

STATEMENT

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

Combating VAWG Must Be Set as A Political Priority at All Times

25 November 2020

With one out of three women abused or subjected to gender-based violence in their lives, **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a global pandemic**. No country, whether in peaceful, crisis and conflict situations, is free from that ill.

The Covid-19 crisis has put a spotlight on existing structural gender inequalities and the different realities that women and men are facing. Loss of income, deteriorating working conditions, closure of schools, changes in daily life and the home quarantine put an added burden on women, who traditionally take on more responsibilities at home and in the family and struggle to find jobs in the formal labour market.

Both the pandemic and the measures meant to limit the spread, exacerbate gender discrimination, fuel VAWG and represent a significant threat to gender equality efforts. The rates and severity of VAWG, particularly domestic violence including sexual violence, have surged. Stress, unemployment, and financial instability are additional triggers for domestic violence while social distancing and isolation are amplifying domestic violence. Yet, **VAWG and women's rights continue to be overshadowed on the political agendas**.

At work and at home, women are on the frontline providing care and services to the Covid-19 crisis response. Women's rights organisations have urgently stepped in to avoid a discontinuity of care for sexual and reproductive health and psychosocial services during the lockdown and provide services and referrals to women and girls victims of violence, in shelters, support centers and help lines. However, **women remain largely under-represented in the governance and decision-making bodies**.

In this context, the members of the EuroMed Feminist Initiative network from both shores of the Mediterranean are partaking in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (25 November- 10 December 2020) in order to raise the voice of women and **call political leaders and decision-makers in the Euro Mediterranean region to set VAWG as a political priority at all times**.



Setting VAWG as a political priority at all times means:

- i) Enforcing the **implementation of international human rights instruments**, international agreements, UN resolutions and treaties providing international protection for women, such as UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and SDGs 5 and 17. These are the basis for achieving women's freedom and rights and improving women's lives during the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.
- ii) Developing **comprehensive laws that criminalise all forms of VAWG** specifically domestic violence and harassment. Meanwhile, enforcing existing laws that ensure women's human rights are protected and that women's lives are free from violence.
- iii) **Putting prevention and protection measures in place** and allocating resources for their implementation.
- iv) **Developing national action plans for UNSCR 1325** with sufficient budgets and ensuring that they are incorporated and mainstreamed into national executive plans and strategies, and throughout all government sectors.

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, this also means that combating VAWG shall not be pushed at a secondary level, on the contrary it requires:

- i) **Taking immediate measures** to address the impact of Covid-19 with effective protection bodies, including legal and judicial bodies, for abused women and children.
- i) **Integrating gender analysis** into preparedness, response and recovery plans related to any crisis and across all sectors, and in particular related to Covid-19
- ii) **Ensuring the participation and leadership** of women and women rights' organizations in decision-making processes.

*Follow the EuroMed Feminist Initiative Regional Campaign on **Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls** (2019-2021) funded by the EU, which aims to engage the society as a whole to stand up against VAWG in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia¹ on: www.ostik.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)*

¹ The Consortium led by EuroMed Feminist Initiative is composed of *Algerian Women Claiming their Rights (FARD)*, in **Algeria**; *Association for Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT)* in **Egypt**; *Arab Women Organization (AWO)* in **Jordan**; *Association Najdeh* and *Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (RDFL)* in **Lebanon**; *Women's Action Union (UAF)* in **Morocco**; *Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC)* and *Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD)* in **Palestine**; and *Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development (AFTURD)* in **Tunisia**.