



LEGAL ACTION WORLDWIDE
ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Legal Action Lebanon visit a Refugee Camp in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

Contents

A Message from LAW	4
Vision and Approach	5
A Message from our Beneficiaries	6
2019 in Numbers	7
Gender Equality	8
Where we work	9
Asia: Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	10
Sri Lanka	13
Middle East: Lebanon	15
Syria	19
Palestine	20
Africa: Somalia	23
South Sudan	27
LAW in the Media	30
LAW Advocacy	32
LAW in 2020	34
Partnerships	35
LAW Finances	36
Thank you Board	37
Contact Us	38

In 2019, Legal Action Worldwide consolidated its position as one of the leading global human rights NGOs. The year ended on a high, with our participation in the genocide case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice. LAW worked in partnership with the international community to bring three Rohingya survivors of the Myanmar military's "clearance operations" to The Netherlands to bear witness to the trial. LAW was featured in scores of international news outlets including the BBC and the Guardian newspaper, with a global reach of tens of millions of people.

2019 has been a year of continued growth and consolidation. LAW drafted "Strategy 2022" - a four-year plan that adjusts the focus of the organisation to reflect key lessons learned over the past six years. Our original goals remain unchanged. LAW always asks victims what justice means to them. That simple question ensures survivors and their needs remain at the centre of our legal approach.

The Middle East office made a big impact in 2019. Just one year after it was established, the Lebanon team provided legal advice and representation in 784 cases. The majority of these cases involved Syrian mothers registering the births of their children or trying to gain access to the family after divorce. The lawyers also dealt with 29 cases of domestic migrant workers who were being subjected to serious human rights abuses. Five of those cases were closed and the woman safely returned home to Africa. LAW's Syria program got underway in earnest this year. LAW is working with local partners to support victims and survivors of gendered crimes. I'm eager to shepherd this vital work throughout 2020.

Moving to South Asia and the camps of Bangladesh. LAW support the women's group "Shanti Mohila" and helped its leader, Hamida Khatun, fly to Geneva to personally address the Human Rights Council. It was a special moment - the first time she'd been on an aeroplane; the first time she'd seen snow. LAW also submitted a victim impact statement to the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber on behalf of men and boys subjected to sexual violence. In Sri Lanka, LAW trained 69 state prosecutors. As a result of our training and advocacy, victim impact statements are now admissible in Sri Lankan courts.

The Africa office was very busy in 2019. In South Sudan, LAW supported the establishment of a victims association of women and girls who were subjected to rape and gang rape by the South Sudan military. In Somalia, we've received 800 complaints from IDPs. As a result of our work, a male perpetrator of domestic violence has been ordered by the Daynille court to pay his wife money to feed their family.

It's stories like this inspire us to work harder in 2020. I'm extremely proud of LAW and the lengths our lawyers go to represent vulnerable communities. I continue to be humbled by the bravery of resilience of our clients.

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised of predominantly female Human Rights lawyers, who work in fragile and conflict affected areas in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. LAW's focus is on increasing access to justice, improving Rule of Law and addressing human rights violations and abuses, with a particular focus on gender and discrimination, sexual and gender-based violence, natural resource exploitation and transitional or transformative justice.

How LAW works

i. Legal Empowerment and Legal Aid

- LAW empowers individuals and communities to regain their agency by working with them closely to facilitate their meaningful access to justice by providing legal information, advice and representation, depending on their legal needs.

ii. Strategic Litigation

- LAW uses strategic litigation as a method for precipitating significant changes in the law, practice or public awareness by taking carefully selected cases to court. LAW utilises domestic, transnational and international justice and human rights mechanisms for this purpose.

iii. Technical Assistance

- LAW works with justice institutions, law faculties and national partners to strengthen their ability to deliver survivor-centred and effective justice and uphold human rights.

iv. Advocacy

- LAW conducts strategic advocacy with decision makers and supports national champions to promote human rights and the rule of law.



A Message from our Beneficiaries

6

Lebanon comments



Bangladesh/Rohingya comments

2019 in Numbers

new victims received legal support from LAW.

new staff members worked from **## countries**, focussing on **## conflict affected areas**.

new programmes with **## new partnerships**

Took part in **## specialist events**, **##** organised by LAW.

