

## What will it take to ensure that women's lives are valued? Statement of Solidarity with South African Women

In the week that feminists from across the world gather in South Africa for the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) conference, members of the Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM), Global Women's Institute at the George Washington University, Raising Voices and VOICE express our solidarity with, and support for, activists seeking gender equality and an end to femicide and other forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) across South Africa.

### #TotalShutDown

If courage and resilience had a face, it would look like the women of South Africa. Twenty-six years after the end of apartheid, the women of South Africa still live under patriarchal oppression. In 2018, almost 3,000 women — or [one every three hours](#) — were murdered. Whether picking up a package at the post office, like [Uyinene Mrwetyana](#), or driving a car like [Leihandre Jegels](#), or simply coming out of the house like [Meghan Cremer](#), women in South Africa are forced to constantly worry "#AmI(next)"

This year, as leading feminist researchers and VAWG practitioners congregate in Cape Town, we must look beyond the safety of the conference rooms to recognize the danger of being a woman in South Africa, and honor your bravery and resolve. To our South African sisters, we say:

We suffer with you. We carry your pain in our hearts and your thoughts in our minds. We understand that the root causes of the injustices you endure are not simply corrupt policing, broken infrastructure or an inefficient government. It is society's collective and proactive decision to NOT value the lives of women that endangers you each and every day.

We, like you, ask ourselves "What will it take to ensure that women's lives are valued and respected? To make your lives matter?"

Alongside and in solidarity with you, we recommit to insisting upon systemic social change — a change that aims to dismantle the patriarchy and builds feminist leadership that is inclusive of all and embraces all peoples. We stand with you in calling for the South African Government to remember that the rights of women are protected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and Bill of Rights — and the State is accountable to ensure and enforce them. We join with you to insist that South Africa remember that the bodies of women are not crime scenes for the state apparatus to prod, process and eventually forget.

With you, we demand action. We demand that men who are violent be held accountable for their actions. We demand South African women know the criminals that walk amongst you and violate you. We join you in calling on South Africa to make the sexual offenses register available and accessible to all and to have accurate statistics gathered and made available for all femicide and other VAWG cases.

Furthermore, we recognize that women and girls live at the intersection of multiple oppressions — LBTIQ+, women living with HIV, women living with disabilities, the economically underprivileged, and others who are marginalized and ignored — suffer double and triple violations. We stand with you, in all your diversity, to call for an intersectional approach to preventing and responding to VAWG in South Africa— one that is accountable to all women and girls.

This statement was first published by [COFEM](#)