

## Sample Opinion Editorial

### A Great Step Forward to Stop the Epidemic of Violence Against Women and Girls

*The International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) would for the first time place gender-based violence prevention and response at the center of the U.S. foreign policy and foreign assistance agenda. Amnesty International USA and our partners in the Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls Globally are pushing Congress to pass this vital legislation in 2015.*

Around the world, with sickening frequency we hear about another instance of violence against a girl or woman. Consider the [women and girls abducted](#) by the group calling itself the “Islamic State” who are experiencing horrific acts of sexual violence; or the [women murdered with impunity](#) in Guatemala, a country with one of the highest rates of femicide in the world; or [99% of women surveyed in Egypt](#) who have undergone some form of sexual harassment; or [women in Cambodia](#) who experience physical violence with little recourse owing to a domestic violence law loophole.

Violence against women and girls is one of the world’s most pervasive human rights abuses and a tremendous and costly problem. The World Health Organization estimates that one in every three women will experience violence in her lifetime, with rates reaching up to 70% in some countries. Women and girls fall prey to sex traffickers, are attacked as they attend school, endure brutality in the home, or are raped in conflict zones.

From Iraq and Guatemala to Egypt and Cambodia, violence against women destabilizes families and communities, blocks economic progress, and undermines women’s efforts to create better lives for themselves and their families. Violence takes the lives of millions of women and girls, and denies countless others their dignity and their right to live safe, productive lives. No country is immune. Violence crosses all national borders and affects women of all ages, social groups, religions, and economic, racial and ethnic groups.

Consider “Arwa”, a 15 year old girl who was abducted from her village with over sixty of her relatives and hundreds of neighbors by the Islamic State. Before escaping, she was raped in captivity. If passed, the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA) would make gender-based violence prevention and response a U.S. government foreign assistance priority, with the goal of using diplomacy and aid to respond to and ultimately reduce levels of violence. So, for example, health care providers would be trained to recognize signs of violence and provide proper medical care, legal services would be in place to lend support, and law enforcement would be trained on how to better respond to the needs of survivors like Arwa.

Working through the international assistance that the U.S. already provides to countries around the world, this bill will support best practices against violence so that authorities can bring perpetrators to justice and women and girls can go to school, earn an income, and participate politically without fear of rape.

Investing in women makes sense because when women and girls thrive, societies are more likely to prosper, reduce rates of HIV and AIDS, decrease child and maternal mortality, and increase participatory and democratic governments— all of which makes U.S. assistance dollars go farther. U.S. security – and the security of all countries – is only enhanced when the status of women is elevated. So addressing violence against women is crucial to global development and stability, and by extension, to U.S. security.

In August 2012, the U.S. government took a historic step to help millions of women and girls by releasing its first ever U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. This comprehensive strategy improves existing aid programs with the goal of helping to prevent and reduce violence against women. This effort, which is set to expire this summer, must be renewed through passage of IVAWA. We cannot let such critical efforts expire. I ask [\[your Member of Congress name here\]](#) to support the bill and ask [\[his and her\]](#) colleagues to do the same.

Supporting the International Violence Against Women Act is in the United States’ interests as well as being the right thing to do. Tell lawmakers to do more to stop violence against women and girls across the globe.

## Sample Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

From Iraq and Guatemala to Egypt and Cambodia, violence against women and girls is one of the world's most pervasive human rights abuses and a tremendous and costly problem: it destabilizes families and communities, blocks economic progress, and impedes one out of three women worldwide from creating better lives for themselves and their families.

In August 2012, the U.S. government took a key step to support millions of women and girls by releasing its first ever U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. This comprehensive strategy improves existing foreign assistance programs with the goal of helping to prevent, reduce and ultimately end violence against women. Unfortunately, it is set to expire this summer.

The strategy must be extended through passage of the International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA), a bill that will make such existing efforts to stop violence against women more integrated, effective and efficient, placing women at the center of U.S. diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts where I believe it belongs.

I ask [your Member of Congress name here] to support the bill and ask [his or her] colleagues to do the same.

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive human rights crisis that demands a strong response. I ask [your Member of Congress here] to do just that and support this effort.

*Name*

*Town, State and affiliation*

**NOTE: If your letter to the editor or editorial is published, let us know! Email us at [tdemant@aiusa.org](mailto:tdemant@aiusa.org)**