



It kills more
young women
than cancer.

It affects one
in three women
worldwide.

It leaves women
mentally scarred
for life.

“It” is violence
against women
and girls.

women on the frontline

**ON THE
FRONT
LINE**

Aired first on BBC World TV, the critically acclaimed **Women on the Frontline** is a brutally honest account of the silent war being waged against women across the world.

As of January 2008, 185 countries were party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Yet UN estimates show that violent abuses not only persist, but are on the rise.

Introduced by Annie Lennox and shot by all-women crews in Nepal, Mauritania, Austria, Turkey, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Colombia and Morocco, these seven films tell the personal stories of the courageous women who have survived abuses and now want their voices to be heard.



In DRC we investigate rape as a weapon of war; in Turkey we hear from women forced into suicides as a way of disguising killings in the name of honour. In Nepal we follow a 24-year-old mother as she helps the authorities track down her sex trafficker; in Mauritania we ask if the movement to abandon the harsher aspects of Sharia law can succeed; in Austria we find a new law banning violent men from their homes; and in Colombia and Morocco we follow the stories of inspiring women who have shown extraordinary courage in the face of violence.

“If you say 'rape', people usually can imagine what's happened, but what these women go through is not... I think the word is not suitable. Sexual terrorism? I don't know... you find a word for it.”

Dr. Denis Mukwege,
director of Panzi hospital,
Democratic Republic of Congo

- At least one in three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, according to a study based on 50 surveys around the world
- A fifth of women report being sexually abused before the age of 15
- 500,000 women die from pregnancy and childbirth each year: a number that has changed little in 20 years
- Violence against women kills more women than traffic accidents and malaria combined, according to World Bank estimates
- The World Health Organisation has reported that up to 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by their male partners
- The prevalence of women in developing countries who experience violence during pregnancy ranges from 4 to 20%, according to the European Journal of Public Health.
- In 48 population-based surveys from around the world commissioned by the World Health Organisation, 10 to 69% of women reported being physically assaulted by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives.



women on the frontline

Austria: Showing the Red Card

“He beat me again and again, in the belly or the back so I would lose the baby or it would be born too early. I was totally blue and bled, so was my son.”

Liljana G, victim of domestic violence

“We said the Bill is like the red card in soccer - people who play unfairly have to leave.”

Doris Täubel-Weinreich,
judge at the family court

One in five Austrian women are victims of male violence.

7,000 cases of domestic violence a year are reported to the police, and police suspect more go unreported.

With 95% of reported abuse occurring in

the home, the Austrian authorities have created a legal "Red Card" that gives police the power to eject men from their houses, which then become domestic sanctuaries for the women.

Women on the Frontline asks whether such a radical new law can truly help women achieve security and justice?



women
on the frontline

Mauritania: A Question of Rape

“It’s time that we speak. It’s time that we go out into the streets and shout 'protect us' as women.”

Zeinabou Mint Taleb Moussa, president of the association for the protection of the health of women and children

“As far as Mauritania is concerned, there was a time when we only applied Sharia. We’re not there anymore. We are at a stage where we have a hybrid law.”

Fatimata M'Baye, first female lawyer in Mauritania

In the Islamic state of Mauritania, punishments are severe for any kind of sexual relationship out of marriage: an abuse known as "Zina".

Rape is undefined in the country's law, and for a woman to allege she has been raped is to run the risk of imprisonment. About 60% of women who allege rape are accused of Zina. It is therefore unsurprising that most choose to remain silent.

Featured in our final film is Fatima M'Baye, the first female lawyer in Mauritania, who is part of the move to blunt the harsher aspects of Sharia by mixing it with French law. She is also helping women overturn their convictions.

women
on the frontline





Nepal: A Narrow Escape

“It’s a big vicious circle. There are about 20-25 people who are involved in the trafficking of one girl. She knows only this man who lured her.”

Anuradha Koirala, founder of women's shelter Maiti, Nepal

“Traffickers, they go to a village, they can easily trap girls who are aspiring for a better quality life.”

Punya Prasad Neupane, permanent secretary, ministry for women, Nepali government

Deserted by her husband and with four children to support, 24-year-old Sushma from a remote village in Nepal was taken to India and sold to a brothel for \$250. Unlike most victims of sexual slavery,

however, Sushma managed to escape her captors and return home. In this film we document the legal and logistical difficulties of staunching the flow of an estimated 12,000 young women who are trafficked across the open Indian border every year, and meet some of the women on the front line trying to put a stop to the trade. We follow Sushma as she sets out to find the man who lured her to Kolkata. Sushma’s trafficker is cornered and admits to his role. She returns to her village and is re-united with her children.

women on the frontline



Turkey: Killing in the Name of Honour

“It is a situation which we are used to, in Urfa we are losing our girls all the time to honour or custom killings.”

