

Press Release: Join the 2010 16 Days of Activism Campaign

How Are You Living Your Faith?

Every Religion Calls for Non-Violent Relationships!

16 Days of Activism Campaign 2010

Violence against women affects individuals, families, and communities around the world every day. Too often, religion is used as an excuse for this violence, and yet the central messages of Christianity, Islam, and other major religions instruct believers to respect the sanctity of peaceful and loving relationships. Join the chorus of religious leaders and communities who will act on their faith during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to prevent violence against women!

Every November 25 - December 10, activists raise their collective voices during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign Against Violence Against Women. This year the regional theme is *'Mutual Respect and Non-Violence: It's Part of Every Religion.'* Faith plays a powerful role in people's lives in our region. An April 2010 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report found sub-Saharan Africa to be one of the most religious places in the world. It reports that about 90% of people in the region say that religion is very important in their lives. Therefore, with faith as its anchor, the 2010 Campaign calls on believers, faith-based communities, organizations, and religious leaders to speak out against violence against women.

Consequences of violence against women affect every member of society, and yet it continues with impunity in many communities across the region. The 2001-02 *Zambia Demographic and Health Survey* found that 27% of women who have ever been married reported being beaten by their partner in the past year. A 2005 WHO *Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence* against Women reported that in rural Ethiopia and Tanzania, 49% and 47% of ever-partnered women report experiencing physical violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime. These statistics are particularly alarming considering that 28 African Union Member States have ratified the African Protocol on African Women's Rights, which declares the rights of women and includes their protection from violence.

Christianity and Islam, the two dominant religions in the region include teachings that instruct believers to create relationships based on mutual respect and non-violence. The Bible instructs husbands to *"...love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself"* (Ephesians 5:28). In the Holy Qur'an, it is written: *"And among His signs is this: that He created for you mates from among yourselves so that you may dwell in tranquility with them. He has put love and mercy between your hearts..."* (30:21). Religious leaders also acknowledge their moral mandate to take a strong stance to prevent violence against women:

"Let [husbands and wives] try to be in one love, in one heart. Let us feel that we are people, nobody is better than others."

Sheikh Idriis Habibi Luswabi, Uganda

"Help me, help me make this a home that is hospitable to goodness, to laughter, to joy, to peace, to caring."

Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu, South Africa

By living our faiths, we can prevent violence against women. Religious leaders, you are charged with guiding believers to respect the dignity of all persons; therefore, initiate discussions about violence against women in your communities of faith. Believers, you are called to promote peace in your families and communities; therefore, role model harmonious and respectful relationships. Religious communities, you are bound to live the tenets as prescribed by your faith; therefore, act and speak out to prevent violence against women. Members of the GBV Prevention Network challenge all of us to consider: How are you living your faith?

For more information about how you can prevent violence against women, please contact:

