

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences

The IANSA Women's Network is the only international network focused on the connections between gender, women's rights, small arms and armed violence. It was formed in 2001 as a women's caucus at IANSA events and now links members in countries ranging from Fiji to Senegal, Argentina to South Africa, Canada to Sudan.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, is mandated to seek and receive information on violence against women, its causes and consequences from Governments, treaty bodies, specialized agencies, other special rapporteurs responsible for various human rights questions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and to respond effectively to such information.

The Special Rapporteur transmits urgent appeals and allegation letters (communications) to States regarding alleged cases of violence against women which she receives.

Individual Complaints

Allegations may concern one or more individuals or may convey information relating to a general prevailing situation condoning and/or perpetrating violence against women. It should be emphasized that, in accordance with her mandate, the Special Rapporteur is in a position only to process cases of alleged violence or threats of violence directed against women because of their sex. The definition of gender-based violence used by the Special Rapporteur is taken from the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/104 on December 1993.



The dialogue established with governments by the Special Rapporteur and the transmission of allegations concerning their countries in no way implies any kind of accusation or value judgment on the part of the Special Rapporteur, but rather a request for clarification with a view to trying to ensure, along with the government concerned, the effective prevention, investigation, and punishment of acts of violence against women and compensation for victims of such violations.

Urgent Appeals

Urgent transmissions may be sent by the Special Rapporteur to concerned Governments when reliable and credible information is received concerning cases which involve an imminent threat, or fear of threat, to the right to personal integrity or the life of a woman. When transmitting urgent actions, the Special Rapporteur appeals to the Governments concerned to ensure effective protection of those under threat or at risk of violence.

Allegation Letters

For those communications that do not require urgent action but relate to violations that already occurred and/or to general patterns of violations - including the legal framework and its application as regards violence against women – the Special Rapporteur may send allegation letters requiring Governments to clarify the substance of the allegations received.

How to submit cases to the Special Rapporteur

It is important to provide as much information as possible. The individual complaint form can be used to document cases of violence against women.

It would be helpful to receive a summary of the main points of the case. The summary could identify the rights that have been or may be violated. If your government has ratified human rights treaties, you could refer to the specific provisions of the treaties you believe have been violated.

If your submission is in regard to a law, practice or policy which affects women in general or women in a specific group, explain how other women are affected or describe the group. A consistent pattern in individual cases can be used to demonstrate a general failure to prevent and respond to private abuses.

If you submit information about violations committed by private individuals or groups (rather than government officials), include any information which might indicate that the government failed to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish, and ensure compensation for the violations. For example information on:

- *whether or not there is a law which addresses the violation*
- any defects in existing laws such as inadequate remedies or definitions of rights
- the refusal or failure by authorities to register or investigate your case and other similar cases
- the failure by the authorities to prosecute your case and other similar cases
- patterns of gender discrimination in the prosecution or sentencing of cases
- statistics and other data concerning the prevalence of the type of violation described in the submission.

Please bring to the attention of the Special Rapporteur any information which becomes available after you have submitted information about a case. For example, if your human rights concern has been adequately addressed or a final outcome has been determined in an investigation or trial, or an action which was planned or threatened has been carried out.

Reports on Communications

A summary of communications and the replies received from the concerned State are included in the Special Rapporteur's annual Communications report to the Commission on Human Rights. Please note that, as a general rule, both urgent appeals and letters of allegation remain confidential until published.

To get to the Confidential Individual Complaint Form for Sending to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women please click [here](#).