

17 July 2023

An Open Letter to the Organisers of Women Deliver and the Generation Equality Forum: High-Level Forums on Women's Rights Must Not Ignore the Rights of Criminalised, Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women

We, the undersigned, call upon the organisers of [Women Deliver](#) and the [Generation Equality Forum](#) to ensure that these high-level forums on women's rights are inclusive of all women, particularly criminalised, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women.¹

The [Generation Equality Forum](#), convened by UN Women in 2021, was the largest forum on women's rights in the last 25 years. The forum launched a series of ambitious actions to progress gender equality and billions of dollars were pledged by philanthropists and governments to support this agenda.

However, a key group of women and girls were [left out of this process](#) — criminalised, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women. Women's incarceration is increasing at a [faster rate than for men](#), up 60% compared to 22%, since 2000. The women's prison population has increased by over 100,000 in the last ten years. There is a wealth of evidence that shows women's incarceration is closely linked to gender-based violence, poverty and discriminatory laws.

Despite these glaring statistics, women's incarceration was not a feature of any of the six Generation Equality [Action Coalitions](#) — key thematic action areas chosen for the global community to focus on for the next 5 years — including ones focused on Gender-Based Violence and Economic Justice and Rights. Women with lived experience of the criminal justice system were invisible throughout the forum, despite the sixth Action Coalition being focused on Feminist Movements and Leadership.

The Generation Equality Midpoint will be held in September 2023, bolstered by the Women Deliver conference in July. We are dismayed that, yet again, women's incarceration is not a priority issue and that applications submitted by some of the undersigned organisations to hold an official event on this issue at Women Deliver were not accepted.

This is reflective of the marginalisation of the realities of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women across high-level forums, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).² This contributes to lack of [funding](#) and policy reform which is needed to address the alarming increase in the criminalisation of women and the number of children detained with a parent.

We call upon member states, UN and other intergovernmental organisations, as well as the organisers of these high-level forums, to ensure that women's incarceration is included as a priority topic. This includes at the upcoming Generation Equality Midpoint and CSW 2024. Consultations should be held with stakeholders working in this space. In particular, the voices of women with lived experience must be placed centre stage, such as the [International Network of Formerly Incarcerated Women](#).

¹ This letter was coordinated by [Women Beyond Walls](#). For more information, please contact hello@womenbeyondwalls.org. Thank you to everyone who signed the letter and who helped to share it with their networks.

² An [analysis](#) of side events and parallel events at CSW 2022 found that incarcerated women were entirely missing from side events and out of 800 parallel events, only four presentations specifically focused on incarcerated women.

Organisations

1. Abolition of the Death Penalty in Iraq
2. ACAT Belgium
3. ACAT France
4. ACAT Germany
5. ACAT Liberia
6. Acción Andina Bolivia
7. AdvocAid Sierra Leone
8. African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum
9. AIVL (Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League)
10. AMAFA Foundation, South Africa
11. Amnesty International
12. Andean Information Network
13. Anti-Drug Abuse Forum Zimbabwe
14. APDES, Portugal
15. Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas (ACEID), Costa Rica
16. Asociación Por Ti Mujer, Spain
17. Association for the Prevention of Torture
18. Center for Prisoners' Rights, Japan
19. Center on Gender and Extreme Sentencing
20. Centre d'Observation des Droits de l'Homme et d'Assistance Sociale (CODHAS), DRC
21. Centre for Human Rights Education Advice and Assistance (CHREAA), Malawi
22. Centre for Women's Justice, UK
23. Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation, Canada
24. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), Argentina
25. Centro de Estudios y Acción por la Justicia (CEA Justicia Social), Mexico
26. Centro de Investigación Drogas y Derechos Humanos, Peru
27. Clean Start Africa, Kenya
28. Clinks, UK
29. Coalición Feminista Contra la Violencia Judicial, Venezuela
30. Coalition Action For Preventive Mental Health, Kenya
31. Coalition Togolaise des Défenseurs des Droits Humains, Togo
32. Coalition Tunisienne Contre la Peine de Mort, Tunisia
33. Colectivo Artesana, Guatemala
34. Coletiva Todas Unidas, Brazil
35. Conseil Communal Enfants de Savalou, Benin
36. Corporación ATS / Acción Técnica Social
37. Corporación Humanas Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos y Justicia de Género, Colombia
38. Corporación Mujeres Libres, Colombia
39. Corporación Viso Mutop, Colombia
40. Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN)
41. Death Penalty Focus
42. Dejusticia, Colombia
43. Droit et Paix
44. Drug Policy and Harm Reduction Platform, Malawi
45. Eldoret Women For Development, Kenya
46. Elementa DDHH, Colombia and Mexico
47. EQUIS Justicia para las Mujeres, Mexico

