

ISRAEL

57th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by
Ambassador Ron Prosor
Permanent Representative

**The Elimination and Prevention of All Forms of Violence Against
Women and Girls**

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Mr. President,

The Jewish tradition tells us, (and I quote), "our daughters are the cornerstones of society." Women hold together families, build strong communities, and serve as the foundation of thriving nations. A society that disempowers its women is destined to crumble.

And today, we gather to discuss an issue that threatens to erode our societies from within.

Gender-based violence is a global pandemic. According to the Secretary-General's report, 70 percent of world's women experience physical and sexual violence at some point in their lives.

This is a statistic that should set off alarm bells. It means that women across the globe—from the streets of New York to the buses of Delhi—are vulnerable to this appalling violence.

This may only be the tip of the iceberg. Many women are afraid to speak out in cases of abuse. The culture of silence that surrounds this issue means that the number of women who fall victim to violence could actually be far higher.

The forms of gender-based violence are diverse. They range from spousal abuse to female genital mutilation; from sexual violence to public stoning; and from human trafficking to killing in the name of honor.

But regardless of its form, violence against women devastates families – and undermines communities.

Make no mistake: A community that is not safe for women is not safe for anyone.

Mr. President,

Today my mind is with women like Efrat Golden, an Israeli woman who was abused by her father as a child – and beaten by her husband as an adult. Fearing for her safety, she took her two children to a government-sponsored shelter, where she found a mentor to help her rebuild her shattered life.

She came to the shelter with nothing but hope and a passion for music. Eventually, with the support of her mentor, she developed her love for music. Today, she supports herself and her children by singing professionally in venues across the country.

All abused women have a song to sing. They have rhythm and melodies within them that must be unleashed. We must not only protect them – we must empower them and encourage them to dance to the beat of their own drum.

Mr. President,

In Israel, women like Efrat Golden can find assistance through a comprehensive support system. This system includes a 24-hour hotline that provides support in five different languages, social workers in police stations, family council centers, and a network of shelters and where women and children can find protection. We also have programs for integrating abused women into the labor market.

Israel also believes that ending the cycle of violence requires starting at a very young age. From Kindergarten through high school, Israeli students learn to develop healthy relationships through prevention programs. These programs also allow instructors to monitor students – and recognize early warning signs of abuse.

Israeli society is extremely diverse. As a result, these programs are tailored to cater to the specific needs of every segment of society. Regardless of her background, every woman deserves to control her own destiny.

Mr. President,

We cannot break the cycle of violence with half of the population sitting on the sidelines. Israel believes that men play a crucial role in ending this violence.

Israel sponsors rehabilitation programs for abusive men, such as therapy programs in prisons across the country. After these men finish their sentences, they have access to community programs that help continue their therapy.

Mr. President,

Israel is also committed to ending the cycle of violence against women beyond its borders.

Last year, MASHAV—Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation—organized several courses that addressed violence against women. These courses trained over 120 professionals from 25 different countries. MASHAV also organizes empowerment courses for women in locations across the globe – from Africa to Asia to Latin America.

Israel is also a proud contributor to the UN's Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. No country should stand alone in its efforts to protect women from abuse. The United Nations must be united on this issue.

Mr. President,

We have passed many resolutions in these halls concerning violence against women. And yet the number of victims continues to grow.

We must work to change not only policies but mindsets. Far too many women today seek shelter from abusive men. We cannot rest until abusive men must seek shelter from society's outrage.

As we sit here today, let us recall Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old Pakistani girl who was deliberately targeted by extremists because of her advocacy for girls' education. The Taliban attempted to murder her because she dared to say (and I quote): "I have the right to play. I have the right to sing. I have the right to go to school. I have the right to speak up."

It is our responsibility—as the family of nations—to speak up for those who cannot speak out.

Malala's words hang over this hall today. There are many other women and girls who dare to speak out against their oppressors. And we cannot rest until their voices are amplified by our words and deeds – and not silenced by those who seek to do them harm. Today, let us pledge to give them hope – so that they can hope for a better future.

Thank you.