights organisation);
- Urgent Action Fund for Women's Rights (UAF);
- Women's Initiative for Gender Justice (WIGJ)