



**WOMEN'S UN REPORT NETWORK - WUNRN**

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**VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN**

**United Nations Human Rights Council Session 35**

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**Geneva, Switzerland**



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# WOMEN'S UN REPORT NETWORK WUNRN®

**DO YOU CALL THIS RESPECT?**

Every day, older Vermonters are being threatened, neglected and hurt. These are all forms of elder abuse. Make today different. If you know someone who is being neglected, exploited or abused, report it to Adult Protective Services at **1-800-564-1612**.

**YOU'LL FIND HELP & RESPECT.**

For information about services or referrals, call the Senior Helpline at **1-800-642-5119**.

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**Who is the Older Woman, the  
Ageing Woman, Elderly Woman?**



Photographer - [Brenda Paik Sunoo](#)



**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION - OLDER PERSONS**

**Currently, there is no United Nations standard numerical criterion, but the UN agreed cutoff is 60+ years to refer to the older population.**

**For a woman, perception and experience of age, and of health, vary widely, as well as her health care, health services, and health traditions.**

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United Nations

CEDAW/C/GC/27



## Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General  
16 December 2010

Original: English

### Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

#### General recommendation No. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights

##### Introduction

1. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter "the Committee"), concerned about the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by older women and that older women's rights are not systematically addressed in the reports of States parties, decided at its forty-second session, held from 20 October to 7 November 2008, pursuant to article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter "the Convention"), to adopt a general recommendation on older women and protection of their human rights.

2. In its decision 26/III of 5 July 2002, the Committee acknowledged that the Convention "is an important tool for addressing the specific issue of the human rights of older women."<sup>1</sup> General recommendation No. 25 on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention (temporary special measures) also recognizes that age is one of the grounds on which women may suffer multiple forms of discrimination. In particular, the Committee recognized the need for statistical data, disaggregated by age and sex, in order to better assess the situation of older women.

3. The Committee affirms previous commitments to older women's rights enshrined in, inter alia, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing,<sup>2</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>3</sup> the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (General Assembly resolution 46/91, annex), the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,<sup>4</sup> the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002,<sup>5</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights general comment No. 6 on the

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 33 (A/57/38, Part One, chap. I, decision 26/III, and chap. VII, paras. 430-436)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the World Assembly on Ageing, Vienna, 26 July-6 August 1982* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.I.16), chap. VI, sect. A.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.



**CEDAW General Recommendation No. 12 (Eighth Session, 1989)**

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Considering that articles 2, 5, 11, 12 and 16 of the Convention require the States parties to act to protect women against violence of any kind occurring within the family, at the work place or in any other area of social life, Taking into account Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/27,

Recommends to the States parties that they should include in their periodic reports to the Committee information about:

1. The legislation in force to protect women against the incidence of all kinds of violence in everyday life (including sexual violence, abuses in the family, sexual harassment at the work place etc.);
2. Other measures adopted to eradicate this violence;
3. The existence of support services for women who are the victims of aggression or abuses;
4. Statistical data on the incidence of violence of all kinds against women and on women who are the victims of violence.



### **The Independent Expert on the Human Rights of Older Persons**

In May 2014, the Human Rights Council appointed Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte as the first Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

Ms. Kornfeld-Matte served as the National Director of the Chilean National Service of Ageing where she designed and implemented the National Policy of Ageing.

For human rights purposes, age is not merely a numerical designation, but a social construct based on custom, practice and the perception of the role a person plays in his or her community. The specific vulnerabilities of older persons can be the result of physical and mental conditions, but can also result from the obstacles encountered due to societal perception and the interaction of an individual with his or her environment. Population ageing constitutes one of the most significant demographic transformations of the 21st century. For the first time in history, humankind will reach a point at which there are fewer children than older persons in the world.







EU - VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN IN FAMILIES - RECOGNIZING & ACTING

**BREAKING  
THE TABOO**

Violence against older women in families:  
recognizing and acting



**INDIA - THALAIKOOTHAL "MERCY" KILLING OF ELDERLY WOMEN BY POOR FAMILIES**



Mother, shall I put you to sleep? Maariyamma is likely to be killed by her children because they cannot afford her. They will give her a loving oil bath. Several glasses of coconut water. A mouthful of mud. Perhaps a poison injection. She is just one of many old parents in Tamil Nadu dying in this way. PHOTO: G KARTHICK

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**OLDER, POOR WOMEN OF INDIA**





