

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

November 25 - December 10, 2010



2010 THEME ANNOUNCEMENT

This year marks the 20th 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign, and with this important landmark, the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) is considering new ways to utilize the campaign for transformative change. Year after year, new partners join the 16 Days Campaign to bring local, national, and global attention to the various forms of violence that women face. The attention that gender-based violence has received in international forums is a testimony to the powerful actions of women's rights activists around the world. Yet, despite this increased awareness, women continue to experience violations in alarming numbers and new forms of violence are emerging. We, as defenders of women's human rights, have a responsibility to look more closely at the structures in place that permit gender-based violence to exist and persist. After much consultation with activists, organizations, and experts from around the world, militarism has emerged as one of the key structures that perpetuates violence.

While there are many different ways to define militarism, our working definition outlines militarism as an ideology that creates a culture of fear and supports the use of violence, aggression, or military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests. It is a psychology that often has grave consequences for the true safety and security of women and of society as a whole. Militarism is a distinctive way of looking at the world; it influences how we see our neighbors, our families, our public life, and other people in the world. To embrace militarism is to presume that everyone has enemies and that violence is an effective way to solve problems. To leave militaristic ways of thinking unchallenged is to leave certain forms of masculinity privileged, to leave global hierarchies of power firmly in place, to grant impunity to wartime perpetrators of violence against women. To roll back militarism is to inspire more expansive ideas about genuine security, to bring more women into public life, to create a world built not on the competitive sale of weapons, but on authentic relations of trust and cooperation.

There is a need to address militaristic beliefs in all of our societies. Militarism has material and institutional, as well as cultural and psychological consequences that are more difficult to measure. Wars, internal conflicts, and violent repressions of political and social justice movements – all of which are a result of a culture of militarism – have a particular and often disproportionate impact on women. Rape is used as a tactic of war to drive fear and to humiliate women and their communities. But sexual violence is just one form of violence that women and girls suffer throughout the continuum of violence before, during and after conflict has ostensibly ended. Militarism neither ends nor begins in warzones, nor does it confine itself to the public sphere. The families of militarized men and women may experience violence in their homes where 'war crimes' and armed domestic violence are hidden from public view, and women who serve in the military are just as easily victims of sexual assault by their fellow soldiers. Even places that are not experiencing conflict directly are not exempt from militarism: they send troops, produce and sell weapons, and invest in the militaries of foreign governments rather than supporting development efforts. These governments have skewed priorities, spending huge percentages of their budgets on the military and arms rather than on social services, such as education, health care, job security, and development that would yield real security for women. For these reasons, the international theme for the 2010 16 Days Campaign will be:

Structures of Violence: Defining the Intersections of Militarism and Violence Against Women

CWGL envisions that a theme on the intersections of militarism and violence against women will be a multi-year project. We look forward to launching the campaign in 2010 and using it as an opportunity to collect information from you about your individual and collective experiences of militarism, which will help us to develop a more robust strategy for future campaigns. Please join CWGL as we work to support a coordinated, global, feminist critique of militarism and the violence it perpetuates.

We appreciate that this campaign theme will not be an easy issue to address, and many activists could experience a backlash against their work. CWGL encourages activists to carefully consider their own safety when working on the campaign. For those activists who are relatively new to the campaign, those who feel that their energy is better directed towards general sensitization efforts around gender-based violence and human rights, or those who cannot openly work on militarism, CWGL will continue to provide general resources and information.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is coordinated by
the Center for Women's Global Leadership

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What are some examples of issues the campaign can address?

- A discussion of “genuine security” and gender justice
- Economic consequences of war on women
- Women’s role in peace negotiations, peace-building, diplomacy and decision-making positions
- Proliferation of small arms and the role of arms in domestic violence
- Reparations, healing and reconciliation
- Global production and sale of arms
- Domestic violence committed by members of the military
- Sexual violence and sexual slavery in conflict situations
- Abuse of sexual and reproductive rights in conflict situations
- Sexual violence within the military
- Impunity for military personnel in cases of violence against women
- Women and girl’s vulnerability as refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Women and girl combatants
- Violations committed by peace-keeping forces
- Violence and abuse of women living and working around military bases
- Governments’ use of force against civilians, suppression of pro-democracy movements
- Suspension of rule of law and basic human rights in an “emergency”
- The use of ‘anti-terrorism’ laws to silence women human rights defenders
- Communal violence and riots
- Linkages between militarism and conservative religious forces
- Environmental contamination by military operations and its consequences for women and children
- Military spending by government – cost-analysis compared to social programs
- Militarized police forces and social institutions (schools, public spaces, etc.)
- Send us your ideas!

RESOURCES FOR THE 2010 16 DAYS CAMPAIGN

CWGL is in the process of developing resources and campaign materials, which will provide useful background information on the theme and suggestions for planning your campaign activities. CWGL will be posting these resources on the 16 Days Campaign website over months leading up to the campaign. You can also write to the 16 Days Campaign Coordinator (16days@cwgl.rutgers.edu) to request hard copies of these materials. As always, information and resources on various thematic areas related to violence against women will be available on the 16 Days website for participants focusing on other topics.

Join the 16 Days movement!

Create or join a community, campus, national or international activity for the 16 Days! Request campaign materials, join the 16 Days listserv, and use past International Calendars of Activities (available online) to spark ideas for your activities or to find information about groups in your area. As November approaches, remember to submit your plans to CWGL for posting to the 2010 International Calendar of Activities to become part of the global 16 Days movement.

Check out the website!

If you would like more information about the international 16 Days Campaign, please visit the website <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>. Pictures from previous 16 Days Campaigns can be viewed on Flickr at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/18578511@N04/>.

Find us on Facebook!

Join the campaign on Facebook by searching for “The Official 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign,” and become a fan! We’ll be posting updates, pictures, video links, and other fun facts about what activists around the world are working on. Don’t forget to share your thoughts and ideas there too!

Sign up for the 16 Days e-mail discussion!

Join the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence e-mail listserv discussion, which gives activists a space to share work against violence, build partnerships with others worldwide, and develop strategies and themes for the annual 16 Days Campaign. To join the discussion, sign up here: https://email.rutgers.edu/mailman/listinfo/16days_discussion.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute sponsored by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University in 1991. Participants chose the dates November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women, and December 10, International Human Rights Day, in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a human rights violation.