



GENEVA FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS



Oral statement at the 47th session of the Human Rights Council Item 3: ID with the WG on discrimination against women and girls

Geneva, June 25, 2021

We welcome the report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls. We note the recognition given to obstetric fistula as one of the conditions leading to the discrimination of women and girls.

Obstetric fistula leads to serious violations of women's rights but has received very little attention by the Human Rights Council and the mechanisms of the human rights system.

Women without prenatal care have 20 times more risk of suffering maternal death than women with prenatal care, according to a study from Kelsey Harrison in Northern Nigeria.¹ The most common causes of maternal death in this study were, obstructed labor, bacterial infection, anemia, hemorrhage, pregnancy-induced Hypertension – which often occurred in the setting of obstructed labor. Obstructed labor also causes Obstetric fistula.

We recommend

- That the human rights violations resulting from Obstetric fistula be widely recognized, and greater attention be given to them by the human rights community, particularly the Human Rights Council.
- That pregnant women have the right to free of charge prenatal medical visits to prevent obstructed labor and obstetric fistula.
- Implement awareness raising campaigns to help women access prenatal care and to overcome shame and silence about the issue.
- That in all governmental policies and programmes special attention will be given to women in rural areas.

Thank you!

¹ Tears for My Sisters: The Tragedy of Obstetric Fistula; L. Lewis Wall; JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS; page 144