

# #NOT

STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
IN P<sub>+</sub>OLITICS

# THE

A Renewed Call to Action

# COST



**COPYRIGHT © NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI) 2021.**

All rights reserved. Portions of this work may be reproduced and/or translated for noncommercial purposes provided NDI is acknowledged as the source of the material and is sent copies of any translation.

455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20002

Telephone: 202-728-5500

Website: [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org)

# #NotTheCost

STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN P<sub>OLITICS</sub>

A Renewed Call to Action



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The launch of *#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics, A Renewed Call to Action* by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is the culmination of the hard work and insight of many people around the globe, for whose efforts the Institute is grateful.

First, we would like to thank Dr. Mona Lena Krook of Rutgers University, for her continued partnership and work as the technical advisor to this initiative. From writing the initial background paper in 2016, to drafting the original and the renewed call to action document, Mona Lena's input has been critical to developing a theoretically rigorous and politically convincing approach to the issue and the potential for change.

We must also thank our institutional partners for their collaboration on this initiative: the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, International IDEA, the InterParliamentary Union, UN Women and the Organization of American States.

In Washington DC, the renewed call has been developed under the leadership of Sandra Pepera, Senior Associate and Director, Gender, Women and Democracy. Caroline Hubbard, Senior Gender Advisor for NDI, served as the Institute's technical lead on the initiative. They were supported and amplified by many colleagues, but in particular by Victoria Brenner, Clayton McCleskey, Tamar Eisen and Bridget-Rittman Tune. This publication also benefited from the hard work of our production team, including copy editor Bedatri Choudhury and designer Max Sycamore. Finally, the Institute gratefully acknowledges the support of the National Endowment for Democracy for its ongoing financial support to the #NotTheCost initiative.

## **ABOUT THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE**

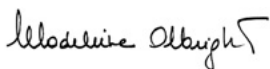
NDI is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization that works in partnership around the world to strengthen and safeguard democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to secure a better quality of life for all. NDI envisions a world where democracy and freedom prevail, with dignity for all. NDI is a leading organization working to advance women's political participation around the world. The Institute empowers women to participate, compete and lead as equal and active partners in democratic change. Mobilizing its global networks and drawing on three decades of experience in 132 countries, NDI supports women's aspirations for gender equality, and for inclusive and responsive government. NDI's multinational approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies.

# FOREWORD

Five years ago, I launched the “#NotTheCost” campaign to stop violence against women in politics on behalf of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and its partners. Since then, the campaign has grown into a global movement focused on ensuring that women everywhere have the chance to participate in safety, in the political life of their countries. With that purpose in mind, we have succeeded in putting the issue on the agenda of political parties, electoral officials and observers, parliaments, digital platforms, regional and international organizations including the United Nations. Despite that progress, political women around the world continue to face violence in the form of everyday sexism, psychological abuse, threats and intimidation - in person and online - physical and sexual assault. Too many have lost their lives. All of this aimed to silence them or to stop them running for office or for striving for change in their communities.

Democracy is not an abstract concept or a lofty goal. It is a system characterized by pluralism, participation, transparency and accountability. Democracy depends on everyone being able to speak up, and to join together to fight against inequality, and for justice. In fact, for democracy to succeed, we must change the face of politics altogether. Make no mistake: violence against political women is not only an abuse of their human rights, it is a threat to democracy itself. It is a favorite tool of authoritarians, tyrants and illiberals. They use it to suppress the representation of 50% of the voting population, to constrain the diversity of views, and to affirm the status quo in their favor.

That is why this year NDI and its partners are launching a renewed call to action to end violence against women in politics once and for all. If we are determined, we can end the violence that stalks, threatens, attacks and kills women in politics; that deters young women and new entrants from engaging in politics; and that is weaponized and used as a political tactic to achieve political outcomes. Violence against women is “not the cost” of politics. It is a scourge that we must eliminate for good. And we will.



**Madeleine K. Albright**

Chairman, The National Democratic Institute

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                      | 8  |
| <b>FRAMING THE CHALLENGE</b>                  | 12 |
| What is 'violence against women in politics'? | 12 |
| Whom does it affect?                          | 15 |
| What forms does violence take?                | 17 |
| <b>WHY IS THIS VIOLENCE PROBLEMATIC?</b>      | 21 |
| It is a form of violence against women        | 21 |
| It violates human rights                      | 23 |
| It undermines democracy                       | 24 |
| <b>HOW CAN WE STOP IT?</b>                    | 26 |
| A call to action                              | 26 |
| <b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION</b>               | 29 |
| Global institutions                           | 30 |
| Regional institutions                         | 34 |
| Governments                                   | 38 |
| Parliaments                                   | 40 |
| Political parties                             | 46 |
| Civil society                                 | 49 |
| Elected and appointed leaders                 | 54 |
| Justice and security sectors                  | 58 |
| Electoral observers and authorities           | 61 |
| Media and Digital Technology                  | 64 |



*LtoR: Mimoza Kusari Lila of Kosovo, and Rowena Guanzon, member of the Elections Commission of the Philippines, at NDI's #NotTheCost workshop in May 2018.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As women advance toward equality, they continue to make historic gains in the political sphere. Women are active in a wide range of political roles—be it within civil society, in political parties or local governments—and they are increasingly occupying leadership roles as mayors, cabinet ministers, prime ministers and presidents. In fact, in the last 25 years, the number of women in parliaments worldwide has more than doubled, and rightly so. Equal participation of women within the political ecosystem is a fundamental human and civil right. Women's participation in politics results in real gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and more sustainable peace.

Yet, as women step forward to claim their right to participate in politics, they continue to face strong resistance from opponents of gender equality who use a wide range of tactics to target, undermine and inhibit the participation of women in the political and public sphere. These acts may include psychological abuse, economic coercion, physical and sexual assault and, in a growing trend, online violence and gendered disinformation. While political violence is not always gender specific, violence against women in politics has three distinct characteristics: it targets women explicitly because of their gender; its forms are gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence; and its impact is to discourage women in particular from being or becoming politically active.



In 2016, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) launched the **#NotTheCost campaign** to stop violence against women in politics, declaring that women's political participation should not come at the cost of violence, or even the threat of violence. Building on growing momentum around the world, NDI issued a global call to action to unify efforts to raise awareness of what this problem looks like, why it deserves global attention and what solutions might be pursued. The call to action highlighted the need for stakeholders at the global, national and local levels to take steps to ensure that women are able to fearlessly exercise their right to participate politically as civic leaders, activists, voters, political party members, candidates, elected representatives and appointed officials.

On the fifth anniversary of the #NotTheCost campaign, NDI is renewing this call to action in order to reflect what has been learned and the progress that has been made since 2016. Over the last five years, important advances have been achieved and they have fostered a deeper understanding of the problem of gendered violence in politics and its effects. Extensive data collection and documentation on the incidence of this violence has inspired a growing list of solutions that have been adapted to different contexts around the world. However, several new challenges have also emerged. Adding to the existing prevalence of misogyny and sexism, democratic backsliding, a rise in "strong man" politics and technological innovations have created new means of perpetrating violence against politically active women.

Additionally, political responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have allowed authoritarian regimes to exploit public health concerns to further restrict civic and political activity. Any systemic shock, such as a pandemic, affects women's voice, their access to information, the physical environment in which they live and the gendered norms which determine their experience of disempowerment. In the specific case of COVID-19, public health responses have included stay-at-home orders which have increased the demands for women's time while decreasing the value assigned to it. Consequently, these orders have also made it easier to find and target women activists and have increased women's vulnerability to online attacks as more of their personal and political lives have moved to digital spaces. Occurrences of domestic violence have also increased exponentially as a result of the pandemic and lockdown measures.

Violence against women in politics is not restricted to any one part of the world, although depending on specific political, social, economic and cultural contexts, the forms and the intensity of the violence may vary. Consistent with a growing body of national laws and international conventions on violence against women, the definition of violence is not limited to acts of physical harm. An NDI study on violence against women in political parties in 2018 revealed that while 20.3% of respondents had confronted physical violence while carrying out party functions, 85.9% had experienced psychological violence, including threats and coercion. These attacks are not evenly distributed, but differentially impact women based on their race, age, class, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Until recently, violence against women in politics was a largely invisible problem as women are frequently told that abuse, harassment and assault are simply “the cost of doing politics.” As a result, violence was routinely normalized as part of a woman’s political experience and women grew used to dismissing it. Those who recognize these acts to be unacceptable are often strongly discouraged from reporting them in addition to being threatened by colleagues and forced to remain silent. Many political women even struggle to find a vocabulary to describe their experiences. Some of these acts are explicitly prohibited under many legal frameworks and workplace codes of conduct in the same jurisdictions. Allowing violence to be the price women must pay to exercise their voice and agency politically leads to women’s self-censorship and/or exclusion with serious detrimental consequences for gender equality, human rights and democracy.

Violence against women in politics doesn’t just affect its immediate target; it also sends a message to other women that violence awaits them in the political sphere and to society, as a whole, that women should not participate in politics. Research shows that reports of violence against high-profile women in politics discourage other women—particularly girls and younger women—from engaging with politics, thereby undermining their rights and reinforcing women’s intergenerational exclusion from the political sphere. All violence against women is abuse and must be stopped. Any form of tolerance for violence amounts to the infringement of women’s human rights, affronting their personal dignity and hindering their rights to enjoy a life of good health, liberty and security. Violence against women in politics is a threat to the integrity of democratic practice and culture. By excluding women and their perspectives, it disrupts the political process and impedes the will of voters. As a result, this type of violence denies society the benefits of the sustainable and responsive democratic governance that an inclusive political space can create.

The 2016 call to action presented a wide range of strategies to address and prevent violence against women in politics, focusing on the action that could be taken by potential changemakers from the global to the grassroots levels. Five years later, growing awareness has produced a set of actions to tackle this problem, offering practical and innovative solutions that help call out violence against women in politics, support the women experiencing it, and sanction perpetrators. The 2021 call to action highlights these emerging best practices and, because crucial systemic gaps still exist, it signals where, how, and by whom further actions still need to be taken.

Examples of promising initiatives are those being taken by international and regional organizations to set new norms and standards regarding violence against women in politics. There are new expectations of political parties to establish zero tolerance for violence against women party members, imposing sanctions on party members and representatives who perpetrate any such violence. Social media platforms are increasingly introducing new security and privacy settings for accounts to better protect against online violence targeting women and gendered disinformation. There are new tools available that allow politically-active women to assess their risks of violence and help them to develop safety plans to mitigate those risks.

Violence against women in politics, like any other form of violence against women, is rooted in gender inequality and therefore remains an intransigent problem worldwide. It is also a deeply political problem that, through the silencing or exclusion of women, can change political outcomes and thereby poses significant danger to democratic ideals.

The broad range of actions listed in this renewed call to action suggest that everyone, regardless of their political role, can do something to combat violence against women in politics. However, isolated actions are likely to have less impact than campaigns that succeed in mobilizing and coordinating the efforts of a large number of people in diverse locations, drawing on their differing strengths and capacities to influence change. The task ahead is not only to share existing practices or develop new strategies, but also to explore and nurture new partnerships that help identify and address political strategies that use violence against women in politics to undermine the potential for achieving inclusive and resilient democracies.



*Violence against women in politics takes many forms, but shares a common intent to restrict and control women's political participation, preventing them from taking their equal places alongside men. (Photo credit: NDI, Pakistan.)*

## FRAMING THE CHALLENGE

### WHAT IS 'VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS'?

Political violence can be experienced by both men and women. However, the specific issue of violence against women in politics has three distinct characteristics:

- it targets women because of their gender
- in its very form it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence
- its impact is to discourage women in particular from being or becoming politically active

Violence against women in politics encompasses all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation seeking to exclude women from politics—whether serving as civic leaders and activists, voters, political party members, candidates, elected representatives, appointed officials or election administrators—simply because they are women. While violence against women in politics takes many forms, it often draws on gendered ideas about women's bodies and their traditional social roles—primarily as mothers and wives—to deny or undercut their suitability or competence in the political sphere. As a result, its purpose

extends beyond the individuals targeted, seeking also to deter other women who might consider engaging in public and political life.

Violence against women in politics is rooted in gendered power imbalances and its recognition as a concept seeks to validate women's lived experiences with gender-based violence in the political realm. It brings attention to incidents driven by sexism and misogyny that, due to structural inequalities between women and men, are typically ignored or treated as "normal" behaviors. Placing women at the center of concern, this approach suggests that relying solely on comparisons with men's experiences—which are not rooted in gendered power imbalances—may be both inappropriate and misleading.



