

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The history of humanity has been marked by persistent and pervasive sexism, where women's contributions have been largely ignored, with only a few exceptions. This exclusion was no accident; rather, it was a deliberate attempt to deny women the rights to which they are entitled as human beings. For centuries, women have been mistreated, deemed inferior to men, and stripped of their most basic rights. They have been subjected to various forms of physical and psychological violence that, even today in the modern age, continue to persist and must be eradicated.

As established by a United Nations resolution, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is commemorated every year on November 25. This date was chosen in memory of a horrific act of violence that took place in the Dominican Republic.

In 1960, the country was ruled by the ruthless, bloodthirsty dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Among the few who dared to oppose him were the Mirabal sisters—Minerva, Patria, and María Teresa. Enraged by their opposition and accustomed to inflicting violence on women, Trujillo ordered his henchmen to stage an “accident” to eliminate them. On November 25 of that year, the sisters were brutally murdered. The story of these martyrs, who stood against violence against women, is vividly recounted by Julia Álvarez in her book “In the Time of the Butterflies.”

The statistics on violence against women are deeply disturbing:

- Every hour, more than five women or girls are killed by a family member somewhere in the world.
- One in three women experiences sexual or physical violence at least once in their lives.
- 86% of women and girls live in countries without legal systems that protect them from gender-based violence.

In 2002, the Council of Europe issued a recommendation declaring violence against women to be "a leading cause of death and disability among women aged 16 to 44." Similarly, a World Bank report highlighted that violence against women is as significant a cause of death and disability among women of reproductive age as cancer and is more common than

traffic accidents and malaria combined. The economic toll of violence against women is staggering as well, costing society over 2% of the global GDP. In the United States alone, a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence exceeds six billion dollars, including expenses for medical care and lost productivity.

In Latin America, the situation for women is equally dire; incidents of assault, rape, and even homicide occur daily. Although laws have been enacted to protect women, they are ineffective if society remains unaware of the gravity of the situation or continues to cling to the outdated myth of “male superiority.” It is crucial to understand that modern society can no longer accept stereotypes that have only held back the progress of our nations.

Unfortunately, the situation for women is not much better in other parts of the world. We see this reported daily in the media. To date, over fifty countries have enacted legislation to address this issue, and many more are exploring ways to implement measures to eradicate violence against women. However, the lack of financial resources, particularly in developing countries, makes it more difficult to implement effective programs that could put an end to this endemic problem that continues to plague humanity.

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