Photos

Gender Equality

Achieving gender equality requires an active commitment to reducing discriminatory laws and practices, tackling harmful gender stereotypes that assign roles based on socially constructed identities or biological sex, and combatting all forms of violence that target, or disproportionately affect, women and girls. In armed conflict, the struggle for gender justice must begin with the recognition that conflict impacts differently on women and girls than it does on men and boys.

Conflict Related Sexual Violence

In April 2019, the United Nations Security Council adopted landmark Resolution 2467, adding another major pillar to the Women, Peace and Security architecture. The Resolution strengthened the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) through justice and accountability, and affirmed, for the first time, that a survivor-centred approach must guide every aspect of the response of affected countries and the international community. LAW can rightly call itself a field leader when it comes to putting empowered survivors at the forefront of tackling CRSV and other forms of gender-based violence. It will heed the Security Council's call to action by continuing to improve and expand its model for addressing the diverse needs and priorities of survivors through creative justice solutions and an expansive approach to accountability. LAW will pursue every opportunity to ensure that survivors' voices are heard in the most important fora where the global response to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) is debated and defined, particularly when international courts and tribunals adjudicate on matters that will shape the prevailing approach to SGBV for years to come.

Maps

LAW's activities in **South Sudan** focus on conflict-related sexual violence and holding security actors to account. In December 2018, LAW submitted the first ever case against the South Sudanese government to CEDAW on behalf of victims of rape, mass rape and sexual slavery.

LAW offers assistance to national authorities in **Somalia** to improve national policy, legislation and practice in respect of sexual violence. LAW works to improve access to justice for internally displaced persons, and in 2019 supported the establishment of a new police outpost to investigate GBV cases.

LAW provides legal assistance, advice and representation to vulnerable women and girls in **Lebanon**. LAW is preparing strategic cases to transform Lebanese law and policy, including by improving women's protection in GBV cases, and by addressing the ill-treatment of domestic workers.

In **Syria**, SGBV has been a persistent issue since the uprising in 2011. Women have been severely impacted, both directly and indirectly, by human rights abuses such as arbitrary killings and enforced disappearances. LAW will soon begin work with survivor groups to pursue justice for gendered crimes.

LAW supports women, men and transgender survivors of the **Rohingya crisis**. In December 2019, LAW supported Rohingya survivors to attend a hearing before the International Court of Justice, which resulted in a landmark court order directing Myanmar to prevent further acts of genocide against the Rohingya community.

The LAW team in **Sri Lanka** is working to transform national justice institutions and to better equip justice actors to be able to investigate and prosecute sexual violence. LAW is working with the Attorney General's office to build international investigative standards and a trauma-informed into the fabric of the Sri Lankan legal system.

Re-defining **Female Genital Mutilation** as a form of Torture: LAW is campaigning to redefine FGM as a form of torture, and in some circumstances, a crime against humanity. In 2019, LAW began preparing cases for strategic litigation to strengthen state obligations to prevent and respond to FGM.

CRSV Tech Solutions: In 2019, LAW commenced a collaboration with international investigators and business design innovators to explore the use of technology to improve the investigation and prosecution of CRSV.

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

More than 900,000 refugees are located in camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, having fled from northern Rakhine state in neighbouring Myanmar. Many are survivors of serious international crimes perpetrated by the Myanmar military (the Tatmadaw) during 2016 and 2017 'clearance operations.'

LAW works closely with the Rohingya community located in Bangladesh to secure justice for crimes experienced in Myanmar, to ensure survivors of those crimes regain agency and empowerment, and to support the healing of the wider refugee community. LAW provides legal information, assistance and representation to Rohingya survivor associations, while supporting international justice processes and identifying creative strategies for accountability of those responsible for international crimes.

LAW represents Shanti Mohila ('Peace Women') an inspiring group of **more than 400 Rohingya women and girls** displaced from northern Rakhine state, Myanmar to Bangladesh following 'clearance operations' by the Tatmadaw in 2017. Many are widows or saw their children killed. Many are survivors of brutal sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, mass rape and sexualised torture.

LAW supports Shanti Mohila in providing support to survivors of sexual violence within their communities. Through LAW, survivors identified by Shanti Mohila can engage in international justice mechanisms, and the wider advocacy around gender equality and justice carried out by Shanti Mohila. Through these activities, survivors have regained agency and have seen their psychosocial wellbeing improve. In 2019, LAW began working with a group of Male Survivor Advocates, trained to provide support to male survivors of sexual violence.