*Women who aspire to office, such as these mayoral candidates at an NDI leadership academy in Mexico, must be able to pursue those aspirations free from the fear of violence. (Photo credit: NDI)*

Over the last five years, a wide range of actors have begun collecting data on this phenomenon. This work has included re-coding existing datasets on political violence, conducting original surveys and case-based research and engaging in online data analysis. Research by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project confirms the existence of political violence targeting women, which they define as events where individual women, or groups composed primarily of women, are attacked on political grounds. They find that protests featuring women were more likely to meet with excessive force or intervention than protests involving men or mixed-sex groups<sup>1</sup>.

Gathering testimonies between 2000 and 2005, the Association of Locally Elected Women of Bolivia found that their members had experienced a wide and diverse range of violent acts in the course of their political work. Women were pressured to resign from their positions, faced sexual and physical assaults, had their salaries frozen illegally and were the subject of defamation, slander and libel campaigns.<sup>2</sup> Looking at Facebook comments directed at candidates in

the 2018 general elections in Pakistan, the Digital Rights Foundation noted that female politicians were far more likely to face objectifying, personal, sexualized or sexual comments, whereas men tended to be attacked more often on policy grounds.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the resolve of women to continue their political work unabated, many report feeling compelled to take precautions that affect their ability to engage fully with the public and express their opinions freely, especially on controversial issues.<sup>4</sup> Witnessing violence against other women can also discourage women from engaging in politics. Writing on the state of women's rights in Afghanistan, a Human Rights Watch report observed: "Every time a woman in public life is assassinated, her death has a multiplier effect: women in her region or her profession will think twice about their public activities."<sup>5</sup>

Not all forms of conflict in political spaces are instances of violence against women in politics, however. Healthy criticism is an essential part of robust political debates and elections, protected and sustained by guarantees of free speech and parliamentary privilege. Yet when women do not feel safe voicing their opinions without the fear of threats or reprisals, their full and equal political participation is impossible. Further, acts of violence that appear small and insignificant can have powerful effects if they form part of a repetitive or persistent pattern informing women's experiences of political engagement. Growing dependence on digital technology and online platforms, in particular, often reinforce a sense of an anonymous and lurking threat.

Women are not just passive victims of violence. Women, like men, can be active perpetrators of violence against politically active women. Although men as a group benefit most directly from patriarchy, men and women alike may seek to punish individuals who do not conform to prevailing gender norms. Some women may also adopt a strategic attitude towards violence; acceding to demands for sexual favors, for instance, as a means for political advancement. These behaviors should be understood as the response to an environment determined by male power, leadership and negative masculinities. Nevertheless, their impact is to normalize demands for sexual exploitation, reinforce patterns of sexual corruption, pollute the democratic culture and color perceptions of other women who are assumed, in error, to have performed such favors.

## Whom does it affect?

Violence against women is a global problem affecting women of all backgrounds, in all countries and regions of the world. The same is true of violence targeting women in politics. While the concept was first theorized in relation to experiences of women in the Global South, international actors have increasingly connected these debates as part of the same overarching trend.<sup>6</sup> All the same, violence against women in politics does not affect all women equally or in the same ways.

Defining violence against women in politics as acts directed at women because they are women, centers the role of gender, potentially suggesting that gender is the main or only source of abuse. Yet other aspects of women's identities may also influence the levels of violence they experience. Women who are members of other marginalized groups are disproportionately targeted for abuse. A study by Amnesty International found, for example, that Black and Asian women in the British parliament faced 30% more abuse on Twitter than their white counterparts.<sup>7</sup> According to a UN Women survey, women who were poor, lower caste and under the age of 30 were more vulnerable to violence in India, Nepal and Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Multiple forms of marginalization can further magnify these effects. In a recent U.S. analysis, the politician receiving the most online abuse, Representative Ilhan Omar, was attacked not only because she is a woman, but also as a racial minority, an immigrant and a Muslim.<sup>9</sup>

Women's political activities and profiles may also exacerbate the levels of abuse they experience. Politically active women in countries as diverse as Afghanistan and Sweden note that gender-based attacks against them often escalate after they have proposed bills or appeared on television in connection with women's issues.<sup>10</sup> The same is true of women who achieve high leadership positions. For women politicians in the U.S. and Canada, an increase in political visibility resulted in a sharp rise in uncivil tweets directed at them—an effect that was largely absent for men.<sup>11</sup> These patterns reinforce the intuition that violence against women in politics is fundamentally about preserving gender roles.

Features of the broader political, social, economic and cultural context may also shape women's experiences with violence. Authoritarianism and democratic backsliding, militarization accompanied by widespread impunity for law enforcement and military officers, criminal infiltration of public institutions and religious fundamentalism—all reduce the costs of violence for potential perpetrators, while reducing the likelihood of redress for victims. Social media platforms, especially in countries with high levels of internet



use, have dramatically expanded opportunities to harass women directly. New technologies also make it possible to create and disseminate harmful and degrading doctored images and videos to shame and attack women who are active in politics. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified these risks, as authoritarian regimes exploit the pandemic to further restrict civic and political activity, stay-at-home orders make it easier to find and target women and as women come to rely more on online spaces to do their political work, their vulnerability to online attacks increases.<sup>12</sup>

Violence against women in politics targets, but is not restricted to, women holding formal political roles. As voters, women may confront efforts to prevent them from voting or to coerce them to vote in a particular way, including through threats of divorce from their husbands and other members of their families. As electoral officials or party poll agents, they may face intimidation aimed at closing female-only polling stations or be on the receiving end of threats from constituents and political parties keen to suppress full vote counts. As activists and human rights defenders, women may face negative or outright hostile reactions from their families, communities or governments, especially if they are in isolated regions and challenging established networks of patronage or resource allocation.

*Women from all walks of life can be targeted by violence for their political participation—not only candidates and elected officials, but activists and those who are merely exercising their right to vote, like this woman in Nigeria's 2015 national election. (Photo credit: NDI.)*





As members of political parties, women may be unsafe even among their own political colleagues, being more likely than men to be victims of violence, to witness violence against others in the party and to perceive a climate of violence within the party itself.<sup>13</sup> As candidates, women may confront negative reactions from various directions, including their families and spouses. They may also face vandalism of their campaign materials, character assassination from opponents both outside and inside their parties and rape threats aimed at curbing their political ambition. As elected and appointed officials, women are not immune to attack, facing potentially hostile working conditions, including sexual harassment, within legislatures and council chambers, as well as sexist abuse on social media intended to marginalize them and render them less effective. As political staffers, finally, women may be subject to sexual harassment in political spaces. When working for female officeholders, they may also be the first point of contact for harassing phone calls, threatening letters and abusive social media posts.

Despite growing attention to the problem of violence against women in politics, it remained a largely invisible problem until very recently. A key reason is that women are frequently told that facing abuse, harassment and assault is simply “the cost of doing politics.” As a result, many dismiss or ignore violence as a normal part of the political game. Other women recognize that such acts are unacceptable, but are strongly discouraged and even threatened by colleagues to remain quiet. They may also fear being dismissed as “playing the gender card,” or blamed for bringing the abuse upon themselves. The lack of robust and safe complaint mechanisms exacerbates these effects, leaving women feeling as if there is no one to tell their experiences to, as well as increasing their sense of vulnerability to such attacks. In the five years since the launch of #NotTheCost campaign, these dynamics have shifted somewhat as growing numbers of political women around the world have begun to speak out and give a name to their experiences: violence against women in politics.

## What forms does violence take?

Debates on violence against women in politics eschew simplistic definitions focused merely on the use of physical force, in favor of more comprehensive definitions, recognizing a broader range of violations of personal integrity. Thinking about violence as existing on a continuum not only facilitates recognition of its different forms, but also highlights their connections and interactive effects. In its guidelines for statistics on violence against women,

the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) recommends collecting data on four types of violence: in UNDESA's order of listing, physical, sexual, psychological and economic.<sup>14</sup>

**Physical violence** involves injuries inflicted on women's bodies, as well as acts of bodily harm carried out against their family members. Examples include assassination, kidnapping, beating and domestic abuse, either of the woman or her family members, in order to prevent her political participation. Compared to other types of violence against women in politics, physical violence tends to be relatively rare, with offenders opting for "less costly" means of violence before escalating to physical attacks. According to research by NDI with political party leaders and members in Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania and Tunisia, 20.3% of women respondents reported having personally experienced some form of physical violence in connection with their political work.<sup>15</sup>

**Sexual violence** entails sexual acts and attempts at sexual acts by coercion, including unwelcome sexual comments or advances. Examples include sexual harassment, rape and sexual exploitation, such as forcing women to perform sexual favors in order to win a party nomination. Sexual violence may also involve sexually explicit or sexually graphic representations of women online, often doctored or fake, drawing on potent cultural ideas about women's sexuality to question their morality and sexual identity. Beginning in late 2017, the global #MeToo movement gave crucial momentum to discussions of sexual

*In 2020, Gretchen Whitmer, governor of the state of Michigan in the USA, was the target of a foiled kidnapping plot devised by violent extremists. (Photo Credit: NDI)*



**GRETCHEN WHITMER**  
49th Governor of Michigan

**#NotTheCost**  
Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics

violence in political spaces, but this topic nonetheless still remains taboo. Approximately one-quarter (23.4%) of women in NDI's *No Party to Violence* study reported facing sexual violence in the course of their political work. Men were far less aware of this problem than women, reflecting either a lack of knowledge or an unwillingness to discuss such issues, or a tolerance for violence against their female party colleagues.<sup>16</sup>

**Psychological violence** entails hostile behavior and abuse intended to cause fear and/or emotional damage. Death and rape threats, character assassination, social boycotts and stalking are all examples of this type of violence. Such acts may occur inside and outside official political settings and may be carried out in person, by telephone or via digital means like email and social media. Studies using a variety of data sources, including testimonies of political women, data on electoral violence and purpose-built surveys all suggest that psychological abuse is the most widespread form of violence against women in politics.<sup>17</sup> In NDI's study on violence against women within political parties, 85.9% of the women interviewed had faced psychological violence, including death and rape threats and sexist attacks online. Women were also far more likely than men to say they had witnessed someone in the party using psychological attacks, including threats and coercion, to control or persuade others.<sup>18</sup>

**Economic violence** employs economic hardship and deprivation as a means of control and intimidation. Examples include vandalism, property destruction, theft and withholding of funds and resources. Despite direct links between economic violence and the ability of women to seek and perform political functions, it remains one of the most invisible forms of violence against women in politics and simultaneously one of the more common forms of violence experienced by politically active women. More than one-third (35.9%) of women surveyed by NDI said they had faced some form of economic violence while carrying out their political party functions, *exceeding* the reported rates of physical and sexual violence.<sup>19</sup>

A fifth category, **semiotic violence**,<sup>20</sup> is not yet widely recognized, but captures dynamics that are not easily reduced to the other four types of violence. It involves mobilizing words and images to injure, discipline and subjugate women. Unlike the other four forms, these acts are less about attacking a particular woman directly than about shaping public perceptions about the validity of women's political participation more broadly. Perhaps the clearest example is the rising and potent trend of gendered disinformation, which weaponizes gendered narratives to spread highly emotive content to convince people that women are devious, stupid, overly sexual or immoral and therefore,

unfit for public life. Such attacks often involve sexualized distortion, including doctored nude photos, screenshots from alleged sex tapes and accusations of illicit affairs, and have become an increasingly favored political tactic among authoritarian and illiberal forces around the world.<sup>21</sup>

As evident through these examples, violence against women in politics occurs in both public and private spaces, with incidents and their effects often challenging the boundary between professional and private life. Perpetrators are not limited to political rivals, the traditional focus of research on political violence, but may include a woman's family and friends, members of her own party, community and religious leaders, media outlets and state security forces and the police, among others. Over the last five years, advances in digital technologies have expanded the range of perpetrators to include anonymous actors working on their own or as part of large online mobs—some transnational—to intimidate and humiliate women active in the public sphere. Given the freedom and anonymity one enjoys on the internet, these acts of violence can easily cross national borders and have powerful and sustained effects that are difficult to control or reverse.