Suzen Isbilen, Urfa teacher’s union

“Every suicide must be investigated carefully as if it is a potential murder.”

Nimet Cubukcu,
minister for family affairs

Worldwide, according to the United Nations Poulation Fund, as many as 5,000 women a year are murdered in the name of honour. In Turkey there are no recorded figures. But behind closed doors, officials admit that the problem is a grave one. Emanating from centuries old traditions, it is proving almost impossible to eradicate.

Recent attempts to crack down on perpetrators, such as making life imprisonment mandatory, have not solved the problem, but instead stimulated a whole new wave of criminal activity: forced suicides. In this film we hear from men who have to choose between murder and dishonour and investigate whether it truly is possible to change a repressive psyche of this custom of the Middle East?



women
on the frontline

Colombia: Justice in the Region of Death

“Men typically do not allow women to use contraceptives...early pregnancy is common and often not a matter of choice.”

UNFPA report on the status of women in the Mid-Magdalena

“I have a reputation with men. The women will tell their partners: ‘if you keep doing this I will sue you in the court of Judge Esperanza’”

Judge Esperanza Gonzalez.

The Mid-Magdalena region of Colombia is known as the ‘region of death’. It’s one of the most macho places in Latin America where women are the victims in the drugs-fuelled conflict between right wing death squads, the army and left wing guerrillas. “Their bodies have been turned into a battleground,” according to Amnesty International.

In this guerilla war, where at its peak at the end of the 1990s there was a murder rate of 115 per 100,000 citizens, violence against women is a casual part of everyday life. But change is coming. One of the ‘change-makers’ is Judge Esperanza Gonzalez, a woman in her late 40s. Trained by the “Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio” on sexual and reproductive rights, *Women on the Frontline* tracks her in the courtroom and outside as she seeks to bring justice for females in the ‘region of death’.

women
on the frontline

Morocco: Never Again

“The police attacks and arrests were ferocious. We knew that no-one was safe.”

Maria Ezzaoui, former political prisoner

“The electric shocks on the base of my feet, under my nails put meat their mercy, the pain was indescribable.”

Fatna El Bouih, former political prisoner

Morocco is coming to terms with the human rights abuses of its recent past. Televised testimonies to a truth and reconciliation commission set up by the government have transfixed the nation, unveiling the atrocities committed under King Hassan's 38 year rule.

Through the personal testimonies of those who suffered both wrongful imprisonment and torture in the 1970s and 80s, we discover the prominent role women had in resisting repressive rule during the "Iron Fist" era.

Women on the Frontline, tells the astonishing stories of two of these women - Fatna El Bouih and Khadija Rouissi - who put their lives on the line to fight for truth, justice and independence, and who survived to pass on their message of hope and endurance to a new generation.



Democratic Republic of Congo: Find a Word For It



“I was everybody's woman and nobody's woman. Whoever wanted to satisfy his sexual needs came on us.”

Honorata Kizende, abducted as a sex slave by Rwandan Hutu militia

“If you say 'rape', people usually can imagine what's happened, but what these women go through is not... I think the word is not suitable. Sexual terrorism? I don't know... you find a word for it.”

Dr. Denis Mukwege, director of Panzi hospital

For the last ten years the Eastern Provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been at war. The women bear the brunt of it.

The precise number of victims suffering from rape and related diseases, of which traumatic fistula is one, is impossible to know.

A UN independent expert says that between 2005 and 2007, 14,200 cases were reported in South Kivu province alone.

Shunned by their community, the women are often reluctant to come forward for treatment. Instead they are forced to bear the physical and psychological scars of their ordeal alone.

We travel to Bukavu to interview Dr Denis Mukwege, one of the few doctors in the country willing to treat fistula, to discover the truth behind one of the world's greatest unreported evils.

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ON THE FRONT LINE

ABOUT ...*on the Frontline* ...

Introduced by Annie Lennox, the ...*on the Frontline* is the series airing first on BBC World TV that tells the human stories behind the push for justice and equity. Previous series have taken the viewer to the guerrilla camps in Burma and to a battlefield hospital in Haiti; to rapidly desertifying central China and southern Spain.

For information on previous series look up:

www.dev.tv or
www.oneplanetpictures.co.uk

For information on how to obtain *Women on the Frontline* series contact:

Eva Triano
Dev.tv
Rue du Mont Blanc
1201 Geneva
Switzerland

tel +41 22 909 1240
Fax +41 22 909 1249
eva@dev.tv

Queries from Asia Pacific:
TVE Asia Pacific, sales@tveap.org

Photography:
Panos and Still Pictures

