



# STOP RAPE NOW

## UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

### UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action)

UN Action unites the work of 13 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict. Endorsed by the Secretary-General's Policy Committee in June 2007, it represents a concerted effort by the UN to “work as one” – amplifying advocacy, improving coordination and accountability, and supporting country efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors.

### Why did the UN establish UN Action?

Sexual violence during and in the aftermath of conflict is a serious, present-day emergency affecting millions of people, primarily women and girls. It is frequently a conscious strategy employed on a large scale by armed groups to humiliate opponents, shred societies and destroy individuals. It is the only crime for which a community's response is more often to punish the victim, rather than the perpetrator. Sexual violence during conflict remains vastly under-addressed due to weak national protection mechanisms, inadequate rule of law and judicial systems, and piecemeal services for survivors. Many still view sexual violence as an inevitable, if regrettable, consequence of conflict and displacement – an attitude which encourages impunity for perpetrators and silences survivors. Yet rape during conflict can constitute a war crime, crime against humanity, act of genocide and form of torture. As a grave violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, it has received widespread condemnation.

In 2008, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1820, linking sexual violence with the maintenance of international peace and security, demanding the “cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence”. In 2009, the Council adopted resolution 1888, mandating new measures and mechanisms to advance implementation. In December 2010, resolution 1960 was adopted to strengthen monitoring, reporting and accountability.



Although a range of governmental, non-governmental and international initiatives to address sexual violence are being implemented, the scale and complexity of the problem, coupled with poor coordination, has meant huge gaps in the response. The creation of UN Action responds to calls from women's rights organizations, NGOs and rape survivors for the UN to do much more to provide a holistic response. It reinforces efforts by UN entities to better coordinate and streamline their activities, as well as to protect civilians from violence in conflict-affected settings.

### What are the aims of UN Action?

UN Action is committed to aligning the UN's work more effectively behind national efforts to address sexual violence, and to

deepen partnerships with NGOs and civil society organisations at all levels. It builds upon existing coordination mechanisms including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the work of the humanitarian Protection Cluster.

UN Action aims to strengthen both the UN's response to survivors and efforts to prevent sexual violence during and after conflict – recognising that the problem is a peace and security challenge, as well as a humanitarian and developmental issue. UN Action supports women's engagement in conflict prevention and enhances their influence over peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery processes. UN Action seeks to strengthen services for survivors, including health care, legal support and economic assistance to help them rebuild their lives.



### What are the focus areas of UN Action?

UN Action has three main pillars:

- 1. Country Level Action:** strategic support to integrated UN Missions to help them design comprehensive strategies to combat conflict-related sexual violence, and targeted support to strengthen joint UN programming. For example, UN Action has supported the design and implementation of the first-ever *Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the DRC*, as well as the Joint Government-UN Programme on Sexual Violence in Liberia.
- 2. Advocating for Action:** advocacy to raise public awareness and generate political will to address sexual violence as part of broader UN campaigns to *Stop Rape Now* and *UNITE to End Violence Against Women*.

**3. Learning by Doing:** creation of a knowledge hub to develop new data-collection methodologies, provide guidance on judicial and rule of law responses, and promising approaches to tackling stigma.

### What Guides UN Action?

- Rape is not an inevitable consequence of conflict. It must be prevented.
- Conflict-related sexual violence is a violation of fundamental human dignity and rights.
- Attempts to end sexual violence must address gender-based inequalities by empowering women, and promoting their human rights.
- Women must guide advocacy and programming efforts to end sexual violence and secure peace.
- Constructive involvement of men and boys is vital.
- Sexual violence in conflict and impunity for perpetrators are among history's greatest silences. We all have a duty to act.

UN Action seeks to marshal the UN's response to Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1960, broadening the constituency for addressing sexual violence against civilians.

### For more information:

The work of UN Action is governed by a Steering Committee consisting of Principals from the 13 UN entities, supported by a small Secretariat, and chaired by the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Funding for the network's activities is channelled through a Multi-Donor Trust Fund. For more information please contact Gillian Holmes: [gillian.holmes@unwomen.org](mailto:gillian.holmes@unwomen.org); or Letitia Anderson: [letitia.anderson@unwomen.org](mailto:letitia.anderson@unwomen.org) or visit: [www.stoprapenow.org](http://www.stoprapenow.org); [www.facebook.com/UNAction](https://www.facebook.com/UNAction)

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