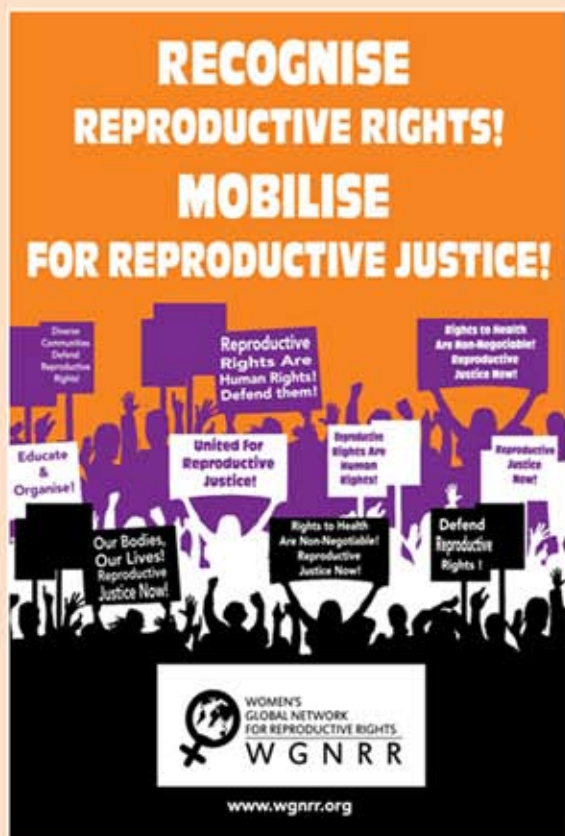


# MAY 28th: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

## Sexual and Reproductive Rights are Human Rights! Defend and Mobilise for Reproductive Justice!

In communities worldwide, religious, political and economic extremisms are on the rise, promoting patriarchal, conservative, and exclusionary ideologies. Violations of the rights to bodily autonomy and to live free from sexual violence are being normalised. Sexual and reproductive rights guaranteed under national laws and international conventions are being denied. Opportunities to seek justice and to hold perpetrators accountable remain rare. Yet, despite the challenging times, in every corner of the world, people are collectively responding in innovative, courageous ways to claim and defend sexual and reproductive rights as universal, indivisible human rights.



This 28th of May, the **Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)** calls on all women's human rights defenders around the world to seize the opportunity of the 2011 International Day of Action for Women's Health to publicly affirm our collective defence of the rights to provide and obtain safe, legal, accessible, affordable abortions and post-abortion care, and to live free from all forms of forced population control methods, including any sterilisation, abortion or use of contraceptives without our full, informed and non-coerced consent.

To express solidarity with the diverse efforts to defend sexual and reproductive rights of **WGNRR** members, allies and partners, the multi-year campaign "Recognise Reproductive Rights, Mobilise for Reproductive Justice!" was launched in 2010 during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. This initiative is a direct collaboration with the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, and is supported by the Peoples' Health Movement-Global. The campaign asserts that sexual and reproductive rights are universal, indivisible human rights. It promotes UN and regional human rights frameworks that affirm sexual and reproductive rights as practical mechanisms that defenders of these rights can use in our communities and countries as we carry on our efforts towards the realisation of sexual and reproductive justice. It also transcends national borders and regional divisions by encouraging tangible solidarities between and amongst **WGNRR** members and allies on particular days of coordinated actions and events. For example, on 4th February 2011, over 25 African based organisations allied with **WGNRR** organised actions to commemorate African Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Day. Many others around the world expressed their solidarity by writing letters to the African Court and Commission on Human and Peoples Rights to urge these institutions to respond to the widespread and systemic violations of sexual and reproductive rights in the region. **WGNRR** members around the world will also hold solidarity activities on the Latin American and Caribbean Day of Action for Decriminalisation of Abortion (Sept. 28) and the Day of Action for Asian Women's Human Rights (Nov. 30).

## WHAT WILL YOUR ORGANISATION BE DOING ON MAY 28th?

WGNRR is compiling a global list of actions and would like to hear from you. Packages of sample buttons, leaflets and posters are available upon request. Templates of the materials are available on [www.wgnrr.org](http://www.wgnrr.org).

For more information, email:  
[tanya@wgnrr.org](mailto:tanya@wgnrr.org) and [office@wgnrr.org](mailto:office@wgnrr.org)



Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)  
Red Mundial de Mujeres por los Derechos Reproductivos (RMMDR)  
Réseau Mondial de Femmes pour les Droits Reproductifs (RMFDR)

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## 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.<sup>i</sup>
- 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.<sup>ii</sup>
- The criminalisation of abortion, abortion providers and midwives performing homebirths;<sup>iii</sup>
- 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;<sup>iv</sup>
  - 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*;<sup>v</sup>
  - 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.<sup>vi</sup>
  - In Nepal, the Supreme Court ruled that access to safe, affordable abortion services must be offered throughout the country.<sup>vii</sup>
  - 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.<sup>viii</sup>
- 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.<sup>ix</sup>
  - 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.<sup>x</sup>
- The launching of path-breaking initiatives that affirm sexual and reproductive rights as human rights by women's human rights defenders in communities worldwide.<sup>xi</sup>

## 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.

<sup>i</sup>See for example, LACWHN: End Violence Against Women! Stop the Damage, Discrimination and Death!

<sup>ii</sup>[www.reddesalud.org/news/act3\\_int.php?id=20](http://www.reddesalud.org/news/act3_int.php?id=20)

<sup>iii</sup>IPAS / PPIFA, Global Rights Watch Africa Update, 23 March 2011.

<sup>iv</sup>See for example, Free Agents, [www.freeagentsreb.com](http://www.freeagentsreb.com); Center for Reproductive Rights

<sup>v</sup>[reproductiverights.org/en/feature/defending-human-rights-abortion-providers-under-siege](http://reproductiverights.org/en/feature/defending-human-rights-abortion-providers-under-siege)

<sup>vi</sup>Pambazuka News, Special Issue: African Commission blocks LGBTI human rights. [www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/506](http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/506)

<sup>vii</sup>Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, Special Rapporteur Faces Criticism for including LGBTI

Defenders in Her Report. [www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special\\_rapporteur.php](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special_rapporteur.php)

<sup>viii</sup>Alert Net, South Africa: Activism Makes Inroads on "Corrective Rape". [www.trust.org/alertnet/news/south-africa-activism-makes-inroads-on-corrective-rape](http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/south-africa-activism-makes-inroads-on-corrective-rape)

<sup>ix</sup>Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR), Nepal Supreme Court: Abortion is a Right.

<sup>x</sup>[www.reproductiverights.org/en/feature/nepal-supreme-court-abortion-is-a-right](http://www.reproductiverights.org/en/feature/nepal-supreme-court-abortion-is-a-right)

<sup>xi</sup>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](http://www.reproductiverights.org/en/feature/delhi-high-court-continues-to-stand-up-for-pregnant-women)

<sup>xii</sup>Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition. [www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special\\_rapporteur.php](http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org/special_rapporteur.php)

<sup>xiii</sup>International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, UNHRC Statement a Major Step in the Fight

Against Transphobia and Homophobia. [ilga.org/ilga/en/article/IT5bSp1Em](http://ilga.org/ilga/en/article/IT5bSp1Em)

<sup>xiv</sup>See for example, One Day, One Struggle Campaign. [muslimahmediawatch.org/2010/11/the-one-day-one-struggle-campaign](http://muslimahmediawatch.org/2010/11/the-one-day-one-struggle-campaign)

<sup>xv</sup>Dakar Declaration <http://www.viacampesina.org>



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