



## DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2016-0237, 5 December 2016

# UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

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and Grahame Allen

## Backbench Business Debate Main Chamber, 8 December 2016

A backbench business debate on a motion relating to the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women will be held in the Commons Chamber on Thursday 8 December 2016. This debate has been scheduled following a bid by Seema Malhotra MP and Kate Green MP. Their bid to the Backbench Business Committee may be heard on [parliamentlive.tv](http://parliamentlive.tv)

The text of the motion is:

That this House notes the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence; further notes that violence against women is a human rights violation and prevents women and girls fulfilling their full potential; recognises that an estimated one in three women experience physical or sexual violence worldwide, but that violence against women and girls is not inevitable, and that prevention is possible and essential; and calls on the Government to work with other governments around the world to adopt comprehensive laws addressing violence against women and gender-based inequality and discrimination, to provide women-centered, specialist services to all survivors, and to fund key education and prevention programmes so that violence against women and girls is ended once and for all.

The proceedings of this debate may be watched on [parliamentlive.tv](http://parliamentlive.tv)

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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# 1. Introduction

In December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#).

For the purposes of the Declaration, "violence against women" means "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".<sup>1</sup>

Violence against women is understood to include the following:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.<sup>2</sup>

## The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

In December 1999, the General Assembly designated 25 November as the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) and "invited governments, international organizations and NGOs to organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the problem on that day."<sup>3</sup> The [UN's website](#) gives the following introduction:

### Why this International Day?

- Violence against women is a human rights violation.
- Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination against women, in law and also in practice, and of persisting inequalities between men and women.
- Violence against women impacts on, and impedes, progress in many areas, including poverty eradication, combating HIV/AIDS, and peace and security.
- Violence against women and girls is not inevitable. Prevention is possible and essential.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 1 of the Declaration

<sup>2</sup> Article 2 of the Declaration

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/events/endviolenceday/background.shtml>

- Violence against women continues to be a global pandemic.

One of the major challenges to efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls worldwide is the substantial funding shortfall. As a result, resources for initiatives to prevent and end violence against women and girls are severely lacking. Frameworks such as the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), which includes a specific target on ending violence against women and girls, offer huge promise, but must be adequately funded in order to bring real and significant changes in the lives of women and girls.

From 25 November through 10 December, [Human Rights Day](#), the [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#) aim to raise public awareness and mobilizing people everywhere to bring about change. This year, the UN Secretary-General's [UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign](#) invites you to "**Orange the world**," using the colour designated by the UNiTE campaign to symbolize a brighter future without violence. Organize events to orange streets, schools and landmarks! [Read our Toolkit](#).

The [UN site](#) gives further information on the International Day. This includes a [resources](#) section giving details of related organisations, websites and documents.

## Prevalence of violence against women

The following is an extract from the HC Library Briefing Paper: [Women around the world: International Women's Day 2016](#) (February 2016)

Gender-based violence is present in every society in the world. Violence against women and girls encompasses violence by an intimate partner, sexual violence and rape, female genital mutilation, honour killings and trafficking.

Globally, more than one-third of women (35%) have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence.<sup>4</sup> The most common form of violence is intimate partner violence. Nearly 30% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the course of their lifetime. More than two-thirds of victims of family related homicides are women.<sup>5</sup>

The World Health Organisation highlights that as well as being a violation of women's human rights, violence against women is a major public health problem. Women who have experienced violence are more likely to have babies with low birth weights, are twice as likely to experience depression and, in some regions, are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV.<sup>6</sup>

There are also social and economic costs of violence against women. Women may be unable to work, participate in regular activities or care for themselves or their children.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> UN, [The World's Women 2015](#), Violence against women (Chapter 6), 2015