- **46 survivor advocates** trained
- **More than 100 survivors of sexual violence identified**, including survivors of rape, and sexualised torture.
- **More than 20,000 refugees engaged by survivor advocates** since November 2018.
- Working across **12 camps**
- Submission to the **International Criminal Court** including statements from **83 survivors prepared by LAW**
- Survivor advocate missions to The Hague for **International Court of Justice hearing** and Geneva for the **Human Rights Council**
- **Identification of Hijra (transgender) survivors.**

Victim Submission to the International Criminal Court

In October 2019, LAW prepared and filed a victim submission to the International Criminal Court on behalf of Shanti Mohila and the Male Survivor Advocates (in total more than 450 individuals), calling for the court to authorise a full investigation by the ICC Office of the Prosecutor. The submission included the **statements of more than 80 survivors and witnesses** of international crimes and detailed legal argumentation in support of an investigation.

On 14 November 2019, the Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC issued its decision authorising the Office of the Prosecutor to initiate an investigation into the Situation of Bangladesh/ Myanmar. In its decision the Court noted that: ***“According to the Registry, victims unanimously insist that they want an investigation by the Court.”***

Hamida's Story

Hamida Khatun fled Rakhine State, during 'clearance operations' in 2017. Her village was attacked by Tatmadaw and Border Guard Police forces and two members of her family were killed. In the first week of September 2017, Hamida's husband was detained by the Tatmadaw and has not been seen since. She walked for seven days before she reached Bangladesh.

Hamida was a founding member of Shanti Mohila, a survivors' network now numbering more than 400 women and girls, who call for justice for the Rohingya and women's empowerment.

In March 2019, Hamida participated in the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, with the support of LAW and OHCHR - the first Rohingya woman displaced by the 2017 'clearance operations' to do so. Shanti Mohila was the only Rohingya women's civil society group operating within the camps to participate. Hamida addressed the Interactive Session with the Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar and spoke on a high level panel and at media event. On 25 August 2019, Hamida Khatun was the only women to speak at a rally of more than 250,000 in the camps in Cox Bazar, commemorating two years since the 2017 clearance operations.





Mission to the International Court of Justice 12

In December 2019, LAW supported three Rohingya refugees in travelling to the Hague for the International Court of Justice Case between The Gambia and Myanmar on provisional measures requested by The Gambia on the crime of Genocide (10-12 December 2019). The presence of the refugees in the court room was explicitly highlighted by the Gambian legal team during proceedings. H.E. Mr. Abubacarr Tambadou, the Gambian Attorney General and Minister of Justice, noted in his statement to the court: *"I am also pleased that The Gambia's delegation today includes members of the Rohingya community, including those who have travelled from the refugee camps in Bangladesh."*

Alongside hearings, the Rohingya participated in meetings with senior officials and diplomats. These include senior representatives from the Dutch government, attending a reception hosted by the Government of Bangladesh and attending a high-level roundtable, hosted and chaired by the Canadian Ambassador to The Netherlands, Lisa Helfand and Canada's Special Envoy to Myanmar, Bob Rae. The Roundtable was attended by senior governmental representatives of a number of member states and international organisations.

On 23 January 2020, the **ICJ unanimously ordered provisional measures be undertaken**. Myanmar was ordered to prevent acts of genocide against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, to prevent its armed forces and aligned groups from committing acts of genocide, take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations and to submit a report to the Court on compliance with the measures ordered. More than **XX** Rohingya gathered in LAW's office near the camps in Cox's Bazar to watch the Court's decision be announced.



Sri Lanka

13

Sri Lanka's complex recent history has been characterised by decades of armed conflict and internal division. Despite a recent period of peace and a commitment by the Government of Sri Lanka to establish mechanisms to address allegations of human rights violations and international humanitarian law violations, society remains deeply fractured.

In Sri Lanka, LAW supports national justice actors, civil society and grassroots networks embedded within local communities in dealing with the past. In doing so, LAW has empowered beneficiaries and stakeholders to meaningfully engage with justice for past crimes and to build a more resilient and transparent model of governance for the future.

