



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Joint Statement by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell and UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

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One year ago, the UN Secretary-General called for a cessation of violence both on battlefields and in homes. Yet his latest report shows that conflict-related sexual violence has continued unabated during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains a cruel and widespread tactic of war, torture, terror and political repression.

The report records cases of sexual violence against women detained for alleged violations of curfews and quarantines, as well as violations by armed groups that have taken advantage of the pandemic to intensify their operations and gain ground. The pandemic has also laid bare the intersecting inequalities that plague our societies, as compounded by conflict, displacement, and institutional fragility.

We are deeply concerned about the impact on women and girls of recent events, including the use of sexual violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia and the persistent threat and occurrence of sexual violence in many countries affected by conflict, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, as documented in the UN Secretary-General's report.

The level of compliance by all parties to conflict with international obligations, including relevant Security Council resolutions, remains low. Yet this does not deter us. We continue our work to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda, to prevent conflict, and to uphold women's rights, agency and safety.

We urge all state and non-state parties to conflict to adopt specific commitments to address conflict-related sexual violence, which must include peacekeeping missions receiving the necessary budgetary allocations to properly implement their Women, Peace and Security mandates. The protection of survivors and a survivor-centred approach, including in terms of justice and reparations, is essential, particularly in fragile conflict-affected settings, and when survivors face multiple forms of stigma and discrimination.

We are committed to keep strengthening our partnerships with civil society, women's rights organisations, human rights defenders, peacebuilders and local and religious leaders. We look forward to the high-level meeting of the Generation Equality Forum in Paris on 30 June to 2

July, which provides an opportunity to accelerate the work to end sexual violence in peacetime, as well as during conflict by mobilising states and other stakeholders.

Building back better in the wake of this pandemic requires political resolve and resources equal to the scale of the challenge. A gender-responsive and inclusive global recovery from COVID-19 should promote a new social contract in which no one in power is above the law, and no one rendered powerless is beneath its protection. Responses must be comprehensive, multisectoral, age-appropriate and survivor-centred, Survivors' rights, needs and voices should inform national COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

On this day, we call on all parties involved in armed conflicts to heed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and immediately end all acts of conflict-related sexual violence. We call on the international community to put the safety of women and girls first in the response to COVID-19. The goal of achieving safer, fairer, more secure and more peaceful societies will require the international community to demonstrate sustained vigilance and dedication.

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