

Forum:	Human Rights Council Commission I (HRCI)
Issue:	Combating Violence and Discrimination Against Women
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Introduction

Gender inequality has been an issue and concern for a long time, yet it has never been properly addressed. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) declares that “all human beings are entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, including sex” and that “all are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination,” this is not the reality for the large majority of people. In fact, despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights being ratified by 150 UN nations, the societies that an overwhelming majority of people live in still propagate cultural norms and beliefs allowing gender inequality. In 155 UN recognized nations, there are still females facing institutionalized systematic and legislative discrimination. If human rights cannot even be upheld in signatory countries, what will the future be like for females living in countries who have not yet ratified the UDHR? Gender inequality can easily be overlooked, as there are multiple forms of gender inequality, including violence and discrimination.

Despite raising awareness taking actions to combat the issue of gender inequality, specifically in combating violence and discrimination against women, there are limited amounts of people who care enough to actively talk about this suppressing issue. Gender inequality has led countless females into situations where they face violence on a daily basis or even worse, often even leading to homicide or suicide from both people of the public and family members, whom they should be able to trust. After all these terrifying situations people experience in various parts of the world, after all the females being impacted in both their physical and mental

health, these females still remain silent. This is a result of the lack of actions to combat gender inequality, especially in the area of combating violence and discrimination.

Back in 1980 in Czech Republic, the Lennon Walls were used to symbolize freedom of speech and anti-violence. Sexual violence, discrimination against women, violence against women are all examples of harm and violence to females that we as an international community must eradicate. In order to reach a society that unites Lennon walls, or in other words to reach a society that is anti violence, we must take actions. Just because one is born female in a society that values male does not mean female lives can be easily ended or threatened. Thus, as an international community, whether it is to prevent violence, protect/support victims or prosecution of perpetrators of such violence. Another definition of lennon wall used in Hong Kong not long ago is to reflect upon today for a better tomorrow. Society must start reflecting and realizing that gender inequality is painful for females not just for a few hours or days but rather for a lifetime, to create a better future for ourselves and our future generations. Gender equality influences not just one group of females but rather a large majority of females. Small acts of discrimination or violence based of gender to a female can make a large impact on their lives. Gender equality is not something that can be reached over a few nights nor can the impacts of gender inequality be forgotten in a day. Actions must be taken starting from today, so that one day we will reach a society free of gender inequality.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender Equality

The UN defines gender equality as “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.” Sexism is the belief or ideology that one sex is innately superior than the other. Sexism is one of the many causes of gender inequality

Empowerment

Empowerment can be defined as “increasing the personal, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities”. However, empowerment of females focuses on females “gaining power and control over their own lives ... requires actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality”.

Violence and Discrimination Against Women

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." In addition, not only did women face discrimination, some weven faced violence. The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

Culture

UNESCO defines culture as the "set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs." To continue, society sets up stereotypes or even cultural norms that make lives for some people even more miserable. Cultural norms are "shared expectations and rules that guide behavior people live by". Cultural norms can be seen across the world and play a role in every culture and country. Cultural norms are influenced by peers and family members.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy denotes a social hierarchy in which acts and thoughts of men overshadow those of women. Patriarchy is a social system "in which men hold the greatest power, leadership roles, priviledge, moral authority and access to resources and land, including in the family. Most modern societies are patriarchies.

Human Rights

The UN defines human rights as those that "are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status." Every human being are granted these rights and freedom, thus should not be discriminated against for

any reason. Freedom can be considered as the right to do things as desired, making “decisions, and express opinions” freely without being constrained.

Feminism

Feminism is the range of social and political movements along with ideologies that aim to achieve the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. People often associate females to “feminine activities” such as cooking, cleaning the house and taking care of children and elderly.

Systemic vs Societal Discrimination

Systemic discrimination is when organizations implement or push policies and practices that are directed at a specific group of people, disadvantaging them. Meanwhile, social discrimination is the inequality treatment of individuals in a specific, usually marginalized, group by members of a society.

Gender blindness

As UNICEF defines, gender blindness is “failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of [males] and [females] are given to them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts and backgrounds”. Gender blindness could potentially lead to gender stereotypes and thus gender based violence. By UNICEF's definition, gender based violence is any “harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males”. Gender stereotypes is “certain attributes, characteristics and roles to people based on their gender.” However, gender stereotypes can be negative when it “limits a person's life choices, such as training and professional path, and life plans”.

Background Information

History of sexism

Religion

Religion is often referred to as a barrier to gender equality. One reason why religion is seen as an obstacle to freedom is that religious freedom is often neglected.

One should be able to follow any religion of their choice without sacrificing freedom. When people neglect freedom and use religion as an excuse, women's freedom of action and speech will be limited, thus causing gender inequality. Another consequence of neglecting religious freedom is the unstable economy. Women are essential in an economy that is run in the modern world; by limiting religious freedom, women are hindered from speaking out and face disadvantage in workfields. Religious freedom is closely tied with female empowerment, which is another problem resulting from gender inequality.

