



*16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence - Joint statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura*

GENEVA / NEW YORK (10 December 2012) – "Truth, justice and accountability are key in upholding the human rights of women and their right to a life free from violence, particularly in countries in post-conflict situations", said the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura.

"In occasion of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, we call on States to ensure the right to truth and justice for victims of war-time sexual violence, as well as accountability for perpetrators," the independent human rights experts stressed.

"In many instances, domestic violence is linked to the legacy of war, and women are affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, other war-related health problems, as well as unemployment, poverty or substance addiction", Ms. Manjoo said. "Recognition and acknowledgement of the legacy of conflict must include the experiences that women face during war, and address their entitlement to justice and reparations, as well as to information and assistance on the missing and the disappeared."

"All too often I hear about the lack of accountability which further perpetuates a sense of distrust in the ability of national courts to provide justice and redress to women victims of violence," said the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, emphasising the States' responsibility to prosecute and punish perpetrators of violence against women, whether it occurs in times of peace, conflict or transitions.

The UN experts stressed that adequate redress involves ensuring the right of women to access both criminal and civil remedies and the establishment of effective protection, support and rehabilitation services for survivors. In their view, "reparations should also include elements of restorative justice and the need to address the pre-existing inequalities, injustices, prejudices and biases or other societal perceptions and practices that enabled violations to occur, including discrimination against women and girls."

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence underscored that it is vital for national authorities to recognize the existence of women victims of rape and torture, regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, and ensure that they have equal access to remedies and services. "Crucially, this should be addressed during the early stages of post-conflict processes, as this is also when violence from the wartime period tends to become privatized and manifests itself in the family sphere, thus creating new challenges for women," Ms. Bangura said.

The experts recalled how they have listened to survivors' concerns about time passing by with no justice being served.

"It is imperative to speed up efforts and achieve political solutions. Transitional justice endeavours should ensure the public acknowledgment and memorialization of women victims, their access to compensation, including non-material damages, and their empowerment," Ms. Bangura noted. "This is particularly important in many parts of the world that are experiencing post-conflict reconstruction, and where the current adverse economic situation, coupled with unemployment and poverty, are disproportionately impacting women victims of violence."

The human rights experts referred to limited access to justice and dysfunctional justice systems, lack of equal participation of women in peace building, and economic disempowerment as some of the challenges faced by women in conflict and post-conflict situations that need to be effectively addressed by relevant Governments and stakeholders.

"We call on all stakeholders to ensure that women who are subjected to numerous forms of violence during conflict have a chance to seek remedies and obtain reparations that lead to fundamental changes in the structures that discriminated against them, and that continue to exist long after conflict is over," they concluded.

**Additional links:**

- My voice, my right, my voice counts – [Watch the Human Rights Day's video](#)

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