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## GLOBAL CSW tribute to forgotten heroines on International Women's Day

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is marking International Women's Day by paying tribute to female human rights defenders and women whose suffering is often overlooked because of their supporting role to their husbands, or because they have no representation.

Liu Xia, wife of Chinese Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo, and Yuan Weijing, wife of blind human rights lawyer, Chen Guangcheng, are currently under strict house arrest in their own homes, despite not having committed a crime themselves. Ni Yulan, a housing rights lawyer, was beaten so badly in police detention that she is now in a wheelchair and has been evicted from her Beijing home.

In China, Pastor Yang Rongli, a leader of Linfen Church, Fushan City, Shaanxi province is serving a seven-year prison sentence for 'obstructing farmland' and 'gathering masses to obstruct traffic', charges that pertain to a prayer meeting organized by Christians after the destruction of their church building by local authorities. Her friend and fellow leader, Yang Caizhen is serving two years' in the extralegal re-education through labor system. She was severely beaten in police detention.

Eritrean female refugees held hostage in the Sinai face abuse and inhumane treatment at the hands of people traffickers, who regularly subject them to rape. Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-Israel) reported on 13 December that a number of women recently freed from detention were seeking abortions.

According to the organization, "In conversations with our doctors, many women confessed to being raped prior to entering Israel. Of a total of 165 abortions facilitated by the clinic between January and November 2010, PHR-Israel suspects half were requested by women who were sexually assaulted in the Sinai."

In Nigeria's Plateau State, armed attacks on non-Muslim villages have targeted women and children in particular, who are often hacked to death after being frightened out of their homes by gunfire. This year alone, there have been 14 attacks on villages with at least 50 dead, the majority of them women and children. In response, several thousand women dressed in black brought the Plateau State capital to a standstill as they protested against the killings, attacks on educational establishment and the failure of the authorities to provide security for the most vulnerable members of society.

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "CSW's thoughts and prayers are with the many women worldwide who suffer at the hands of repressive governments, or are victims of unscrupulous groups or individuals who violate, abuse and murder without compunction. They are not forgotten, and it is our hope that this day will remind the international community of the need to work towards the elimination of discrimination, mistreatment and gender-based violence, ensuring the protection of vulnerable women."