Supporting Sri Lanka's Justice Institutions

LAW supports Sri Lankan justice actors and institutions in dealing complex and gendered crimes. These have included the Department of the Attorney General, The Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms and the Office for Missing Persons. In 2019 LAW facilitated trainings for 69 state prosecutors on the and prosecution of sexual violence crimes. LAW aimed to improve survivor experiences in the criminal justice system by reducing risks of re-traumatisation, demonstrating to the participants how this improves prospects of conviction.

Key highlights include training on:

- International best practices in the prosecution of complex sexual violence cases;
- The psychology of vulnerable witnesses and sexual offenders and strategies for dispelling rape myths at trial.

As a result of LAW's support, training and advocacy to the Attorney General's office, **victim impact statements are now admissible in Sri Lankan courts**. This is a crucial step forward in seeking justice for victims. In April 2019, LAW was awarded a commemorative plate by the Attorney General's Department for its delivery of training on the prosecution of sexual offences.

PHOTO

KEY FACTS

- **69 state prosecutors** trained by LAW
- **90 law students** trained by LAW
- **50 master trainers** spreading knowledge on dealing with the past
- **538 community leaders** working with local communities
- **2,240 people who have participated in awareness programmes** on dealing with Sri Lanka's past
- **1652 community members** reached with essential knowledge about the dealing with the past in Sri Lanka



PHOTO

Anuja's Story

[Anuja REAL NAME?] is a community leader from the south [CHECK] of Sri Lanka. In 2006, she lost members of her family in a bomb attack on a bus, allegedly by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which killed 60 people. While she was initially angry, her attitudes have since changed:

"I had hatred for Tamils. But during the training I saw that there was no point in hating. I saw that what had happened to us had happened to Tamils also. I realised we need to address the root causes."

Anuja's story illustrates that attitudes towards the past and other communities can be changed. Master trainers envisage Anuja becoming an inspiring agent of change in her community.

Dealing with the Past

LAW supports grassroots communities around Sri Lanka in learning to deal with the past, peace and reconciliation. This is especially important in the south and centre of Sri Lanka where enthusiasm for effectively dealing with the country's past is low.

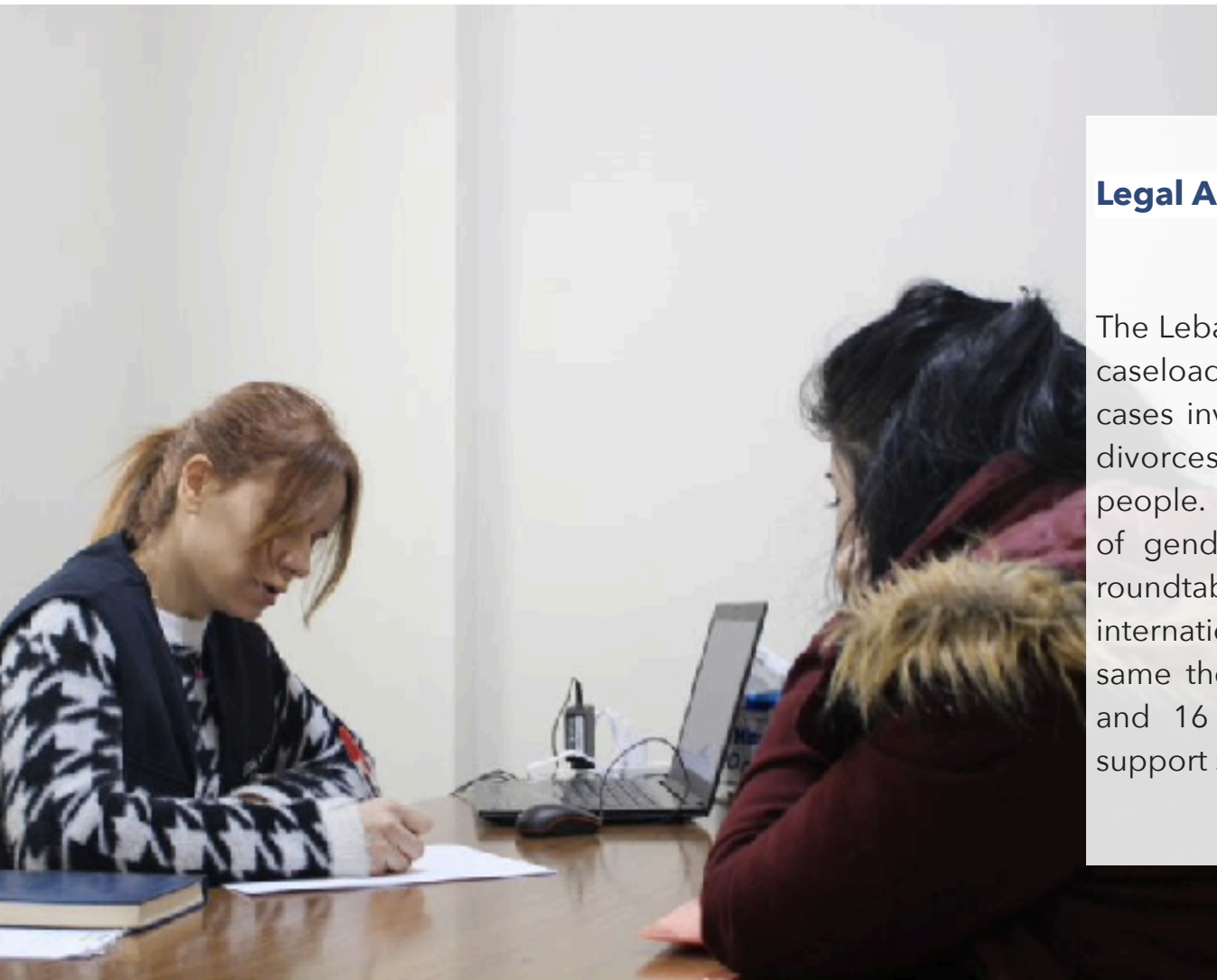
LAW and the Sri Lankan National Peace Council have used an innovative 'training of trainers' approach to spread information about addressing the past to rural areas of the country. Under LAW's leadership, 50 specialists were trained in helping communities deal with the past. These master trainers have gone on to educate more than 500 local leaders. Equipped with both knowledge of how to deal with the past and an awareness of local knowledge and attitudes, these leaders spread awareness to their communities. As a result, 1652 community members learned about the importance of effectively dealing with Sri Lanka's recent past.

