

The Violence is Not our Culture (VNC) global campaign was launched on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to end the relentless misuse of religion and culture to justify the killing, maiming and torture of women as punishment for violating the imposed 'norms' of sexual behaviour. The Campaign is not against any religion or faith, but believes in promoting the positive, inclusive values and discourses that are part of our cultures.

The VNC Campaign grew out of local women's movements at the forefront of confronting and challenging acts of violence such as stoning, honour killings, forced/early marriage, marital rape, and more. Active across Senegal, the Sudan, Nigeria, Indonesia, Aceh, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, the Campaign builds local and transnational solidarity movements in diverse ways.

VNC distributes the valuable research and publications produced by local partners. This ranges from documentary films to policy briefing series, which undertake cross-comparative analyses of the practice of stoning and other forms of violence, to the most recent book "Control and Sexuality" which examines *zina* laws across certain Muslim contexts and communities in order to explore connections between the criminalisation of sexuality, gender-based violence and women's rights activism.

The Campaign also focuses on capacity building, and has held training workshops on Social Media Advocacy for partners in both the Africa and Asia regions to enhance their local and global communications strategies. VNC continues to bridge the local-global divide by bringing women's rights activists to UN forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women and Human Rights Council Sessions.

To mark its third year in action in 2010, VNC partnered with **Take Back the Tech** to launch actions to celebrate women's human rights defenders across the globe for the transnational 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Based Violence campaign. Under the slogan "***Reject 'cultural excuses' that deny women their rights to freedoms of expression and information***", local partners engaged in a variety of actions to promote the ability of women and girls to exercise their freedom of expression, and to countering the continued dissemination of cultural messages that are used to justify acts of violence against women.

In Pakistan, the Baidarie organization launched a series of activities which included dialogue with local community leaders and government officials and the launch of its online petition demanding the government to reintroduce the bill on domestic violence in the Parliament. Shirkat Gah, together with its local partners the South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP), the Women Workers Help Line, and Kashf Foundation organised a walk in solidarity with the women rights activists outside the Lahore Press Club, to denounce violence, particularly honour killings.

In Germany, Iranian women's rights activists under the banner of "Equal Despite Difference" Campaign held a meeting amongst Iranian lesbians to strategise their collective actions to fight homophobia and violence against lesbians in Iranian society both within and outside Iran including in cyberspace.

In the province of Aceh, close to 100 people – activists, academics, local government officials and religious scholars - attended the meeting organised by Solidaritas Perempuan-Aceh on 29 November 2010. Experts' papers were presented, all pointing to the misinterpretation and misuse of Shari'a across the province. The meeting successfully laid the foundation for a consensus-building amongst stakeholders regarding the importance of pressing the provincial government of Aceh to address the growing abuse of Shari'a by local religious leaders with support from the local government authorities.

These are but a few of the exciting actions VNC partners continue to carry out across the globe. To find out more about the campaign and how to get involved in your local context, visit <http://www.stop-stoning.org> or email [info@stop-stoning.org](mailto:info@stop-stoning.org) and sign up to our listserve for future updates.