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

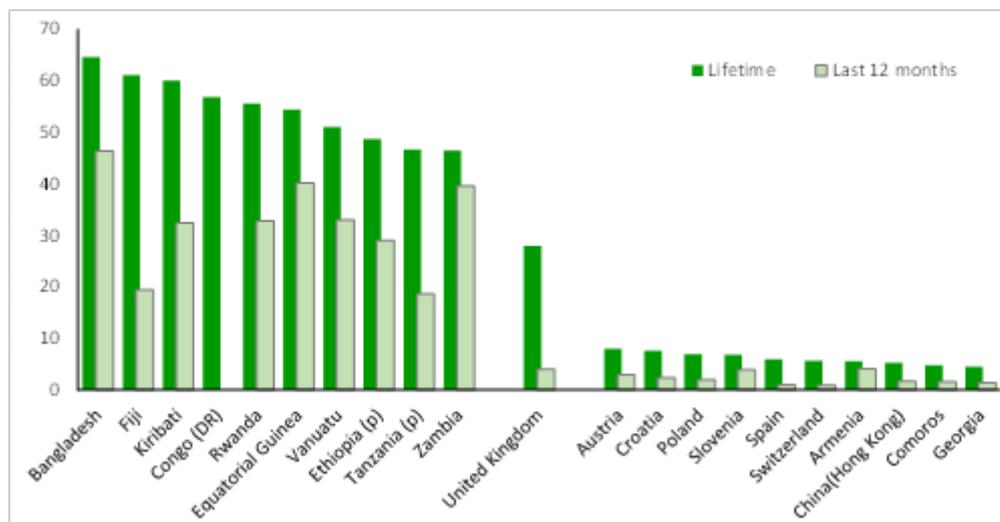
<sup>6</sup> WHO, LSHTM, SAMRC, [Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence](#), 2013

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation, [Violence against women](#), Fact sheet 239, November 2014

Chart 4 shows the rates of violence against women inflicted by an intimate partner in a number of countries. It gives the ten countries with the highest rate, the ten countries with the lowest rate, and data for the UK for comparison. The data was collated by the UN from surveys on violence against women, conducted by a wide range of countries over a number of years.<sup>8</sup>

**Chart 4: Prevalence of Violence against Women by Intimate Partner (%)**

(The chart represents the latest available data from surveys conducted in the period from 1998 to 2014)



**Chart 4 source:**  
 UN, *The World's Women 2015, Violence against women* (Chapter 6)

**Chart 4 notes:**  
 Data is only available for 114 countries and represents surveys conducted in the period from 1998 to 2014

The UN notes that these surveys were conducted with varying methodologies so caution should be taken when comparing results

No data available for last 12 months for Congo;

(DR) = Democratic Republic, ~~of Congo~~

**Female Genital Mutilation**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.<sup>9</sup>

It is estimated that more than 125 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where the practice is concentrated<sup>10</sup>. In Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Somalia more than 90% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 have undergone some form of FGM.<sup>11</sup> FGM is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and the age of 15.<sup>12</sup> FGM carries immediate and long-term health risks, including haemorrhage, infection, infertility and an increased risk of childbirth complications.<sup>13</sup>

An estimated 137,000 women and girls with FGM, born in countries where FGM is practised, were permanently resident in England and

<sup>8</sup> World Health Organisation, [Female Genital Mutilation](#), February 2016

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Population Reference Bureau, [Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Data and Trends](#), 2014