When basic human rights are not protected due to the lack of religious freedom, females are put in a very dangerous position. Terrorist groups, such as ISIS, is a classic example of groups of people that reinforce the importance of religion by neglecting freedom. ISIS members believe that by killing those who are unwilling to convert to the religion ISIS wants them to convert to, it is nothing but a process of ethnic cleansing. In other words, ISIS members are passionate about their religion to a point they are taking away other peoples life and not letting them have freedom. In addition, in a lot of countries, espeically in Muslim majority countries, the lack of gender equality is considered common. While Muslim majority countries such as Iran, does not have laws that allow equality for both genders to reach equality, female representatives fight for themsleves and their rights.

Evolution

Although in modern society, countries are much closer to gender inequality as they were twenty years ago. However, seeing as there is no country with perfect gender equality, every country still has room for improvement. There has been a long history of male dominance in households, known as patriarchy. As time passes, a lot of countries have evolved beyond patriarchy and have empowered females beyond just household chores. In every country, there are different evolutions of how each country slowly is overcoming the issue of gender inequality. In many countries, countries develop small acts and laws such as equal pay act to prevent gender based unequal pays. There are still lots of improvements awaiting for countries to take to finally reach a world free of gender inequality.

Coverture and Marriage Regulations

Before the twentieth century, countries had highly unfair ideologies and rules for females to follow. When a girl is born back before the twentieth century, they were to stay home and learn the chores while males went out for education or work. When they grew up, they did the same jobs until they were married off to a guy their families had arranged for them. After being married over, females were expected to serve their husbands, be loyal to family, take care of the household chores and activities. In some countries, women weren't even allowed to be seen in public without male presence. Things changed as females started to gain rights and freedom. Today, in some countries females are actually the dominant ones within a household, however in Middle East or South Asian countries, females still face difficulties with no solution to equality. Thus needing the help of international countries and the UN.

Gender stereotypes

Common in families with lower education, gender stereotypes define women less than men. There is no black and white area of whether females are better or worse than males but to say one gender is better than the other is considered as a violation of human rights.

Objectification

The Internet

The internet can also be a form of harassment and can be detrimental to one's future. Under the category of internet, there is sub headings such as stalking and pornography. The rapid growth in technology and use of the internet makes life for lots of people easier, however at the same time risks the damage. While people say it's easy to prevent misuse of social media simply by not using social media or not posting on social media, the ideal way of solving the issue of misuse of social media is to find out the original problem and trying to solve it instead of trying to solve the aftermath. Youth may not realize the damage internet pornography or sending nudes can cause until they experience it, but sometimes, by the time people realize the seriousness or results of actions done on the internet, there is no going back. For some female, they are abused and thus videos or pictures of them are leaked out into the world of internet. Regardless

of the method, these can be considered as acts of violence females risk with or without realizing.

International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women

The day, November 25, set by the United Nations General Assembly, is the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women. It is crucial to eliminate violence towards women as violence against women affects females of all ages and causes life long impacts. When there is violence towards young girls at home or even when girls themselves face discrimination and violence, there will be limited schooling for these young girls, thus limiting limiting opportunities in the future. Even worse, these females that experience violence, discrimination or sexual abuse risks chances of bad health such as HIV, female genital mutilation or other diseases. Some even get beaten up very badly to a point they lose their lives.

November 25 is designated as a day to remind people of the current progress and plan that is aimed to reduce and prevent violence against women. Every year there are different themes for International Day for the Elimination Violence Against Women. In 2019, the theme was *Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape*. The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women lasts for 16 day where activists take action. For example, in 2019, buildings are painted Orange or will be "oranged". December 10 is not only the the sixteenth and final day of the annual International Day for the Elimination Violence Against Women, but also the International Human Rights Day.

Violence

Violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents and malaria combined.

Forms of violence towards females and results

In our world today, violence can be found in numerous forms and can be seen everywhere. Whether it is intimate partner violence or human trafficking, violence towards anyone can result into a lifetime trauma. However, one thing in common is that

females encounter violence a lot more than males. Intimate partner violence is a combination of physical violence (such as kicking or hitting), sexual harassment or even emotional abuse. 1 in 3 females face physical/sexual violence by their intimate partner. Ideally, family members are whom anyone should be able to trust and not having to worry about getting hit or even killed. However, the reality is 1 in 2 women facing death by their families, and 1 in 20 men killed in similar circumstances. Yet, this is not even the worst. Females in particular, face sexual violence and harassment, including, rape, unwanted sexual advances, child sexual abuse, child marriage, or even stalking. These acts of sexual harassment is not simply targeted at a specific age group, but instead, females of all ages are affected. Sexual harassment hinders schooling, right to education and ultimately limit opportunities. In our society today, only 52% females feel like they can control their sexual relations by their will. At this stage, many would think this is the worst females could face. However, human trafficking, which is almost synonymous with slavery, is a reality for 71% of females in the world. The issue of child marriage is horrifying, in the sense where, currently there are 750 million females in a marriage before turning 18.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW)

The commission on the Status of Women is a worldwide intergovernmental body that is committed to advocating for gender equality and empowerment of females. Recently, the Commission on the Status of Women also focuses on females in aspects such as education in engineering and science, with an ultimate goal of ending illiteracy for females and increasing efficiency in work. Overall, UNCSW strives to reach gender equality and encouraging female empowerment.

