

Statement of the Religious Leaders of Cyprus
Condemning all forms of Violence against Women and Girls

8 March 2017

We, the religious leaders of the five main faith communities of Cyprus, Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Armenian Orthodox, Maronite and Latin Catholic, who form the *Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process* under the Auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, are deeply concerned that violence against women and girls continues to be one of the most pervasive manifestations of discrimination against women in Cyprus. This includes economic, psychological, sexual, and physical violence.

We acknowledge with pain that violence against women affects women and girls of all ages, religions and ethnic backgrounds. Violence undermines women's dignity and integrity and has devastating effects on the lives of women and girls with severe consequences on families, communities and societies. As long as it persists, the world cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.

We reiterate our common belief that men and women have equal value in the eyes of God. Christianity and Islam condemn violence against women. Violence against women and girls, in whatever form, is a contradiction to the will of God and unacceptable in His eyes.

We strongly believe that religious leaders don't only have a responsibility but also a religious duty to stand united against violence in all its forms everywhere, including violence against women and girls.

Therefore, as Christian and Muslim religious leaders of Cyprus:

- We strongly condemn violence committed against women and girls and express our commitment to share this message with our respective faith communities and society as a whole.
- We categorically reject the misuse of religion to vindicate any form of violence against women and girls and express our united voice against all forms of violence against them.
- We pray for healing and wholeness and reach out to all women and girls that have fallen victim to violence.
- We are committed to ensure that violence against women and girls are recognised, condemned and that there are legal frameworks and institutions capable of dealing with it. In this regard, we are committed to work together with state and civil society partners to end violence against women and girls in Cyprus.

Signatories:

H.B. Chrysostomos II
Archbishop of Nova Justiniana and All Cyprus

H.E. Dr. Talip Atalay
Mufti of Cyprus

H.E. Yousef Soueif
Archbishop of the Maronite Church of Cyprus

H.E. Khoren Toghramadjian
Archbishop of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church of Cyprus

Rev. Father Jerzy Kraj
Latin Patriarchal Vicar and Representative of the Apostolic Nunciature in Cyprus

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