

## PRESS RELEASE

# Combating Violence Against Women Through World-Class Karate Self Defense and Mental Health Seminar in Los Angeles

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The Koyamada International Foundation (KIF), the World Karate Federation (WKF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are bringing together diverse communities of women from the Los Angeles area to launch an initiative targeting gender-based violence named Guardian Girls Global Karate Project (“Guardian Girls Karate”) on Saturday, October 8th, 2022 from 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the Terasaki Budokan in Downtown LA. This inaugural event begins with a “Guardian Girls Karate Women’s Self-Defense Seminar,” followed by an evening devoted to “Women’s Mental Resilience” with a special screening of the award-winning short film *Shadow Glass* and panel discussion on mental health and resilience. All events are free. The VIP Reception Dinner “Karate Night” will kickstart the weekend’s events at the Official Residence of the Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles on October 7.

The “Women’s Self-Defense Seminar” from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, includes an orientation session by UNFPA’s Mariarosa Cutillo, Chief of UNFPA’s Strategic Partnerships Branch, about the impact that gender-based violence (GBV) has on women and girls around the world; followed by self-defense training by U.S. Karate Olympian Sakura Kokumai and World Karate Champion Elisa Au. Dozens of world-renowned Karate masters from different schools and disciplines, and their students and supporters across the United States are coming together to support the Karate community and the Guardian Girls Karate events in Los Angeles.

A special mental health session titled “Women’s Mental Resilience” includes a screening of the award-winning short film *Shadow Glass*, followed by a 60-minute panel discussion led by mental health professionals, the movie’s lead actress Ava Hall, U.S. Karate Olympian Sakura Kokumai and government officials from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

Shin Koyamada, KIF Chairman, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree Black Belt in Karate and star from *The Last Samurai*, passionately shared, "by providing girls and young women with guidance, knowledge and techniques, this initiative can help them build their self-esteem, discover martial arts as a means to learn self-defense, self-discipline, mental, spiritual and character development and enhance their potential in life and their communities, and also contribute to preventing and responding to violence."

The Los Angeles event will be amplified globally by KIF, UNFPA and WKF through their combined global networks of nearly 200 countries, territories and areas with member national federations and country offices in which they have relationships in the fields of government, business, medical, academic, educational, media and entertainment and sports. In addition, the programs will potentially meet tens of millions of global followers and supporters through their combined social media outlets.

#### About the Koyamada International Foundation

The Koyamada International Foundation is an international nonprofit organization founded in 2008 by international celebrity Shin Koyamada and his wife, Nia Lyte. With headquarters in Los Angeles and national chapters around the world, KIF manages global initiatives and operations in strategic partnerships with the United Nations and other international organizations.

#### About the United Nations Population Fund

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. UNFPA's mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA calls for the realization of reproductive rights for all and supports access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services, including voluntary family planning, quality maternal health care and comprehensive sexuality education.

#### About the World Karate Federation

The WKF is the international governing body of Karate. With 200 National Federations and headquarters in Madrid (Spain), the WKF manages the sport of Karate for its over 100 million fans around the world, and it organizes Karate events worldwide.

#### About the partnership of KIF/UNFPA/WKF

In 2019, the Koyamada International Foundation initially signed a partnership agreement with the United Nations Population Fund to develop the self-defense Guardian Girls program aimed at preventing gender-based violence for underprivileged girls and women as a means to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2022, the Koyamada International Foundation and the World Karate Federation signed a global partnership to cooperate in fostering gender equality and to fight gender-based violence globally through the practice of Karate and the Guardian Girls program.

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