

## **Human Rights Council Session 41 - Oral Statement**

### **Widows Rights international**

**(on behalf of Global Alliance Last Woman First – including Global Fund for Widows, Guild of Service, The Tandem Project, WRI – and National Board of Catholic Women, International Business and Professional Women, Graduate Women International, National Alliance of Womens Organisations, International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and others)**

Thank you Madame Vice President, Excellencies.

Would you sit silent if you saw a woman evicted from her home, subjected to extreme violence, suddenly forced to remove her children from school, unable to feed & clothe them? Would you sit by and let her daughter be married as a child, and her sons recruited by extremists? We believe you would raise a voice in defense of this woman.

So why is it that we remain silent when over 300 million widows are subjected to this horror?

Violence against widows, of all ages, includes degrading mourning rites, stigmatization, economic, sexual and physical violence, disinheritance, property grabbing, denial of access to rightful assets. Her husband dies and she is forced to leave her home with the children. Or inherited by a brother.

These human rights violations result in many widows and their children, living in extreme poverty. The cycle of poverty continues when the daughters are forced into child marriage, often to older men, so she becomes a child widow.

Sons of widows join extremist movements.

Our world has seen an exponential increase in widows and women-headed families, through conflicts and climate crises. Yet their voice is absent from national and international arenas.

It is vital to increase awareness of discrimination against widows and the denial of their human rights.

In addition - support for widows can hugely increase progress towards so many SDGs.

International Widows Day, 23 June, was but a few days ago. Can we not act TODAY to end the silence?

We urgently request that this Human Rights Council, Member States, UN entities and civil society, act today to make widowhood a human rights priority.

Thank you