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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Campaigning for the Elimination of Gender Violence: *Towards the recognition of every woman's right to a life free of violence***

**Geneva, 25 November 2008.** *On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, OMCT joins its network members and partners to call for the recognition that human rights cannot be universal without the protection of women from gender-based violence and discrimination.*

From 25 November to 10 December human rights groups worldwide will be celebrating the “16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence” Campaign, which is dedicated this year to the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the reassertion of the universality of the human rights of women. In the framework of this Campaign, OMCT field partners will carry out various activities to call attention to the magnitude, forms and consequences of gender-based violence and to demand states’ compliance with their commitments undertaken upon the adoption in 1993 of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

In India and Georgia, OMCT partners will highlight the consequences of militarization and conflict on women and demand accountability for gender-based violence perpetrated in this context. Other themes addressed include trafficking in women (West Bengal, India), women human rights defenders (Nepal) and women living with HIV/AIDS (Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal). Capacity-building activities will be carried out in Bangladesh and Nepal in order to strengthen human rights activists’ capacity to document and report violence against women. In Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo, partner NGOs will reach out to local communities in order to foster understanding and awareness of the right of women to a life free of violence.

Local and global activism plays a key role in the recognition that gender-based violence is the worst form of discrimination against women, and one that requires multiple and sustained positive measures by local and national authorities. Sixty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 16 Days Campaign aims to finally bring human rights home to every woman.

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***Further information on activities carried out by OMCT's network members and partners during the 16 Days Campaign - See [www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org) or [http://www.omct.org/pdf/VAW/2008/16\\_jours\\_activisme/16\\_days\\_activism\\_activities\\_en.pdf](http://www.omct.org/pdf/VAW/2008/16_jours_activisme/16_days_activism_activities_en.pdf).***

## ***Background on the 16 Days Campaign***

*The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign originating in 1991. The dates, November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women, and December 10, International Human Rights Day, have been chosen in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that such violence is a human rights violation. This 16-day period also highlights other significant dates, including November 29, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, and December 1, World AIDS Day.*

*Historically, the 16 Days Campaign has been instrumental in using a human rights framework to draw global attention to the worldwide problem of violence against women. In its early years (1991-1992), 16 Days activists initiated a worldwide petition calling for the United Nations to place women's human rights issues on the agenda for the World Conference on Human Rights in June of 1993 in Vienna, Austria. By the time of the conference, the petition had collected half a million signatures in 23 languages from 124 countries. The petition helped secure a formal declaration of women's rights as human rights and of violence against women as a human rights violation in the Vienna Declaration. Also, in 1999, the 16 Days Campaign was part of successful efforts to push the United Nations to declare November 25 as International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Activists at the local, national and regional levels have realized successes through activities as varied as media campaigns, campus rallies, art exhibitions, lobbying, roundtable discussions, theater performances, tribunals, and workshops.*

*For more information, see <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/kit08/kit.html>*