*As with other forms of violence against women, violence against women in politics violates human rights. Moreover, it has additional impacts on democracy itself. (Photo credit: NDI, Honduras)*

## WHY IS THIS VIOLENCE PROBLEMATIC?

### It is a form of violence against women

The 1993 United Nations International Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as “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>22</sup> The UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) describes violence against women as “a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on the basis of equality with men,” which may keep “women in subordinate roles and contribute to their low level of political participation.”<sup>23</sup> In 2017, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 recognized that “harmful practices and crimes against women human rights defenders, politicians, activists or journalists are... forms of gender-based violence against women.” It further stressed that “gender-based violence against women occurs in all spaces and spheres of human interaction, whether public or private, including... politics.”<sup>24</sup>

Placing violence against women within a discrimination framework highlights the ways in which traditional gender roles, rooted in social, cultural and religious norms, both inform and justify the various forms of violence that women experience around the world. Since the 1990s, countries have responded to global shifts in perspective by adopting new laws on violence against women, together with legal reforms like gender quotas aimed at increasing the share of women in positions of political leadership. However, growing authoritarian forces across the globe threaten this progress, promoting regressive social norms—including a return to traditional gender roles—in the name of nationalist and other illiberal political agendas, in turn, offer particularly fertile ground for violence against women in politics.

Over the last five years, the issue of violence against women in politics has been integrated into related global frameworks on gender-based violence. In the wake of the launch of the #NotTheCost campaign, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women announced her intention to take up the topic. In 2018, she submitted a report to the UN General Assembly which explicitly recognized violence against women in politics as a form of “gender-based violence.”<sup>25</sup> Two months later, the UN General Assembly debated Resolution 73/148 on sexual harassment, which specifically invoked the concept of violence against women in politics. The resolution expressed deep concerns about “all acts of violence, including sexual harassment, against women and girls involved in political and public life, including women in leadership positions, journalists and other media workers and human rights defenders.”<sup>26</sup>

Emerging data from around the world illustrates the impact of violence against women in politics on gender equality. Reviewing ten years of case files, the Association of Locally Elected Women in Bolivia found that more than one-third of the complaints it had received concerned forced resignations, with women local councillors being pressured to hand over their seats to male alternates. Few women ran for a second term, moreover, believing that holding political office was not worth the physical and psychological violence they had endured.<sup>27</sup> Online violence, similarly, induced politically active women to pause, decrease or completely halt their social media engagement in Colombia, Indonesia and Kenya.<sup>28</sup>

Violence against women in politics may also have longer-term effects on gender equality by reducing young women’s political ambitions. In the United Kingdom, almost all (98%) participants in a program for aspiring women leaders reported witnessing sexist abuse of female politicians online; over 75% indicated this was a concern weighing on their decision to pursue a role in public life.<sup>29</sup> Interviews

in Canada with young people affected by sexual violence in the course of their political work, found that a stunning 80% had left politics (52%) or significantly reduced their involvement in politics (28%) as a result.<sup>30</sup>

## It violates human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) affirms that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. The Vienna Declaration, adopted at the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, described the “human rights of women” as “an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.” It called for the “elimination of violence against women in public and private life,” arguing that gender-based violence constituted a violation of human rights.<sup>31</sup> CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) asserts that women’s right to a life free from gender-based violence is “indivisible from and interdependent” on other human rights, including rights to life, health, liberty and security of the person; freedom from torture, cruel, inhumane or degradation treatment; and freedom of expression, movement, participation, assembly and association.<sup>32</sup>



*Taking action to promote an inclusive democracy, means women being involved in every level and aspect of political life, like this presiding officer during the 2015 Nigeria elections. (Photo credit: NDI.)*

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) asserts, further, that everyone has the right “to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” It also stipulates the right to be protected “against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of [these] rights.”<sup>33</sup> The first report of the UN Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in 2002 noted that women defenders “face risks that are specific to their gender and additional to those faced by men,” because “they may defy cultural, religious or social norms about femininity and the role of women in a particular country or society.” It also observed that “hostility, harassment and repression” faced by women defenders may take gender-specific forms, ranging from “verbal abuse



directed exclusively at women because of their gender, to sexual harassment and rape.”<sup>34</sup>

Human rights abuses can assail a target’s sense of personal dignity. Flora Terah, a parliamentary candidate in Kenya, was beaten by a group of men leading to an extensive period of hospitalization. In an autobiography, she noted that her attackers “had wanted to humiliate me, strip me of all my dignity and leave nothing of me but a shell.”<sup>35</sup> Abuse also threatens individuals’ sense of security, creating additional mental labor and requiring the adoption of extensive preventative measures in the conduct of their daily lives, including at home. This may increase negative perceptions among women regarding the costs of being politically active, in turn thwarting their pursuit of social justice. A study of insecurity as a barrier to women’s participation in protests in Egypt, Libya and Yemen observes that “ambitious young women are forced to forego opportunities for development that could make them more effective community and political activists in the future.”<sup>36</sup>

## It undermines democracy

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) outlines a number of civil and political rights, including the right to self-determination, individual liberty, political participation and non-discrimination and equality before the law. CEDAW also specifies that women have the right, on equal terms with men, to vote and stand for election, to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government and to participate in associations concerned with the public and political life of their countries. Violence against women in politics undermines the exercise of these rights, preventing women from participating in politics freely and without fear and constraining voters’ choice about who is available to represent them. It also deprives society of the benefits of women’s inclusion in political deliberation, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and more sustainable peace.

Violence against women in politics can impact democracy in the short-, medium- and long-term. On a day-to-day basis, dealing with abuse and harassment can burden women with extra concerns, drawing time and attention away from their political priorities. In an Inter-Parliamentary Union survey of political staffers in Europe, 59.7% of those subjected to violence said they were badly shaken by the experience. More than half (52.9%) reported it had affected their ability to



work normally.<sup>37</sup> Violence can also affect women's willingness to share their political opinions in the present as well as in the future. Following the murder of British parliamentarian Jo Cox in 2016, her colleague Jess Phillips shared: "Jo's death has brought about so many emotions... I am scared that what I might say or do will make me a target... For Jo, her beliefs and her courage to air them cost her her life."<sup>38</sup> Such dynamics also threaten the broader fight for social justice because, as noted by the Latin American human rights network IM-Defensoras, women human rights defenders are often the ones who search for disappeared victims, mobilize to defend the lands and natural resources of indigenous groups and defend women working in sweatshops.<sup>39</sup>

These threats to democracy have deepened over the past five years, as rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding have accompanied a resurgence of patriarchal values and behaviors in the public sphere. In countries like Brazil, Hungary, the Philippines and the U.S., the election of openly misogynistic, homophobic and transphobic leaders have gone hand-in-hand with a significant regression in political discourse and public speech on issues of gender and sexuality, organized around a binary of masculine authority and feminine domesticity. The challenge to patriarchal authoritarianism, largely led by women, met with violent repression from state actors in Belarus. In Poland, where the government had already targeted women's rights groups with various forms of economic intimidation including police raids, eviction from office spaces and sudden elimination of funding,<sup>40</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic has served as a convenient excuse for further restricting public gatherings, including protests against new policies rolling back women's reproductive rights. Violence against women in politics is thus a central component in the unravelling of democratic institutions and reassertion of patriarchal masculinities.

*Women must be able to speak out in their own voice and conscience, like this woman in Pakistan, without fear of violence or the threat of reprisal. (Photo credit: NDI.)*



# HOW CAN WE STOP IT?

## A call to action

Violence against women in politics is a serious issue that affects the development of strong, inclusive and democratic societies, as well as global progress toward gender equality. As the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals make clear, these outcomes are fundamentally connected and require action to ensure that women and girls are able to claim full and equal opportunities and rights—including their right to participate meaningfully in all aspects of political life, free from the fear or threat of violence.

An important first step is to declare that violence should not be “the cost of doing politics” for women seeking to participate in any aspect of the political process—as civic leaders and activists, voters, party members, candidates, elected representatives, appointed officials or election administrators. Rather, violence costs politics the benefits of sustainable and responsive democratic governance that an inclusive political space can create. Exposing violence against women in politics in all its forms is vital for ensuring women’s rights to participate fully, equally and safely in political and public life, and in turn, for promoting democracy, human rights and gender equality.

In 2016, the #NotTheCost call to action presented possible strategies to address and prevent violence against women in politics. Focusing on a wide range of potential changemakers, from the global to the grassroots levels, the call focused on actions that might be pursued to educate and raise awareness about violence against women in politics, creating new norms and standards against this behavior; to create processes at the institutional and national level for registering and responding to complaints of violence against women in politics; and to provide services for assisting women who are victims of violence against women in politics, as well as to punish the perpetrators of such violence.

Many of these strategies were theoretical at the time, as the issue of violence against women in politics had not yet entered the realm of public debate in many parts of the world. This renewed call to action highlights the emerging best practice and where, how and by whom further actions might be taken.

The broad range of actors on this list suggest that everyone, regardless of their particular political role, can do something to combat violence against women in politics. All the same, isolated actions are likely to have less impact than campaigns that mobilize and coordinate the efforts of actors in distinct locations, drawing on their differing strengths and capacities to influence change. The task ahead is thus not only to share existing practices or develop new strategies, but also to explore and nurture new partnerships to tackle violence against women in politics in all its manifestations. This includes engaging men as change agents alongside women,<sup>41</sup> as well as tailoring strategies to distinct social, economic, political and cultural contexts.

# **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Violence against women in politics is a multi-faceted issue, involving diverse acts and a broad range of potential perpetrators. While every countermeasure, however small, is important, tackling this problem effectively requires that actors at various levels take steps to call out violence against women in politics, support the women who experience it and respond to and sanction offenders. The opportunities for action that follow are organized for quick reference, with the tools that are most useful or relevant for members of specific institutions or sectors of society, collected together in sections. These actions might be used singly, joined in varying combinations or modified to fit particular political situations, institutions or contexts. Exploring ways to work together across these levels, however, is likely to have the greatest impact on ensuring that women are able to participate in politics fully, equally and safely.

Three strategies might be pursued by actors at all levels. The first is **awareness-raising**, which is vital for all other efforts as it lays the groundwork for recognizing the problem and inspiring action to address it. This entails using the concept of “violence against women in politics”—or related terms like political harassment and violence against women, electoral gender-based violence and abuse and intimidation—to name acts that use physical, psychological, sexual, economic and semiotic violence to exclude and marginalize women as political actors. Actors at the global, national and local levels should emphasize that violence should not be the “cost of doing politics.” Further, violence against women in politics is a global problem, not one restricted to only one area of the world. While such acts may take different forms, given variations in political, social, economic and cultural contexts, they nonetheless share the same intentions to restrict and control women’s political participation.

The second strategy involves **data collection**, which can help prove the existence of the problem, identify the perpetrators and measure progress and setbacks over time. Lack of data on violence against women in politics contributes to denial of this problem, as well as ignorance of its troubling impact on women, politics and society. Over the last five years, actors at all levels have adopted four main approaches: re-examining existing datasets on political and electoral violence through a gender lens, conducting original surveys informed by work on violence against women, gathering and systematizing testimonies from individual women and collecting social media data using hand-coding and automated techniques.

The third strategy is **networking and training**. This might entail creating formal or informal opportunities for women politicians and civil society groups to connect on the issue of violence against women in politics, for example, during in-person gatherings or via virtual platforms. Given the sensitive nature of this topic, organizers should take care to ensure that the women who participate are protected from any backlash or breach of confidentiality, with psychological support and other services made available to those who may require them. Training programs should assist women in learning ways to respond to and mitigate acts of violence, including tips on how to decrease vulnerability and respond effectively to both in-person and online attacks. Men should also be targeted for training opportunities addressing the roles they can play in stopping or responding to violence, including better understanding their own disproportionate power and privilege in political spaces.

## GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS

Intergovernmental organizations, international associations and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can contribute to efforts to combat violence against women in politics by establishing new international standards and leveraging their global reach to raise awareness and provide technical assistance on this issue across world regions. Over the last five years, a growing number of global institutions have tackled violence against women in politics by raising its visibility, calling for new standards of behavior and tracking and monitoring its occurrence. There is ample room, however, for more global actors to become engaged with this issue and incorporate concern for violence against women in politics into existing and emerging normative frameworks, operating procedures and global programming.

