

First lady criticizes forced abortion, genital mutilation

□ Countries such as Iran and China argue that human rights vary according to each country's social and economic circumstances.

BEIJING (AP) — Hillary Clinton named no names, but everyone knew whom she was talking about.

Her pointed emphasis on human rights, delivered in crisp, unadorned language from the heart of the last Communist superpower, electrified her audience at the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women.

Tuesday's speech denounced the crime, prevalent in India, of dousing wives in gasoline and setting them on fire because they don't contribute enough wealth to the family.

Clinton attacked the practice of

mutilating young girls' genitals, which is prevalent in some African and Islamic societies.

The Bosnia conflict hung unspoken in the air as she lamented "thousands of women (who) are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war."

Clinton did not mention China as a prime offender when she criticized sterilization and forced abortion.

Clinton's words cut like an ax, especially when she prefaced no fewer than seven successive sentences with the words, "It is a violation of HUMAN rights"

Freedom "means the right of people to assemble, organize, and debate openly," not "taking citizens away from their loved ones and jailing them."

The loudest of several bursts of applause from the delegates came when she criticized China for the "indefensible" act of preventing many women from attending or participating fully in the conference.

She was referring to the harassment of delegates with agendas China doesn't like, and the outright refusal of visas to some of them.

Talking to reporters later, Clinton said she hoped China got her message.

"It's important that all governments which in any way infringe upon human rights know that this conference is taking a strong stand about human rights and that the entire world is trying to move toward realization of human rights," she said.

Her speech will be taken as a vindication by those who said the first lady should attend the conference. Some critics of China said she should stay away.

"We're very pleased she made a such a strong statement," said delegate

Dorothy Thomas of New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Shahin Gobari of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, the main group fighting the Islamic regime, also welcomed it, saying, "The more emphasis is put on women's rights, the more it will encourage the women of Iran who are living under pressure."

Thomas cautioned, "Words are not enough. There are women suffering human rights abuses around the world. They can't wait for there to be another conference."

Chinese officials did not immediately comment. The state-run Xinhua News Agency, which has carried reports on every other major speech at the conference, ignored Clinton's.

Given Beijing's continual sparring with Washington over human rights, Clinton's speech is unlikely to go down well here.

Homeira Yeganeh an Iranian covering the conference for the state-run news agency IRNA said, "Mrs. Clinton was only talking, and talking is very nice ... but I can't understand what is meant by human rights."

Human rights "must be according to the culture and customs" of each nation, said Yeganeh, dressed in a black chador from head to ankle.

She criticized the conference platform under debate for being based on "Western culture, not on Eastern or Islamic culture."

Her remark encapsulates the debate between the West, which argues that human rights are universal, and countries such as Iran, China and others in Asia, which say human rights vary according to each country's social and economic circumstances.



MSC September 1995

8 "Back to School Luau"
7:00 p.m.
Cain Pool
MSC Black Awareness Committee

8 Priest
8:00 & 10:00 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium
MSC Film Society

8 & 9 Rocky Horror Picture Show
Midnight
MSC Grove
MSC Cepheid Variable Committee

9 While You Were Sleeping
7:00 & 9:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium
MSC Film Society

12 "Business Etiquette"
6:00 p.m.
601 Rudder
MSC Council Development

15 "Hispanic Heritage Month"
La Noche Mexicana Buffet & Entertainment
Room 201 MSC 7:30 p.m.
MSC Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture & Mexican Student Association

15 "Distinguished Visitor Executive Series"
10:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Room TBA
MSC MBA/Law Committee

15 & 16 Batman Forever
7:00 & 9:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium
MSC Film Society

22 & 23 My Family/Mi Familia
7:00 & 9:30 p.m.
Rudder Theater
MSC Film Society

23 "The Power of Five"
8:00 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium
MSC Opera & Performing Arts Society

25 to 29 "Poster Sale"
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
MSC Hallway
MSC Visual Arts Committee

28 Panther w/ Talk by Bobby Seale
7:00 & 9:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium
MSC Black Awareness & Film Society

29 & 30 Die Hard: With a Vengeance
7:00 & 9:30 p.m.
Rudder Theater/Auditorium
MSC Film Society

30 "Distinguished Visitor Executive Series"
10:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Room TBA
MSC MBA/Law Committee

Persons with disabilities please call 845-1515 to inform us of your special needs. We request notification three (3) working days prior to the event to enable us to assist you to the best of our ability.

If you have any questions regarding these events, please call 845-1515. All tickets may be purchased at the MSC Box Office (845-1234).

To Place
Your Ad In
The Battalion
Call 845-2696

Ken Gordon, Engineering major with a minor in *Individualism*.

Cardmember since
TODAY

THE NEW CREDIT CARD from AMERICAN EXPRESS

BIG AIRFARE SAVINGS

The new Optima® Card from American Express has the kind of benefits every student can appreciate. Like no annual fee. The option to make payments over time. Big savings on Continental airfares and MCI long distance calling. A low introductory interest rate. And the unsurpassed service only American Express can provide. So why settle for an ordinary credit card? Declare yourself a Cardmember, today.

To apply, call
1 800 344-4057

AMERICAN EXPRESS Cards

Coming September 1995: American Express University, a World Wide Web resource for college students. Visit us at <http://americanexpress.com/student/>

© 1995 American Express Travel Related Services Company, Inc.