



# Indigenous Women's Call to Action for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence



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## Cultural Factors

Indigenous women are the bearers of ancestral knowledge, the guardians of our lands, and the architects of sustainable communities. Their resilience in the face of adversity is a testament to the strength ingrained in our cultures. Yet, this strength should not be mistaken for an acceptance of the status quo or misconstrued as a capacity for tolerating harms. It is a call to acknowledge indigenous women's contributions to indigenous societies and the world as healers, peacekeepers and life forces.

The Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact calls for an end to the triple discrimination that is a lived reality of indigenous women and girls who are caught in the crosshairs of poverty, racial and ethnic discrimination, chronic malnutrition and higher rates of illiteracy. Indigenous women and girls also struggle to be represented at tables where decisions are being made; a complex matrix, exposing indigenous women and girls to multilayered trauma triggered by ongoing structural and lateral violence.

The Global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence call to UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls serves as a grim reminder that our commitment to eradicating gender-based violence must be backed by tangible and sustained investments. We pledge to continue to stand firmly with indigenous women and girls who form an integral and crucial part of Indigenous Peoples' fight for self-determination. Intersectional violence which has shaped indigenous women's experiences must be deconstructed fully to activate a multidimensional elimination strategy through sustained investments.

## Colonial Legacy

Historically oppressed and silenced, a colonial legacy has had a profound impact on indigenous women and communities. The colonial policies of States have often taken a tokenistic approach to the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' constitutional rights. Ongoing internal colonization by States has brutalized indigenous women whose bodies are often used as political tools through rapes and massacres during civil unrest and militarization of their ancestral territories. Displacement, cultural disruption, and economic marginalization resulting from archaic policies further exacerbate the vulnerability of Indigenous women.

## Systemic Issues

Systemic issues, stemming from lack of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities keep indigenous women in the vicious cycle of poverty. Limited resources, lack of timely and prioritized interventions and institutional discrimination continue the marginalization.





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## Discrimination and Stereotypes

Negative stereotypes in the form of parody and pastiche in popular culture whether it is through the medium of film, music, on social media or through academia dehumanize indigenous women and girls carving the way for impunity against those who perpetrate violence and discrimination against them. Efforts to address GBV among Indigenous women should be culturally competent and sensitive to the unique needs and perspectives of each community. Solutions must be developed in collaboration and consultation with indigenous women leaders following due processes such as meaningful Free Prior and Informed Consent.

## Social and Legal Justice System Challenges

Obstacles to justice occur at each stage from the initial reporting of violence to seeking justice in court. Access to justice is hampered further due to a mistrust of law enforcement, inadequate legal representation, and systemic biases within the justice system. These barriers exist in conjunction with patriarchal control of women which discourages women from seeking and accessing justice outside their communities and homes. Survivors of gender-based violence are collectively silenced, and left to carry the burden of shame and guilt on their own. All of which can result in a lack of accountability for perpetrators. While international frameworks such as CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 34/16 specifically mentions particular threats and discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls, it is imperative that indigenous women's rights are included and mainstreamed at the grassroots level.

Addressing the intersectional violence faced by Indigenous women requires a comprehensive and culturally informed approach that considers historical context, systemic issues, and the diverse needs of Indigenous women and girls. Advocacy, education, and policy changes are essential components of this ongoing effort.

The 16 Days of Activism serve as a powerful catalyst for us to shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by indigenous women in their daily lives, where gender-based violence intersects with issues of land dispossession, environmental degradation, and social inequality.

As we engage in the global 16 Days of Activism, we challenge governments, international organizations, and civil society to go beyond tokenistic gestures and genuinely prioritize the inclusion of indigenous women's voices. The fight against GBV is incomplete without acknowledging and dismantling the systemic barriers that have perpetuated violence against indigenous women for far too long. Let their voices resound not just during these 16 Days but every day, shaping our shared destiny.



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