Supporting Future Human Rights Lawyers

LAW partners with Sri Lankan universities to prepare students to become effective human rights advocates. LAW has worked with the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka's conflict-affected North to design a human rights clinic at the University's Department of Law—the first such program in Sri Lanka. LAW staff have collaborated with Jaffna law faculty to develop the objectives and structure of the planned clinic and to prepare curricula and syllabi for clinical courses.

Lebanon

Lebanon is home to two permanent refugee populations, including 1.5 million Syrians and 270,000 Palestinians (according to UN data). In late 2019 the Lebanese economy fell into a deep decline and put more pressure on vulnerable local groups, including domestic migrant workers. LAW's work in country focusses on these resources or assistance. It addresses sexual and gender-based violence in the country and the practical application of international marginalised communities who have little access to legal resources or assistance. It addresses sexual and gender-based violence in the country and the practical application of international law.



Legal Aid and Assistance

The Lebanon office worked on 738 cases in 2019. It's a big caseload for an office in its infancy. The majority of these cases involved registering the births, deaths, marriages & divorces of Lebanese, Syrian refugees and stateless people. Lawyers sought 14 protection orders for survivors of gender and sexual based violence. There were two roundtables held on gender based violence & gender and international law as well as eight training sessions on the same themes. LAW engaged the services of five lawyers and 16 legal information officers, in addition to four support staff and three lawyers in management positions.

Domestic migrant workers

In 2019, LAW identified urgent human rights violations against domestic migrant workers in Lebanon. Six women who were being held in slave-like conditions were released and returned to their home countries. LAW continues to seek opportunities to continue this crucial work and investigate avenues to launch strategic litigation against the Government to affect lasting change.



23-year-old Ethiopian 'UC' arrived in Lebanon in March 2019 and was immediately detained by her agent rather than being assigned to an employer. She told her family in Ethiopia that she was being held captive and wasn't allowed to leave and return home. Her family sent \$500 for a ticket, but the agent refused to release her and the ticket lapsed.

