

GWI calls on governments and organisations to promote security in areas of conflict to prevent sexual violence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geneva, Switzerland, 19 June 2017 – The [International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) aims to both stop sexual violence as an instrument of war and to eradicate the stigma that inhibits survivors from reporting. Former Security-General Ban Ki Moon defined [conflict-related sexual violence](#) as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity. 2016, the United Nations (UN) classified conflict-related sexual violence as an act of terrorism.

On this occasion, Graduate Women International (GWI) stresses the importance of recognising that anyone, regardless of gender or age, can be a victim of sexual violence. Gender-based violence against boys and men is underreported because of the degradation affiliated with being a victim. Let's make no mistake, girls and women face a greater risk than boys and men do because perpetrators depict girls as "[bearers of the future](#)". In areas where the nature of the conflict threatens the existence of future generations, perpetrators abuse women as a means towards repopulation. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram and ISIL affirm that [abduction and sexual violence against girls is necessary](#) in achieving their goals. Smugglers will often exploit the women and girls who are fleeing and force them into [trafficking, commercial sex and sexual slavery](#).

In order to prevent sexual violence in areas of conflict, GWI calls on governments and organisations, especially women's organisations, to protect women and girls per [Security Council Resolution 2106](#). Resolution 2106 affirms that the emphasis is on the empowerment of women, the protection of women and prosecution of the perpetrators. Without empowerment, protection and prosecution in areas of conflict, girls and women become more vulnerable and are more susceptible to sexual violence.

GWI also calls for the de-stigmatisation of sexual violence in conflict. Mothers of children of rape will often [stay with their rapists](#) in fear of returning to their communities. The dishonour of birthing a child who is the result of rape causes women to employ hazardous methods in dealing with their pregnancies. Unsafe abortions are one of the leading causes of [maternal mortality](#). The de-stigmatisation of sexual violence can save women's and girls' lives.

About Graduate Women International

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 80 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and International Labour Organization.

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