

#NotTheCost

STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS ♀

A Call to Action

THE ISSUE:

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

It encompasses all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation against women as political actors simply because they are women. These acts—whether directed at women as civic leaders, voters, political party members, candidates, elected representatives or appointed officials—are designed to restrict the political participation of *women as a group*. They reinforce traditional stereotypes and roles given to women, using domination and control to exclude women from politics.

This violence is a major barrier to women’s political participation, and threatens to undo many of the gains that have been made toward political and gender equality. Politically active women’s experience of violence must not be “the cost of politics.” In fact, it **costs** politics the benefits of the sustainable and responsive democratic governance that an inclusive political space can create.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

The problem of violence against women in politics needs to be exposed in all its forms. It must be acknowledged globally, validating the realities that many women face, and empowering them to speak frankly about their experience. Action must—and can—be taken to mitigate and prevent this violence. By supporting or leading efforts to stop violence against politically active women, you can have an influence on women’s ability to exercise their political rights without fear of violence or the threat of reprisal.

Take action in your own association, community or country against this violence:

- Educate and raise awareness creating new norms and standards against this behaviour
- Develop indicators and collect data on the prevalence, form and impact of violence against women in politics
- Raise awareness of the global nature of these debates to emphasize that violence against women in politics is not a phenomenon restricted to one area of the world
- Support networking among female politicians and civil society organizations interested in tackling this issue, whether on a formal or informal basis

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When a woman participates in politics, she should be putting her hopes and dreams for the future on the line, not her dignity and not her life.

— Madeleine K Albright, Chairman of NDI
