

**AUGUST 2024**

***“Jesus, seeing His mother, and the disciple whom He loved (esteemed) standing near, said to His mother, ‘[Dear] woman, look, [here is] your son!’ Then He said to the disciple (John), ‘Look! [here is] your mother [protect and provide for her]!’ From that hour the disciple took her into his own home.” (John 19:26-27 Amp)***

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your faithful giving! Advocates International does not ask for membership fees or subscriptions because many of our advocates worldwide already give sacrificially of their time and personal finances to help the vulnerable and persecuted. As you read this newsletter, please consider prayerfully giving towards our global work.

National Women's Day in South Africa, celebrated on August 9, honors the 1956 march of 20,000 women, organized by the South African Federation of Women, and led by women of different races, to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. They presented a petition to the Apartheid government with over 100,000 signatures opposing the pass laws, which enforced racial segregation and kept black South Africans out of white areas by requiring black South Africans to carry internal passports (so-called “passes”). If found without a pass, black people were summarily arrested by the police. The protest, marked by a 30-minute silent stand, was a powerful and non-violent demonstration for change.

In this letter, I would like to highlight the efforts of some brave lawyers in our network who are fighting for the protection of women and girls:

- Selvi Ganesh, from Chennai, India, uses her legal training to support widows who are left to fend for themselves. There are an estimated 40 million widows in India today. Conservative Hindus believe that a widow should no longer live because she failed to retain her husband's soul. Widows are not allowed to return home after their husbands die. According to the historical practice of "sati", widows were burned alive on their husband's funeral pyre, either willingly or unwillingly. Selvi recently organized a seminar called “Empowering Widows” to create opportunities for widows without any support. Several training partners collaborated with her in this effort.



Selvi (right of picture), Teresa and Selvi's sons

- Abishag Sambo, a young Nigerian lawyer, leads the Kauna Foundation for Women and Girls Rights Awareness. She and her team work tirelessly to liberate Christian women and young girls forced into marriage with much older Muslim men. There are testimonies of girls as young as 10-15 suffering serious health challenges because of these marriages. Only recently Abishag informed us of a woman whose hand was amputated by her husband in an act of domestic violence.



- A High Court application was recently launched in the Western Cape High Court of South Africa to decriminalize prostitution. Adv Reg Willis SC and attorney Crystal Maphalla, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Christian Lawyers Association, are representing Doctors for Life in their application for admission as amicus curiae. It is often claimed that decriminalizing prostitution maximizes legal protection and access to rights like justice and health care for prostitutes. Unfortunately, the opposite is true. The legal team is relying on the assistance and experience of our global partners to ensure that good jurisprudence is established.

During the abovementioned South African women's march in 1956, the marchers sang the words "*Wathint' Abafazi Wathint' Imbokodo!*". In the years since, the phrase (or its latest incarnation): "*you strike a woman, you strike a rock*" has come to represent women's courage and strength in South Africa. We salute the strong, brave women in our global network who unwaveringly represent and protect other vulnerable women and children!

Let us remember that Jesus honored and valued women.

Warmly in Christ

Teresa Conradie - President and CEO, Advocates International

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