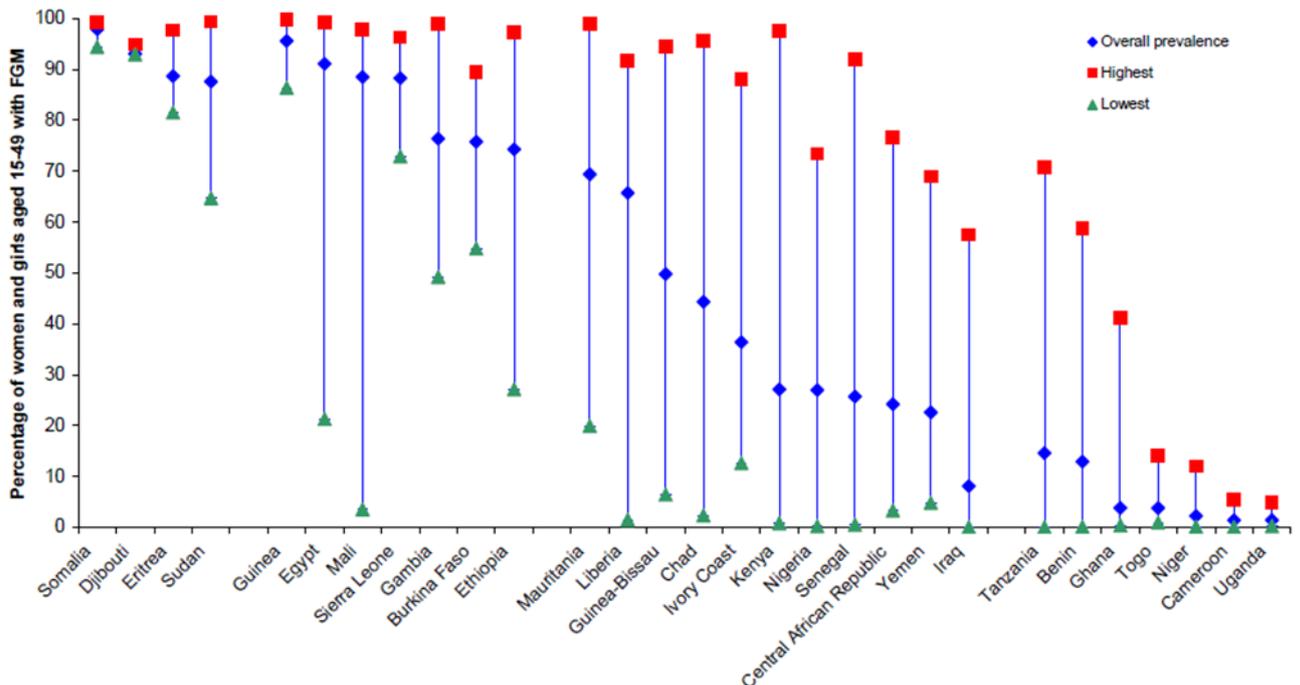
<sup>11</sup> World Health Organisation, [Female Genital Mutilation](#), February 2016

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Wales in 2011. Each year since 2008, women with FGM have made up around 1.5 per cent of all women delivering in England and Wales.<sup>14</sup>

Chart 5 illustrates the differences between regions including the highest and lowest rate in each country.

**Chart 5: Differences between regions with lowest and highest prevalence of FGM by country, 2014**



Source: Macfarlane & Dorkenoo, [Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: National and local estimates](#), July 2015

## Government policy

In March 2016, the Government published its [strategy](#) for 2016-2020 to end violence against women and girls. This summarises progress made under the previous Government while stating that:

(...) it is unacceptable that many women still suffer in silence from crimes that wreck their lives and the lives of their families – crimes which all too often remain hidden. The only way we can achieve real, sustainable progress is if national and local government, local partners and agencies, and every community work together to prevent women and girls from becoming victims in the first place and make sure those who have experienced abuse receive the support they need to recover.

...Over the next four years, we will support a transformation in service delivery and a step change in social action to achieve a sustainable long term reduction in the prevalence of these terrible crimes, to help women and girls rebuild their lives, and to break the inter-generational consequences of abuse.

<sup>14</sup> Macfarlane & Dorkenoo, [Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales: National and local estimates](#), July 2015

On outcomes, the strategy states that by 2020 the Government wants to achieve:

(...) a reduction in the prevalence of all forms of violence against women and girls, matched by increases in reporting, police referrals, prosecution and convictions for what can still be hidden crimes. We want to see earlier intervention and prevention so that fewer women reach crisis point and every victim gets the support she needs - and the support her children need - at the right time. Through our plans to bring all services up to the level of the best, we will ensure that women get the support they need to ensure long-term changes to their lives and the lives of their children.

The strategy sets out what will be done in the following areas:

- prevention
- the provision of services
- partnership working
- pursuing perpetrators

The strategy's vision is that by 2020:

- There is a significant reduction in the number of VAWG victims, achieved by challenging the deep-rooted social norms, attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against and limit women and girls, and by educating, informing and challenging young people about healthy relationships, abuse and consent;
- All services make early intervention and prevention a priority, identifying women and girls in need before a crisis occurs, and intervening to make sure they get the help they need for themselves and for their children;
- Women and girls will be able to access the support they need, when they need it, helped by the information they need to make an informed choice;
- Specialist support, including accommodation-based support, will be available for the most vulnerable victims, and those with complex needs will be able to access the services they need;
- Services in local areas will work across boundaries in strong partnerships to assess and meet local need, and ensure that services can spot the signs of abuse in all family members and intervene early;
- Women will be able to disclose experiences of violence and abuse across all public services, including the NHS. Trained staff in these safe spaces will help people access specialist support whether as victims or as perpetrators;
- Elected representatives across England and Wales will show the leadership, political will and senior accountability necessary to achieve the necessary change, and will champion efforts to tackle these crimes;
- Everyone in a local area will be able to hold their elected leaders to account through clear data on how local need is being met;
- There will be a lower level of offending through an improved criminal justice response and a greater focus on changing the behaviour of perpetrators through a combination of disruption and support; and

