

Observation of International Women's Day

Center for Reproductive Rights

Speaker: Paola Salwan Daher

Thank you, Mme. President,

I deliver this statement on behalf of 18 organizations.¹

International Women's Day was established at the beginning of the 20th century as a strategy to promote equal rights. Since then, women human rights defenders, feminist groups and organizations and women's rights activists have strived to uphold this legacy and lead the struggle for gender equality and against gender-based discrimination, patriarchal values and systemic patterns of oppression.

Women and girls human rights defenders are building transnational solidarity networks articulated around demands for economic and social justice, bodily autonomy, equal rights within families and against violence, militarization and intersectional discrimination.

International human rights mechanisms have a key role to play in reflecting and amplifying the demands coming from feminist and women's rights movements. The respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of women and girls, which includes the full realization of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), is at the heart of gender equality, and without which it cannot be achieved.

Treaty Monitoring Bodies and Special Procedures alike, informed by the work of women's rights and feminists groups and individuals, have repeatedly recognized that women experience intersectional discrimination and that States have an obligation to address the particular needs of marginalized groups of women such as adolescents, women living with HIV, women living in poverty, minority women, rural women, migrant and refugee women, women from LGBTIQ communities and women with disabilities.

States have an obligation to address underlying structural factors which negate their autonomy in decision-making regarding their own lives, health and bodies, to ensure that their agency and right to substantive equality are respected in all aspects of their lives.

Accountability is central to the realization of human rights and is a core demand of women human rights defenders. Accountability includes ensuring participation, transparency, empowerment, sustainability, and non-discrimination as well as meaningful and effective remedies to victims and survivors of violations, including of women human rights defenders (WHRDs), including young women.

Contemporary social movements have demonstrated the incredible power of feminist mobilization: as we commemorate International Women's Day, let us celebrate the creativity, resilience, sense of strategy, solidarity and political savviness of women human rights defenders throughout the world, and commit to ensuring a meaningful place at the table, and in the streets, for all women in all of our diversity. As 19th century feminist activist Emma Goldman famously stated 'This is not my revolution if I can't dance to it'.

¹ Center for Reproductive Rights, Fédération Internationale pour les Droits Humains, International Service for Human Rights, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Defend Defenders, Rutgers, Plan International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Human Rights Watch, Sexual Rights Initiative, Akahatá, The Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Federation for Women and Family Planning, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, International Commission of Jurists.

Thank you Mme. President,