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PRESS RELEASE

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) launches its publication “Violence Against Women: 10 Reports/Year 2003” covering the situation of women in Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Eritrea, Estonia, Mali, Russia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

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The World Organisation against Torture (OMCT) has published a fourth collection of reports, *Violence Against Women: 10 Reports/Year 2003*, within the framework of its Violence against Women Programme. The publication forms part of the Programme’s work in the field of integrating women’s human rights and a gender perspective into the activities of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies. Over the past year, OMCT submitted ten alternative country reports to the five “mainstream” human rights treaty bodies: three alternative reports to the Committee against Torture on **Cameroon, Colombia and Turkey**; two alternative reports to the Human Rights Committee on **Estonia and Mali**; two alternative reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on **Brazil and Russia**; two alternative reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on **Bangladesh and Eritrea**; and one alternative report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on **the United Kingdom**.

The ten country reports in this compilation confirm that violence against women is clearly a universal problem. Although distinct social, cultural and political contexts give rise to different forms of violence, its prevalence and patterns are remarkably consistent, spanning national and socio-economic borders as well as cultural identities. Women in Turkey, Bangladesh and Brazil are subjected to violence committed in the name of honour or passion, while women in Cameroon, Mali and Eritrea undergo genital mutilation in the name of tradition. Immigrant women victims of domestic violence in the United Kingdom, although not more likely to be victims of domestic violence than women in the majority population, risk losing their residency permits if they leave their violent husbands. In Cameroon, Brazil, Turkey and Eritrea, marital rape is not a crime. Women and girls in Estonia and Russia are particularly vulnerable to becoming trafficking victims. Women in Colombia are targeted for being relatives or otherwise associated with the “other” side in Colombia’s ongoing armed conflict, and women in Chechnya are subjected to violence during “clean-up” operations and at checkpoints. Women human rights defenders in Colombia and Chechnya have disappeared and have been tortured, threatened and killed as a result of their work.

Violence against women continues to flourish since too many governments do not accept responsibility to end gender-based violence and allow it to occur with impunity. Unequal gender roles and societal structures adversely influence women’s enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and may lead to different forms of violence against women including domestic violence and trafficking. Many states have failed to pass legislation specifically prohibiting and punishing violence against women, and have failed to train State officials to understand the complexities of the issues surrounding this type of abuse.

Recognizing the important of raising awareness about violence against women in all of its forms, the OMCT country reports compiled in this publication serve as important documentation of the widespread and pervasive nature of violence against women in the family, in the community and at the hands of State agents.

Carin Benninger-Budel and Lucinda O’Hanlon, *Violence Against Women: 10 Reports/ Year 2003*, OMCT, 2004, ISBN: 2-88477-073-9, 418 pp.

The collection of reports is available on the internet site of the OMCT (www.omct.org). A French and Spanish summary of the ten country reports in the compilation can also be found on the OMCT website.

For further information concerning OMCT's Violence Against Programme please contact the women's desk at: cbb@omct.org or ak@omct.org.