### Actions for global institutions:

- **Integrate violence against women in politics into existing international instruments** on violence against women, human rights, peace and conflict and women's rights, among other possibilities. This topic has appeared in reports by the UN Special Rapporteurs on Violence against Women and on Human Rights Defenders. It has also been taken up under mechanisms provided by CEDAW. Between 2015 and mid-2019, the CEDAW Committee raised the issue of violence against women in politics in concluding

observations to five country reports: Bolivia, Honduras, Costa Rica, Italy and Mexico. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations recommended a “zero-tolerance policy” for “targeted violence by state and non-state groups against women campaigning for public office or women exercising their right to vote.”<sup>42</sup>

- **Establish new standards for behavior in political spaces.** In 2018, the UN General Assembly approved Resolution 73/148, encouraging national parliaments and political parties to “adopt codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating zero-tolerance.... for sexual harassment, intimidation and any other form of violence against women in politics.”<sup>43</sup> The following year, the Inter-Parliamentary Union published a set of guidelines offering advice and practical information on how to transform parliaments into gender-sensitive environments free from sexism and abuse.<sup>44</sup> While not dealing explicitly with violence against women in politics, International Labour Organization Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (2019) helps resolve ambiguities and specificities regarding politics as a place of work—namely who is a “worker” and that the “world of work” includes both public and private spaces serving as places of work—that have posed challenges to dealing with issues of sexual as well as online harassment in political spaces.<sup>45</sup>
- **Develop new standards for electoral observation.** In 2019, the Convening Committee for the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers adopted a set of guidelines drafted by a group co-ordinated by NDI,<sup>46</sup> for integrating gender considerations into all aspects of international election missions. Outlining the many ways in which women may participate in elections, including as citizen election observers, media representatives and election workers, this framework emphasized that women should be able to serve in all these capacities “without fear or threat of violence.”<sup>47</sup> At a more grassroots level, NDI developed a gender-sensitive methodology for citizen election observation, *Votes without Violence*, to monitor incidents of violence against women as voters, candidates, election administrators and public officials before, during and after elections.<sup>48</sup>
- **Collect and publish data on violence against women in politics.** In 2016, the Inter-Parliamentary Union conducted a survey with 55 women parliamentarians from 39 countries across five world regions, asking

questions about their experiences with physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence.<sup>49</sup> Over the last five years, NDI has piloted a number of data collection efforts, including *Votes without Violence*, focusing on violence against women in elections;<sup>50</sup> *No Party to Violence*, analyzing violence against women in political parties;<sup>51</sup> and *Tweets that Chill*, measuring online violence against women in politics.<sup>52</sup> In addition to summary reports of the various findings, the data from *Votes without Violence* was posted online, together with visualization tools facilitating direct engagement with this data.<sup>53</sup>

- **Develop programming guides on violence against women in politics.**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women expressed concerns about violence against women in elections in a 2013 publication, *Inclusive Electoral Processes*. Their global work on this issue subsequently informed a full-length programming guide, *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections*, published in 2017.<sup>54</sup> Following the launch of the #NotTheCost campaign in 2016, NDI elaborated its own program guidance, aimed specifically at democracy practitioners as a group that was well-positioned to develop and conduct programs to eradicate violence against politically active women.<sup>55</sup>

- **Convene dedicated global gatherings** on the topic of violence against women in politics and place the issue on the agenda of international meetings addressing themes like citizen participation, elections, governance state fragility, and/or violence against women. In 2017, the Carter Center organized a workshop bringing together electoral observers with gender experts to explore ways of measuring violence against women in elections. In 2018, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, in partnership with the British political parties, hosted an international summit to address violence against women in politics, with more than 50 speakers from over 20 countries. In 2021, the UN Commission on the Status of Women encompassed violence against women in politics in its priority theme—“Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”—and the Commission’s agreed outcomes.<sup>56</sup>

- **Engage global institutions** to incorporate a focus on violence against women in politics into their work, especially when their remit deals with questions related to democratic governance, civil society, political parties and electoral integrity. Established in 1976, the Inter-Parliamentary



Union's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians receives and investigates complaints regarding alleged human rights violations suffered by MPs—from kidnapping and murder to illegal detention and exclusion from political offices. Over the last five years, the Committee has taken new steps to incorporate gender, both in the accounts of personal profiles of victims and in the nature of the human rights abuses they have faced.<sup>57</sup>

## **RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH DATA: ACTION BY UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS**

The UN Human Rights Council designates a number of independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from various perspectives. Two of these mandates, focusing on human rights defenders and violence against women, have served to raise the profile of violence against women in politics through evidence-based reporting, contributing to normative progression on this issue and prompting concrete actions to address it.

The first report of the Special Representative on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in 2002 included a chapter on women, noting that women defenders faced risks specific to their gender and additional to those faced by men. In 2010, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders devoted a full report to women human rights defenders, particularly those working in the area of women's rights. In 2019, a second report on this topic highlighted recent changes in the global political context leading to greater resistance to the work of women human rights defenders.

Two reports submitted in 2018 by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women took up the question of violence against women in politics. The first focused on online violence against women and girls, noting that women serving in political roles were “directly targeted, threatened, harassed and even killed for their work,” including through misogynistic and often sexualized online attacks. The second took up the issue of violence against women in politics in greater depth, providing an overview of the issue, the various actors working on it and recommendations on preventing and combating it as a form of gender-based violence.

# REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Regional organizations and NGOs can supplement, complement or extend the efforts of global actors by bringing attention to violence against women in politics at the regional level and using region-based mechanisms to share and magnify regional solutions and experiences. Over the last five years, some regions have advanced more than others in developing these conversations, with regional connections in Latin America playing a particularly crucial role in amplifying the issue in national and local arenas. Yet there is potential for more actors in this and other regions to cooperate more closely with one another to prevent, respond to and sanction violence against women in politics, drawing on shared histories and important social and cultural commonalities.

## Actions for regional institutions:

- ***Utilize regional forums as a venue for raising awareness on violence against women in politics.*** In 2007, the Tenth Regional Conference on Women, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, issued the Quito Consensus, the first international call to “adopt legislative measures and institutional reforms to prevent, sanction and eradicate political and administrative harassment against women to accede to elected and appointed decision-making positions.”<sup>58</sup> To counter sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments, the Council of Europe (COE) Parliamentary Assembly launched the #NotInMyParliament initiative in 2018, at an event in which parliamentarians from COE member states pledged to take action in national parliaments to eradicate such behaviors.
- ***Mobilize the capacities of regional bodies to set new norms and standards regarding violence against women in politics.*** In 2019, the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 1 on preventing and combating sexism across various sectors, including public life. It notes that women in positions of power or authority are often targets, with women politicians and human rights defenders facing, for example, rampant sexist and sexualized abuse online. The Recommendation called for a series of concrete actions, including passing legislation condemning sexism and criminalizing hate speech; encouraging positive images of women as active participants in social, economic and political life; and promoting internal disciplinary measures for sexism in the public sector and in all decision-making and political bodies, for instance through suspending responsibilities or imposing financial penalties.<sup>59</sup>

- ***Incorporate violence against women in politics into regional conventions*** and declarations on violence against women, human rights, peace and conflict and women's rights. In 2015, states-parties to the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women approved a Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women (see text box).

## **USING EXISTING CONVENTIONS: ACTION BY THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

Several regional institutions have taken action to fight and condemn violence against women in politics. One of the most straightforward ways to do this is to work within existing frameworks calling for action to end violence against women more broadly. In 1994, the Organization for American States (OAS) adopted the landmark Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (also known as the Belém do Pará Convention). During a follow-up conference in 2015, states-parties to the Convention approved a Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women, informed by a series of regional consultations by the Inter-American Commission of Women. Applying the Convention's definition of violence against women, the Declaration called for the adoption of mechanisms and measures, collection of data, introduction of victim services, awareness raising campaigns and development of media codes of conduct.<sup>60</sup>

- ***Establish regional protocols or model guidelines*** offering guidance to national parliaments and/or political parties in tackling the problem. In 2017, the Inter-American Commission of Women carried out consultations across Latin America to produce an Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life.<sup>61</sup> The aim was to share best practices and lessons learned in a region where a growing number of countries are introducing bills to criminalize and punish violence against women in politics. In 2019, they followed with a Model Protocol for Political Parties to support efforts to combat violence against women within political parties, ensuring that parties comply with the obligations established in national and international legal frameworks on violence against women in politics.<sup>62</sup>

- ***Collect and publish regional data on violence against women in politics.***

During a 2015 meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of ParlAmericas, a network of national legislatures in North, Central and South America and the Caribbean, staff filmed testimonies on violence against women in politics across the Americas which it posted on its website as a means to map the problem across the region.<sup>63</sup> In 2018, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly partnered with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to extend the framework in IPU's 2016 global study to conduct a more in-depth study of the problem in Europe. Through confidential interviews, 123 women from 45 European countries, including members of parliament and parliamentary staff, testified to their experiences of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence.<sup>64</sup> And in 2020, the Network of Arab Women Parliamentarians for Equality undertook a survey of 370 current and previous Arab women parliamentarians from 15 Arab countries, finding that 79.6% of them had been exposed to one or more forms of violence.<sup>65</sup>

- ***Place the issue on the agenda of regional meetings*** addressing topics such as elections, governance, civil society or violence against women. Women's regional networks have attempted to do this by organizing seminars on violence against women in politics in the days prior to regional conferences, raising awareness among women in the hopes that these perspectives might feed into subsequent regional deliberations. In 2016, the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians meeting ahead of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference focused on the theme of political violence against women. In 2018, PES Women, the women's organization of the Party of European Socialists (PES), organized a day-long conference on violence against women in politics prior to the PES annual congress.

- ***Convene sub-regional gatherings to take regional variations into account.***

In 2016, ParlAmericas held a special event in Saint Lucia for women parliamentarians in the Anglophone Caribbean, where these debates had gained less traction than in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. In addition to language barriers, lessons from elsewhere in the region could not simply be extended to these countries, given their distinct political and legal traditions.

- ***Create procedures for registering complaints and issuing punishments*** through regional mechanisms. While this strategy has not yet been utilized, regional courts—especially human rights courts—offer one possible mechanism for lodging complaints and securing justice for victims and survivors of violence against women in politics. Notably, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights included an extensive discussion of violence against politically engaged women in its recent overview of violence and discrimination against women and girls across the Americas.<sup>66</sup>The Commission could play a potentially important legal and norm-setting role in relation to violence against women in politics, especially in light of its past work safeguarding women's political rights.

# GOVERNMENTS

National and local governments, as agents of the state, have a responsibility to promote the human and democratic rights of all citizens. They can address violence against politically-active women by taking a public stand against this problem and developing mechanisms to support victims and hold perpetrators to account. While many governments around the world have been slow to take up the issue of violence against women in politics, over the last five years, a growing number of countries have considered legislation on this issue and some current and former heads of government and cabinet ministers have been vocal about problems with sexism and misogyny directed toward women as political actors. More can and should be done, however, by governments to mobilize their authority to prevent, treat and punish violence against women in politics.

## Actions for governments:

- ***Raise awareness of violence against women in politics*** as a problem for democracy, human rights and gender equality. Following a perceptible rise in violence against politically active women during the 2017 general elections in the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Theresa May called on the Committee on Standards in Public Life to undertake a study on the abuse and intimidation of parliamentary candidates. The report found that, while candidates of all political persuasions were affected, candidates who were female, from ethnic minorities and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender were disproportionately targeted in terms of scale, intensity and level of vitriol.<sup>67</sup> May made her first public comment on the report on the United Kingdom's centenary of women's suffrage in February 2018, drawing parallels with suffragettes who "had to contend with open hostility and abuse to win their right to vote."<sup>68</sup>
- ***Educate state actors and the broader public on the problem of violence against women in politics.*** In 2017, the Mexican Federal Electoral Tribunal—as part of a larger initiative to combat violence against women in politics coordinated by a broad range of state institutions—developed an online course, free to anyone who registered, offering concept and contextual tools on issues related to gender, violence and politics, as well as basic information for identifying and addressing it in Mexico. In a self-guided track of study, the course provided course materials to read and a series of tests for self-evaluation.

- **Support legislative initiatives and implement laws to tackle violence against women in politics.** In 2016, Bolivian President Evo Morales issued Supreme Decree 2.935 to clarify procedures for implementing Law 243, approved in 2012 to criminalize political harassment and violence against women (see text box in next section). The Decree also designated the Ministry of Justice, through the Vice-Ministry of Equal Opportunities, as the unit responsible for designing and carrying out programs related to this issue.

