

## Violence Against Women Still a Global Shame

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE WORST HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007

Amnesty International's highest priority global campaign is to 'Stop Violence Against Women'. This global campaign was launched in 2004 to combat the massive worldwide violence against women.

"Violence against women carried out by individuals and governments alike remains a disturbing pattern in every country. All too regularly in the headlines are such cases as that of the Saudi Arabian rape survivor sentenced to receive 200 lashes and a six-month prison sentence after challenging her original sentence of 90 lashes," says Margaret Taylor, Amnesty International New Zealand Spokesperson.

"Even here in New Zealand almost one third of women will suffer physical or sexual abuse at the hands of a partner in their lifetime. It is the extent of this injustice which makes violence against women an issue for us all to address", says Margaret.

Amnesty International in New Zealand is working alongside other organizations such as The Families Commission, YWCA, UNIFEM, Women's Refuge on events for White Ribbon Day on 25 November, and continuing throughout the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence ending on 10 December – being International Human Rights Day.

Thirteen Amnesty International activist teams throughout New Zealand are hosting stalls, write-a-thons and other community events. The Kapiti Amnesty Team will co-host with the 'Kapiti Voices Against Violence Coalition' the White Ribbon Day Gathering and Celebration on Friday 23 November, 1pm at Paraparaumu Beach complete with: aerial flyover; waka arriving; celebrity speakers; sausage sizzles; bagpipes; and Kapa Haka groups.

Amnesty International is working globally on some of the worst cases of violence towards women. In the past nine months Amnesty International has released reports detailing severe violations against women in Japan, Hungary, Greece, the U.S.A, Burundi, Chad, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Northern Uganda and Cote D'Ivoire.

Here in New Zealand Amnesty International are asking activists and the public to take action on individual cases in Saudi Arabia, Greece and Iran. (Letters can be signed at Amnesty stalls around the country or via our websites at [www.standbyme.org.nz](http://www.standbyme.org.nz) and

- Saudi Arabia: On November 15th, a court in eastern Saudi Arabia reviewed the sentences passed against a 19 year old woman, known only as 'the girl from al-Qatif' and her male companion and increased the sentence from 90 lashes to 200 lashes and a 6 month prison term. The woman and her male companion were kidnapped at knifepoint in November 2006 by a gang of seven men. The woman was gang raped, the man beaten.
- Greece: Trafficking for forced prostitution in Greece is believed to have increased 10-fold in the last decade. The trafficking of women and girls into forced prostitution is a serious and growing human rights abuse around the world.
- Iran: Several women's rights defenders in Iran have been sentenced to prison terms for their involvement in peaceful activities demanding equal rights for women in Iran. Many of these women face police beatings and their lawyers are not allowed to address the court in their own defence.

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### Notes to Editors

White Ribbon Day is held internationally in conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Campaign was launched in 1991, following a Montreal university massacre in which 14 women engineering students were murdered.

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign, from the 25th November to the 10th December, arose from the 'Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights' in 1991 during a forum calling for an effort to highlight the connections between women, violence and human rights.

### Resources Available

Amnesty International NZ has a dedicated website for this campaign, detailing events, information and action at: [www.standbyme.org.nz](http://www.standbyme.org.nz).

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# MEDIA RELEASE

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