

From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World:

A Prayer for the 16 days of Action to End Gender Based Violence



You are invited to begin the prayer with some instrumental music. A single candle is lit to help us enter into this sacred space.

If a member of your community is involved in work to combat violence against women she might be asked to share her reflections on this reality in your local context. Otherwise the following stories are read. Allow some moments of silent reflection after each woman's story.



Selma's Account, Syria

Selma, from Karm al-Zeitoun, Homs told Human Rights Watch in a face-to-face interview that she heard her neighbors being raped while hiding in her apartment in March 2012: "I saw the security forces and the *shabiha* and I went into the house [and hid] ... My neighbor has girls. I heard her say to them, "Don't let out a noise." Our apartments are wall-to-wall ... They [the *shabiha*] came to our building ... The door to my house was open still [as I left it when I was packing]. From my hiding place I could hear that someone came in and said "This one is empty, there is no one here" ... They knocked on my neighbor's door ... One of them said, "Open or we will shoot." She did not open the door and they shot at it ... When they went in one said, "Why are you not opening the door?" She was saying, "Oh God, God forbid, don't come close to me." She said, "I will kiss your feet but don't come near us" ... The girls were protesting. I could hear them saying not to grab the mother and she was just saying, "Don't touch my daughters." I could hear one girl fighting with one of them. He was saying, "Oh, you are going to scratch me too?" She pushed him and he shot her in the head. She was the oldest. 20 years old ... They grabbed the youngest. She was 12. You could hear her say, "Don't take my clothes off." The mother said, "This girl is 12." The youngest, I saw her [later], her sweater was torn, all the way down the front. They raped her and they raped the two others ... The other girls were 16 and 18 ... I waited, hiding after they left. I didn't move for one hour or so until the *thuwar* (revolutionaries) came ... The girls had closed the door to their house and were crying ... I knocked on their door and said, "I am your neighbor let me in." The scene on the inside was unreal. The 12 year old was lying on the ground, blood to her knees. I told them to get up, that this happened against their will. More than one person had raped the 12 year old."*

Mexico

L.R. fled to the US with her children in 2004. Over the years, her partner forced her to live with him, raped her at gunpoint, tried to burn her alive when she was pregnant and threatened to kill her family. The police did not help and a judge even tried to seduce her. Her partner "told my sister he had school business to talk about with me so we needed to be alone in another room. I did not want to go with him, but he had a gun in his hand and flashed it at me. It was the first time he had a gun and it terrified me. When he had me alone in his room he pointed the gun at me and threatened to kill me if I did not have sex with him...He told me he would kill my sister's baby first so the others could watch and then he would kill my sister and her 3-year-old if I did not comply with his demand. I was scared of him and he had the gun. He raped me. I was too embarrassed and afraid to tell my sister what had happened....Afterwards, I waited to get on the bus to go to Mexico City with my final belongings. [He] grabbed me from the bus line and pointed the gun in his jacket. He made me come to his house, where he forced me to put on a baggy jacket so that he could hold the gun to me without anyone noticing. He then dragged me to a nearby pay phone and forced me to call my sister and tell her that I loved [him] and that I was staying with him. He took me to his house and held me captive there for several years...The police told me that it was a private matter and that my life was not in danger, so they could not help me."



1) The World Health Organization estimates that at least one of every three women globally will be beaten, raped, or otherwise abused during her lifetime. In most cases, the abuser is a member of her own family.



We remember all women who are abused in their own homes.

(After each intercession we silently remember women who we know are in this situation and the following Taize chant or another appropriate refrain in your own language is sung)

*O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer,
When I call, answer me,
O Lord hear my prayer, o Lord hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.*

2) Violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer. And its toll on women's health surpasses that of traffic accidents and malaria combined

We pray that violence in the family will always be recognised as a crime and a violation of human rights and that appropriate systems are put in place in every country to address this reality

3) The most common act of violence against women is being slapped—an experience reported by 9% of women in Japan and 52% in provincial Peru. Rates of sexual abuse also varies greatly around the world—with partner rape being reported by 6% of women from Serbia and Montenegro, 46% of women from provincial Bangladesh, and 59% of women in Ethiopia.

We pray that love, respect and trust become the cornerstones of all intimate relationships, that power and control are eliminated and that those who perpetrate violence will recognise the reality of their actions and will be open to change.

4) Survivors of sexual assault are 3 times more likely to suffer from depression, 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol, 26 times more likely to abuse drugs, and 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide

We pray for women who have been abused, that they become able to regain their sense of their dignity and self-esteem and come to experience their God given power in healthy relationships

5) Of the nearly 900 million small arms in the world today, more than 75% are in the hands of private individuals—most of them men— and stored in homes

For all children who are affected by exposure to domestic violence and abuse that they will be assisted in enabled to grow and develop in a home without violence. So that it doesn't impact on their future.

6) An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of female genital mutilation

That the church will take the courage to speak out on these issues and to support those who are suffering

7) It is estimated that close to 90% of current war casualties are civilians, the majority of whom are women and children, compared to a century ago when 90% of those who lost their lives were military personnel



We pray for peace in the world and in society, that love may overcome hate, tolerance overcome discrimination and may we never stop believing that a better world is possible.

Let us all join hands and circle our candle which represents Christ, the bringer of peace and in the words that He taught us let us pray: Our Father...

Excerpted from: Amnesty International, 2004. "Democratic Republic of Congo: Mass rape – time for remedies."

Submitted by Margaret Lynch, Representative GS NGO in Geneva