

WHITE RIBBON



1. The White Ribbon Campaign

The *White Ribbon Campaign* is the first male-led campaign to end violence against women in the world. We encourage men to take a stand and say that violence, in any form, is never acceptable.

Origins

In 1991, on the second anniversary of the massacre of 14 women by a lone gunman in Montreal, Canada, a handful of Canadian men initiated a White Ribbon campaign to urge men to speak out against violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon, particularly in the weeks leading up to the anniversary of the women's deaths, represented men's public pledge never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. That first effort achieved the distribution of 100,000 white ribbons to men across Canada, and promoted widespread community discussion about violence in personal relationships.

The White Ribbon Campaign has spread to countries on every continent, and commences each year on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

In December 1999, the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 54/134 declaring November 25 the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

As the United Nations General Assembly had resolved six years earlier, ***“violence against women constitutes a violation of the rights and freedoms of women... there is a need for a clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women, a clear statement of the rights to be applied to ensure the elimination of all violence against women in all its forms, a commitment by States... and a commitment by the international community at large to the elimination of violence against women.”***¹

¹ United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women A/RES/48/104, 85th plenary meeting, 20 December 1993.

Kofi Annan stated in March 1999, ***“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And, it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.”***²

The origins of November 25 as the International Day go back to 1960, when the three Mirabal sisters from the Dominican Republic were killed for their political activism. The sisters, known as the 'Unforgettable Butterflies', became a symbol of the crisis of violence against women in Latin America. November 25 was the date chosen to commemorate their lives and promote global recognition of gender violence.

November 25 marks both the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and White Ribbon Day, the first day of the White Ribbon Campaign.

Why wear a white ribbon?

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal pledge that the wearer does not excuse violence against women, and is committed to supporting community action to stop violence by men against women.

Men who wear a white ribbon demonstrate their opposition to violence against women and their commitment to equality between women and men. Men of all ages, from all workplaces, of all political affiliations and of all racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation and physical ability are needed to help establish community leadership to stop violence against women.

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>.
Viewed November 11, 2009.

² United Nations Chronicle Online Edition.
<http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2005/issue1/0105p57.html>.
Viewed November 11, 2009.