

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

November 25 - December 10, 2008



Key Dates

Why these particular 16 Days?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence uses the 16 days between International Day For the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November) and International Human Rights Day (10 December) to reinforce that eliminating all forms of violence against women is a human rights issue and that the act of perpetrating violence against women is a human rights violation. The 16 Days Campaign brings the human rights framework to the heart of its work and utilizes it to ensure that both state and non-state actors are held accountable for acts of violence against women.

The Significance of November 25 and December 10

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, NOVEMBER 25TH

November 25 was declared International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women at the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogota, Colombia, July 18-21, 1981. The “feminist encuentros” are conferences of feminists from Latin America who come together every 2-3 years in a different Latin American country in order to exchange experiences and to reflect upon the state of the women’s movement. At that first Encuentro, women systematically denounced all forms of gender violence from domestic battery to rape and sexual harassment to state violence including torture and abuse of women political prisoners. November 25 was chosen to commemorate the violent assassination of the Mirabal sisters (Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa) on November 25, 1960 by the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. In 1999, the United Nations officially recognized November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Who were the Mirabal sisters?

Patria, Minerva, Maria Teresa and Dedé were born in Ojo de Agua near the city of Salcedo, in the Cibao region of the Dominican Republic. “Las Mariposas” (“the Butterflies”), as they were called, were political activists and highly visible symbols of resistance to Trujillo’s dictatorship. They were repeatedly jailed, along with their husbands, for their revolutionary activities toward democracy and justice. On November 25, 1960, three of the Mirabal sisters, Minerva, Patria and Maria Teresa were murdered, along with Rufino de la Cruz, their driver, by members of Trujillo’s secret police. The three women were being driven by Rufino to Puerto Plata to visit their imprisoned husbands. The bodies of the three sisters were found at the bottom of a precipice, broken and strangled. The news of their brutal assassinations shocked and outraged the nation and helped propel the anti-Trujillo movement. Trujillo was assassinated on May 30, 1961 and his regime fell soon after.

The Mirabal sisters have become symbols of both popular and feminist resistance. In the years since their deaths, they have been commemorated in poems, songs and books. An exhibition of their belongings has been mounted at the National Museum of History and Geography in the Dominican Republic, a stamp has been issued in their memory and a private foundation is raising money to renovate a family museum in their hometown. On March 8, 1997, International Women’s Day, a mural was unveiled on the 137-foot obelisk (that Trujillo had erected in his honor) in Santo Domingo. It depicts the images of the four sisters. The painting on the obelisk is entitled “Un Canto a la Libertad” (A Song to Liberty).

For more information see Julia Alvarez’s fictional account of the Mirabal sisters in her 1994 novel, “In the Time of the Butterflies;” Bernard Diederich’s book “Trujillo: The Death of the Dictator;” and “The Mirabal Sisters;” in Connexions, an International Women’s Quarterly, No. 39, 1992.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, DECEMBER 10TH

On December 10, people and states the world over celebrate the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On this landmark date in contemporary history, the nations of the world joined together to try to bury, once and for all, the spectre of genocide raised by the second World War. The UDHR was one of the first major achievements of the United Nations and provided the basic philosophy for many legally-binding international instruments to follow. Resolution 217A (III) by the General Assembly proclaims the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms...”

Organizations and individuals use Human Rights Day as an opportunity to both commemorate the signing of this historic document and to promote the principles that it embodies. Human Rights Day, according to former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, is “an occasion to demonstrate that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were not theoretical or abstract.”

To obtain a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to see a description of activities the United Nations has planned for Human Rights Day, please visit the UN website at: <http://www.unhcr.ch/udhr/>

Key Dates that Commemorate Feminist Activism

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DAY, NOVEMBER 29TH

Defending Women Defending Rights is an international campaign launched in 2004 for the recognition and protection of women human rights defenders who are activists advocating for the realization of all human rights for all people. The campaign asserts that women fighting for human rights and all activists defending women’s rights face specific violations as a result of their advocacy or their gender. November 29th is a day of recognition for women human rights defenders, and it is a day to commemorate activism, advocacy and courageous acts of resistance. The campaign focuses on defense of rights and the impact of abuses by state and non-state actors (including family and community members), the rise in militarism and fundamentalisms, and the many ways defenders are targeted because of sexuality, including the perception of being lesbian or gay.

For more information, check the women human rights defender campaign website at www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org for videos, action alerts, reports, and other materials you can use to celebrate International Women Human Rights Defenders Day in your community.

THE MONTREAL MASSACRE, DECEMBER 6TH

On December 6, 1989, a 25 year-old man named Marc Lepine walked into the University of Montreal’s School of Engineering Building with semi-automatic rifle. He began a shooting spree during which he murdered fourteen women and injured thirteen others: nine women and four men. Lepine believed it was because of women students that he was not accepted to the engineering school. Before killing himself, he left an explanatory letter behind which contained a tirade against feminists as well as a list of nineteen prominent women whom he particularly despised.