*Working together to achieve political parity and equality can often be a place of strength for women, like these women during the municipal elections in Kaya, Burkina Faso. (Photo credit: NDI.)*



## COLLEEN BELL

Executive Director of the California Film Commission  
and former United States Ambassador to Hungary



## BRENDA SANTAMARÍA

Chief of the Electoral Observation Section,  
Organization of American States



## JEANINE MABUNDA LIOKO MUDIAYI

MP and former Speaker of Parliament,  
Democratic Republic of Congo



## DR. NOMAFRENCH MBOBO

Western Cape Health Minister and the Democratic  
Alliance Women's National Leader. South Africa

*Ambassador Colleen Bell, discusses the current political context for violence against women in politics with Brenda Santamaría, the Hon Jeanine Mabunda MP, and Dr. NomaFrench Mbombo. (Photo Credit: NDI)*

# PARLIAMENTS

Parliaments, as representatives of the people, have a duty to safeguard citizens' human and democratic rights. Collectively and individually, members of parliament can take steps to address and end violence against women in politics by raising the issue in parliamentary debates, passing legislation to penalize perpetrators and introducing reforms to make parliaments a safer workplace. While substantial progress has been made on these various fronts over the last five years, more work is needed to engage a broader range of parliaments on this issue and make existing initiatives more effective.

## Actions for parliaments:

- **Create opportunities to raise awareness** of violence against women in politics through debates and speeches in parliament. In a widely followed Westminster Hall debate in the United Kingdom in 2017, Diane Abbott, the first Black woman elected to parliament, spoke at length about the racist and sexist abuse she had received over the years, noting that the tone and scale of the abuse had grown stronger in recent years in parallel with the rise of social media. In 2020, an incident between U.S. Representatives Ted Yoho and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez motivated a special debate in Congress on sexism and politics. In a memorable speech, Ocasio-Cortez, and later a number of male and female colleagues, emphasized the structural nature



of violence against women in politics and the need to call out such sexist attacks—on the floor of parliament—as unacceptable and illegitimate.

## **TAKING A LEGISLATIVE ROUTE: ACTION BY LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES**

Following 12 years of activism by civil society and the high-profile murder of a local politician, Bolivia was the first country in the world to pass legislation outlawing violence against women in politics in 2012. Law 243 defines political violence and political harassment, presents an extensive list of examples, establishes legal sanctions and lists a series of factors that might magnify these penalties. Possible legal sanctions include monetary fines and removal from office for civil offenses and prison sentences lasting two to eight years for criminal offenses. Aggravating factors include acts committed against pregnant, illiterate or disabled women, or women over the age of 70; actors involving the children of the victims; acts involving two or more perpetrators; and perpetrators who are repeat offenders, party leaders or public officeholders. By 2016, however, only one case had been convicted, provoking a governmental decree clarifying implementation procedures. In 2017, the national electoral authorities published a regulation to assist women in bringing forward their cases, leading to a rise in the number of cases filed to approximately 100 by 2018. Nonetheless, the problem remains under-reported and not all cases proceed through the system. Despite these shortcomings, at least seven other countries across Latin America have pursued similar legal reforms at the national and subnational levels.

- **Consider legislative reforms** to sanction violence against women in politics. These initiatives might involve drafting stand-alone laws like Law 243 in Bolivia (see text box). Alternatively, they might entail revising or passing new laws on violence against women to incorporate text on violence against women in politics. Such reforms are most common in Latin America, where they have been passed in countries like El Salvador, Panama and Paraguay. The term “political violence,” however, was included in a new law on violence against women approved in Tunisia in 2017. Legal measures can also be introduced within bills addressing various aspects of political life. In France, legislators amended a law on trust in political life in 2017 to stipulate that anyone found guilty of a crime or misdemeanor, including moral and sexual harassment, be declared potentially ineligible

to hold or run for parliamentary office for a period of up to ten years. Recognizing that women were prevented from participating in elections in certain parts of the country, the Pakistani parliament approved a new Elections Act in 2017 with a clause mandating that if the turnout of women was less than 10% of the total votes polled in a constituency, the election results would be declared void.

- ***Introduce resolutions condemning violence against women in politics.***

In 2020, five Democratic Congresswomen in the U.S. introduced House Resolution 1151 recognizing violence against women in politics as a global phenomenon and calling on the government to take steps to mitigate this violence in the U.S. and abroad. While carrying no legal weight, such resolutions can provide important moral support to raise the profile of certain issues. Elsewhere, resolutions can also be used to call out particular instances of abuse. In the Philippines, five women senators came together in 2016 to file Senate Resolution No. 184, condemning a plan by the House of Representatives to show an alleged sex tape featuring Senator Leila de Lima at a congressional hearing. The tape was later found to be fraudulent.

*Women parliamentarians, such as this member of parliament from Kyrgyzstan, must be able to execute their office and functions without fear or threat of violence—something parliaments themselves can take action to ensure. (Photo credit: NDI.)*





Women's voices advocating for their right to be represented in politics need to be heard, as in this constituency dialogue in Cambodia. (Photo credit: NDI.)

- **Establish dedicated teams within parliament** to investigate threats and abuse directed at members. Following the murder of Jo Cox in 2016, the British parliament created the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team, based on the grounds of parliament and forming part of the Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection Command at the Metropolitan Police. While not focused exclusively on the security of women parliamentarians, data collected by the team in its first few years of operation found that women appeared to be disproportionately targeted. As a result, the team recruited a dedicated female security advisor in 2018 to assist women in parliament in dealing with threats and abuse by providing tailored security advice.
- **Establish or revise parliamentary codes of conduct** to address aspects of institutional culture that create a hostile work environment, especially for female parliamentarians and staff. Following a sexual harassment scandal involving parliamentarians from different political parties, the Canadian parliament introduced a Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment in 2015. In response to the #MeToo movement, the Chilean parliament adopted a Protocol on Prevention and Sanction of Sexual Harassment in 2018, covering all workers and people visiting the parliamentary estate.
- **Set up an independent office within parliament** for receiving and dealing with complaints related to violence against women in politics. In Switzerland, such an office was created in 2017, prompted by a sexual harassment scandal involving a prominent male parliamentarian. Those

working in the parliament could speak to a male or female officer and get advice in all three official languages. The financing provided for the unit was minimal, however, amounting to only 3600 Swiss francs.

- ***Streamline existing procedures for handling cases of sexual harassment in parliament.*** In 2018, the U.S. Congress revised the onerous process for workers on Capitol Hill to bring forward complaints, eliminating mandatory counseling and mediation periods. The new law stipulated that legislators could not use taxpayer funds to pay settlement claims when they were found guilty. It also increased transparency regarding the settlements reached, aiming to prevent repeat offenders from continuing their abuse.
- ***Create a cross-party working group*** on sexual harassment that includes not only parliamentarians but also representatives of parliamentary staff, union officials and sexual violence experts. In 2017, the British parliament set a group to study the issue of bullying and harassment on the parliamentary estate, which heard from a variety of stakeholders and conducted a survey of people employed at the parliament. It recommended a number of immediate and long-term measures, including expanded support from human resources, an independent complaints procedure, new behavior codes and a training system.

*Women can and should be part of the public sphere as elected leaders, officials, voters, and activists as seen here in a campaign march in Benin . (Photo credit: NDI.)*





- ***Provide gender-sensitivity and sexual harassment training to parliamentarians.*** One of the key demands of the #MeTooEP campaign, launched in 2017 and focusing on the problem of sexual violence in the European Parliament, was mandatory sexual harassment training for all members. Some powerful political and country groups resisted, however, suggesting that mandatory training would infringe upon their individual rights. In Canada, official training materials were made available to all members of parliament and their staff beginning in 2016. It was only in 2018, however, with the rise in #MeToo scandals that parties made this training mandatory for their members.
- ***Conduct a confidential survey of parliamentarians' experiences*** with violence against women in politics. In 2018, women in New Zealand undertook a short study modeled on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's global analysis of sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians. They found that while the prevalence of physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence was lower in New Zealand than in the global sample, violence against women in politics was not an uncommon problem in the country, with nearly half the respondents reporting they had experienced psychological abuse in the course of their parliamentary work.<sup>69</sup>

# POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties serve as a primary avenue for citizens to participate in democratic processes and to exercise their fundamental rights to shape the decisions and direction of their country. Parties are also, in most cases, the doorway to elected office. While political violence is often thought of as occurring across parties, studies by NDI<sup>70</sup> and UN Women<sup>71</sup> find that women's own party colleagues are among the most common perpetrators—often, but not always, due to conflicts over candidate nomination outcomes. Such acts rarely come to light, however, because party loyalty and dynamics of electoral competition can create pressures upon women not to disclose behaviors that might cast the party in an unfavorable light. The resulting environment can enable violence against women within parties, while obscuring such acts from public view. Over the last five years, parties have been less active than actors at other levels, apparently lacking the creative thinking and political will needed to recognize and take concrete steps to address violence against women in politics. There has also been a tendency to weaponize the issue against rival parties, while excusing bad behaviors within the party's own ranks.

## Actions for political parties:

- ***Raise awareness of violence against women in politics through internal party conversations.*** In early 2021, Conservative women in the British parliament invited the Prime Minister, and Conservative Party leader, Boris Johnson to a virtual meeting in which they shared their experiences with death threats, rape threats, online abuse and vandalism. The discussion inspired him to announce a review into how sexist abuse targeted at women parliamentarians might be addressed. In 2017, similar conversations—and perhaps her own personal experiences—motivated Prime Minister Theresa May to commission a cross-party study of abuse and intimidation in elections by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- ***Raise awareness within international party confederations,*** emphasizing the challenges posed by violence against women in politics to party values. In 2016, Liberal International, the world federation of liberal political parties, joined NDI in the launch of the #NotTheCost campaign. In addition to using its observer status to submit a statement on violence against women in politics to the UN Human Rights Council, the federation gathered Liberal members of parliament representing 13 countries during the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly October 2016 to share

country-specific experiences before uniting in a joint call for action on stopping violence against women in politics. The following month, Liberal International scheduled a debate on this topic on the fringes of its Executive Committee meeting. In 2017, the Africa Liberal Network adopted the Nairobi Declaration on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women, which included a strong commitment to end all forms of violence against women in politics.

- **Develop a party code of conduct** for leaders and rank-and-file members to prohibit sexism or bullying in meetings, as well as sexual harassment in all contexts of party work. In recent years, the three major political parties in the United Kingdom have taken steps in this direction (see text box).

### **DEVELOPING PARTY CODES OF CONDUCT: ACTION BY BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES**

Sexual harassment, as well as abuse and intimidation of candidates, have gained substantial attention in the United Kingdom in recent years. All three major parties have responded by introducing or revising codes of conduct for their members. In 2014, the Liberal Democrats adopted a code of conduct stating that all members had the right to be treated fairly and equally and were expected to behave in a way that does not negatively impact other members, including engaging in intimidation, harassment or bullying. In 2017, the Conservatives introduced a code of conduct stating that anyone who formally represented the party may not use their position to bully, abuse, victimize or harass others. They must also cooperate with any process set down by the party board to address any grievances of this nature. The Labour Party revised its rulebook in 2018 to include a policy on sexual harassment and another on social media usage. With regard to the first, the party committed itself to ensuring a welcoming environment so that all members could participate freely in party activities without feeling disadvantaged and unsafe. The second policy called on all party members to treat all people with dignity and respect, stating that harassment and intimidation were never acceptable, along with any form of group-based discrimination. Labour also required all party members to take a pledge to stand against all forms of abuse, both on and offline.

- ***Impose sanctions on party members*** and elected and appointed representatives who perpetrate violence against women in politics. The British Conservative Party stipulates that members found to have violated its 2017 code of conduct are subject to a number of potential penalties, including provisional expulsion from the party, suspension or non-renewal of party membership, suspension from office or candidature, rebuke or severe rebuke, mandated apology, removal of offending social media material and obligatory training. Although it is rarely possible to remove elected officials, a sanction used by various parties in the United Kingdom since 2017 has been “removal of the whip,” or the suspension of a parliamentarian from the party caucus—amounting to a statement of severe disapproval of behavior.
- ***Empower women in the party to collect testimonies on violence against women in politics.*** Doubts about the sincerity of party leaders to deal with issues of sexual violence and harassment in the wake of the #MeToo movement in 2017 led to the creation of LabourToo, serving as a clearinghouse for women to share their experiences in the British Labour Party. In early 2018, a team pulled out common themes in a report to party leaders, focusing on explaining the nature of the problem and calling for reforms to the party’s formal complaint and disciplinary processes.
- ***Make a public pledge,*** either independently or with other parties, to ensure the safety and security of female voters, election workers and candidates, so women are free to participate in all aspects of the electoral process. In 2012, all eight registered parties in Sierra Leone signed an “Open and Safe Elections Pledge” to promote an electoral atmosphere free of violence and intimidation and to encourage women to participate in the election process. The pledge was a response to incidents of inter-party violence, which had kept some citizens, particularly women, from running for office. The pledge also included commitments to empower women, youth and disabled candidates with campaign, transportation and financial assistance.



# CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society groups, especially women's organizations and those already working to address violence against women and women's political participation, can contribute to efforts to combat violence against women in politics by raising awareness, advocating for policy changes and providing services to victims of violence. In so doing, they can also complement the steps taken by other actors or fill the void left by their inaction. Over the last five years, civil society

initiatives on violence against women in politics have expanded dramatically to give voice to women's experiences, express solidarity with women facing abuse and increase their safety and well-being, particularly in online spaces. Given the multidimensional nature of this problem, there is still room for further activism to prevent and respond to violence against women in politics, as well as to shed further light on what it looks like around the globe.

## Actions for civil society:

- **Publish open letters and manifestos** speaking out against violence against women politics. In 2016, more than 500 male and female activists and elected officials in France joined forces to call for an end to impunity for sexual harassment in politics. Several days later, 17 female former ministers from parties across the ideological spectrum published a joint call denouncing sexist remarks and behaviors in French politics. Later that year, female staff at the French parliament launched their own awareness-raising collective, Chair Collaboratrice, including a website and Twitter account.
- **Use social media hashtags to raise awareness and express solidarity** with targets of violence against women in politics. In 2016, NDI launched



*Civil society organizations can act to ensure women are able to exercise their full and equal political and civic rights, such as the right to vote. (Photo credit: NDI, Nigeria)*

the #NotTheCost hashtag as part of its Global Call to Action to stop violence against women in politics. Over the last five years, civil society organizations have employed a variety of hashtags in global (#DefendHer), regional (#MeTooEP, #NotInMyParliament) and national (#StopVAWIE, #DestroyTheJoint, #LevonsLOmerta, #LiftHerUp, #WeHaveHerBack) contexts to denounce violence against politically active women.

- ***Develop strategies to call out online violence against women in politics.***

In 2019, Parity YEG, an NGO in Canada, partnered with a computer programmer to develop ParityBot. Using machine learning methods, ParityBot detects abusive and problematic tweets directed at women during an election and then sends out a positive tweet for every bad tweet, with the aim of generating more positive political discourse for women during elections. To date, this tool has been employed during elections in Canada, the U.S. and New Zealand.

- ***Establish partnerships to raise the profile*** of violence against women in politics as an issue in national and local elections. In 2015, the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform (TWCP), a network bringing together the women's wings of all parties with representation in parliament, joined with local women's organizations like the Tanzania Women Judges Association and Coalition against Sextortion in a citizens' election monitoring project with technical and financial support from UN Women, DEMO Finland and NDI (see text box).

- ***Explore opportunities for transnational dialogues*** to share experiences and raise awareness of violence against women in politics. In 2006 and 2007, South Asia Partnership International, with financial support from Oxfam, convened a regional gathering of women involved in national and provincial politics, as well as female activists and representatives of the media, from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Meeting several times over the course of two years, the women offered testimonies of their experiences which they used to develop the concept of violence against women in politics and explore opportunities for action, including using the UN's CEDAW Convention as a possible entry point.

- ***Create and distribute videos to educate the public*** on violence against women in politics. In 2016, the Women's Media Center raised money via Kickstarter to make a short video raising awareness of violence against women in politics in the U.S. Posted online in 2017, the video featured the experiences of eight women, Democrats and Republicans, who had

run for political office across the country, from high school students to gubernatorial candidates to members of the U.S. Congress. As of 2019, it had been viewed more than 30,000 times.

## **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP: ACTION BY CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCATES**

Civil society groups have historically served an important role in calling attention to issues and creating pressure to change legal or cultural norms. In 2014 in Tanzania, a group of women's rights organizations joined together to launch a "Coalition Against Sextortion" and accompanying campaign to raise awareness about the pervasive presence of the sexual extortion of women, including in politics. In particular, the coalition aimed to break the silence surrounding the issue with public outreach about its impact as well as training women politicians to recognize and avoid "sextortion."

Civil society organizations have historically formed partnerships and networks across national borders to monitor, document and address issues of violence against women in politics. In 2006 and 2007, for example, one such network, called SAP International, worked in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India with the support of Oxfam to facilitate dialogues among women politicians about the issue, work towards greater public awareness, lobby for legal change and build alliances among advocacy groups.

- ***Document women's experiences with violence in political life.*** In 2015, the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition published a manual on documentation, pointing out that prevailing method for recording abuses in the human rights community reflected limited assumptions about who defenders are (men), where violations take place (public spaces), who commits these violations (agents of the state), what is human rights advocacy (for example, campaigns to end the death penalty) and what constitutes a human rights violation (torture in prison). Existing frameworks often tended to ignore women defenders, abuses occurring in private spaces, non-state perpetrators, women's rights activists and violations of a gendered or sexual nature.
- ***Provide alternative reporting mechanisms for women*** to anonymously share their testimonies of witnessing violence in politics. In 2018, staff at the

European Parliament launched the #MeTooEP blog to provide a venue for women to report incidents of sexual harassment they had experienced or witnessed at the parliament. The website served three functions: to critique the lack of institutional response a year after the European Parliament had passed a resolution on sexual harassment; to offer resources for those seeking help, including defining what sexual harassment is and what to do when faced with it; and to mobilize supporters around a number of key actions, including creation of a taskforce of independent experts, mandatory sexual harassment training for members of the European Parliament and a pledge for candidates in the 2019 European elections to prevent, combat and report sexual harassment and sexism in the European Parliament and beyond.

- ***Use listening sessions to inform services*** developed to combat violence against women in politics. In Canada, the Young Women's Leadership Network (YWLN) spoke with young people across Ontario who had been affected by sexual violence in the course of their political work as elected officials, volunteers, interns, staffers and lobbyists. During the sessions, respondents offered a number of recommendations, including alternative programs at events where alcohol is present, to lower the risk of sexual violence; provision of third-party, survivor-centric anti-harassment and sexual violence support advisors at political gatherings; codes of conduct and information about support services; and adequate funding for lodging to ensure that party convention attendees can have private rooms. To support these strategies, YWLN developed four services for political institutions: sexual violence support training, policy consultation, equity and inclusion training and anti-harassment support at political events and conferences.
- ***Offer financial support to women*** affected by violence against women in politics. Based in the U.S., Urgent Action Fund offers rapid response grants for women human rights defenders. Accepting applications in any language using online, text and mobile funding applications, the organization responds within 24 hours and makes most decisions in one to ten business days, offering a lifeline to women defenders to mitigate threats and prevent backsliding in their work. By its tenth anniversary in 2007, Urgent Action Fund had supported more than 100 activists in 45 countries.

- ***Provide digital safety training for women*** who are, or are seeking to become, politically active. Glitch, a charity based in the United Kingdom, offers a free online training—thanks to a partnership with the Equal Power Coalition—on digital self-care, safety and security for women currently in or aspiring to be in politics. Seeking to equip women with practical tools and increased control over their online presence, the one-hour-long interactive training focuses on types of online abuse and tactics; online safety techniques and strategies, including how to effectively document abuse; and creating a digital self-care plan.
- ***Offer services to victims of violence against women in politics.*** In 2012, the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA-Kenya) established a dedicated SMS hotline for victims and witnesses to report instances of violence against women candidates and voters. After forwarding these text messages to the closest police station for response, FIDA lawyers would follow up with victims and, where relevant, offer free legal aid. In 2017, they offered the same hotline, but augmented their support services. In addition to sending cases to the police, they referred victims in need of medical attention to a gender-based violence recovery center. In the Kisu region, a hotspot of election violence, they also set up in-person counseling at the FIDA offices to assist those who wanted to report instances of violence.
- ***Provide training to law enforcement officials*** to enable them to recognize acts of violence against women in politics. In 2017, FIDA-Kenya trained police officers in five regions on gender-based violence in elections to foster more informed responses to these cases.
- ***Recognize and promote the importance of self-care*** for targets of violence against women in politics. In 2013, a study by the Mesoamerican Women Human Rights Defenders Initiative (IM-Defensoras) found that protection for human rights defenders often focused narrowly on physical protection in the form of bodyguards and bullet-proof jackets. In contrast, little attention was paid to broader threats and their impact on women's physical and mental health. Partnering with a Mexican NGO, they created Casa La Serena, offering ten-day stays to women human rights defenders in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua to help them recuperate, heal, rest and reflect. IM-Defensoras argued that self-care was not a luxury, but a vital political strategy for individual and collective well-being.

# ELECTED AND APPOINTED LEADERS

Elected and appointed leaders can take steps as individuals—not only as members of parliament, government officials or party members—to prevent and punish violence against women in politics. Female leaders can play an important role in helping to break the silence around this issue by telling their stories, exposing perpetrators and creating networks to generate momentum for change. Male politicians can take a stand by publicly supporting campaigns to end violence against women in politics, as well by naming and shaming their colleagues who engage in such acts. Over the last five years, such actions have helped amplify voices calling for an end to violence against women in politics. However, many leaders still hesitate to speak out, often for political reasons. At the same time, some prominent leaders—often, but not only, in contexts of democratic backsliding—are at the forefront of this problem, committing or inspiring egregious acts of violence against women in politics.

## Actions for elected and appointed leaders:

- ***Share personal stories of violence against women in politics***, perpetrated against oneself, close friends or colleagues. In 2012, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard gave an impromptu speech in the parliament about sexism and misogyny in politics. Clips of the speech went viral in Australia and around the world, resonating with many women and opening up new conversations about sexism. Reflecting on negative reactions to her speech by other commentators who accused her of “playing the gender card,” Gillard wrote in her autobiography in 2014: “Calling sexism out is not playing the victim. I have done it and I know how it made me feel. Strong. I am nobody’s victim. It is the only strategy that will enable change.”<sup>72</sup>
- ***Use existing state and legal mechanisms to pursue complaints*** related to violence against women in politics. In 2020, Lenore Qereqeretabua, a member of parliament in Fiji, responded to a sexualized attack from a local teacher by filing reports against the perpetrator with the police, the Ministry of Education and the Online Safety Commission. These actions inspired women’s human rights groups to denounce online attacks against other women in parliament by the same man. Collectively, these actions brought visibility to the issue of violence against women in politics which, up to that point, had remained largely unreported by media across the Pacific Islands.<sup>73</sup>



- **Join other women to denounce violence against women in politics.** In 2017, more than 140 women in California politics—legislators, staff, consultants and lobbyists, both Democrats and Republicans—signed an open letter published in the *Los Angeles Times*. Listing examples of threats and sexual harassment experienced in the course of their political work, they explained they had remained silent until now due to personal shame and concern about professional ramifications for doing so. They called on other women to speak up and share their stories and for the “good men, and there are many, to believe us, having our backs, and speak up.”<sup>74</sup>
- **Use social media as a platform for exposing acts of violence** against women in politics. Elected in 2018, U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez often uses her Twitter account as a platform to respond to or call out abuse, whether perpetrated online or in media coverage more broadly. In 2019, she inverted her opponents’ logic that, based on her identity and background, she was unqualified to serve in the U.S. Congress by tweeting: “I find it revealing when people mock where I came from, & say they’re going to “send me back to waitressing,” as if that is bad or shameful... But our job is to serve, not rule.”<sup>75</sup> Such responses need not be limited to acts occurring at the present moment. In 2016, former French cabinet minister Monique Pelletier reacted to campaigns against sexual harassment in politics by tweeting: “Minister of women in 1979, I was harassed by a senator... shame on me for my silence!”<sup>76</sup>

*This traditional Mayan ceremony in Guatemala celebrates an observation effort to reduce violence in elections, a form of political violence that affects women’s ability to participate in democracy. (Photo credit: NDI.)*



- Support and contribute to efforts to document women's experiences with violence in political life. In 2014, the Alliance of Feminist Representatives in Japan sent a questionnaire to more than 500 women serving as local councilors across the country (see text box).

