

UPF UK: United Nations Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls

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The Universal Peace Federation UK held on the 30th November an annual commemoration of "UN International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls". This is in support of the UN Secretary General's campaign 'UNITE by 2030 to End Violence Against Women'.

Speakers included are:

- Dr. Yvonne Thompson CBE: Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Patron
- Baroness Sandip Verma: a great advocate of women and girls and co-founder of a charity for girls education in India
- Pamela Zaballa: Global Executive Director of NO MORE.
- Chris Green- CEO of White Ribbon - Men supporting victims of violence.
- Caroline Mukaka - Founder of Loani World: Ladies of All Nations International. We will also hear testimonies from two women.
- Robin Marsh - Secretary - General of UPF-UK [Closing Remarks]

As countries implemented lockdown measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus, violence against women, especially domestic violence, intensified - in some countries, calls to helplines have increased five-fold. The UN Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, will focus on amplifying the call for global action to bridge funding gaps, ensure essential services for survivors of violence during the COVID-19 crisis, focus on prevention, and collection of data that can improve life-saving services for women and girls.

This year's theme for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is "Orange the World: End the Violence Against Women Now!". Several public events are being coordinated for this year's International Day. Iconic buildings and landmarks will be 'oranged' to recall the need for a violence-free future.

'According to latest estimates, nearly 1 in 3 women aged 15 years and older, around the world have been subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, non-partner or both, at least once in their lifetime, indicating that levels of violence against women and girls have remained largely unchanged over the last decade.' (WHO 'Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018')

This year's global campaign theme "Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!" will mobilize all UNITE networks, civil society and women's rights organizations, the UN system, the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, government partners, schools, universities, private sector, sports clubs and associations and individuals to:

Advocate for inclusive, comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and eliminate VAWG in public and private spaces prioritising the most marginalised women and girls.

Amplify the success stories demonstrating that VAWG is preventable by showcasing effective strategies and interventions to inspire all actors to scale up what works.

Promote the leadership of women and girls in their diversity and their meaningful participation in policy making and decision making from global to local levels.

As the world retreats inside houses due to the lockdown measures introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, reports from around the world showed an alarming increase in the already existing pandemic of violence against women. "Accompanying the crisis has been a spike in domestic violence reporting, at exactly the time that services, including rule of law, health and shelters, are being diverted to address the pandemic," said the UN Secretary-General's report "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19". Globally, statistics show that 1 in 3 women experienced physical or sexual violence prior to the pandemic and now it is estimated cases have increased by more than 20% during the first lockdown.

During the UK's first lockdown in March we, at UPF, convened a ZOOM conference entitled 'Domestic Violence During Lockdown' to assemble experts to raise awareness and explain the resources available to victims. It was a hugely successful event supported by a panel of top-level speakers including Chris Green, Founder and President of White Ribbon UK.

The greatest achievements, accomplishments, studies, movements, amongst others all began with an idea. It was the dedication and free will of the individual and groups to spread their ideas changing our reality for the better. Collective action and shared responsibility for driving change is what will make EVAWG day a successful reality. Whether you are male or female, old or young, with this strong global momentum striving for EVAWG there has never been a more important time to help each other, keep motivated and get involved.

Universal Peace Federation honours UN International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls by holding an annual event to address the increasing violence against women and girls by raising awareness and collective action to say STOP domestic violence. Topics that have been covered in the past include domestic abuse, trafficking, highlighting women's political and economic participation, and violence against women.