

MAY 28th: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

FORGING ON TOWARDS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Over the past year, members, partners and allies of the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights have reported violations of sexual and reproductive rights, including:

- Increasing incidences of femicide and brutal 'honour killings' worldwide.ⁱ
- Health initiatives that continue to subject marginalised women - and in particular, those who are living with HIV/AIDS - to coercive contraceptive 'counselling sessions' and sterilisation operations without full consent.ⁱⁱ
- The criminalisation of abortion, abortion providers and midwives performing homebirths;ⁱⁱⁱ
- Denunciations of sexual and reproductive rights within national, regional and international forums, including:
 - the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights denying observer status to the South African-based organisation Coalition of African Lesbians;^{iv}
 - the 2011 UN Commission on the Status of Women concluding with statements that withdraw language on sexual and reproductive rights already agreed upon in the Beijing Platform for Action;
 - vocal opposition from numerous country delegates at the UN Human Rights Council to identifying people who defend the rights of lesbian/gay/bi/trans communities as *human rights defenders*;^v
 - vocal denunciations at the 2011 UN Commission on Population and Development of comprehensive sexual education (CSE), and the terms 'gender' and 'sexuality', as well as intimidation of women and youth members of state delegations who spoke against violence against women, and for CSE.

Yet, simultaneously, WGNRR members and allies report recent victories in the field, including:

- The achievement of national legal precedents, such as
 - In South Africa, government ministers agreed to look into legal interventions to prevent the systemic rape committed against lesbian women.^{vi}
 - In Nepal, the Supreme Court ruled that access to safe, affordable abortion services must be offered throughout the country.^{vii}
 - In India, the Delhi High Court established the right to maternal health care as a constitutionally protected right, and ordered the local state government to ensure that every pregnant woman has access to quality maternity care, as well as to provide compensation for violations in certain cases.^{viii}
- Unprecedented advances in the international arena, for example:
 - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders completed the first ever UN report solely dedicated to exposing the realities of criminalisation and stigmatisation faced by women's human rights defenders, including those defending sexual and reproductive rights globally.^{ix}
 - The United Nations Human Rights Council issued a Joint Statement that called on governments to end violence, criminal sanctions and other discriminatory human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identities. It was endorsed by eighty-five states.^x
- The launching of path-breaking initiatives that affirm sexual and reproductive rights as human rights by women's human rights defenders in communities worldwide.^{xi}

Mobilise for Reproductive Justice On the International Day of Action for Women's Health!

Given this challenging context, the years ahead represent a critical time to continue to proactively defend comprehensive sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and mobilise on an ongoing basis for reproductive and justice. On May 28th, the **Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights** urges members and allies to collectively:

- Create safe places for discussions about your experiences: Develop strategies to mobilise and organise locally for reproductive rights to be affirmed as human rights, and to confront violations you have experienced.
- Document violations of the rights of local sexual and reproductive rights defenders. **WGNRR** will be initiating efforts to publicise these testimonials in a collective format at regional and international human rights forums.
- Hold local forums and public meetings to raise awareness about the urgent need to defend sexual and reproductive rights as universal, indivisible human rights.
- Organise public actions with banners, leaflets, music, dance, photo exhibits and other creative forms of expression to raise the profile of your local demands for the respect of reproductive and sexual rights.

ⁱSee for example, LACWHN: End Violence Against Women! Stop the Damage, Discrimination and Death! <www.reddesalud.org/news/act3_int.php?id=20>

ⁱⁱIPAS / PPIFA, Global Rights Watch Africa Update, 23 March 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱSee for example, Free Agnes Gerab <freeagnesgerab.com>; Center for Reproductive Rights

<reproductiverights.org/en/feature/defending-human-rights-abortion-providers-under-siege>

^{iv}Pambazuka News, Special Issue: African Commission blocks LGBTI human rights. <www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/506>

^vWomen Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, Special Rapporteur Faces Criticism for including LGBTI

Defenders in Her Report. <www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special_rapporteur.php>

^{vi}Alert Net, South Africa: Activism Makes Inroads on "Corrective Rape". <www.trust.org/alertnet/news/south-africa-activism-makes-inroads-on-corrective-rape>

^{vii}Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), Nepal Supreme Court: Abortion is a Right. <www.reproductiverights.org/en/feature/nepal-supreme-court-abortion-is-a-right>

^{viii}CRR, Delhi High Court Continues to Stand up for Pregnant Women. <www.reproductiverights.org/en/feature/delhi-high-court-continues-to-stand-up-for-pregnant-women>

^{ix}Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. <www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special_rapporteur.php>

^xInternational Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, UNHRC Statement a Major Step in the Fight

Against Transphobia and Homophobia. <ilga.org/ilga/en/article/IntSBSp1Em>

^{xi}See for example, One Day, One Struggle Campaign <muslimahmediawatch.org/2010/11/the-one-day-one-struggle-campaign>; Dakar Declaration <<http://www.viacampesina.org>>



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