UN Women

The United Nation Women, UN Women, is an organization branched from the United Nations that focuses on reaching gender equality and empower women. The United Nation is accountable as it hires experts and activists to write reports and analyze human rights reports in

countries. UN Women is an organization that is specifically dedicated to overlook the effectiveness and efficiency of operations countries take to improve gender equality. The UN Women spends over USD 100 million per year to accomplish tasks in order to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women across the world. The UN Women is known to be transparent in its results and reports.

Iceland

People view Iceland as a suitable and good place to live in as Iceland was the first to elect a female president, most company directors were females, and that eighty percent of females have a job. However, the reality in Iceland is that females are paid way lower than male even though females do the same if not more work than males. Besides the unfair wage females face in the workfield, females in Iceland also face gender based violence and discrimination. Thirty of females in Iceland from ages between eighteen to eighty have undergone physical attacks by males, not to mention thirteen percent of females has been raped before. While actions to reduce gender gap such as equal pay act in Iceland has been ratified in, violence towards females due to gender status is still common. Thus, Iceland has a long way to go before reaching gender equality with no discrimination or violence against females.

Sweden

The United Nation recognizes Sweden as a role model of Human Rights, in the majority of its aspects. However, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crims, one aspect that is hindering Sweden from reaching gender equality is the sexual crimes and violence rates. In South and East Asia, seventy seven percent of females are victims of trafficking. It is perceived that females are reaching almost equality in Sweden, however there is still a long way for Sweden to go before turning this perception into reality.

Iran

As one of the nations which has not yet agreed to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Iran has a long way to go before reaching gender equality. Despite the small steps Iran takes in reaching gender equality, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, things went downhill again.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1979	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
June 19th, 2008	Recognises sexual violence as a weapon and tactic of war
September 30th, 2009	Reiterates that sexual violence exacerbates armed conflict and impedes international peace and security
October 5th, 2009	Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding and on women's participation in all stages of peace processes
December 16th, 2010	Reiterates the call for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 3 September 1981 (A/RES/34/180)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention, 22 December 2000 (A/RES/54/4)
- Security Council Resolution on women and peace and security, October 2000, (S/RES/1325)
- Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Girls, June 18, 2018 (A/HRC/38/46)
- Accelerating Efforts to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls in Digital Contexts, June 18, 2018 (A/HRC/38/L.6)
- Resolution 48/104 (12/20/1993)
- 2/7/2000 resolution 54/134
- Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women, January 30, 2007 (A/61/438)

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action - 1995
- International Day of the Girl Child, December 19, 2011 (A/RES/66/170)

Possible Solutions

In less economically developed countries (LEDC) and more economically developed countries (MEDCs), education opportunities and literacy rates for females are lower. Education is fundamental and crucial for a better future. However, females are rejected from education due to several reasons, such as family, religion, or simply because of their female status. Our future depends on our future generations. To help the next generation of females, scholarships from schools to female students are examples of methods to help females to get more involved in education. Discrimination is common in schools, whether they be because of religion, income or gender. However, discrimination outside of school or discrimination towards entering school is also heavy and must be addressed. Just because one is a girl, it does not mean they don't deserve school. This concept may seem easy to understand, but it is often neglected. While there are handfuls of females graduating high school, there are females not even having education on common sense. The idea of bottom up education, which basically encourages implicit teachings before explicit teachings, is a method to encourage more schooling of girls, so they have the basics of our world before entering the working field.

Females are often discriminated against in the workplace. Some are even unemployed due to their female status, not to mention the limited opportunities due to the limited education. Family and religions also hinders females from reaching equality in work fields. Even after being employed into a company, many females are targeted and face harassment as they are seen less superior or weak. Whether it is incentivising or regulating companies to hire females or even to protect females after they've been hired, delegates are to address violence and discrimination in workplaces as well.

An important aspect females face but is often neglected is the aftermath of being abused. After being abused, whether they be mentally or physically, females often don't have access to seek for help nor do they have access to health services to heal their wounds. Thus, delegates should think of solutions such as but not limited to supporting victims physically through health services, accommodation centers and rehabilitation centers. Many females are

abused sexually, hence getting pregnant unwillingly. Even worse, after child birth, some females don't even get chances to rest their bodies and are forced to do house chores and babies. Because of this, delegates should think of ways for females to receive access to health services and care after birth. Even if one is not pregnant, high chances are they still have trauma from being abused. Thus, rehabilitation centers to give legal and mental support is crucial. Females should be able to make their own decisions without threat of discrimination or violence.

There are few activists in our society that speak for females abused or face violence. Activists risks chances of being targeted and being harmed, thus hindering many from actively speaking on this issue of violence and discrimination against females. Activists should have platforms to speak on these suppressing issues without worrying about facing harm. To end violence and discrimination towards females is not only one persons job. Ending violence and discrimination against females has been a long lasting issue but never properly addressed. Delegates are encouraged to think of solutions that unite the international community to properly solve this issue and to eradicate discrimination and violence against women as a whole.

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