**INTERSECTIONALITIES OF ISSUES - OLDER WOMEN & RIGHT TO HEALTH**

**INTERSECTIONALITIES OF ISSUES & HUMAN RIGHTS  
OLDER WOMEN & THE RIGHT TO HEALTH**

- \*Poverty & Extreme Poverty**
- \*Health - Physical & Mental**
- \*Nutrition/Malnutrition**
- \*Land, Housing/Shelter**  
**Land-Grabbing, Forced Evictions**  
**Homelessness - Slums**
- \*Climate Change Issues**
- \*Natural Disasters**
- \*War & Conflict**
- \*Refugee Status**
- \*Internal Displacement**
- \*Safety - Violence**
- \*Migration**
- \*Minority & Indigenous Issues**
- \*Culture & Traditions**
- \*Widows Discrimination**
- \*Accusations as Witches**
- \*Older Women with Disabilities**

**ITALY - EARTHQUAKE - OLDER WOMEN - INCREASED VULNERABILITY TO VIOLENCE**



Italy - Hundreds of L'Aquila's 80,000 residents gathered in the central Piazza Duomo, where nuns from a local convent attended to frightened residents, the ANSA news agency reported.

Photo: Filippo Monteforte/Agence France-Presse -- Getty Images

**SOMALIA - OLDER FEMININE FACE OF WAR**



Michael Kamber for The New York Times

How does it feel to be an old woman, alone, in Somalia. You have known violence and conflict in Somalia most of your life. Now, your only daughter and her children have left, to try to walk to a camp in Kenya, to survive the famine, drought, fighting. You are not able to walk any distance. There is no one to care for you. Tears! Tears!



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**IRAQ - OLDER WOMEN FRONTLINES OF WAR - HEALTH?**



© Panos Pictures / M. Saman

**HOMELESS OLDER WOMAN - SURROUNDED BY VIOLENCE EVERY DAY**



Photo - Trekearth - By Shamay





**MOROCCO - ELDERLY NOMADIC WOMAN - CULTURAL VIOLENCE - SUPPORT?**





**COMPOUNDED CURRENT CHALLENGES LINKED TO VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN**

- \*Multiple and protracted crises and recessions**
- \*Austerity measures as decreased pensions, higher taxes**
- \*Dramatic increase in the ageing population**
- \*Rising poverty of older women**
- \*Absence or decrease of social supports and benefits**
- \*Separation of families, migration, displacement**
- \*Social fixation on beauty, youth, money, good health, fitness, marketing-advertising-commodification of women and girls**
- \*Increase in widows, especially in countries of conflict**
- \*Complexities of care for elderly, ill, and disabled**



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**ELDERLY WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES - POTENTIAL VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE**





**OLDER WOMEN IN PRISON - MULTIPLE ABUSE ISSUES**



## Older Women's Potential Abuse in Nursing Homes

Some people are afraid of disclosing the experiences of elderly abuse in nursing homes for fear it will become worse or because they do not wish to cause worry. Nursing home residents are also often the victims of horrible elderly abuse because they may have physical or mental restrictions that leave them unable to communicate what is going on. .

- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns, sprains, or fractures in various stages of healing.
- Bedsore or frozen joints.
- Unexplained venereal disease or genital infections; vaginal or anal bleeding; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
- Sudden changes in behavior.
- Staff refusing to allow visitors to see resident or delays in allowing visitors to see resident.
- Staff not allowing resident to be alone with visitor.
- Resident being kept in an over-medicated state.
- Loss of resident's possessions.
- Sudden large withdrawals from bank accounts or changes in banking practices.
- Abrupt changes in will or other financial documents.



## VIOLENCE AGAINST OLDER WOMEN IN NURSING HOMES



BBC Photo - Violence against woman patient in nursing home in North London

**GHANA OLDER WOMAN IN CAMP FOR WOMEN ACCUSED OF WITCHERY**



## OLDER WOMAN'S VOICE

I am an older, an elderly, woman  
The lines on my face are etching of the seasons of my life.

I am not pretty anymore. My hair is grey, my skin sagging,  
In a world fixated on youth and beauty.

I am frailer now, more fragile, more often ill.  
I cannot afford all the medical care I need.

I want to tell my children stories of my life.  
But they are busy, not so interested in my legacy.

I am lonely. My husband, also old, has dementia.  
I feel isolated, ignored, forgotten.

What has happened to the respect for elders,  
To the valuing of life from cradle to grave?

Where is social justice to care for old women  
And provide for their special needs and rights?

I am an older woman, but I am very much alive.  
Hear me, care about me, help me, treasure me.