



RE CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATION ON WOMEN IN CONFLICT AND POST CONFLICT SITUATIONS.

MEETING CHAIRED BY CEDAW MEMBER PRAMILA PATTEN ON MONDAY, JULY 18TH, 2011, IN NLB, UNITED NATIONS

3 MINUTE VERBAL INTERVENTION ON SITUATION OF WIDOWS AND WIVES OF MISSING BY MARGARET OWEN DIRECTOR WPD

CONFLICTS create millions of widows and wives of the "disappeared", although there is barely any reliable data. Yet widowhood remains one of the most neglected of all gender and human rights issues. WIDOWS are mostly uncounted and unheard. In most conflict afflicted countries today even in peacetime widowhood is a form of social death; but during wars and their aftermath the discrimination, stigma, and abuse, including sexual exploitation experienced by widows of all ages is exacerbated and extreme, as is their poverty.

It is essential that the CEDAW GENERAL RECOMMENDATION contains a specific reference to this issue so that governments address the needs of widows, especially in respect of rights to inheritance, land and property ownership, protection from violence, and ensure that they are counted, heard, have access to justice, and are supported in their crucial roles as sole supporters of children and other dependents, and as key players in peace-building, reconstruction and future development.

The extreme poverty and marginalisation of millions of widows of all ages often makes them and their daughters vulnerable to forced prostitution, to traffickers, in their struggle for survival. Many are also rape victims and thus infected with HIV and AIDS. Displaced widows and their dependents fill refugee and IDP camps and are the last to be resettled and rehabilitated. Without rights, in desperation, more widows contemplate and commit suicide. As survivors and witnesses of crimes against humanity, widows also need special protection as testifiers to these in courts and tribunals.

ON behalf of the unheard uncounted millions of widows and their children of AFGHANISTAN, BOSNIA, BURUNDI, CONGO, IRAQ, NEPAL, SIERRA LEONE, LIBERIA, SOMALIA, SRI LANKA, SUDAN....but the list is endless.

We ask that CEDAW request all member states to address this important issue which if ignored, will frustrate all other strategies to bring gender equality, peace, reduce poverty, and prevent future conflicts. The poverty and discrimination suffered by widows in conflict and post conflict must be relieved, so that they and their children can positively contribute to their countries' reconstruction and development.

Thank you