



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTES IN FAVOUR OF JUSTICE AND SERVICES FOR UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT WOMEN

BRUSSELS, 4 February 2014 – The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) and Women against Violence Europe (WAVE) commend the European Parliament for passing the resolution on undocumented migrant women in the European Union.

The plenary session of the European Parliament today voted on a resolution on [‘Undocumented Women Migrants in the European Union’](#). The motion for this resolution came from an own-initiative report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). Prepared by rapporteur Norica Nicolai (ALDE, Romania), the resolution calls on national and European authorities to ensure that a woman's immigration status does not prevent her from accessing decent housing, healthcare, and education, and to safeguard access to justice for those experiencing violence and exploitation.

While some key recommendations proposed by the FEMM committee were not passed in plenary, the resolution marks an important step in the right direction.

Across the EU, undocumented women face significant barriers to access to support, services and justice. Because immigration control is often given priority to their needs as victims, they risk severe reprisals when contacting the police. As a consequence, female victims of violence are detained and deported, while their perpetrators remain unpunished. This protection gap means that perpetrators of violence against women can actually threaten their victims with the police.

When she became undocumented in Sweden, Miriam (33) found herself in a chain of abuse that was impossible to break. She was turned away from the local women's shelter and lived in fear of the police. Her irregular status meant that she could be abused with impunity.

“He hit me and wanted to kill me, I could not go to the police because I have no papers. He said ‘if you leave me, I will call the police, you are a case for the police’. It was a very bad situation for me”,

The resolution recommends that member states now delink the prosecution of violence from immigration control so that all victims can safely report crimes. To ensure undocumented women are not turned away in their time of need, violence against women shelters are encouraged to waive requirements that women provide documentation. Finally, access to healthcare and education should be upheld, there should be no reporting of children of undocumented migrants.

The resolution recognises that all women should be able to access justice regardless of their residence status.

“A woman must be treated first and foremost as a woman”, affirmed PICUM's Director Michele LeVoy, *“Europe has taken a strong pledge to end violence against women and*

today's vote marks an important step in ensuring that undocumented women must no longer be left behind."

Speaking on behalf of Europe's network of women's service organisations, Rosa Logar underlined the urgent need to implement this resolution:

"Violence against women is a violation of human rights. It is the obligation of the state to protect all women and their children from violence. Discriminatory laws and regulations denying undocumented women and children access to shelters are inhuman and dangerous, they can cost lives!"

While it is regretful that some key recommendations were not passed such as a call for member states to ratify the UN Convention on Migrant Workers and the need to increase legal and social assistance for undocumented women, the resolution marks an important step regarding the need to protect undocumented women's rights in Europe.

PICUM and WAVE urge EU institutions and member states to now take the resolution on board by abolishing discriminatory regulations and guarantee access to shelters and justice for all victims, regardless of their residence status.

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View here PICUM's report "[Strategies to End Double Violence Against Undocumented Women. Protecting Rights and Ensuring Justice](#)", 2012.

To read the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA) guidelines: 'Apprehension of migrants in an irregular situation – fundamental rights considerations', click [here](#).

[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 provides a direct link between the grassroots level, where undocumented migrants' experience is most visible, and the European level, where policies relating to them are deliberated. PICUM provides regular recommendations and expertise to policy makers and institutions of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and at EU level. In 2009, PICUM was awarded participatory status with the Council of Europe.

[WAVE](#) – Women against Violence Europe is a network of women's refuges, counseling centres, SOS hotlines/helplines, and other NGOs working in the field of combating violence against women and children. The network sets out to promote and strengthen the human rights of women and children in general and to prevent violence against women and children in particular. WAVE adheres to the aims of the United Nations, stressing the importance of working towards ending all forms of violence against women and children in public and private life in accordance with the Vienna Declaration, the Declaration on Violence against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action and all other related documents. Since 2009, WAVE has participatory status with the Council of Europe and as of 2011 consultative status with ECOSOC.

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