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**Written Statement Submitted by the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**

**54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council**

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As an international non-governmental organization whose membership base comprises government, civil society, industry, academia and individuals, the International Federation on Ageing appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement at the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the abuse and neglect of older adults.

The global population is rapidly changing, resulting in a shift in demographic distributions toward older ages. It is estimated that by 2050, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or older, with the proportion of this population and those 80 years or above doubling and tripling, respectively <sup>1</sup>. With this trend towards longer lives, and a growing demographic of older adults, there is an increase in the experience of abuse and neglect in this population. Roughly 1 in 6 people over the age of 60 have experienced some form of abuse in a community setting <sup>2</sup>.

Despite the growing prevalence of abuse and neglect experienced by older adults, the abuses remain underreported and understudied. A key challenge is the lack of globally recognized or supported definition of abuse against older adults <sup>3</sup>. While there is no definition it is known that the abuse of older adults is complex and multifaceted, including physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuses from individuals with an expectation of trust <sup>2</sup>. The maltreatment, abuse, and neglect experienced by these individuals is often rooted in ageism and the power dynamics that ageist beliefs uphold. The Global Report on Ageism as reported that 1 in 2 people are ageist against older people<sup>4</sup>. This prejudice can be further exacerbated by other discriminatory attitudes such as sexism, racism, homophobia and ablism.

With a globally ageing population, protecting the rights and dignity of older adults requires urgent action to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to live a life they have reason to value. Current strategies to combat the abuse of older adults include helplines and emergency shelters, money management programmes, and mental health care, however there are limited resources and reporting on the effectiveness of these programs <sup>5</sup>. The intersectionality involved in the abuse of older adults make it hard for individuals to report their abuses and can lead to worsened physical and mental health

outcomes, poor quality of life, and social exclusion<sup>6</sup>. The correlation of abuse with decreased functional ability and well-being highlights the urgency that is needed in addressing these challenges.<sup>1</sup>

The right to a safe, supportive, and caring environment in later life is crucial to promoting the overall health and wellbeing of the globally ageing population. The International Federation on Ageing urgently calls for action of the UN Human Rights Council to act on the critical and globally relevant issue of abuse and neglect towards older adults.

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<sup>1</sup>World Health Organization. Ageing and health. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health> (2021).

<sup>2</sup> WHO. Abuse of older people. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people> (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Mikton, C., Campo-Tena, L., Yon, Y., Beaulieu, M. & Shavar, Y. R. Factors shaping the global political priority of addressing elder abuse: a qualitative policy analysis. *Lancet Healthy Longev* **3**, e531–e539 (2022).

<sup>4</sup> WHO. Global report on ageism. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240016866> (2021).

<sup>5</sup> Pillemer, K., Burnes, D., Riffin, C. & Lachs, M. S. Elder Abuse: Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Prevention Strategies. *Gerontologist* **56** Suppl 2, S194–S205 (2016).

<sup>6</sup> Özer, N. & Tanriverdi, D. Determining depression, abuse, and neglect in elderly individuals. *Psychogeriatrics* **23**, 690–700 (2023).