



# ISSUE

**AMNESTY  
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# BRIEF

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## **THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (I-VAWA) (S.2982, HR.4594)**

**E**very year, violence devastates the lives of millions of women and girls. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation occurring globally. It includes rape, domestic violence, women being beaten and killed by their husbands, human trafficking and more. The United Nations Development Fund for Women estimates that at least one in every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence destabilizes countries, impedes economic progress, and prevents women from raising healthy children.

The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) (S.2982, HR. 4594) creates a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing violence and places women at the center of U.S. foreign policy. The bill supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. It contains best practice provisions for preventing and responding to violence against women during times of peace and times of conflict. The legislation was developed by Amnesty International USA, Family Violence Prevention Fund and Women Thrive Worldwide with input from 40 international and 150 U.S. based groups with relevant expertise. The bill was introduced in the House and Senate during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress and received bipartisan support. Hearings were held in October 2009 by Senator Kerry in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and by Representative Delahunt in the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight.

In February 2010, a bipartisan team of Senators John Kerry (D-Mass.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Representatives Bill Delahunt (D-Mass.) and Ted Poe (R-Texas) re-introduced I-VAWA in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress. Senator Kerry said "This bill will protect women everywhere, and it turns out that championing these values is also an extremely effective and cost-efficient way to advance America's foreign assistance goals and strengthen our national security."

### **Specifically, I-VAWA would:**

- Address violence against women and girls comprehensively, by supporting health, legal, economic, social, and humanitarian assistance sectors and incorporating violence prevention and response best practices into such programs.
- Alleviate poverty and increase the cost effectiveness of foreign assistance by investing in women.
- Strengthen security by reducing social tensions.
- Support survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and prevent violence.
- Create a five-year strategy to fight violence against women in select countries which have a high incidence of violence against women.
- Define a clear mandate for Senior Officials in the Department of State and USAID for leadership, accountability and coordination in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls.
- Enable the U.S. government to develop a faster and more efficient response to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related situations.
- Build the effectiveness of overseas non-governmental organizations – particularly women's non-governmental organizations – in addressing violence against women.

### **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- ✓ [U.S. Senators should co-sponsor I-VAWA \(S.2982\).](#)
- ✓ [U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor I-VAWA \(HR.4594\).](#)

*Amnesty International is a grassroots organization with 2.2 million members worldwide working to promote and defend human rights. For information, contact Daphne Jayasinghe at 202-544-0200 or [djayasinghe@aiusa.org](mailto:djayasinghe@aiusa.org), or visit [www.aiusa.org/ivawa](http://www.aiusa.org/ivawa).*