### **DOCUMENTING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES: ACTION BY WOMEN POLITICIANS IN JAPAN**

One of the first surveys of political women and their experiences of sexual harassment in politics was carried out by the Alliance of Feminist Representatives in Japan in 2014. They received 143 responses indicating that female politicians in Japan experienced a wide range of harassment, from sexist heckling and taunts about their marital status to being silenced in debates and unwanted touching. Self-identified feminists and those campaigning for gender equality were more likely than other women to report being targeted. Harassment was also more common in councils where women held less than 10% of seats.<sup>77</sup>

- ***Organize listening sessions for women*** to share their experiences and recommendations for tackling violence against women in politics. In 2018, three women in U.S. state politics spearheaded the Illinois Anti-Harassment, Equality and Access Panel, which spent six months collecting surveys, consulting with experts and holding listening sessions across the state with hundreds of women working in politics. While it had no formal investigatory powers, the panel's listening sessions focused on what women themselves saw as solutions and obstacles to addressing sexual harassment in the political workplace. Drawing on women's testimonies, the panel recommended clear and non-negotiable policies not limited to what the law provided, including party funding of campaigns tied to adopting sexual harassment policies and undergoing training, independent reporting avenues in campaigns and parties more broadly and policies for consensual romantic relationships.



- ***Develop programs for men in politics*** aimed at increasing their awareness of violence against women in politics. In 2020, NDI launched *Men, Power, and Politics*, an initiative to engage male political leaders as transformative agents of change for gender equality, recognizing that patriarchal gender norms have led to the continued marginalization of women from political life. NDI's program guidance outlines a series of linked exercises for men in politics to personalize the issue of gender to better understand their own disproportionate power and privilege; professionalize this new understanding by applying it to how gender norms impact broader political contexts and political organizations; and leverage this increased understanding to strategize how to achieve organizational change and broader gender equality efforts in ways that are accountable to women.<sup>78</sup>

# JUSTICE AND SECURITY SECTORS

Members of the justice and security sectors serve as the primary point of contact for victims of crime, providing a mechanism for citizens to report incidents and, ideally, gain protection or compensation from the state and/or prosecution of the perpetrator. Over the last five years, justice and security actors have taken steps in a handful of countries to explore ways of responding to violence against women in politics, including by clarifying how the law might assist victims and creating new offices to assist women who are targeted. Far more could be done by actors in these sectors, however, given their potential capacity to shift the environment from one of widespread impunity to greater accountability for acts of violence against women in politics.

## Actions for the justice and security sectors:

- **Provide citizens with information**

on legal redress and services for victims of violence against women in politics. In 2017, the United Nations Development Program in partnership with UN Women and the UN Secretary-General partnered with various aid agencies and governments to produce a pocket-sized booklet distributed to polling agents ahead of the Kenyan elections.

The booklet listed applicable laws on elections, electoral offenses, sexual offenses, criminal procedure and domestic violence. It also outlined what security agents, citizens and victims should do when faced with electoral gender-based violence and provided contacts for helplines, legal services, rescue shelters and medical and trauma services.



*When women can enter into the political sphere unfettered and without the fear of violence, their voices can add to the democratic outcome and values of their country, like this woman in Uganda. (Photo credit: NDI.)*

- ***Assist and encourage politically active women*** targeted for violence in pursuing their claims through the justice system. In Italy, former cabinet minister Cécile Kyenge pursued and won several legal cases related to the sexist and racist abuse she faced during her time in office. In 2019, for example, a senator was found guilty of defamation for likening her to an orangutan. In the United Kingdom, a number of women in parliament—including Luciana Berger, Stella Creasy and Anna Soubry—have taken cases of online abuse to the courts, leading to jail time for a number of their harassers.
- ***Consider how to tackle violence against women*** in politics using existing laws, procedures and agencies. In 2015, actors in various state institutions in Mexico began to receive complaints related to violence against women in politics, despite the absence of a specific law on this issue. Seeking to establish a process for dealing with these cases, members of the Federal Electoral Tribunal reached out to colleagues at related bodies to explore what they might be able to do, individually and collectively, within their existing competencies. In 2016, these conversations led to the publication of a Protocol to Address Political Violence against Women in collaboration with the National Electoral Institute, the Office of the Special Prosecutor on Electoral Crimes, the Subsecretariat of Human Rights of the Interior Ministry, the Executive Commission on Attention to Victims, the National Commission on Preventing and Eradicating Violence against Women, the National Institute of Women and the Office of the Special Prosecutor on Crimes of Violence against Women and Human Trafficking.
- ***Create informational materials to help targets of violence*** against women in politics navigate the legal system. In 2018, the Office of the Special Prosecutor on Electoral Crimes in Mexico created a website as part of a task force on violence against women in politics. One of the most extensive sections provided details on how to bring forward complaints of violence against women in politics, mapping out the legal process should women decide to pursue their claims via different state institutions.
- ***Assist women with safety planning*** as a means to avoid and mitigate the effects of violence against women in politics. In 2018, NDI launched the #think10 tool to provide women in politics with guidance on how to enhance their personal security (see text box).

## UNDERTAKING SAFETY PLANNING: THE NDI #THINK10 TOOL

NDI developed the #think10 tool to enable politically active women to improve their safety by evaluating potential vulnerabilities and identifying how to counteract and overcome these challenges. The tool includes a confidential self-assessment questionnaire posted online<sup>79</sup>—but also available in mobile app and paper formats—asking about levels and types of political activity, personal experiences with violence in political spaces, existence of support networks, intersectional identities, upcoming political events, presence of women’s rights protections, legal safeguards and police responsiveness and societal views on women’s public engagement and acceptability of violence against women. Answers to these questions are then combined with a country score from NDI’s Women’s Political Participation Risk Index to generate an individual safety plan, based on assessed levels of low, moderate or high risk.

- ***Adopt a gender-sensitive approach to policing*** related to violence against women in politics. In 2017, the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) trained police officers in five regions on gender-based violence in elections to foster more informed responses to these cases. In 2018, the disproportionately high volume of cases affecting women inspired the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team based at the British parliament to recruit a dedicated female security advisor to assist women in parliament in dealing with threats and abuse by providing tailored security advice.

## ELECTORAL OBSERVERS AND AUTHORITIES

Election observers and electoral management bodies work together to monitor and evaluate the fairness of elections. They can assist with efforts to combat violence against women in politics by observing and reporting incidents of violence and taking these acts into account when assessing electoral integrity. Over the last five years, election observers and electoral authorities in some parts of the world have grown more gender-sensitive in their approaches to this work, but more action needs to be taken to protect women's political rights and preserve the integrity of electoral processes around the globe.

### Actions for electoral observers and authorities:

- **Develop a code of conduct for elections** that includes articles prohibiting violence against women in politics. In 2018, the Independent National Electoral Commission worked with political parties in Nigeria on a voluntary code of conduct for the upcoming elections. It forbids any party or candidate from using “inflammatory language, provocative actions, images or manifestation that incite violence, hatred, contempt or intimidation against another party or candidate or any person or group of persons on grounds of ethnicity or gender.” This included issuing any poster, pamphlet, leaflet or other publication containing such incitement.
- **Incorporate a code of conduct into the elections law**, providing stronger protections against violence against women in politics by facilitating their enforcement by electoral authorities. Guarantees of this nature appear in the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina (see text box).



*Elections are an essential component of democracy, and women must be able not only to compete but also to vote free from fear or threat of violence (Photo credit: NDI.)*

## ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN ELECTIONS: ACTION BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF BOSNIA

Two articles of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina directly address violence against women in politics. Article 7.2 proscribes the “posting, printing and dissemination of notices, placards, posters or other [election] materials... on which women or men are presented in stereotype and offensive or humiliating ways.” Article 16.14 forbids campaign conduct “by way of electronic and printed media where the contents are stereotyped and offensive against men and/or women or which encourages any stereotype and offensive behavior on the grounds of gender or any humiliating attitude against the members of different genders.” Additionally, Article 7.3 indirectly addresses violence against women in politics by prohibiting hate speech, establishing that electoral actors may not “use language which could provoke or incite someone to violence or spread hatred or to publish or use pictures, symbols, audio and video recordings, SMS messages, Internet communications or any other materials that could have such effect.” The Central Election Commission has the power to impose three types of sanctions on those who violate these rules: fines up to 5000 euros, removal of perpetrators standing as candidates and decertification of political parties.

- ***Clarify procedures for how women might bring forward complaints*** related to violence against women in politics. In Bolivia, where a law was passed in 2012 criminalizing political harassment and violence against women, few cases succeeded in making it through the legal system. In 2017, the national election authorities responded by publishing a regulation to assist women in bringing forward their cases, outlining the process and necessary documentation needed to file a complaint.
- ***Consider how to tackle violence against women in politics*** using existing laws, procedures and agencies. In 2015, the Federal Electoral Tribunal in Mexico reached out to colleagues at other state institutions to explore what they might be able to do, individually and collectively, within their existing competencies to tackle cases related to violence against women in politics. This work led to the 2016 publication of a Protocol to Address Political Violence against Women, updated in the intervening years and now entitled the Protocol to Address Gender-Based Political Violence against Women.

- ***Train and engage citizen election observers*** to detect and report acts of violence against women in politics. In 2015, NDI's *Votes without Violence* program supported citizen observer groups in Guatemala, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Burma and Tanzania to implement new methodologies for election monitoring that integrated a close attention to the ways women—as voters, party members or candidates—were being specifically targeted for violence. In Guatemala, Acción Ciudadana, a civil society group, was able to collect data to support previous anecdotal evidence that social benefit programs were being used to target and politically coerce women disproportionately to men.

*Ene Ede, adviser to the NDI-supported "Stop Violence Against Women in Elections" campaign in Nigeria, discusses strategies to stop violence against women in politics with a group of international experts at NDI in December, 2015. (Photo credit: Ezra Gregg.)*







**MARIA RESSA**  
Co-founder and CEO of Rappler

**#NotTheCost**  
Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics

*Maria Ressa, NDI's Democracy Award honoree in 2017, has faced a torrent of online violence fueled by Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte's public statements about her work. (Photo Credit: NDI)*

## MEDIA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

The media and technology sectors play a powerful role in political communication, serving as a major platform and means for perpetrating—but also responding to—violence against women in politics. Over the last five years, technological advances have created new opportunities for perpetrators to attack and undermine women as political actors, particularly through the spread of gendered disinformation. Yet impunity for such acts remains widespread, requiring media and technology actors to do more than simply create community standards that largely remain unenforced. Engaging the media and technology sectors, including in partnership with the various other actors identified in this call to action, will be vital in all future efforts to ensure that women are able to participate in politics fully, equally and safely.

### Actions for media and technology:

- **Raise awareness among journalists** to recognize and avoid committing acts of violence against women in politics via their news coverage. In 2020, Time's Up Now, an NGO in the U.S. created in the wake of the #MeToo movement, sent an open letter to news division heads, editors in chief, bureau chiefs, political directors, editors, producers, reporters and news anchors to ask them to reflect on their role in perpetuating inequality through the use of gender and racial stereotypes in their reporting.



They provided a long list of examples to highlight ways in which media coverage has contributed to the lack of diversity in top political roles, including through sexist and racist questioning of women's qualifications and temperament—standards rarely, if ever, applied to (white) men. They offered to help media outlets meet this challenge and warned that they would be watching the coverage carefully. To amplify this message, they employed the hashtag #WeHaveHerBack on social media.

- **Mobilize journalists to cover stories** of violence against women in politics. In Germany, a journalist for *The Huffington Post* published a story illuminating the experiences of young female party activists across the five major parties. Combining dozens of personal interviews with anonymous surveys of nearly 100 women, the story reported that 45% of the women had witnessed sexual harassment during their political work and one in three had personally experienced it themselves.<sup>80</sup> In Canada, the Canadian Press, a national news agency administered a survey to female members of parliament across all parties in late 2017. This coverage used media platforms to draw attention to violence against women in politics more quickly and widely than other actors—like NGOs and academics—ever could.
- **Foster and support research on online violence against women in politics.** Data technology companies have partnered with various actors to collect and analyze social media abuse. For its *Tweets that Chill* study in 2019, NDI collaborated with Charitable Analytics International (CAI) to explore the nature and impact of online violence on young women's political engagement in Indonesia, Colombia and Kenya. NDI researchers surveyed university students and ran three-day workshops in each country to develop lexicons of words and phrases in local languages to capture both gender-based harassing language and the political language of the moment. CAI used these lexicons to develop an algorithm and scrape data from a sample of Twitter accounts, which were later verified as abusive or not by human coders. The study found that politically active women in the three countries paused, decreased or completely stopped participating online following violent incidents.<sup>81</sup>
- **Enforce and enhance community standards** on social media platforms to take down posts and remove users who engage in violence against women in politics. Twitter, for example, explicitly states that users may not threaten violence against an individual or a group of people; engage in targeted harassment of someone; promote violence against, threaten

or harass other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability or serious disease; or depict sexual violence and/or assault. Yet many politically active women who report abusive content often grow disillusioned with the process, noting that platforms often refuse to remove the offending content due to questionable and often inconsistent judgments regarding what does and does not constitute “abuse,” related in part to the lack of training in detecting gendered and intersectional forms of abuse. Dramatic steps taken by Twitter in early 2021 to remove users and flag posts spreading disinformation about the U.S. elections was an important step forward in this respect. However, in some cases this conduct simply migrated to other platforms, like Parler, which have openly expressed less willingness to monitor abuse and disinformation.

