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## France

### Dial 01.47.91.48.44: Shelter helpline needs more publicity

*“The telephone is the only link with the outside world for women who are confined in their own homes. Many of them dare not arrange to meet someone to talk about their problems.”*

- Director, “L’Escale” (port of call), a women’s shelter near Paris

Many women in France – like women all over the world – know little of their rights and what help is available to them. As a result, they find themselves terribly isolated in trying to deal with a violent husband or partner.

L’Escale helps run a telephone helpline covering the whole district of Hauts-de-Seine. For many women who call the helpline, it is the first time they have told anyone about what they are going through.

In all, 1,717 calls were received in 2005 from women enduring violence and from social workers, doctors and police officers. This number may seem high, but it is not, taking into account the fact that an estimated 10 per cent of women in France suffer some form of violence.

The helpline number is not widely known: for six years there has been no publicity campaign. L’Escale and its partner associations are appealing to the local authorities to launch a campaign of posters, printed cards, leaflets and advertisements in the local press so that people become familiar with the helpline number. **You can help with this appeal.**

L’Escale offers a welcome and shelter to women from all walks of life and from every culture. It provides psychological support, assistance with legal, welfare and employment problems, and help with accommodation. With 40 beds, it can provide temporary shelter for women and their children, but needs more. *“If only every municipal authority would put one or two flats or houses at our disposal every year, we would find it much easier to help women who have suffered violence.”*

L’Escale’s psychologist adds: *“It looks as if society considers it more acceptable for a woman and her children to find themselves homeless, because they have been obliged to flee or have been thrown out, than to evict a violent husband from his home. I know of a woman who found herself and her baby homeless in the depths of winter, and used to sit in laundrettes to keep warm.”*

**[Call to action]**

Write to the Vice President and Sous-Prefet asking them to urgently launch a publicity campaign for the telephone helpline number for the project “Femmes Victimes de Violences 92” to help women suffering from domestic violence.

### **[Sample letter]**

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express concern that the telephone helpline number for the project “Femmes Victimes de Violences 92”, established to meet the needs of women who suffer domestic violence, is not widely known.

I urge you to conduct a campaign of posters, printed cards, leaflets, advertisements and information on your website, so that people become familiar with the helpline telephone number.

This appeal is part of Amnesty International’s worldwide campaign to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, focusing on shelters for women who suffer domestic violence.

Yours sincerely,

### **[Target contact details]**

1)

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