Event to commemorate the 10th official observance of the

International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

co-hosted by the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations

"Attacks against healthcare in conflict-affected areas: impacts for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence"

Conference Room 11, Wednesday, 19 June 2024, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Live webcast available at: https://rb.gy/y60fxw

~~~

Background & objectives:

The world is facing the highest number of conflicts since World War II, while the number of people forced to flee their homes has reached a record 117 million. Disregard for international law, arms proliferation, increasing militarization, and shrinking civic space continue to exacerbate sexual violence and challenge safe reporting and response. Against this backdrop, attacks against civilian infrastructures by parties to conflict, including healthcare facilities, are intensifying, and depriving communities of fundamental rights such as the right to health. This poses serious threats to the safety of civilians, including vulnerable groups such as survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, as hospitals are essential to provide life-saving assistance in conflict-affected areas. Additionally, survivors often seek refuge in hospitals, hoping for safety, care, and support.

Conflict-related sexual violence is an extremely devastating form of violence with lasting, harmful effects on victims and continues to be used as a tactic of war, torture, and terrorism. It adversely and profoundly affects victims' physical, sexual, reproductive, and mental health and destroys the social fabric of communities. Women and girls continue to be subjected to brutal forms of sexual violence, while armed groups control essential resources, including medical services. Most women and girls do not seek medical attention owing to fear, stigma or prevailing insecurity. In several conflict-affected situations, the massive and widespread destruction of health facilities, the direct and indirect killing of health workers and humanitarian access constraints are severely impeding the provision of life-saving assistance for patients, including survivors of conflict-related sexual
~~~

violence, who require comprehensive medical care, post-exposure prophylaxis, sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial support, as well avenues for reporting.

Attacks on healthcare facilities rob entire communities of essential health services that are needed to save lives. This results in negative consequences for pregnant, nursing, and new mothers, including the unprecedented scale of women and girls reported to have died before or during childbirth. Ensuring the safety of hospitals in conflict zones is paramount for the well-being of survivors of sexual violence and persons at-risk, and supporting their quests for justice and redress. For instance, women and girls face distinct risks and harms following pregnancy as a result of rape and require comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare. Men and boys victimized by sexual violence, are often marginalized due to cultural shame and stigma and are at risk of increased isolation if the necessary care and support is not made accessible to them. Children born of conflict-related rape also face unique risks and harms, including exclusion and ostracization, which may compound and evolve as they reach adulthood and may be exacerbated if health structures are inexistent or non-operational. Many cannot benefit from basic health assistance and education and are burdened by trauma, which affects their well-being and livelihood opportunities, and renders them vulnerable to recruitment by armed forces or groups.

In addition, the military use of hospitals threatens the civilian nature of these institutions and exposes patients and medical personnel to increased risks of attacks and other violations. International humanitarian law clearly stipulates that hospitals are protected from attacks and should benefit from the humanitarian principles of distinction and proportionality. The international community should use all the tools at its disposal to ensure the protection from attacks of these structures, as they play a vital role for survivors of sexual violence, enabling them to benefit from a protective environment, heal and rebuild their lives amidst adversity. Furthermore, in order to respond to the needs of survivors, the international community must prioritize its financial support to survivor-centered responses, including through the delivery of comprehensive support services, access to justice, and socioeconomic reintegration even in the midst of conflict.

In line with General Assembly Resolution 69/293 of 2015, an event will be held to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. This International Day is commemorated every year, on or around 19 June, which marks the date of the unanimous adoption of the first Security Council resolution to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war and a threat to international peace and security (S/RES/1820 of 2008). The purpose of this event is to stand in solidarity with survivors and those supporting them, to spark hope as we lift our voices to say: “#EndRapeInWar”.

Event format:

The event will begin with opening remarks by the three co-hosts, followed by a short video from the 27th Governor General and Commander in Chief of Canada and Global Champion in the Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean. A survivor from South Sudan will deliver a video statement. This will be followed by remarks by the Director of Programme at Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). The coordinated work of the United Nations in “delivering as one” in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence will be presented by the

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), an active member of the UN Action network, which is chaired by the SRSG-SVC. This will be followed by a statement from the Executive Director of the Working Group on Women Peace and Security. To conclude, representatives of Member States, Regional Groups, and Civil Society will be invited to make brief interventions[1].

Opening Segment:

Moderator: Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Nancee Oku Bright

1. *Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, H.E. Ricardo E. Lagorio*
2. *Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Pramila Patten*
3. *Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Under-Secretary-General, Ms. Virginia Gamba*

Special Guests:

Moderator: Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Nancee Oku Bright

4. *Video statement from the 27th Governor General and Commander in Chief of Canada and Global Champion in the Fight against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean*
5. *Video statement from a Survivor from South Sudan*
6. *Statement from the Director of the Programme on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones at Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), Ms. Payal Shah*
7. *Statement from Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Natalia Kanem, on behalf of the UN Action network*
8. *Statement from the Executive Director of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Ms. Kaavya Asoka*
9. *Interventions from Member States and Regional Groups, including co-sponsors of General Assembly Resolution 69/293*

Moderator closes the event.

Expected outcomes:

1. *Statements by the panelists, Member States, and senior United Nations officials, as informed by the perspectives of survivors and civil society representatives, will*

[1] Member States and Regional Groups wishing to make an intervention are requested to contact the Permanent Mission of Argentina (Ms. Bibiana Brest bib@mrecic.gov.ar to inscribe on the speakers' list by **Thursday 13 June 2024.**

highlight our collective responsibility to ensure that hospitals become beacons of safety and healing for survivors, places where they can find solace and rebuild their lives with dignity and respect.

2. *Member States will reiterate their commitment to addressing CRSV, including through adequate, flexible, and sustainable resourcing to the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV MPTF).*
3. *Enhanced media coverage globally, including the promotion of key messages on social media (#EndRapeinWar & #ACTtoProtect), and a dedicated microsite hosted by the United Nations Department of Global Communications featuring the Secretary-General's annual message and other relevant resources https://tinyurl.com/ytrawwp8 as well as a virtual exhibition on a CRSV survivor's journey https://www.un.org/en/exhibits.*