



Cheryl A. Thomas  
Director, Women's Human Rights Program  
(w) 612-341-3302, ext. 102  
cthomas@advrights.org

Robin Phillips  
Executive Director  
(w) 612-341-3302, ext. 109  
rphillips@advrights.org

**The Advocates for Human Rights welcomes report of U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, urges continued focus on ending violence against women in Minnesota**

Minneapolis (June 8, 2011) - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (SRVAW), Rashida Manjoo, released her report on the situation of violence against women in the United States last week at a United Nations Human Rights Council session in Geneva. The report, which was based in part on fact-finding Ms. Manjoo did in Minnesota, was welcomed by The Advocates for Human Rights and a national network of women's and human rights organizations who applauded the Special Rapporteur for the breadth of her inquiry and recommendations.

Cheryl Thomas, Director of The Advocates' Women's Human Rights Program, said the report is an important step in ensuring the protection of basic human rights for women and girls in the United States: "Ms. Manjoo's report will assist us in discussions with lawmakers about the need for further action to prevent violent and discriminatory treatment of women and girls in the United States. It highlights ongoing issues in Minnesota that our state must continue to tackle, such as domestic violence and issues of violence which face Native American women."

At the invitation of the United States government, Ms. Manjoo visited the United States from January 24 to February 7, 2011. Her objective was a broad examination of the situation of violence against women, including issues such as violence in custodial settings, domestic violence, violence against women in the military, and violence against women who face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination, particularly Native American, immigrant, and African American women. Ms. Manjoo visited Minnesota, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, Florida, California, and New York during her trip to the United States.

Ms. Manjoo visited the Twin Cities on February 2nd and 3rd. Hosted by The Advocates, she toured the Domestic Abuse Service Center (DASC), founded in 1994 as the first one-stop center for victims and now a model replicated around the country; heard testimony from victims of domestic violence at a Town Hall forum coordinated by The Advocates, the Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women, the Sacred Hoop Coalition, and the Minnesota Office of Justice Programs; learned about the Coordinated Community Response that was created in Duluth in the 1970's; met with the founder of Women's Advocates, the first battered women's shelter in the nation in 1972; heard about Minnesota's groundbreaking civil and criminal laws; and learned about the state's strong police protocols and training on domestic violence. Ms. Manjoo's report to the United Nations highlighted DASC as a best practice in addressing domestic violence.

Robin Phillips, Executive Director of The Advocates, notes that, "Although Ms. Manjoo saw first-hand the best practices that Minnesota is renowned for around the world, she also heard about gaps in the state's response to domestic violence, such as difficulties in enforcing restraining orders and the

inadequate resources available to refugees and non-native English speakers. In order to sustain recent momentum in improving protection for women and girls in Minnesota, we must maintain adequate funding and other resources for critical programs working to end violence against women."

In her report, Ms. Manjoo acknowledged positive legislative and policy initiatives but concluded that "the lack of substantive protective legislation at federal and state levels, and the inadequate implementation of current laws, policies and programs, has resulted in the continued prevalence of violence against women and the discriminatory treatment of victims, with particularly detrimental effects on poor, minority and immigrant women."

The Special Rapporteur made several recommendations, including more uniform remedies for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. She also recommended expanding federal causes of action under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to mitigate discrimination, increase uniformity and accountability at the state and local levels. She called on the United States government to "re-evaluate existing mechanisms at federal, state, local and tribal levels for protecting victims and punishing offenders."

***The Special Rapporteur's report can be found at:***

[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/17session/A.HRC.17.26.Add.5\\_AEV.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/17session/A.HRC.17.26.Add.5_AEV.pdf)

***Organizations participating in the national VAW advocacy network (partial list/ for identification purposes only):***

The Advocates for Human Rights, *Minneapolis*

American Civil Liberties Union, Women's Rights Project, *New York*

American University, Washington College of Law, Project on Addressing Prison Rape, *Washington, D.C.*

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, University of California, Hastings College of Law, *San Francisco*

Center for Reproductive Rights, *New York*

Human Rights Watch, *New York*

Indian Law Resource Center, *Washington, D.C. and Montana*

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Center for International Human Rights, *New York*

Justice Now, *San Francisco*

National Congress of American Indians, Task Force on Violence Against Women, *Washington, D.C.*

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP), *Washington, D.C.*

National Organization for Women (NOW), *Washington, D.C.*

New York Legal Assistance Group

The Opportunity Agenda, *New York*

Service Women's Action Network (SWAN), *New York*

University of Cincinnati College of Law, Domestic Violence and Civil Protection Order Clinic

University of Miami School of Law Human Rights Clinic

University of Virginia School of Law International Human Rights Law Clinic, *Charlottesville*

Women of Color Network

Yale Law School, Detention and Human Rights Project of the Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, *New Haven*

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