

## **Statement on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls**

**Saturday 25 November 2023**

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Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November marks the UN International Day for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and the start of 16 days of global activism. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to join this movement: the work to end VAWG is deeply rooted in Catholic Social Teaching.

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation and is often perpetrated by the people closest to them: around the world, a woman is murdered by a partner or family member every 11 minutes.<sup>1</sup> Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in times of war; sexual violence is used as a weapon of war and is also rife in refugee camps.

In the UK, domestic abuse disproportionately affects women, with one in four (and one in two Deaf and disabled women) subjected to domestic abuse during their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that women with a religious faith tend to stay longer in abusive marriages, and that statutory services often fail to meet their spiritual needs<sup>3</sup>.

This year's theme for the international day for ending VAWG is "Unite! Invest to end violence against women and girls" As Catholics, we can answer the call to action in many ways, investing not just money, but our time, skills and willingness to speak up and raise awareness of this issue. The Holy Father recently called us all to end violence against women, describing it as 'a poisonous weed that plagues our society and must be pulled up from its roots'<sup>4</sup>. The Church in England and Wales is answering the call through the work of the National Board of Catholic Women, CSAN, and projects like Caritas Westminster's Bakhita House and Safe in Faith. This year, the CSAN domestic abuse alliance is focusing on the issues of migrant women, who are particularly vulnerable when they are subjected to interpersonal violence. Women with no recourse to public funds face barriers to some of the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/UN\\_BriefFem\\_251121.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/UN_BriefFem_251121.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://refuge.org.uk/news/refuge-launches-accessibility-features-ndah-website/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.faithandvawg.org/publications/resource-page-document-only/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2023/11/09/231109a.html>

protection and services which are accessible to other victims and survivors, and their rights are not protected by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Catholics across England and Wales are encouraged to join the call to action, with a 16-day calendar of suggested actions to help you take part in the global movement to end VAWG. You can download the calendar from the websites below; please share it in your parishes and join us in prayer and in action to protect the lives and dignity of women and girls around the world.

If you need support, please see the below links:

UN Women Action Guide: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>

Women's Aid [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

Welsh Women's Aid [www.welshwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk)

Safe in Faith (Caritas Westminster) [www.safeinfaith.org.uk](http://www.safeinfaith.org.uk)

National Domestic Abuse helpline 0808 2000 247 [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

Live Fear Free Helpline (Wales) 0808 80 10 800 <https://welshwomensaid.org.uk/en/what-we-do/live-fear-free-helpline/>

Galop: <https://galop.org.uk> 0800 999 5428

Rape Crisis: <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/want-to-talk/> 0808 802 9999

## **End Notes**

### **National Board of Catholic Women**

The National Board of Catholic Women brings together women from many different backgrounds. Working nationally and internationally to challenge discrimination and promote the right of women to gender justice. The Board actively promotes the presence, participation and responsibilities of Catholic women in the Church and society. The Board works ecumenically, with women of other faiths and secular groups. There are also many member organisations that bring their expertise, interests and networks to the wider Board. The Board is a consultative body to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales and the United Nations Social and Economic Committee (ECOSOC). In 2020, after many years of addressing VAWG issues as part of their other work, and responding to a growing need, the Board created a new committee to focus solely on issues relating to Violence Against Women and Girls to sit alongside their other key work areas. More information can be found on the [NBCW website](#).

## **Caritas Social Action Network**

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) was established by the [Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales](#) to develop the Church's social action in these parts of the United Kingdom, sharing in the mission of the Catholic Church where England and Wales can be places where every person is fulfilled in their families and communities, living with peace and human dignity. The small national team, based in London, seeks to animate and co-ordinate Catholic charitable activities, and to bring the voices of the poor and Catholic teaching to bear in guiding public policy. The [network](#) includes Catholic dioceses and professional organisations committed to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Their work includes community and specialist support for families and children, the elderly, people who are homeless, refugees, the disabled, and prisoners. They draw on deep and lasting connections of volunteers and staff with their neighbourhoods. More information can be found on the [CSAN website](#).