

Harrowing Domestic Violence PSA Reminds Us Abuse Is Still Happening Behind Closed Doors

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All of us are spending more time at home to stay safe during coronavirus pandemic, but there is one group of people who are not out of harm's way—victims of domestic abuse.

Being cooped up at home is tough. But for victims of violence trapped at home with an abuser, home can also be a terrifying, dangerous place.

This is the message that a new PSA from domestic abuse charity the No More Foundation by MRM McCann gets across in a new PSA ad.

The spot, which is running in the U.S. and U.K., shows a man washing his hands before panning onto the background, where the legs of a woman on the floor come into view.

"There's an epidemic you can't wash your hands of," the text reads. "During the COVID-19 crisis, domestic violence has risen dramatically."

This PSA may be triggering to survivors of domestic violence.

The American version of the spot tells concerned people to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline on 1-800-799-7233, while the U.K. version urges people to download Bright Sky. This app lists local domestic abuse numbers. Both remind people to call for help, 911 in the U.S. or 999 in Britain, in an emergency.

The campaign is the latest in a string of ads designed to raise awareness of the dangers that domestic abuse victims are facing during the quarantine.

According to new figures from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), incidents of domestic violence are expected to surge by 20% over the period, as victims become locked indoors with perpetrators.

A separate United Nations report from earlier this month showed that calls to domestic violence helplines in some countries had doubled and even tripled. At the same time, Google searches for domestic violence help are at the highest rate for five years in Australia.

Amid this crisis, domestic abuse charities have been advertising to raise awareness of the dangers victims face.

Earlier this month, TBWA\Dublin created an as part of the Department of Justice and Equality's #StillHere campaign, which offers resources to people experiencing domestic abuse during the pandemic.

And in Britain, Women's Aid ran a print ad in Vanity Fair by agency Engine to communicate to readers that patterns of coercive behavior and control are abuse and call for donations to support victims.

"The PSA is powerful and disturbing in a way that we hope inspires more people to take domestic violence seriously and become allies in the effort to stop and prevent it—during this crisis and beyond," Pamela Zaballa, global executive director of No More said.

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