



Karen Women's Organization (KWO)

Formal Message

On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

November 25th , 2021

“Have Courage to Speak Out about Injustice and Stop Violence against Women”

November 25th, 2021: Today marks an important day on the International calendar. This is the special day when we ask people in the world to stand quietly for a moment and think about the violence perpetrated against women every day, and what we can do, all of us, to stop it. Today we are asking everyone to Have Courage to Speak Out about injustice and stop all forms of violence against women.

Sadly, there are many kinds of Violence Against Women. And many women live with violence every day. Two of the most common and serious forms of violence which women are facing are:

1. sexual assault and rape,
2. and Domestic Violence.

Our hope today is for us all to work together and make the violence stop. It is possible to stop it, if we take responsibility and we take action. We should not feel helpless and hopeless. When we speak out about violence, it shows that we do not accept it in our community or in our homes. When violence is reported, there is a duty to fulfil responsibilities, to do something practical to protect the victim and to advocate to hold the perpetrator accountable for the crime they have committed. So today KWO wants to say to you do not keep quiet when you see women suffer from violence. And if you are in a position of responsibility, then do your duty. Whether you are the victim, or you are a friend or neighbor, or a community leader, when you speak out, we can make change together. We can stop violence against women.

The most common form of violence we see is Domestic Violence. This is similar to other types of violence that women suffer, but it functions in a very scary way because the victim and the perpetrator live in the same house. In this kind of house we see the 4 main characteristics of Domestic Violence:

- There is abusive and violent behavior.
- AND it is an intimate relationship, (that means with a sexual relationship) like between a husband and wife.
- AND there is a pattern (or system) of abuse over time.
- AND the aim of the abuser is to get control over the woman.

“Domestic Violence” is not the same as what some people might call “family violence” and it is not the same as “child abuse”. They are different kinds of violence. Domestic violence is a special kind of violence. It is when a husband uses violence and abuse over time to control his wife. And it is often kept as a secret. Kept quietly behind the walls of the home. A lot of women live in fear of their husbands with domestic violence every day. Maybe you have seen this kind of violence in your neighborhood. Maybe you have experience of domestic violence yourself.

Of course not all husband and wife relationships are like this. Many intimate relationships are healthy and partners treat each other equally and share power. Even in healthy relationships, there are sometimes disagreements or arguments. That is a normal part of life.

Domestic violence is caused by what we think are the proper roles of men and women in our society. Some men believe that women are inferior, that women are not equal to men. Some men think women should be under their control, and that women must serve and obey men always. So when his wife does not behave as he wants, the abusive man uses violence, and over time he can get control over his wife.

Today we want to see equality between men and women. We want to encourage everyone not to remain silent anymore about Domestic Violence or about rape and sexual assault or any violence against women. It is common, and it is serious. And it is a crime. Violence against women is unacceptable in the culture of our Karen community. Show that this is true in our homes, and at all levels of the community. Show that we do not accept abuse. Have Courage to Speak Out. Do not turn away and say nothing. Do not let those abusive men think it is OK. Or that we don't care.

If you are a neighbor or a family member or a friend or even a leader, you can report it, raise it up. You can talk with the man about his behavior. You can report violence to the local security, or to KWO. If you are a victim of any kind of violence, look for a safe way, and come to report, to KWO, to local security. We will support you.

We want all forms of violence against women to stop Now. We want everyone to have the courage to speak out for justice.