

**BAHÁ'Í
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY**

Office for the Advancement of Women

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To Selected National Spiritual Assemblies

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Dear Friends,

The Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Advancement for Women would like to invite you to support and observe the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2007. This date marks the beginning of 16 days of activism for the elimination of violence against women that ends on International Human Rights Day (10 December).

We are providing you with two recommendations focused on the advancement of women, which you might wish to highlight in your campaign activities this year: (i) the girl child, and (ii) the role of men and boys in eradicating violence against women. These themes were the center points of discussion at the 51st session of the UN Commission for the Status of Women (UN-CSW) in 2007.

This United Nations Day on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the 16 days of activism provides excellent opportunities for all to put their follow up plans for the implementation of the outcome document of the Commission into action. Therefore, the role of your Office for the Advancement of Women's representatives is crucial in raising awareness, both within the Bahá'í community, as well as in the larger society, of the opportunity to address this epidemic from a Bahá'í perspective. Time is crucial. Violence against women is a major cause of death and disability for women, and women and children make up the majority of victims of armed conflict and war and the trafficking of people. Violence against women and girls also has a devastating effect on local and national economies exacerbating the cycle of violence.

A number of National Spiritual Assemblies reported to us last year that they observed the day by organizing panel discussions, public meetings and visits to government officials. They confirmed that this opportunity enabled them to expand and strengthen their contacts with government officials, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations, and to present them with the Bahá'í International Community's statement "Beyond Legal Reforms: Culture and Capacity in the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Girls". Additionally, a few national communities have translated the statement into local languages, published it locally and have placed the statement on their community's website. We have enclosed a list of recommendations for your Office for the Advancement of Women to serve as a guide for creating an action plan. We hope you find it useful in your noble efforts to serve your community by taking an active part in supporting the worldwide campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls.

We would greatly appreciate receiving an update, and hopefully periodic reports, of the activities of your community regarding the advancement of women. This information will not only help us generate better tools and ideas to support Bahá'í communities, but will also enrich our forthcoming news update that is to be shared with Bahá'ís and other organizations from all around the world. We deeply thank you for your valued support and collaboration.

With warmest Bahá'í greetings,



Fulya Vekiloglu
Representative to the United Nations
Office for the Advancement of Women
Bahá'í International Community

Enclosed documents:

- (i) List of recommendations to serve as a guide for creating an action plan.
- (ii) The Bahá'í International Community's Statement "Beyond Legal Reforms: Culture and Capacity in the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Girls"
- (iii) Backgrounder to the Bahá'í International Community's Statement "Beyond Legal Reforms: Culture and Capacity in the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Girls". Prepared as a resource for Bahá'í representatives to familiarize themselves with the issue and facilitate discussions.