

Lies & Facts: CEDAW Women's Rights Treaty

The radical right has spread quite a few lies about the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), often because of its opposition to women's rights. Here are facts to replace some of the more common lies.

LIE: CEDAW PROMOTES ABORTION

FACT: CEDAW is silent and neutral on abortion. CEDAW leaves it to each country to determine policies and laws that may or may not recognize women's fundamental right to abortion.

LIE: CEDAW LEGALIZES PROSTITUTION

FACT: CEDAW does not legalize prostitution. The CEDAW committee, which is strictly advisory in nature, has urged some countries such as China, where women and girls have been trafficked or coerced into prostitution, to de-criminalize prostitution so that women can come forward without fear of prosecution as criminals, thereby decreasing instances of human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and violence against women. This is not legalizing prostitution.

LIE: CEDAW DOES NOT ADDRESS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

FACT: CEDAW clearly addresses violence against women with its focus on eliminating the trafficking of women as sex slaves, its emphasis on access to legal protections and education, and its foundation against discrimination. Discrimination is an important element of violence; once unequal relationships are established, it becomes much easier to abuse the "lesser" person. Obstacles to justice – including in some countries, discounting or giving less credence to the testimony of women – prevent the prosecution of perpetrators of rape and other forms of violence against women. Many global studies have concluded that ensuring the education of girls, which CEDAW promotes, helps reduce instances of violence in the future.

LIE: THE CEDAW COMMITTEE COULD IMPOSE POLICIES ON THE U.S.

FACT: The CEDAW committee is strictly advisory in nature. In fact, by not ratifying CEDAW, the U.S. is prevented from participating in CEDAW committee proceedings, which builds partnerships among nations to end human rights abuses and promote the health and well-being of women and girls around the world. The U.S. will be in a better position to share best practices and policy recommendations with other countries by participating in the treaty process.

Women have already waited 30 years for the radical right to stop lying about CEDAW. Enough is enough. Demand President Obama and the Senate RATIFY WOMEN! by prioritizing and passing CEDAW without restrictions.