



# SEXUAL VIOLENCE DURING AND AFTER CONFLICT


16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
16 DÍAS DE ACTIVISMO CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO  
16 JOURS D'ACTIVISME CONTRE LA VIOLENCE DE GENRE  
25 NOV - 10 DEC <http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu>



**"This crime, in its utter destruction of the individual and the pervasive way in which it undermines the prospect of peace and development, casts a long shadow over our collective humanity."**

Statement by SRSZ Zainab Bangura at April 2014 Security Council Open Debate on sexual violence in conflict

In recent years, the issue of sexual violence in conflict (SVIC) has increasingly become part of the psyche of States, civil society, and international justice institutions. The 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) made rape, which is one form of sexual violence, in conflict a war crime, and other forms of sexual violence as individual crimes that can be prosecuted.

 **With the majority of the perpetrators being men, women and girls are often the primary victims and survivors of sexual violence.**

Men and boys are also victims of sexual violence in conflict, though it is an even greater taboo to discuss and thus there is less information about how many men are directly affected by SVIC. Women and girls are seen, in such cases, as "property" and "tools of war" and violence perpetuated against them serves to humiliate, degrade, and shatter the bonds of families and communities, weakening their ability to face the opposition. Men are sexually violated in order to humiliate them and publicly question their masculinity and strength. In conflict and crisis, violence against women increases, rape is among the widespread forms of sexual violence and used as a weapon of war, while mutilation of women's sexual organs, sexual slavery through kidnapping or forced "marriage", and forced impregnation and sterilization are used to dominate women and their communities by extension.


## Create Safe Spaces

If your organization has experience with counseling survivors of violence, develop trainings to teach others about proper counseling protocol, available legal and medical resources, confidentiality, collection of evidence and testimonies, and sensitivity to survivors.

## Advocate

The UN Security Council has passed resolutions (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, and 2106) related to women, peace and security, and governments must make commitments to implement them. Advocate for women's participation in decision making at all levels on peace and security issues. Encourage policymakers to make addressing the crime of sexual violence in conflict a priority, and to support local, national, and international prevention, protection, and justice mechanisms.

The patriarchal framework promotes and supports insidious displays of tradition, culture, and socialization of women and men based on gender norms and stereotypes. This framework facilitates understandings of justice and allows certain acts of violence to be considered acceptable or even natural. Gender norms steeped in the patriarchal system of masculine and feminine, public and private, and of collective and individual rights encourage for women to be seen as property of men, whose proper place is in the home away from political, social, and economic spaces.

 **When women venture out of the home, traditional gender norms accuse them of thwarting their duties as to the family, and openly inviting men to harass and assault them in public.**

Especially in times of conflict or political repression and upheaval, men and women, specifically Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) are susceptible to sexual violence.

Impunity for crimes of sexual violence before, during and after conflict is widespread. Addressing sexual violence in

## Men & Boys

Men and boys who believe in gender equality are important allies in activism to end gender-based violence in conflict. They can be powerful role models in challenging masculinities based on domination. Invite men and boys you know to attend a 16 Days event with you and ask them to share their ideas about how to involve their peers in ending violence.

conflict requires holding State and non-State actors accountable for their actions. The Women, Peace, and Security agenda of the United Nations Security Council and CEDAW, as well as regional and localized action plans, policies, and other legislation support efforts toward an end to sexual violence. States are bound by the principle of due-diligence to protect and prevent against sexual violence, to bring perpetrators to justice, and to provide relief and recovery support for survivors. State actors as well as non-State actors can be brought to justice through national laws and regional mechanisms if they exist; the International Criminal Court; and principles held within CEDAW.

Historically, war has been seen as a free-for-all, where civilians are more than likely to be harmed, and men and boys, who are the main fighters in conflicts, believe they are entitled to anything they can exert domination over, as tribute to their masculinity in war, which in turn has been used to justify sexual violence against women, children, and men. Why? Rape and other forms of sexual violence are about domination, and using it during conflict is

another way to control and destroy the “enemy.”



However, we must recognize that sexual violence occurs during relatively peaceful times as well, with the likelihood of increasing and worsening in conflict because of the breakdown of institutional and structural elements that keep order and the semblance of rule of law and governance.

International mechanisms such as UN SCR 1325 advocate for and support the inclusion of women’s perspectives and participation of women in conflict and post-conflict processes and bodies, including in conflict prevention, peace and transition processes, in peacekeeping missions and envoys, and in post-conflict decision-making bodies such as local assemblies, national cabinets, and so on. At the same time, the potential root causes of conflicts, which are often economic and social in nature, must be addressed in holistic ways through greater emphasis on a peace culture, demilitarization, gender equality and strengthening of economic and social rights for all people.

## Spread the Word

Invite the media to report on your activities and ask them to raise the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in their reporting. Give members of the media the guidance to report on violations with sensitivity and that do no further traumatize or endanger survivors. Use your social media sites to share information about opportunities to take action. Follow organizations that are active on social media.

## Resources

### Organizations

- The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence: <http://www.stoprapeinconflict.org>
- MenEngage Alliance: <http://www.menengage.org>
- White Ribbon Campaign: <http://www.whiteribbon.ca>
- Women Under Siege Project: <http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org>

### Relevant Publications

- Nobel Women’s Initiative. (2011) *War on Women: Time for Action to End Sexual Violence in Conflict*. [http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/wp-content/archive/stories/Conference\\_Ottawa\\_Women\\_Forging\\_a\\_New\\_Security/war-on-women-web.pdf](http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/wp-content/archive/stories/Conference_Ottawa_Women_Forging_a_New_Security/war-on-women-web.pdf)
- Stop Rape Now. UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict: <http://www.stoprapenow.org/advocacy-resources>
- UN Women - Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/major-resolutions/security-council>
- Women Peacemakers Program (2010) *Together for Transformation: Men Masculinities and Peacebuilding*: <https://www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org/assets/CMS/Resources/Reports/May-24-2010.pdf>