When Legal Action took over the case it immediately began negotiations with the agent. He originally agreed to free her, and then changed his mind. Over the course of 10 days LA's lawyer continued to lobby for her release. Finally the agent relented and Legal Action's driver collected UC from a house in regional Lebanon and took her to the airport where she flew back to Ethiopia.

My name is Nour and I come from the mountains of Lebanon

I lived in an abusive marriage and my friend called the LAW hotline for help.

My husband had been in a relationship with another woman and when I confronted him about it he assaulted me in my car in front of my 9 year old daughter. He tried to strangle me with his legs and pulled out my hair. I decided I couldn't bear to live in the marriage any longer.

A bystander witnessed the assault and told my husband "if you want to kill your wife, kill her away from your daughter." This is the mentality of men in Lebanon.

Legal Action is helping me with my divorce in the courts and to gain access to my three children. The lawyer also got me a protection order against my husband. He was very frightened by it and hasn't hurt me since. I would have had no help if it wasn't for Legal Action Worldwide.



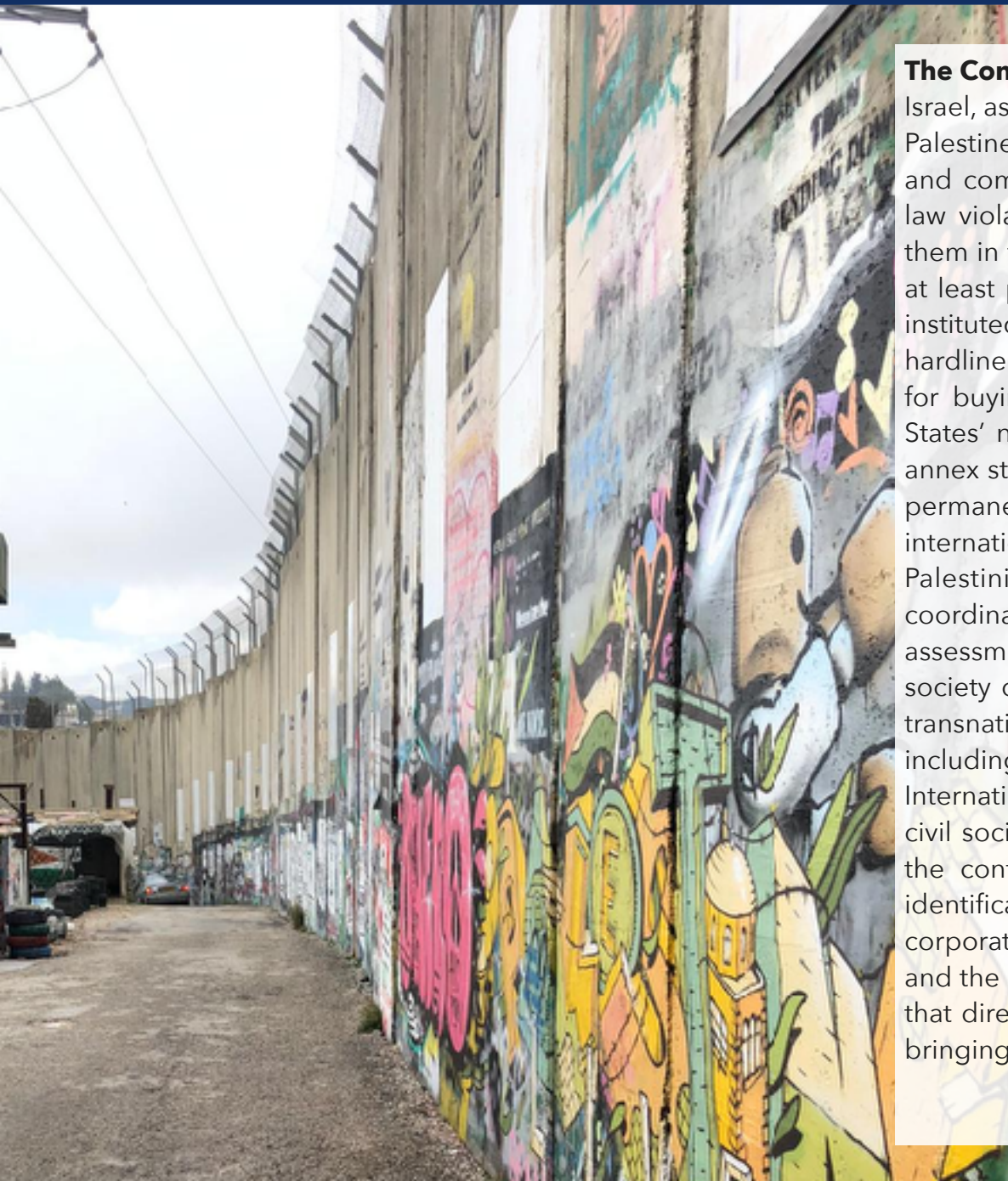
My name is Rima and I travelled from Syria to Tripoli in 2013. I had my three young children in Lebanon. I wanted to register their births with authorities and went to the UNHCR for help. I went three times but there wasn't space for me. I called other agencies for help but no-one called me back.

