



**November 25, 2018**

## **Fethullah Gülen's Message on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women**

Despite considerable achievements regarding the rights of women worldwide, we witness ongoing news of violence against women today. We don't know how many other incidents occur in private and do not get covered by the news media.

Unfortunately, women have been deprived of their rights throughout history around the world. Even today, representation of women at positions of great power and influence in both governmental and private institutions is grossly lacking. This persisting inequality and the lack of sensitivity on behalf of those in a position to implement preventive measures is delaying the solution of the problem of violence against women.

Like all forms of violence, violence against women is the expression of an unhealthy mindset and psychology. Therefore, we must not approach the matter solely from a punitive perspective, but get to the root causes and come up with long-lasting solutions. For long-lasting solutions at the societal scale, the education of children must be addressed first.

Children learn their first lessons in the family. Their first teachers, whether they recognize this role or not, are their parents or other relatives who live with them. The greatest lesson parents can teach to their children is to feel and exhibit great affection and respect toward each other. What a child witnesses in a family in terms of the treatment of women are the first anchor point for their future behavior.

At the societal and institutional level, the effort to eliminate violence against women must include an educational strategy starting early in the lives of children. With the help of psychologists and pedagogical experts, civic and religious leaders, the equality and rights of women should be incorporated into school curricula. This way, we can hope to continuously improve the status of women in the coming generations.

Accountability for violence against women and the proper oversight of their condition in a society are the duties of the government. While the government's enforcement measures are important, civil society should also be involved in these efforts. Civic and religious leaders,

intellectuals and nongovernmental organizations must lead efforts to raise consciousness on the importance of women's rights and prevention of violence against them.

International organizations can and should help by encouraging and pushing states toward positive practices in this matter by means of agreements and conventions that the states are party to.

Women and men are two sides of a whole. We should have no doubt that the treatment of women, our vigilance or indifference with regard to the protection of their rights is bound to affect the whole society in fundamental ways, if not now, in the future. The protection and advancement of women's rights cannot be separated from the advancement of humanity as a whole. Elimination of violence against women is an integral part of advancing universal human rights. Our failure to eliminate violence against women hinders our goal to achieve equality and peace in our societies.

On the occasion of this day, which was declared as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women by the United Nations General Assembly, I urge everyone to take a strong stand to protect the rights of women and prevent all forms of violence against them. I pray to God, the Most Compassionate, to allow us to live in a world in which everybody, especially women who are champions of compassion, is respected for their inherent value, and treated with dignity.

### **About Fethullah Gülen**

Fethullah Gülen is an Islamic scholar, preacher and social advocate, whose decades-long commitment to education, interfaith dialogue and altruism has inspired millions in Turkey and around the world. Gülen is the honorary chairman of the Rumi Forum, Washington, DC and the Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Brussels, Belgium.

### **About Alliance for Shared Values**

The Alliance for Shared Values (AFSV) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that serves as a voice for cultural organizations affiliated with Hizmet, a civil society movement inspired by prominent preacher and peace advocate Fethullah Gülen. The Alliance strives to promote peace and social harmony by helping reduce misinformation and false stereotypes about any or all ethnic, cultural and religious communities. To learn more about the Alliance, please visit [www.afsv.org](http://www.afsv.org).

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