

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO NYLESA EVENT ON 16 DAYS
OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
2 December 2020**

I thank NYLESA, which supports UN spouses in New York, and the Common Threads Project, which assists women who have suffered violence worldwide, for organizing this event to commemorate 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence..

Violence against women and girls is a horrible and widespread affront to human rights, and a blight on all our societies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed this issue as a global emergency requiring urgent action at all levels, in all spaces and by all people.

Even before the pandemic, nearly one in five women experienced violence at the hands of an intimate male partner.

Measures to contain the pandemic have increased the danger for those already in abusive relationships.

Earlier this year, I urged local and national governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women and girls an urgent priority in their national response plans for COVID-19.

Many states and also city governments have responded.

They have increased resources for psycho-social and legal support; and supported prevention initiatives, data collection and funding for women's rights organizations and partners.

But, much more action is needed to ensure that all women and girls feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods.

That is why we have 16 days of activism in connection with the international day for the elimination of violence against women.

But those days of activism and awareness need to be every day throughout the year until we end this shadow pandemic of violence.

Incidents of violence against women and girls must be given high priority by police and judicial institutions.

Prevention strategies, which address the root causes of violence against women need to be stepped up.

And safe spaces are needed, especially for grassroots women's organizations that provide essential services to hard-to-reach, remote and vulnerable populations.

We must also continue to implement measures within our own walls, including through the UN Task Force that addresses sexual harassment in the workplace.

The United Nations is committed to supporting and working with governments and other stakeholders to ensure much faster progress in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

This is the only way we can bring about a world of justice and equality, where all lives are treated with the same respect.

Let us all UNiTE to end the violence during COVID-19 and beyond.