Legal Action was the only group which helped me. It made me so happy once the process was done. I was worried that I couldn't move around Lebanon without my children having valid papers. It is too dangerous for me to go back to Syria because my village was targeted by the regime during the war. The houses have been bombed and many of my family were killed. When I got help from LAW it was a big load off my mind. My life in Lebanon is hard because my husband doesn't make much money as a janitor. The devaluation of the Lebanese lira also means things like baby formula have become much more expensive.



Syria

LAW began work on the Syria crisis in October 2019. Two workshops were held in Lebanon and Turkey, concerning international human rights and gendered crimes & violations. A workshop was also held with programme partners our programme partners Euromed Feminist Initiative (EFI). The programme focuses on putting the needs of Syrian survivors at the centre of our work.



The Context

Israel, as the occupying power in Palestine, has a range of obligations towards Palestine and its protected population. However, it has exploited this status and committed a litany of international humanitarian law and human rights law violations. In some instances, multi-national corporations have assisted them in the commission of these violations. Until recently, Israel has provided at least procedural legal recourse for Palestinians. But since 2015, Israel has instituted changes to the law, policy and practice under the influence of hardliners and the settlement enterprise, which have curtailed opportunities for buying time for Palestinians using the Israeli legal system. The United States' new Middle East 'peace' plan announced in early 2020 threatens to annex strategic parts of the West Bank to Israel, entrench the occupation and permanently deny Palestine of the right to self-determination. Hence, it falls to international interventions to keep Palestinians in their homes and preserve Palestinian rights. In this climate, LAW's transnational casework and coordination activities are proving more vital than ever. Following a needs assessment in the West Bank and Gaza, LAW explored ways in which civil society could be supported in maximising opportunities for success of their transnational cases, in light of the demands of the transnational arena including universal jurisdiction, civil litigation in foreign courts and the International Criminal Court (ICC). This not only informed LAW's mentoring of civil society in their submissions to the Office of the Prosecutor in 2018, but the content of LAW's programmatic activities in 2019. This included the identification of an opportunity to partner with Al-Haq to hold a multinational corporation complicit in war crimes committed in the West Bank to account and the creation of an agenda for LAW's 2019 Palestine Litigation Roundtable that directly responded to the needs of national and international lawyers in bringing effective claims to the international arena.

Palestine Litigation Roundtable

LAW's annual Palestine Litigation Roundtable in November 2019 was described by one participant as "the best one I have attended". "Inspiring" was a common comment, with one participant describing the two-day brainstorming and information-sharing event on transnational litigation and casework relating to Palestine as "inspiring, illuminating and purposeful." The success of the event can be attributed to a combination of the calibre of the 28 international, Palestinian and Israeli lawyers in attendance, the meticulous preparation of the thought-provoking and topical agenda, and the candid discussions instigated by the co-chairs of LAW and Al-Haq. Topics included Palestine at the ICC, intimidation of human rights defenders working on occupied Palestine, and business and human rights including civil litigation and public procurement relating to enterprises doing business in the settlements. The roundtable culminated in a brainstorming session producing a collective action plan, the implementation of which LAW will spearhead. This included the establishment of a working group on the EU public procurement policy and the establishment of an on-line forum for participants to coordinate their work on transnational litigation



