

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

For Immediate Release

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Statement from AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Liz Shuler on the United Nations International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women
November 25, 2009

Today, as the global community commemorates the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the AFL-CIO joins trade unionists from every nation in calling for renewed efforts to combat gender-based violence.

Violence against women is a global problem that affects women of all ages, ethnicities, races, nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds. It is also a workplace issue. Unequal treatment of women in workplaces and the unsafe employment conditions of many women increase their risk of being victims of sexual harassment, abuse and rape. At the same time, domestic violence often impedes the ability of women to go to work and earn a living to support their families. To meet their families' needs, many women have been forced to leave their home regions in search of work elsewhere, often thereby becoming vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

The AFL-CIO recognizes this dynamic in its Charter of Rights of Working Women, issued in a statement by the AFL-CIO Executive Council on March 5, 2009. It states: "Although [women around the world] speak different languages, they share the vision of a world founded on respect, peace, equality and solidarity, and without violence, harassment and discrimination. For all women, especially for the millions who work in insecure, temporary, unsafe, underpaid and unpaid jobs, this vision lies far beyond the truth of their daily lives."

Employers must be held responsible for ensuring that women have safe workplaces free of all forms of violence and sexual harassment. Bringing an end to violence and discrimination against women will have a positive impact on our families, our economies, our nations and our world.

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