48. Federal Association of Vietnamese Refugees in the Federal Republic of Germany
49. Fédération internationale des ACAT (FIACAT)
50. Foundation for Human Rights Initiative
51. Free Hearts, USA
52. Fundación Acción Semilla, Bolivia
53. Fundación Latinoamérica Reforma, Chile
54. German Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (GCADP)
55. Give Hope Uganda
56. Global Exchange
57. Go Bifo Women, Sierra Leone
58. Greater Caribbean for Life
59. Harm Reduction Australia
60. Hibiscus, UK
61. HIV Legal Network / Réseau juridique VIH
62. Hope for Children's Health Foundation
63. Human Rights in Mental Health – FGIP
64. Human Rights Watch
65. Instituto RIA, Mexico
66. International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)
67. Italian Federation for Human Rights (FIDU), Italy
68. ITTC (Instituto Terra, Trabalho e Cidadania), Brazil
69. Japan Innocence and Death Penalty Information Center
70. Just Detention International, South Africa (JDI-SA)
71. Justice Project Pakistan
72. La Boussole
73. Lawyers Collective, India
74. Lawyers for Human Rights
75. LEASUR ONG, Chile
76. Medica MSc Drogodependencia
77. Metzineres, Spain
78. Mujeres Libres, Chile
79. Mujeres Libres, México
80. Next Generation Lawyers (NEXTGEN Lawyers), Kenya
81. New Zealand Needle Exchange Services Trust (NEST)
82. New Zealand Drug Foundation
83. Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones, Venezuela
84. Penal Reform International
85. Plataforma Brasileira De Política De Droga, Brazil
86. PREKURSOR Foundation, Poland
87. Prisoners' Future Foundation, Zambia
88. Radaud Mujeres Usuarías, Argentina
89. Recovering Nepal
90. Rede Nacional de Feministas Antiproibicionistas, Brazil
91. REDUC - Brasilien Harm Reduction and Human Rights Network, Brazil
92. REJADD, Togo
93. RESET - Drug Policy and Human Rights
94. Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, Bahrain
95. SANPUD, South Africa
96. Side by Side, South Africa
97. Sisters Inside, Australia
98. Southern Africa Litigation Centre

99. Sukaar Welfare Organization, Pakistan
100. Sunny African Children's Center, Uganda
101. The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies
102. The International Legal Foundation
103. The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists - ICJ Kenya
104. The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, USA
105. The Sunny Center Foundation, USA
106. Tithandizane Comfort Home, Zambia
107. Transnational Institute
108. Washington Office on Latin America
109. West Africa Drug Policy Network
110. Women and Harm Reduction International Network
111. Women Beyond Walls
112. Women in Prison, UK
113. Women Nest, Kenya
114. Womxns Voice (Suar Perempuan Lingkar Napza Nusantara), Indonesia
115. World Coalition Against the Death Penalty
116. World Vision Uganda

Individuals

1. Aimé T. Adi - Amnesty International Togo
2. Simeonne Agblonon - Women's Rights Activist
3. Kaumba Akuffo - Tithandizane Comfort Home, Zambia
4. M Imman Ali - retired Judge of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh
5. Catherine Appleton
6. Pedro Arenas - Co-Founder of Corporación Viso Mutop Colombia. Former mayor of San José del Guaviare and former Congressman of Colombia
7. Sareta Ashraph - International Criminal Lawyer
8. Cécile Auriol - Coordinatrice, ACAT Belgium
9. Sandra Babcock - Clinical Professor of Law, Cornell Law School
10. Andrea Barrios - Colectivo Artesana, Human rights defender, Director of an association of women formerly deprived of liberty and human rights defenders
11. Carolay Bayona - Formerly Incarcerated
12. Furaha Bazera - Présidente du Conseil d'Administration, Centre d'Observation des Droits de l'Homme et d'Assistance Sociale (CODHAS), DRC
13. Avril Calder - Retired Magistrate.
14. Rebeca Calzada
15. Katie Campbell - Advocate
16. Carmen - family member of an incarcerated person
17. Michelle Carpentier
18. Claudia Alejandra Cardona - Psychologist, Formerly Incarcerated Woman, Colombia
19. Rakia Chehida - Activist
20. Mondher Cherni - Lawyer
21. Chikondi Chijozi - Criminal Justice Lead, Southern Africa Litigation Centre
22. Patricia Chulver - Fundación Acción Semilla, Bolivia
23. Numbi Connie - Activist, Uganda
24. Geras Contreras
25. Isabella Cordua - Research Coordinator
26. Emilie Coyle - Executive Director, The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

