

**Committee/Council:** Special Conference on the advancement of women

**Issue:** Protecting women from police brutality

**Student Officer:** Danai Passakou

**Position:** President

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## Introduction

Honorable delegates, my name is Danai Passakou and I will be serving as the President of the Special Conference during the 16<sup>th</sup> DSAMUN Conference. This year's Special Conference focuses on the advancement of women. During the last decades women have tried really hard in order to gain a position in the society that they deserve. Nevertheless there are certain fields, where women have not made any progress, a problem that can be attributed to stereotypes. One of the topics we have to face is the "Protection of women from police brutality". Women have always been characterized as the weak sex, due to the fact that they are not so physically strong in comparison to men. Police violence, generally, is recognized today as one of the major issues on the international human rights agenda. Our topic focuses only on the protection of women, but you have to bear in mind that we need to solve the issue from all aspects relevant in order to be sure that women will be protected from police abuse. I hope that this study guide will help you with your research and give you ideas about your resolutions. Do not forget that you have to do further research on your own not only concerning this topic but also concerning your country's policy on the matter, in order to be able to participate in the debate. If you have any questions about the topic or in case you need further clarifications, please do not hesitate to ask me. You can contact me via email ([danaipassakou@msn.com](mailto:danaipassakou@msn.com)) or via Facebook (Danai Passakou) and I would be glad to help you as soon as possible. See you in October and good luck with the preparation of you resolutions!

## Definition of Key-Terms

### Brutality

The state or quality of being ruthless, cruel, harsh, or unrelenting or a ruthless, cruel, harsh, or unrelenting act.

### Violence against women

According to the United Nations violence against women is: "Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or

suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

### Violence

- Physical abuse: Meaning any violent act such as slapping, choking, or punching a woman, using hands or objects or even threatening her using a knife or any kind of gun. Committing murder is considered to be the most extreme form of physical abuse.
- Sexual abuse: Forcing a woman into sexual acts without her willingness, using threats, intimidation, or physical force
- Emotional or verbal abuse: The effort to degrade a woman by making mean and rude comments about her beliefs, behavior or appearance and even the effort to force her to commit degrading acts.
- Financial abuse: the act of stealing or controlling a woman’s money or valuables and even forcing her to work in order to earn money
- Spiritual abuse: The effort exercised upon women in order to manipulate, dominate and control her using her religious or any other beliefs

### Police Brutality

Police brutality is a civil rights violation that occurs when a police officer acts with excessive force by using an amount of force with regards to a civilian that is more than necessary. Excessive force by a law enforcement officers is a violation of a person's rights. Excessive force is not subject to a precise definition, but it is generally beyond the force a reasonable and prudent law enforcement officer would use under the circumstances.

### **Background Information**

Early traces of modern policing, meaning a similar form to the one that the police authorities have nowadays, based on the authority exercised by the nation state can be found in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. Moreover, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries modern police departments were established in most nations. The first known use of the term "police brutality" can be found in the New York Times in 1893, describing a police officer's beating of a civilian. Since then a lot of people have reported brutal actions by members of the police, especially against women. Actually, there is a perception that victims of police brutality often belong to

relatively powerless groups, such as but not limited to minorities, the disabled, the young, and the poor, since these groups are considered by some not to have the same rights in comparison to the rest of the people of a country. Although women have tried hard during the last years not to be considered as a powerless group, there are still stereotypes that have not been overcome. Women have equal rights by law as men do and they should be treated accordingly. The fact that they may lack muscular strength does not necessarily make them a powerless and defenceless group. Women are a group that often faces police brutality, especially if they belong to some of the groups mentioned before. Cases of police brutality have appeared numerous times during the last years. Large-scale incidents of brutality were in the past connected with labour strikes, such as the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, the Pullman Strike of 1894, the Lawrence textile strike of 1912, the Ludlow massacre of 1914, the Steel strike of 1919, and the Hanapepe massacre of 1924. But nowadays, police brutality is mainly seen in individual situations. Unfortunately, nowadays, the people who are supposed to protect us and help us when we are in need can't be trusted. Thousands of individual complaints about cases of violent acts against women are reported each year and local authorities pay millions of dollars to victims in damages and lawsuits. The problem is that the authorities have not managed to find a solution yet and are not in a position to control the situation.

#### Groups of women that are especially at risk

- Aboriginal women
- Younger women ( between 15-24)
- Prostitutes
- Homeless and jobless women
- Immigrant women

In all UN member states women have certain rights, to which they are entitled in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. One of the main problems is that the laws of some countries do not take into account this convention. Another problem is that even in cases that these laws exist they are not taken into consideration. The obligations of policemen also differ from country to country. Besides that it is generally known, that policemen should act according to the laws and should always protect the rights of the people, instead of breaking them.

### **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

#### Collective Opposed to Police Brutality

Collective Opposed to Police Brutality (C.O.B.P), also known as Collectif Opposé à la Brutalité Policière, is an autonomous group founded in Montreal in 1995. The organization consists of victims, witnesses, representatives of ethnic communities, marginalized youth, small political groups, the homeless, prostitutes, gay, lesbian, and transgendered persons, youth, drug users or ordinary citizens who have questions about police authority.

### Communities United Against Police Brutality

Communities United against Police Brutality is a Twin-Cities based organization that was created to deal with police brutality on an on-going basis. Their overriding goal is to create a climate of resistance to abuse of authority by police organizations and to empower local people with a structure that can take on police brutality and actually bring it to an end.

### Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement that campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

### People's Republic of China

There have been a lot of cases of riots and protests in China, a great number of which have been politically motivated, notably the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. During the past decade, groups such as Falun Gong, have protested against party measures and riot police have tried to break them up. Dissidents of the country have managed to arrange effective mobilization using all kinds of social media and blogs. During these protests and riots several cases of police harassment have been reported, especially against women, by foreign journalists from Switzerland. In order to suppress violence Chinese Government has often deployed plainclothes policemen. After an individual's arrest his house is searched in case incriminating evidence, such as computers, hard drives, and flash drives are found. Society criticizes negatively any form of violence against women, however, they are not in a position to react. Additionally, we should keep in mind that Chinese media is very much controlled by the government.

### Russia

After the reelection of the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in 2012 the media have shed light on the protests organized by Russian civilians. There have been cases of several videos posted online showing violent acts committed by the police, also against women. Because of that, President Dmitry Medvedev whose intention is to minimize or even eliminate such forms of violence, has initiated reforms of the police force by firing Moscow police chief and centralizing police powers. In 2012, after charges against four

police officers who were said to have tortured detained under custody, Russia's top investigative agency was involved in order to clarify the matter. According to human rights activists, Russian police often use unlawful techniques to extract false confessions from detainees.

### Indonesia

In Indonesia, Islamic extremists, including women, are targeted by police as terrorists and they may be captured or killed by the police as dissidents. There have been numerous cases of beaten and tortured journalists who have suffered these brutal acts against them by police officers in retaliation of their attempt to uncover cases of corrupted police officers. One such case was that of the Indonesian magazine Tempo which had journalist activists beaten by the police. Another case is that of August 31, 2010 when police officers in Central Sulawesi province killed 5 people and injured 34 others, including women, when they fired into a crowd of civilians who were protesting the death of a local man in police custody

In Indonesia there is no independent national body to deal with complaints concerning human rights violations by the police. Amnesty International has called on Indonesia to ensure that they follow international standards concerning the behavior of police officials and to review police tactics during arrests and public order policing.

### Iran

The legal framework of Iran is very discriminatory against women who in many cases are denied their basic human rights. Based on that belief policemen act violently, in most cases without an important reason because they know that in most cases they will not have any serious implications. Additionally, they often react in a violent way because they have certain stereotypes and beliefs about what a woman is allowed to do and what not. Overall, the rights of women are generally not taken into account.

### India

As it is believe by many, the situation in India is very much out of control. Policemen act in an everyday basis violently against women. Following there is an example of such a case that took place in this year. A couple of months ago the Supreme Court of New Delhi condemned the police force for the growing numbers of brutal incidents against women, claiming that they are an 'insult to the country'. More specifically, they required explanations from Delhi Police Officials about the incident of violently slapping a female protestor who was demonstrating against a recent gang rape of a five-year-old girl. Such violent incidents of police behavior against women were caught on camera and TV channels broadcast them around the world.

### Canada

After several cases of alleged police brutality, such as during the protests of 2010 G-20 Toronto summit and the 2012 Quebec student protests, there have been fundamental

concerns about police accountability and governance. But the government has not managed to take efficient measures in order to ensure the safety of the civilians, and especially women.

### Turkey

Turkey is a country where there is a history of police brutality, including the use of torture. Police officials do not hesitate to use excessively tear gas (including targeting protestors with tear gas canisters), pepper spray and water cannon against protestors. Physical violence is another means that police use in order to suppress protests and riots. Victims of those violent actions have been also women throughout the years. During the 2013 protests in Turkey there have been recorded cases of violent actions against female protestors since police has used the above mentioned methods to remove from Taksim Gezi Park an environmentalist sit-in protest. In 2012 several officials received prison sentences for their role in the death in custody of a political activist, named Engin Çeber.

- These are only some of the countries that are mostly involved in the topic. Do not forget to search the policy of your own country and also of other important countries like the P5 ones.

### **Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events**

- United Nations Convention against Corruption

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/>

- Human Rights Council

[http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/A.HRC.19.41\\_English.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/A.HRC.19.41_English.pdf)

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

DEVAW recognizes that there have been numerous violent incidents against females which violate their rights and fundamental freedoms threatening women's social, economic, and political equality. Therefore, all countries and the international community generally should collaborate in order to eliminate and eradicate if possible any form of violence against females. The use of the term 'violence against women' shows gender based violence in the form of physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering towards women.

[http://www.stopvaw.org/domestic\\_violence\\_un\\_resolutions](http://www.stopvaw.org/domestic_violence_un_resolutions)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

There has been no serious attempt to solve this problem. Each country has tried in the past individually to take measures in order to have the situation under control but it has been proved that the actions taken have made a slight improvement which is obviously not enough so as to protect the victims of police violence. But there are some people who have created organizations in order to inform the public and fight against police violence. In that spirit they have established some days which will give people the chance to remind the public the importance of protecting the human rights and the consequences that their infringement may have

- International Day Against Police Brutality ( 15<sup>th</sup> March)  
The Collective Opposed to Police Brutality in Montreal held the first day against police brutality. The day is now observed in the whole world and it gives people the chance to state that they are against any brutal actions of police, to bring victims together and to find a way to inform the people on an international level.
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women  
This campaign wants to remind to the public that violence against women is one of the most widespread human rights abuses in each and every country.

## Possible Solutions

- Strengthening police leadership, meaning that the chief and top administrators should show clearly and publicly their commitment to policies against any form of violation,
- Police officers should receive cultural diversity training,
- Focus on administrative control,
- Developing clear written policies and procedures that “draw the line” and make it clear to the officers and the community what behaviours are not acceptable. Violations of policies must be followed up with disciplinary action but the main problem is where this line should be drawn ,
- Take legal actions against any police member who is found guilty for violence against women (and people generally),
- Everyone that has faced police brutality should be taken seriously,
- Frequent seminars and training exercises provide the instruction necessary for officers regarding how to handle specific situations in humane and disciplined ways,

- Press should help people's movements against police brutality so as to inform the public and prevent future cases.

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