- ***Introduce new security and privacy settings*** for social media accounts to better protect users from violence against women in politics. In 2020, Facebook created Facebook Protect, a program offering candidates, elected officials and government and party officials, as well as their staff, a way to further secure their accounts. By enrolling in the program, Facebook helps users set up stronger account security protections, like two-factor authentication and monitoring for potential hacking threats. In early 2021, Facebook announced it would expand this program to more types of accounts, including journalists and human rights defenders.
- ***Develop technology to proactively find and remove online violence against women in politics.*** In 2019, the Public Policy Manager at Twitter shared that her team had created a tool to proactively find abusive content and provide users with a single report that they can email to the police. In 2017 and 2018, the company had made more than 30 changes to its platform, policies and operations to address hateful conduct online, including taking action on ten times the number of abusive accounts.<sup>82</sup>

## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS: A SOLVABLE PROBLEM FOR TECH?**

Social media remains a key platform for perpetrating violence against women in politics. Over the last five years, technological advances have also made it increasingly easier to create manipulated images and videos of politically active women. Combined, these developments have exacerbated the potential for media and technology to harass and intimate women, as well as spread gendered disinformation undermining their political participation. Addressing this problem effectively requires coordinated and sustained action from a variety of sectors to ensure that women are able to participate in politics without fear of violence. A global summit on technology and violence against women in politics, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders including political women, the technology industry, government, civil society and academia, could serve as a vital starting point. In addition to developing codes of conduct and principles of protection, such a summit could deepen global understandings of how online violence impacts democracy, creating a greater sense of urgency for tackling violence against women in politics in all its forms.

# ENDNOTES

- 1 Kishi, Roudabeh, Melissa Pavlik, and Hilary Matfess. 2019. **‘Terribly and Terrifyingly Normal’: Political Violence Targeting Women**. ACLED Data.
- 2 Rojas Valverde, María Eugenia. 2010. **“Gender-Based Political Harassment and Violence: Effects on the Political Work and Public Roles of Women.”** New Solutions 230 (4): 527-535.
- 3 Digital Rights Foundation. 2018. **Online Participation of Female Politicians in Pakistan’s General Elections 2018**.
- 4 Committee on Standards in Public Life. 2017. **Intimidation in Public Life**. London: CSPL.
- 5 Human Rights Watch. 2009. **“We Have the Promises of the World”: Women’s Rights in Afghanistan**. New York: HRW.
- 6 Krook, Mona Lena. 2019. **“Global Feminist Collaborations and the Concept of Violence against Women in Politics.”** Journal of International Affairs 72 (2): 77-94.
- 7 Dhrodia, Azmina. 2017. **“Unsocial Media: Tracking Twitter Abuse against Women MPs.”** Medium, September 4.
- 8 Centre for Social Research and UN Women. 2014. **Violence against Women in Politics: A Study Conducted in India, Nepal, and Pakistan**. New Delhi: CSR/UN Women.
- 9 Guerin, Cécile and Eisha Maharasingam-Shah. 2020. **Public Figures, Public Rage: Candidate Abuse on Social Media**. Washington, DC: ISD.
- 10 Krook, Mona Lena. 2020. **Violence against Women in Politics**. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 11 Rheault, Ludovic, Erica Rayment, and Andreea Musulan. 2019. **“Politicians in the Line of Fire: Incivility and the Treatment of Women on Social Media.”** Research and Politics 6(1): 1-7.
- 12 Brechenmacher, Saskia and Caroline Hubbard. 2020. **How the Coronavirus Risks Exacerbating Women’s Political Exclusion**. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- 13 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 14 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2014. **Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women**. New York: UN.
- 15 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 16 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 17 Among others, see SAP International. 2011. Incidents that Changed the Course of Women Politicians. Lalitpur: SAP International; Bardall, Gabrielle. 2011. **Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence**. Washington, DC: IFES; Herrick, Rebekah, et al. 2019. **“Physical Violence and Psychological Abuse against Female and Male Mayors in the United States.”** Politics, Groups, and Identities. Online First.
- 18 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 19 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing**

- 20 **Violence against Women in Political Parties.** Washington, DC: NDI.  
Krook, Mona Lena. 2020. **Violence against Women in Politics.**  
New York: Oxford University Press.
- 21 Judson, Ellen, Asli Atay, Alex Krasodonski-Jones, Rose Lasko-Skinner,  
and Josh Smith. 2020. **Engendering Hate: The Contours of State-  
Aligned Gendered Disinformation Online.**  
London: Demos and National Democratic Institute.
- 22 United Nations. 1993. **Resolution 48/104: Declaration on the  
Elimination of Violence against Women.** New York: UN.
- 23 CEDAW Committee. 1992. **General Recommendation No. 19 on  
Violence against Women.** Geneva: CEDAW Committee.
- 24 CEDAW Committee. 2017. **General Recommendation No. 35 on  
Gender Based Violence against Women, Updating General  
Recommendation No. 19.** Geneva: CEDAW Committee.
- 25 Šimonović, Dubravka. 2018. **A/73/301: Report of the Special  
Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and  
Consequences on Violence against Women in Politics.** New York: UN.
- 26 UN General Assembly. 2018. **Resolution 73/148: Intensification of  
Efforts to Prevent and Eliminate All Forms of Violence against  
Women and Girls: Sexual Harassment.** New York: UN.
- 27 Chávez, Franz. 2009. **"Bolivia: Politics, A Risky Business for Women."**  
IPS News, October 27.
- 28 National Democratic Institute. 2019. **Tweets That Chill: Analyzing  
Online Violence against Women in Politics.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 29 Campbell, Rosie and Joni Lovenduski. 2016. **Footprints in the Sand:  
Five Years of the Fabian Women's Network Mentoring and Political  
Education Programme.** London: Fabian Society.
- 30 Young Women's Leadership Network. 2018. **It's Time: Addressing  
Sexual Violence in Political Institutions.** Ontario: YWLN.
- 31 United Nations. 1993. **Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.**  
New York: UN.
- 32 CEDAW Committee. 2017. **General Recommendation No. 35 on  
Gender Based Violence against Women, Updating General  
Recommendation No. 19.** Geneva: CEDAW Committee.
- 33 UN General Assembly. 1998. **Resolution 53/144: Declaration on  
the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of  
Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human  
Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.** New York: UN.
- 34 Jilani, Hina. 2002. **2002/106: Promotion and Protection of Human  
Rights: Human Rights Defenders.**  
Geneva: Commission on Human Rights.
- 35 Terah, Flora Igoki. 2008. **They Never Killed My Spirit... But They  
Murdered My Only Child.** Meru: Olive Marketing and Publishing.
- 36 Saferworld. 2013. **"It's Dangerous to Be the First": Security Barriers  
to Women's Public Participation in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.**  
London: Saferworld.
- 37 Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2018. **Sexism, Harassment, and Violence  
against Women in Parliaments in Europe.**  
Geneva: IPU and Council of Europe.
- 38 Phillips, Jess. 2016. **"Jo Cox's murder Has Left Us MPs More Fearful to**

- 39 **Speak Our Minds.**” Guardian, November 23.
- 40 IM-Defensoras. 2013. **“A Feminist Alternative for the Protection, Self-Care, and Safety of Women Human Rights Defenders in Mesoamerica.”** Journal of Human Rights Practice 5(3): 446-459.
- 41 Human Rights Watch. 2019. **“The Breath of the Government on My Back”: Attacks on Women’s Rights in Poland.** New York: HRW.
- 42 National Democratic Institute. 2020.
- 43 **Men, Power, and Politics: Program Guidance.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 44 CEDAW Committee. 2013. **General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict, and Post-Conflict Situations.** Geneva: CEDAW Committee.
- 45 UN General Assembly. 2018. **Resolution 73/148: Intensification of Efforts to Prevent and Eliminate All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls: Sexual Harassment.** New York: UN.
- 46 Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2019. **Guidelines for the Elimination of Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women in Parliament.** Geneva: IPU.
- 47 International Labour Organization. 2019. **Convention 190 Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.** Geneva: ILO.
- 48 Other members included: the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the Carter Center.
- 49 Convening Committee. 2019. **Declaration of Principles Guidelines on Integrating Gender Considerations in International Observation, including Violence against Women in Elections.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 50 Hubbard, Caroline and DeSoi, Claire(2016). **Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer’s Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 51 Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2016. **Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women Parliamentarians.** Geneva: IPU.
- 52 Hubbard, Caroline and DeSoi, Claire. 2016. **Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer’s Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 53 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 54 National Democratic Institute. 2019. **Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence against Women in Politics.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 55 Hubbard, Caroline and DeSoi, Claire. 2016. **Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer’s Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 56 UNDP and UN Women. 2017. **Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide.** New York: UNDP and UN Women.
- 57 National Democratic Institute. 2016. **#NotTheCost: Stopping Violence against Women in Politics: Program Guidance.** Washington, DC: NDI.
- 58 INSERT CSW65 AGREED OUTCOMES DOCUMENT
- Inter-Parliamentary Union.
- Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.**
- UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. 2007. **Consenso de Quito.** Santiago: ECLAC.

- 59 Council of Europe. 2019. **Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1: Preventing and Combating Sexism**. Strasbourg: COE.
- 60 Inter-American Commission of Women. 2015. **Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women**. Washington, DC: OAS.
- 61 Inter-American Commission of Women. 2017. **Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life**. Washington, DC: OAS.
- 62 Inter-American Commission of Women. 2019. **Model Protocol for Political Parties**. Washington, DC: OAS.
- 63 ParlAmericas. **Mapping Gender-Based Political Violence**.
- 64 Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2018. **Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women in Parliaments in Europe**. Geneva: IPU and Council of Europe.
- 65 Hekking, Morgan. 2020. **"80% of Arab Women Parliamentarians Have Experienced Gendered Violence."** Morocco World News, February 27.
- 66 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. 2019. **Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls: Best Practices and Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean**. Washington, DC: OAS.
- 67 Committee on Standards in Public Life. 2017. **Intimidation in Public Life**. London: CSPL.
- 68 May, Theresa. 2018. **Speech on Standards in Public Life**, February 6.
- 69 Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (New Zealand Group). 2018. **Sexism, Harassment, and Violence against Women Parliamentarians in New Zealand**. Wellington: Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (New Zealand Group) and IPU.
- 70 National Democratic Institute. 2018. **No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 71 Centre for Social Research and UN Women. 2014. **Violence against Women in Politics: A Study Conducted in India, Nepal, and Pakistan**. New Delhi: CSR/UN Women.
- 72 Gillard, Julia. 2014. *My Story*. London: Bantam Press.
- 73 National Democratic Institute. 2020. **Violence Against Women In Politics in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 74 Iwu, Adama et al. 2017. **"We Said Enough."** Los Angeles Times, October 16.
- 75 Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria. 2019. **Tweet**, March 8.
- 76 Pelletier, Monique. 2016. **Tweet**, May 10.
- 77 Dalton, Emma. 2017. **"Sexual Harassment of Women Politicians in Japan."** Journal of Gender-Based Violence 1(2): 205-219.
- 78 National Democratic Institute. 2020. **Men, Power, and Politics: Program Guidance**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 79 National Democratic Institute. **#Think10 Tool**.
- 80 Pfahler, Lennart. 2018. **"95 Junge Politikerinnen Berichten über Sexismus in Ihren Parteien."** HuffPost, January 15.
- 81 National Democratic Institute. 2019. **Tweets That Chill: Analyzing Online Violence against Women in Politics**. Washington, DC: NDI.
- 82 Di Meo, Lucina. 2019. **#ShePersisted: Women, Politics, and Power in the New Media World**. Washington, DC: Wilson Center.

#NOT  
THE  
COST