The fourteen women who were murdered in the massacre were: Anne-Marie Edward, Anne-Marie Lemay, Annie St. Arneault, Annie Turcotte, Barbara Daigneault, Barbara Maria Klueznick, Genevieve Bergeron, Helen Colgan, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganiere, Maryse Leclair, Michele Richard, Natalie Croteau and Sonia Pelletier.

These women became symbols, tragic representatives, of the injustice against women. Women’s groups across the country organized vigils, marches and memorials. There was an increase in support for educational programs and resources to reduce violence against women. Both federal and provincial governments made commitments to end violence against women. In 1991, the Canadian government proclaimed December 6th National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. In 1993, an organization calling itself the Dec. 6 Coalition set up a revolving fund for women leaving violent situations to establish themselves and their children in a safer, more secure environment. Also in 1993 a campaign called Zero Tolerance was launched offering men the opportunity to show solidarity with women against violence against women. As a direct result of the massacre, several mothers of the victims began groups to restrict gun laws and promote awareness of the continued violence against women.

For more information, see “The Montreal Massacre” edited by Louise Malette & Marie Chalouh, Gynergy Books/Ragweed Pr; ISBN: 0921881142 or visit the Men for Change website at <http://www.thebucto.ns.ca/CommunitySupport/Men4Change/>.

International Days Designated by the UN General Assembly That Fall Within The 16 Days

Through resolutions accepted by the General Assembly, the United Nations designates days to recognize significant events or issues. You can find a complete list of these dates by visiting <http://lib-unique.un.org/lib/unique.nsf/Link/R02091>. For your information we have provided below a list of UN designated dates that fall within the 16 days of the Campaign. We have not included 25 November and 10 December as they have been explained in detail above. All the descriptions below are taken directly from the UN website and you can visit the accompanying links to learn more about each day. If there are activities for the 16 Days Campaign that you feel intersect with these dates, consider incorporating them into your advocacy to highlight those intersections.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, NOVEMBER 29TH

In 1977, the General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (resolution 32/40 B). On that day, in 1947, the Assembly adopted the resolution on the partition of Palestine (resolution 181 (II)).

For more information, please see the UN website: <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/palestinian/index.html>

WORLD AIDS DAY, DECEMBER 1ST

World AIDS Day is observed every year on December 1. This day marks the beginning of an annual campaign designed to encourage public support for and development of programs to prevent the spread of HIV infection and provide education and promote awareness of issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. It was first observed in 1988 after a summit of health ministers from around the world called for a spirit of social tolerance and a greater exchange of information on HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day serves to strengthen the global effort to face the challenges of the AIDS pandemic.

For more information about World AIDS Day, contact UNAIDS Secretariat, 20 avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland, ph: (41-22)791 3666, fax: (41-22)791 4187, e-mail: <unaids@unaids.org>, website: <<http://www.unaids.org>>.

CWGL has released a report, “Strengthening Resistance: Confronting Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS,” which focuses on the points of intersection in the social, human rights and public health crises of violence against women and HIV/AIDS. For more information, visit <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/publications/strengthening.htm>.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, DECEMBER 2ND

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, recalls the date of the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317 (IV) of 2 December 1949).

By resolution 57/195 of 18 December 2002, the Assembly proclaimed 2004 the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition.

For more information, please visit the UN website: <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/slavery/>

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS, DECEMBER 3RD

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons, 3 December, aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. The theme of the Day is based on the goal of full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities, established by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 1982.

For more information about International Day for Disabled Persons, please visit the UN Enable website at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/disiddp.htm>

International Volunteer Day for Social and Economic Development, December 5th

The International Volunteer Day (IVD) provides an opportunity for volunteer-involving organizations and individual volunteers to work together on projects and campaigns promoting their contributions to economic and social development at local, national and international levels. By merging UN support with a grassroots mandate, IVD is a unique opportunity for government agencies, non-profit organizations, community groups, the private sector and volunteer-involving organizations to work together to attain common goals. IVD was established by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 40/212 on 17 December 1985. Since then, governments, the UN system and civil society organizations have successfully joined volunteers around the world to celebrate the Day on 5 December.

For more information please see the UN Volunteers Website: http://dynamic.unv.org/infobase/facts/04_08_17DEU_fs_IVD.htm

International Civil Aviation Day, December 7th

The purpose of the global celebration is to generate and reinforce worldwide awareness of the importance of international civil aviation in the social and economic development of States, and of the role of ICAO in promoting the safety, efficiency and regularity of international air transport.

For more information, visit: http://www.icao.int/icao/en/aviation_day.htm

International Anti-Corruption Day, December 9th

By resolution 58/4 of 31 October 2003, the General Assembly designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day. This decision was taken in order to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in combating and preventing it.

For more information, please see the UN website: http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/events/anti_corruption/

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