- A stronger evidence base of what works, and victim safety, will be embedded into all interventions to protect victims of VAWG.

Further information on Government policy is available from Gov.UK:

- [Domestic violence and abuse](#)
- [Forced marriage](#)
- [Female genital mutilation](#)

The Library has published the following briefing papers:

- House of Commons Library, [Domestic violence in England and Wales](#), May 2016
- House of Commons Library, [Modern Slavery Act 2015: Recent Developments](#), 22 July 2016

## 2. Parliamentary material

**EDM 770**

### **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**25 November 2015**

**Primary sponsor: Angela Crawley MP**

That this House welcomes the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, taking place on 25 November 2015; understands that the day marks the start of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which in 2015, for the first time, has prevention as its theme; notes that one in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime but believes such violence and abuse is preventable; acknowledges that major progress has been made around the world in terms of laws to protect women and girls; further notes in particular Guatemala's recent decision to ban child marriage, and that between 1995 and 2013 the percentage of countries that established a legal minimum age of marriage for girls of at least 18 years increased from 76 per cent to 89 per cent; further welcomes Nigeria's decision in May 2015 to ban female genital mutilation and hopes that its decision will set a bench-mark on the issue for other African countries; further understands the challenge in changing the cultural and societal attitudes that support child marriage and female genital mutilation and notes that although substantial progress has been made in recent years, violence against women is still a prevalent issue; further acknowledges the calls for government investment and engagement with civil society, especially women's groups, and notes the concerns of the activists who put the issue of global violence against women and girls on the map are increasingly being left out of the discussions; believes the people being excluded from the expanding conversation are the people who will identify emerging issues and ensure that the development of policies and

services remain responsive to the needs of women and girls; and calls on the Government to recognise campaigners' importance in policy making and believes their voices are critical for future progress.

## **EDM 752**

### **WHITE RIBBON AND INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**24 November 2015**

#### **Primary Sponsor: Greg Mulholland**

That this House recognises White Ribbon and International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women which takes place on 25 November 2015; believes that committing violence against women is a human rights abuse, and accordingly recognises the 16 Days of Action against Gender Violence, which runs from White Ribbon Day to 10 December 2015, International Human Rights Day; encourages hon. Members to show their support by attending White Ribbon UK's drop-in session on 18 November 2015 from 16.00 to 18.00 in Room A in 1 Parliament Street; praises the fantastic work of White Ribbon UK, a campaign launched in October 2005 which engages men in working to end violence against women, and operates in 55 countries around the world; notes the success of White Ribbon UK in promoting positive male role models with 12 leading rugby league and rugby union clubs now wearing the White Ribbon on their kit, while 30 sports clubs, organisations and schools have supported White Ribbon UK's Sports campaign; appreciates the involvement of high-profile sportsmen and musicians in promoting and supporting the campaign, with figures such as Amir Khan and Labrinth becoming involved with White Ribbon UK; further recognises the importance of dealing with violence against women in the UK, with up to three million women experiencing violence every year; is disturbed by the amount of violence against women across the world with 1.4 million women suffering domestic abuse in 2014; and commits to ending violence against women both in the UK and abroad.

Home Affairs Committee, [\*Female genital mutilation: abuse unchecked\*](#), HC 390 2016-17, September 2016

Joint Committee on Human Rights, [\*Violence against women and girls\*](#), HL Paper 106/HC 594, February 2015

## 3. Useful websites

### **United Nations**

[UNiTE to end violence against women](#)

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights:**

[Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality](#)

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:**

[Safeguarding individuals: women](#)

### **[UN Women](#)**

### **World Health Organization:**

[Gender, equity and human rights](#)

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