

Global Dementia Friends Ambassador, Carey Mulligan's statement at the Official Commemoration of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Your Excellency United Nations Secretary General, your excellencies, Executive Director of UN Women, ladies and gentleman. It is an honour to be here today to support the UNiTE campaign.

When it comes to protecting women from violence we should **leave no one behind**. I'm here today to speak for women left behind because of ignorance, because of prejudice, because they are simply dealt a card that gave them a medical condition: dementia. I have experienced first-hand how devastating dementia can be as my grandmother, Nans, lived with Alzheimer's and passed away earlier this year.

For too many years dementia has been dismissed as a natural part of ageing. It's not. Dementia is a global health priority, affecting millions. One person develops dementia every three seconds.

As a UK Alzheimer's Society Ambassador I've seen perceptions start to shift. There is growing recognition of the problem, exemplified by the adoption of the World Health Organisation's recent Global Action Plan on Dementia.

Yet a key issue continues to be overlooked. Women are disproportionately affected by dementia. More women than men live with the condition, they provide the majority of care support and they face the greatest stigma.

This is why I'm supporting the [Global Alzheimer's & Dementia Action Alliance](#) to champion this urgent cause for women.

I was recently made aware of a woman who lives in South Africa and cares for her older sister with advanced dementia. They have been outcast because the community in which they live view her symptoms as evidence of a terrible curse. This is happening in many countries. I've also heard reports of women with dementia across the world being mistreated, assaulted, having their assets seized, and even murdered all due to the combination of their condition and gender.

I appeared in a short film on dementia recently with Kiki Edwards, a leading advocate in Nigeria. Kiki reports of women with dementia being stoned or even burnt to death. Kiki herself has been accused of witchcraft, simply because she supports those with the condition.

To end violence against women with dementia, awareness is vital - communities must recognise that dementia is a medical condition. The UK has championed global action on dementia and I'm honoured the UK government appointed me as a Global Dementia Friends Ambassador. Dementia Friends is a programme that increases understanding of dementia, and now 27 countries are changing how people think, act and talk about the condition.

Without action the world is woefully unprepared for the dementia crisis, and we risk leaving some of the most underserved and marginalised women behind.

I hope governments and civil society partners around the world get behind this global challenge and unite for a world where no woman faces violence because of her dementia. **I believe that dementia is a global women's health and human rights issue that can no longer be ignored.**