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## PRESS RELEASE

# Survivors of Violence, Victims in Silence?

## International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2011: Time to reclaim undocumented migrant women's rights

On this important anniversary, PICUM calls on the EU and its member states to renew their efforts to fight all forms and expressions of gender-based violence and to protect all victims without discrimination. The worrying culture of impunity existing in the European Union must urgently be addressed.

“Europe can no longer tolerate a situation in which a woman can be attacked on the street, harassed at work, or raped in her home and then denied any support or justice. This is the case for many undocumented migrant women who are turned away from women's shelters and risk arrest or deportation if they seek help from the police. We urge Europe to address impunity and reassert its founding values of equality and non-discrimination by reclaiming these women's human rights”, said Michele Levoy, PICUM Director.

As the largest network of organisations working with undocumented migrants in Europe, PICUM has identified many legal and structural barriers that prevent undocumented women from accessing essential rights and services. Denied a legal income, lacking protection in the workplace, and often living in insecure and unsafe situations, undocumented women are more exposed to ill-treatment. Add to this, the risk of deportation if they contact the police, difficulty to access to women's shelters, legal and financial assistance for victims of violence, and it becomes clear that certain women are unprotected against violence in Europe.


This was certainly the case for Meena (30), whose irregular status meant she suffered the same abuse in Sweden as she had in Afghanistan.

“My brother beat me so bad that I had to run away. I was in the cold and I was bleeding. They wanted to kill me. I was in Sweden but it was like being in Afghanistan! I was so lonely and I had nowhere to go because I didn't have papers. A stranger offered me his help, but he also beat me and he used me. I fell pregnant and I wanted to run away again but he kept telling me that he would have called the police”, she told PICUM.

Working towards a Europe free from gender-violence, exploitation and impunity, PICUM will hold an **international conference; “Undocumented Women in Europe: Strategies for Support and Empowerment” on 12-13 December 2011 in Brussels, Belgium** seeking to foster real policy change for undocumented women across the region. For more information and to register please visit: [www.picum.org](http://www.picum.org).

PICUM is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that aims to promote respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe.

**If you would like to speak with organisations or individuals in your country working on this issue, please contact us.**

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