



Ending violent punishment of girls

A key element in the global challenge to all violence against women and girls

Oral statement by Defence for Children International, the CoNGO Committee on Child Rights, International Humanist & Ethical Union and Ribbon International
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Violence against women and girls is now universally understood to be a violation of their human rights and it is accepted that eliminating this violence is key in achieving gender equality.

However, corporal punishment, the most common form of violence against girls, is rarely included in the global challenge to all violence against women and girls.

International human rights law is clear that girls and boys have a right to legal protection from all corporal punishment, including in the home. Prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment is fundamental in preventing violence against women and girls – both for direct prevention of violence against girls and as part of a broader strategy for eliminating other forms of violence.

Corporal and other cruel and humiliating punishment of girls is a violation of their rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity, and its legality violates their right to equal legal protection from assault. Yet as of February 2013 corporal punishment is legally sanctioned in some settings of girls' lives in the majority of states worldwide, and in all settings in 26 states. Judicial sentences of corporal punishment for children are lawful in 41 states; where sentencing is based on Sharia law, women and girls from the age of puberty can be ordered to undergo cruel punishments including flogging. Corporal punishment is lawful in schools in 81 states and in

group care settings such as orphanages in 146 states. In 165 states, violent punishment of girls is legally sanctioned in their own homes.

The Secretary General's report prepared for CSW 57 notes the prohibition of corporal punishment in some states and recommends that states:

*“Develop programmes combining skills-building of respectful relationships and counselling support for children and young people exposed to violence to further avoid future perpetration of violence or victimization; adopt measures and programmes to address physical violence, including corporal punishment of children; and promote positive and non-violent parenting programmes”*¹

However, the “draft agreed conclusions”, we understand, do not explicitly mention the need to eliminate corporal punishment.

Given the very widespread legality and social acceptance of corporal punishment, it is necessary to explicitly include the corporal punishment of children in the outcome document. Prohibition of all corporal punishment is both a basic requirement for the prevention and elimination of violence against girls and a key part of a broader strategy for eliminating violence against women. Where it is not explicitly included, it remains invisible – allowing the legality and practice of this most common form of violence against girls to continue unchallenged.

We urge members of the United Nations, entities within the UN system and others working on violence against women and girls, including all those attending the 57th session of the Commission for the Status of Women, to reflect in their work the obligation under international law to prohibit and eliminate all corporal punishment of girls

¹¹ [Report of the Secretary General](#) on prevention of violence against women and girls (E/CN.6/2013/4), para. 89 (x)