27. Beatriz Maldonado Cruz - Formerly Incarcerated
28. Tsitsi Dangarembga - Author and Filmmaker. Arrested for holding a peaceful protest
29. Olivia Dehnavi - Senior Policy Officer
30. Kisubi Denis - Team Leader, Give Hope Uganda
31. Emily Ebdon - Narcofeminist
32. Ann Eve - Formerly Incarcerated, Eldoret Women For Development, Kenya
33. Ingrid Farias - Rede Nacional de Feministas Antiproibicionistas, Brazil
34. Mike Farrell - President, Death Penalty Focus
35. Aura Roig Forteza - Metzineres
36. Michael H. Fox - Director, Japan Innocence and Death Penalty Information Center
37. Martha Franco - Formerly Incarcerated
38. Mariano Fusero - Honorary President of RESET - Drug Policy and Human Rights
39. Ricardo Soberón Garrido - Centro de Investigacion Drogas y Derechos Humanos, Peru
40. Lucía Alvarado González
41. Dawn Harrington - Free Hearts, USA
42. Richard Honey KC - Lawyer
43. Zille Huma - Statistician (Data Analyst - Women Prisoners' Statistics), Justice Project Pakistan
44. Sunny Jacobs - Formerly Incarcerated/ Wrongly Convicted after being sentenced to death
45. Guleid Ahmed Jama – Lawyer, Somaliland
46. Marisol Pereira Herrera - Formerly Incarcerated
47. Aïsha Ismail - Formerly detained in 2013 and Executive Director of Women Initiative Against Vulnerability and for Harm Réduction
48. Rosma Karlina - Womxns Voice (Suar Perempuan Lingkar Napza Nusantara), Indonesia
49. Melba Katindi - Executive Director, Next Generation Lawyers Kenya/ Advocate of the High Court of Kenya
50. Doreen Kyazze - Lawyer
51. Lydia Winyi Kebabazi - Lawyer.
52. Dr Michelle Staggs Kelsall - School of Law, SOAS University of London
53. Susan Kigula - Lawyer, Human Right Activist and Formerly Incarcerated
54. Debbie Kilroy - CEO, Sisters Inside. Formerly Incarcerated
55. Catia Kim - ITTC Brazil (Instituto Terra, Trabalho e Cidadania), Coordinator and family member of formerly incarcerated woman
56. Louellyn Lambros
57. Simitie Lavalay – Lawyer
58. Victoria Lin
59. Cornelia Lisa Logan - Free Hearts, USA
60. Julie Mac Donnell - Human Rights and Harm Reduction Consultant
61. Dr Annie Madden - Executive Director, Harm Reduction Australia & People Who Use Drugs living experience advocate
62. Sabrina Mahtani - Lawyer
63. Jenny Marcela Perez Martin - Formerly Incarcerated
64. Silvia Edith Martinez - Lawyer
65. Bronwyn Masters - Formerly Incarcerated, Director AMAFA Foundation
66. Patrícia Mendes
67. Andrea Rivera Meneses - Relative of Incarcerated Woman
68. Dr Shona Minson - Criminologist and Lawyer, University of Oxford
69. Eleonora Mongelli - Vice President of Italian Federation for Human Rights (FIDU)
70. Andria Mordaunt MSc
71. Mathew Mutiso - Executive Director, Coalition Action For Preventive Mental Health, Kenya
72. Sheila Muwanga - Human Rights Defender
73. Undule Mwakasungula - Chairperson, Drug Policy and Harm Reduction Platform, Malawi

74. Dr Catherine Mwangi - Executive Director, Women Nest, Kenya
75. Olive Nindamutsa - Journalist
76. Teresa Njoroge - Clean Start Africa, Formerly Incarcerated
77. Molly Nkosi - Senior Legal Aid Advocate, Malawi
78. Marie Nougier - Drug Policy Reform Advocate
79. Irene Nsangi - Youth Leader, Uganda
80. Dr Stella Nyanzi – Formerly Incarcerated. Activist and Academic.
81. Gabriela Olivera - Psychologist and drug policy consultant
82. Habiba Rezwana Osman
83. Merle ORyan - Side by Side, South Africa
84. Henry Okiwu
85. Manon Padilla - Women Voice, Indonesia
86. Danielle Prince - Women's Rights activist
87. Evania Mantan Penjara
88. Henna Pithia - Lawyer
89. José Queiroz - Executive Director, APDES, Portugal
90. Paola Ramirez - Formerly Incarcerated, Mujeres Libres Chile
91. Maria Ernestina Moreno Rivas - Formerly Incarcerated
92. Ana Ingrid Zelada Rivera - Formerly Incarcerated, Colectivo Artesana, Guatemala
93. Edna Rivera - Formerly Incarcerated
94. Priscilla Rocha - Lawyer
95. Signe Roelsgaard - Civil Society Strengthening Specialist, Denmark
96. Vera Da Ros
97. Vannesa Rosales-Gautier - Coalición Feminista Contra la Violencia Judicial, Venezuela
98. Veronica Russo - Radaud Mujeres Usuaris, Argentina
99. Sergio Sánchez - Medical Director, Fundación Latinoamérica Reforma, Chile
100. Ayesha Saleem - Policy and Advocacy Officer, Justice Project Pakistan
101. Katrin Schiffer - Director, Correlation-European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN)
102. Patricia Schulz - Former member and Rapporteur of the UN CEDAW Committee and former Director of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality
103. Zara Snapp - Political Scientist, Instituto RIA, Mexico
104. Kisuule Timothy - World Vision Uganda
105. Dale Nikke Tokpah - ACAT-Liberia
106. Ana Cristina Tonini - Formerly Incarcerated Researcher at the Center for Research in Culture and Economy, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
107. Marta Valldaura - Lawyer
108. Ancella Voets - Harm Reduction Expert
109. Patricia Walsh – Formerly Incarcerated
110. Harriet Wistrich – Lawyer
111. Sara Teklay Woldu
112. Coletta Youngers - INFIW coordinator