

An Indigenous Ixil women's rights activist from Guatemala, who requested not to be named, wanted to share this statement with you today: "I was denied a visa to travel to the US for CSW. Coming from Guatemala or from Central America, we know the obstacles and discrimination that have stood in the way of us accessing international spaces in the US, like the UN in New York. This is a barrier to our work for human rights, worsening in this political climate of fear and exclusion."

Yanar Mohamed, President of Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, wanted to share with you all her response to the U.S.'s ongoing military interventionism and its recently escalated anti-migrant and anti-refugee policies. She expressed concern about worsening conditions for women and LGBT people in Iraq and in other parts of the world suffering from war and disaster, and said "Do not let the racist cries on the television coming from Mr. Trump affect you.... Do not forget us.... [We] still need your support because [in places like] Iraq, the militias and the despotic government and ISIS all have incredible, tremendous support from all around the world— What about the women? ... We need the international pressure from the women's groups in the CSW to support things like the right of Iraqi women to be sheltered by women's NGOs and for that to be ... allowed by the government... This is not the time to keep us out of the meeting rooms, out of the decision-making spaces and away from our sisters at CSW... We are victims. We are not terrorists."

A woman human rights defender from Sudan asked to share this statement with you today: "I was prevented a couple of years ago from attending the CSW with other Sudanese women activists because of the tough visa regulations. I am now a refugee in Egypt and my own resettlement has been postponed which ... puts my life in danger, and minimizes my ability to work. I monitor the situation of Refugee Women from Sudan, Somalia and Syria, who are here in Egypt. Women and children count for the majority of the hundreds of thousands of refugees, with significant numbers from countries banned by the U.S.'s anti-Muslim policy. "A couple years ago, I was part of a group of Sudanese women activists applying for a visa to attend the CSW. Some of us were coming from war zones. We had been preparing reports and coordinating events for months. When we entered the visa section ... the man at the window looked at us and when one of my colleagues replied to a question with her accent and slightly broken English, he laughed and said "if you do not speak good English how you will speak in the UN?" ... He denied the visa for all those in our group. .... I cried because it felt so degrading and just plain racist and sexist. But I also cried because I could not deliver the voices of all those women I interviewed and to whom I promised I would speak at the UN on their behalf-- women suffering genocide and sexual violence from the regime in Sudan. For all xenophobic policy makers I want to say that women are the main victims of conflicts and terrorism."