

United Nations Human Rights Council, 23rd Session (27 May – 14 June 2013)

Item 2/3 General Debate

Monday 3 June 2013

Speaker: CFI Representative Elizabeth O'Casey

Violence against Women: Honour Killings

Mr President,

There are many forms of violence committed against women globally everyday, and all are brutal: the trafficking of women, forced prostitution, marriage into slavery, rape, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, forced feeding, and so-called "honour" killings.

There are estimated to be between 5000 and 20 000 honour killings committed every year.¹ These killings, defended in the name of family honour, involve women and girls being burned, shot, buried alive, strangled, stoned, and stabbed to death.

What is equally shocking to the manner of these deaths, is the discriminatory laws many countries have in place that allow for the full or partial exemption of those guilty of committing honour killings. In some societies, those guilty are actually granted particular respect.

As the High Commissioner for Human Rights herself has noted: "The reality for most victims, including victims of honour killings, is that state institutions fail them, and that most perpetrators of domestic violence can rely on a culture of impunity for the acts they commit".²

This has to change, Mr President. We can no longer stand by and watch this horrific violence against women go unpunished. This barbaric practice is justified on cultural and religious grounds. We must not allow such grounds to be used to legitimize or excuse such an abhorrent abuse of a woman's right to life, her right to equality, her right to freedom, or her right to dignity.

We urge all member states to do more to protect women from this sort of violence, to punish those who commit it, and to condemn the culture of impunity and religious justification, which not only allows for, but *encourages*, such barbarity.

Thank you, sir.

¹ www.worldwewant2015.org/file/282880/download/306690

² <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=9869&LangID=E>