

## **First Legal Case Lodged Against South Sudanese Government for Gang Rape and Sexual Slavery**

Today, 6 December, Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) lodged the first case against the Government of South Sudan for sexual violence against 30 South Sudanese women and girls by members of the South Sudan army, currently known as the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and formerly the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Presidential Guard. The complaint outlines brutal sexual violence, including sexual slavery, sexual torture, rape and gang rape against women and girls during attacks on their villages and whilst they fled the violence from June 2016 to September 2017. The case has been lodged at the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva.

The 30 women and girls represented by LAW include 'K2,' who was subjected to mass rape with her three sisters and a family friend in front of each other in their kitchen. She was 12 years old at the time. Muding, 42 years old, was gang raped by SPLA soldiers whilst another soldier blew a whistle indicating when the perpetrators should finish. Joanna's nine years old daughter was beaten outside while she was raped inside in her home. Scovia, a 27-year-old mother of four, was gang raped by five Government soldiers. Whilst she was being gang raped, two of her children disappeared. She has not seen them since. And Viola, 29 years old, who was tied to a tree, tortured and gang raped by Government soldiers in an army camp.

“The conflict in South Sudan has been ongoing for five years and during this time, tens of thousands of young girls and women have been subjected to horrific sexual violence by Government security forces. To date almost no one has been held accountable. We have to ask ourselves: Why are we not doing more to protect them?” asked Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of LAW “This is a landmark case which is the first step on a long road to justice for all women and girls in South Sudan.”

Rape has been used as weapon of war against the civilian population and until today, there has not been a case against the Government for its actions. The women and girls that LAW represents are so frightened of reprisals from their Government and its agents that they have fled their own country and are now living as refugees. Due to serious concerns for their safety, LAW has requested that the UN Committee protect their full identities during the consideration of their case.

***About Legal Action Worldwide (LAW):*** *LAW is a unique non-profit network and think tank of human rights lawyers who provide creative legal assistance to individuals and communities who have suffered human rights violations and abuses in fragile and conflict-affected areas. LAW works in Africa, Middle East and South Asia and predominantly focuses on addressing sexual violence through legal intervention. In Bangladesh, LAW co-represents 400 Rohingya women and girls in their victims' submission before the ICC.*