

**11<sup>th</sup> session of the Un Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues, 2012.**

**Violence against the San Women and Girls in Southern Africa.**

**Item 3, Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls, article 22 of the United Nations declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**

**7<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

Thank you Mr. Chair. On behalf of the San of southern Africa, we would like to address you on the issue of violence against San women.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples emphasizes in article 22 that: " States shall take measures, in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples, to ensure that Indigenous Women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination" .

San peoples have increasingly demanded that their interest as a people be heard so that issues that threatens their wellbeing and that of San women and youth, should be addressed. Violence against San women and children is of major concern to us. It has led to great despair and a feeling of hopelessness for our women and children to enjoy the better life which all people deserve.

According to our culture, all men and women, including the young ones, are part of the wholeness of the community. By believing in the wholeness of the community, all must contribute on an equal basis because each one of us have unique gifts to help heal our societies. The abuse of San women is thus a trauma suffered by all members of the community.

The theft of our lands and the attempts to destroy our culture and way of life, by extreme violence, including genocide, is the source and cause of all the violence which we as a people still face today.

When you take away a people's land, which is the basis of our dignity and our life, you leave them vulnerable to abuse, and you violate their rights to safety and security.

The infamous apartheid practise of paying San workers in alcohol instead of a wage, has led to serious alcoholism in our communities, and this is a major cause of violence. Unfortunately, independence from colonial powers has not ended this practise. In the Nyae Nyae, where I come from, no San person owns or operates a bottle store or shebeen and yet we are the ones who suffer from this scourge.

When our women collect food from the veld, they can be arrested, beaten, or worse.

We note with sadness that some of our women have been forced into prostitution by poverty and despair, and that young girls are now falling pregnant or becoming infected with HIV and TB. This is violence against women.

There are many other examples.

IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTE THAT Botswana has never submitted a report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

South Africa has done so only once, and Namibia only once.

We call on our governments to honour their commitments to uphold the dignity and the rights of indigenous women and children, as contained in the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous people, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and all other international instruments.

We call on the ILO to investigate and bring an end to the abuse of the rights of San workers, particularly women and children.

As the San Caucus, we say again that the theft of our lands, the destruction of our culture and the violation of our right to dignity is the source and cause of all violence against our people, particularly women and children.

Thank you.