



## Stop Violence Against Girls Going to School Support the International Violence Against Women Act

*One day as a group of girls walked to school in Kandahar, Afghanistan a man stopped them and asked if they were going to school. When they answered “yes,” he sprayed them with acid, leaving Shamsia Husseini’s face disfigured and damaging her eyesight. New York Times reporter Dexter Filkins spoke with school headmaster Mahmood Qadari who told parents “If you don’t send your daughters to school, then the enemy wins . . . Education is the way to improve our society.” Shamsia and her friends returned to school. Shamsia told Finkler, “My parents told me to keep coming to school even if I am killed . . . The people who did this to me don’t want women to be educated. They want us to be stupid things.”*

Imagine being a young girl who learns that going to school is an act of courage. In too many regions of the world, discrimination, poverty and violence are obstacles for girls’ education. And yet girls’ education is critically important to breaking cycles of violence, lifting generations out of poverty, reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS, lowering child and maternal mortality, and building participatory democracies and economies that yield greater equality between men and women.

The **International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594/S.2982)** builds on U.S. efforts to end violence and establishes more effective and efficient responses. Over 150 U.S. groups – including faith-based, human rights, refugee and women’s organizations – contributed to IVAWA and support its passage. Whether the goal is ensuring girls are free from violence as they attend school, ending trafficking in girls and women, stopping rape during war, or stopping violence against women and girls in the home, IVAWA elevates this issue to be a greater priority in U.S. foreign policy. IVAWA will:

- Direct the State Department and U.S. AID to coordinate U.S. approaches and, in the first year of implementation, to develop a strategy for ending violence against women and girls. The strategy will be informed by research and best practices, coordinate programs across relevant sectors, and include data collection to assess success and transparency measures to track funds.
- Integrate this concern when the U.S. responds to humanitarian crises so that U.S. efforts take into account, for example, how to protect women and girls who are especially vulnerable to attacks in camps for refugees or internally displaced people or support survivors of sexual violence.
- Integrate this issue broadly into relevant U.S. programs so that, for example, programs to build schools will also include efforts to ensure girls arrive safely and remain safe while at school; service providers working with persons with HIV and AIDS will be trained to recognize signs of violence and support women who face violence; officers who train foreign security personnel will include instruction on ending violence against women.
- Instruct U.S. AID and the State Department to undertake pilot programs in select countries that are identified in the comprehensive strategy, created and implemented in collaboration with local partners, include mechanisms to collect data on outcomes, and track the use of U.S. funds.

Help end violence against women and girls by improving U.S. diplomacy and making U.S. foreign assistance more effective and efficient. **Support the International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594/S.2982).**