

STEP UP TO ENSURE ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR ALL SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE, WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION

BRUSSELS, 15 December 2016 – Ahead of International Migrants Day, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network join their voices in [calling for access to services for all women](#) who are survivors of violence, no matter their migration status.

Across Europe, there are women who have experienced violence and are excluded from accessing support services because of their migration status. For them, going to the police risks deportation, and going to a women's shelter risks being turned away. If the right to access services and justice in situations of violence and abuse is linked to a woman's migration status, an undocumented woman or woman with a precarious migration status might lose her children, her livelihood and her dignity.

As a 33-year old undocumented woman living in the UK explained: *"My husband took advantage of my residence status being dependent on him, and when he failed to renew my permit and I became undocumented, it helped him. I was always scared of the police because he told me 'if you go to the police they will deport you!' It was emotional blackmail, that they would take my daughter away from me, because she is a British citizen and if I was deported, I would never see her again. And how could I live without my daughter!"*

When asked about leaving her situation of violence, one woman replied: *"How can you? You don't just leave as you are not in control of your situation. I just tried to make myself small and invisible so that he didn't need me or see me as a human being anymore and so he would leave me alone..."*

Another woman said: *"My health problems have been created, exacerbated by the violence. The stress of not having rights in this country have made my physical health so bad that I can barely get through the day without much pain. My mental health has suffered badly."*

Women whose immigration status depends on a spouse or an employer, women who become undocumented because they have left exploitative relationships or had their claim for asylum rejected, women who crossed the border irregularly to find work in Europe, women who have lived in Europe for years and established roots but who are without papers – these women face double violence: violence at the hands of a perpetrator, and violence at the hands of institutions that deny them the right to support, assistance, protection and justice.

The WAVE Step Up! Campaign calls on states to recognise their obligations under the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)), the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ([Istanbul Convention](#)) and the EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime ([Victims' Directive 2012/29/EU](#)) – all of which require taking steps to protect and support all women survivors on their territory, whatever their migration status.

The campaign is also a call to action for women's organisations, migrant rights' organisations and other civil society partners, as well as for city-level authorities to stand together in solidarity with migrant women, to resist racism and to resist discriminatory laws, policies and practices that defeat our common commitment to ending violence against women.

Rosa Logar, President and co-founder of WAVE said: *"Women's rights are human rights, and human rights are universal and apply to all women. Feminist principles must explicitly integrate an ethics of care that has as its cornerstone solidarity for all women and their experiences of violence, including that resulting from intersecting forms of discrimination. Actors invested in advancing women's rights must prioritise inclusiveness and women's autonomy."*

PICUM and WAVE call on service providers such as shelters, medical staff and legal advisors, local, regional and national governments, civil society organisations and women rights activists as well as individuals to step up for women's equality and [become supporters of the campaign](#).

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The statement is available online in English, French and Spanish.

Visit the WAVE Step Up! Campaign page [here](#).

Watch [here](#) a web documentary about the realities of undocumented women in Europe.

See also: [Strategies to End Double Violence Against Undocumented Women - Protecting Rights and Ensuring Justice](#), PICUM.

About PICUM

PICUM - the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, is a non-governmental international organisation (NGO) that promotes respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe. PICUM represents 155 member organisations in over 30 countries. For more information, see: www.picum.org

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About WAVE

The Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) is a formal Network of specialist women's support services and NGOs throughout 46 European countries. Since its establishment in 1992, WAVE aims to promote and strengthen the human rights of women and children and to prevent violence against women and children in particular. It aims at establishing gender equality by eliminating all forms of violence against women. For more information, see: www.wave-network.org

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