



United Nations Human Rights Council, 24th Session (9 – 27 September 2013)
Item 8: Integrating the Human Rights of Women throughout the UN System
Monday 23 September 2013
Speaker: BHA representative Amelia Cooper
Child Marriage

Mr President,

Integrating the human rights of women throughout the UN system has a long, long way to go.

Just a few days ago we read a report of an eight year old Yemeni girl who died of 'bleeding and uterine rupture'¹ on her wedding night after being repeatedly raped by her husband – a man five times her age.

HRC Resolution 6/30 reaffirmed the need to '*fully implement human rights law...in order to protect the human rights of women and girls*'.

Why then, Mr President, are cases such as this continuing to appear, and why are the legal systems of member states permitting such appalling violations of women's rights?

In Yemen, 8 girls die every day as a result of child marriage.² One third of Yemeni girls are married under the age of 10!

According to UNICEF, child marriage worldwide is '*the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls*'³. An estimated 1,600 girls under the age of 18 are married every hour of every day.⁴

Child marriage enshrines inequality, denies girls their right to education and development, subjects them to physical violence and reduces them to little more than vessels of sexual gratification, risking their young lives as their bodies are unprepared for intercourse and pregnancy. In developing countries, complications relating to pregnancy and childbirth are the principal cause of death for girls between the ages 15 of 19⁵.

How many more deaths must it take, Mr President, before concrete action is taken against states which permit, through either their legal systems or through their passivity, such appalling and systematic violations of human rights?

Thank you sir.

¹ Arwa Othman, head of Yemen House of Folklore, as quoted in <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=61283>

² http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3WBsPIX0ww&desktop_uri=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Dq3WBsPIX0ww&nomobile=1

³ UNICEF, as quoted in http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/international-girls-day-five-facts-about-global-girls-rights/2012/10/11/52db18b8-13af-11e2-bf18-a8a596df4bee_blog.html

⁴ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/08/01/girls-are-the-worlds-forgotten-population-nine-facts-about-child-brides/>

⁵ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/08/01/girls-are-the-worlds-forgotten-population-nine-facts-about-child-brides/>