

Official Statement on 25 November 2023

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Today, 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we say loudly and clearly that the battle against male violence is a collective struggle involving the whole of society. Because male violence is not an isolated or private event. Because male violence is the country's main public security problem. Because it is not a women's problem; it is a problem for society as a whole.

Over recent decades, we have seen far-reaching change in our country in the social rejection of this structural violence against women. To get this far, we have had to name the various forms it takes and point out all the areas in which it occurs. It has also been essential for both women and men to learn to identify what constitutes male violence and, most importantly, to hold the perpetrators accountable instead of blaming the women who experience it for what they have or have not done.

This change has not happened by itself. It has been the outcome of intense and long-standing feminist struggle in the social and community setting, in the workplace, in the cultural realm and in sports and which has also gained a prominent place in political institutions and government. More resources than ever before are allocated to specialised services for the care and recovery of women and their children.

It is thus inevitable that we run out of words of condemnation and ask ourselves in pain: "Why doesn't violence against women stop?"; "Why don't feminicides cease?"; and "Why do complaints continue to rise?"

We need to realise that growing social rejection and a robust institutional response are not enough. This is not a sprint but rather a long-distance race. Male chauvinist attitudes and behaviours of contempt, ridicule, control or domination towards women and their bodies are still very much ingrained in our society. And all too often it is still hard to dismantle stereotypes about victims and perpetrators, doubts about the intention of the victim or survivor who reports violence and about involvement or companionship with the perpetrator.

This summer, everyone has seen how an event which took place in front of the cameras and was broadcast all over the world was at first not enough to gain swift reparation for the violence experienced. Everyone has also seen how this only came after indignant social outcry in response to the absence of diligence of those who had the responsibility to take action, those who applauded unjustifiable excuses, those who pressured or questioned the reaction of the victim and those who were bland in their statements or kept silent for too long. Everyone could also see that with the cry "#It's over", the women football players were not only speaking out about these events but also putting the spotlight on inequalities which have to be addressed in order to ensure there is no repetition and to make equality effective.

This is the step we all need to take every day to put an end to male violence. Silence and inaction are not neutral responses but instead support the perpetrator, impunity and the reproduction of violence. We need to shatter all silences and take a proactive role in prevention and detection. We are all observers of the violence experienced by many women around us (family, friends, at work, in education, social media groups, leisure venues, on public transport and in the street) at the hands of men in our very surroundings.

We can all prevent violence from happening by intervening and speaking out against aggressive behaviour, discrimination and inequalities. We can help to set standards for what is and is not acceptable in our setting. We can help to recognise intolerable comments or behaviours, including discourses denying male violence, and thus help to overturn the patriarchal cultural norms of our society. We can draw attention to the violence so that it can be stopped and we can demand that our workplace, association or leisure venue properly implements the protocol it is required to have in place.

We all also have a key role to play in the immediate response to violence. As a friend, family member, co-worker or neighbour, we can help the victim identify the signs of the violence suffered or risk factors for her life. It is especially important to give her emotional support, to help her overcome the fear, isolation, shame or feelings of guilt the violence she has experienced may trigger, reassuring her that it is not her fault, that we are there for her and that we can go with her to the specialised services available across the country or call 900 900 120.

The country's political institutions – the Government of Catalonia, local authorities and municipal organisations – pledge to invest all the efforts and resources needed to safeguard women's right to a life free of male violence. We know that we have done a lot of work yet we still need to do much more: with due diligence, with a comprehensive response and with transformational and bold public policies.

However, everyone's engagement is essential in order to eradicate male violence. Each and every one of us can be an agent of change. Let's blow the whistle, shatter silences and notice all the red flags to prevent, detect and redress violence against women. Let's take a stand to stop the biggest violation of women's human rights once and for all and put an end to the ultimate perpetrator: patriarchy and the sexist ideology underpinning it.

