

SERIOUS ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS? THEN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT MUST RATIFY CEDAW

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The Center for Women's Global Leadership, and the 100 organizations and individuals listed below, call on the U.S. Congress to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without delay. CEDAW establishes an international legal framework for the achievement of gender equality, affirming that women and men enjoy all human rights on an equal basis. It provides a regular system for assessing progress in promoting, protecting and fulfilling women's human rights; and thus, it is an instrument to hold governments accountable. Ratification of CEDAW has led to positive changes for women around the world, combating diverse forms of violation of women's rights from violence against women, to labor market discrimination, to high rates of maternal mortality.

By not ratifying CEDAW, the U.S. places itself amongst the very few nation states, including Iran and Sudan, who have not yet ratified the Convention. The U.S. government has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), so why not CEDAW? In the United States, women and girls, especially women and girls of color still face discriminatory practices, and still have a long way to go to attain equality.

CEDAW covers civil and political rights including provision for affirmative action and the rights to education, health, employment and other areas of economic and social life. It calls for more than just laws that eliminate overt discrimination; it calls for measures that enable women to enjoy substantive equality. CEDAW, and its associated system of monitoring compliance, has the potential to foster national and international dialogue and cooperation around improving women's lives, and expanding understanding of how to end violations of women's rights.

The U.S. needs CEDAW because:

- Though the federal Violence Against Women Act ("VAWA") was passed in 1994, and has enhanced the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, domestic violence remains a serious problem in the U.S. On average four women per day are murdered and 5.5 million women per year physically assaulted or raped by intimate partners.
- Women working full-time today earn, on average, only 77 cents for every dollar paid to men. This is especially harmful given that women are the primary breadwinners in nearly 4 in 10 families.
- In 2008, 37 percent of single-mother households were food insecure at some point during the year. A 2007 USDA study found that about 85 percent of households with food insecure children had a working adult, including 70 percent with a full-time worker. The problem is not simply the unavailability of jobs, but also that the lack of decent work is a severe problem for racial and ethnic minorities and women.

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- Between two and three women die every day during pregnancy and childbirth in the USA: women of color, those living in poverty, Native Americans and immigrant women and those who speak little or no English are particularly affected. One in four women do not receive adequate prenatal care, starting in the first trimester. The number rises to about one in three for African American and Native American women.

CEDAW would provide a stimulus for greater focus on these disparities; for more effective enforcement of antidiscrimination law; and for more equitable access to vital services. While ratification of CEDAW cannot achieve women's equal enjoyment of rights overnight, it opens up a new process of reporting and monitoring that will empower U.S. women to hold their government accountable.

ORGANIZATIONS (66)

Amnesty International Ithaca Chapter, Group 73, United States
Amnesty International USA, United States
Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD), International
Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), International
BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, Nigeria
Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), Canada
Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), United States
Center for Justice & Accountability, United States
Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (CHRSUP), United States
Dab The AIDS Bear Project, United States
Deutscher Frauenring e.V. , Committee for International Work, Germany
Episcopal Church Women of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, United States
Equality Now, International
Feminist Majority Foundation, United States
Gender Center, Republic of Moldova
Global Action on Aging, United States
Gray Panthers, United States
INFORM, Sri Lanka
International Civil Society Action Network, International
International CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants), International
International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW-International), International
International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)'s Women Peacemakers Program, Netherlands
International Institute on Peace Education (IPE), International
International Museum of Women, International
International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic at the City University of New York School of Law, United States

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Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), International
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, United States
Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre, Nigeria
L'ORAGE Productions, United States
Mothers for Active Non-Violence (MOFAN-V), Ghana
National Lawyers Guild, United States
National Organisation for Women - Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone
Nationale de Femmes Cote d'Ivoire Experience, France
Northeastern University School of Law's Human Rights Caucus, United States
Pacific Women's Watch Inc., New Zealand
Peace Brigades International-USA, United States
PeaceWomen Across the Globe, Switzerland
Phoenix Women Take Back the Night, United States
Population Action International, International
Raising Voices, International
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, United States
SERVITAS Cameroon, Cameroon
Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development, International
Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, International
Soroptimist International of the Americas, International
Swayam, India
Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres, Sweden
The Advocates for Human Rights, International
The Episcopal Women's Caucus, International
The Women's Intercultural Network (WIN), International
The Woodhull Freedom Foundation, United States
Treaties Task Force, Social Justice Center of Marin, United States
U.S. Positive Women's Network, United States
United Methodist Women, United States
United States Federation for Middle East Peace, International
United States Human Rights Network, United States
Urban Justice Center, United States
Widows for Peace through Democracy, United Kingdom
Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), International
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, International
Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace (WPJP), Sierra Leone
Women's Rights Without Frontiers, China
Women's Studies Program at University of Connecticut, United States
Women's United Nations Report Network (WUNRN), International
World Federation for Mental Health, International
World Organization for Human Rights USA, United States

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INDIVIDUALS (34)

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Nnenna Eluwa, Nigeria

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Phoebe Schreiner, United States (New York)

Rev. Patricia Ackerman, United States (New York), Axial 20/20 Network

Risa E. Kaufman, United States (New York), Human Rights Institute

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