LAW's OECD Complaint

Multinational corporations' activities in illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank normalise and support the presence of settlements and ignore the violations suffered as a result by the indigenous Palestinian population. LAW aims to hold corporations to account for this behaviour. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises provide non-binding principles and standards for responsible business conduct in a global context consistent with applicable laws and internationally recognised standards. In each OECD country, a national contact point ('NCP') is established to promote and monitor observance of the Guidelines. Interested parties can bring complaints against enterprises which are thought to have breached the Guidelines to the NCP including in the country where the company is incorporated. LAW, in partnership with Al-Haq, prepared a dossier of evidence documenting a certain multinational corporation's breaches of the human rights chapter of the Guidelines and the resulting detrimental impact on Palestinian communities in the West Bank. We have compiled both desk and field research, including documentation, photographic evidence, testimony and statistics to present compelling evidence of the relevant corporation's links to human rights violations. The complaint will be filed with a European NCP where the corporation is incorporated in early 2020. LAW will then represent Palestinian victims through the mediation process with the corporation in question, with the aim of convincing them to withdraw from operating in the settlements.

LAW's work in Africa centres on Somalia, South Sudan [and Uganda] where LAW provides innovative legal assistance and representation to address human rights abuses and violations, increase access to justice and uphold rule of law. The work focuses on gender equality and sexual and gender based violence, transitional justice and the women, peace and security agenda.



Somalia

LAW supports state efforts to align national policy, legislation and practice with international human rights standards through the provision of legal advice and drafting of policies and legislation in Somalia. In 2019, LAW's work has focused on Internally Displaced Persons, with programmes that aim to build their **legal agency** and **access to justice**.

KEY FACTS

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A police officer at Deyniile police station noted, **“since we started working with the COB a lot has changed in our station. A tangible achievement is the way we treat detainees when arrested and locked up.”**



Civilian Oversight Board

In 2018 LAW established a Civilian Oversight Board to monitor the conduct of police in Dharkeynley police station in Mogadishu. The board is comprised of lawyers, former police officers, two male and four female elders and members of civil society, and is tasked with reviewing and reporting on conditions in detention centres, arrest and detention procedures and allegations of police misconduct. The Board ensures that both police officers and detainees understand detainee rights, monitors detainee treatment and investigates allegations of ill-treatment. The impact of this project continued to grow in 2019 when in June, the Dayniile District Administration established a new police outpost to serve IDP camps in the area. This particular outpost has three female police officers who assist in handling cases of gender based violence, after it became clear that survivors of this kind of abuse were struggling to reach other police stations.

COB Impact

Arrests

- Police are in uniform
- Detainees and family members are informed of why they are arrested and their right to contact a lawyer.

Detention

- Detainees not held more than 48 hours without being taken to court.
- Accuser no longer forced to pay for food for the accused.
- Cleaner conditions in the jail.
- Detainees referred to health services as needed.
- Reduced use of inappropriate force in detention and investigation.
- COB monitors practices daily by checking records and interviewing detainees and works with police to address issues (access currently curtailed).

COB Reported Outcomes of Police Reforms

- Improved knowledge, jail conditions, and redress for detainees
- Fewer young people (suspected of being a member of Al-Shabab) detained without evidence. Intelligence detention facility has been closed.
- Improved job satisfaction for police resulting from professionalism
- Improved trust by communities - more people coming to the police to report cases

SLAN

LAW helped to establish the Somali Legal Aid Network (SLAN), which brings together sixteen legal aid NGOs across Somaliland, Puntland, Jubbaland and south central regions of Somalia. It is the first network of its kind and the only forum to bring local NGOs working on justice issues together across all regions of Somalia. The SLAN provides a forum through which legal aid providers can share information about common challenges and successful strategies to provide marginalised groups with access to justice, keep updated on changes in the legal system and receive trainings and technical support.

During a community awareness visit in March 2019, paralegals met with the elders and camp managers in one of the camps. One elder welcomed that women are finally getting access to justice stating: **“We would like to thank the paralegals for creating this strong and much needed connection between us and the police station. Women and girls who suffer from sexual violence and domestic abuse can now report their complaints.”**



Independent Complaints Mechanism

In 2019 LAW and its partner Witness Somalia established the first Independent Complaints Mechanism for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in six IDP camps in Mogadishu (Geedole, Dhagaxweyn and Midnimo) and Kismayo (Maanamufo, Halgan and Dharkeynley). The programme is supported by the Somali Legal Aid Network (SLAN) and is run by ten female and six male volunteer paralegals. Throughout 2019 the project conducted weekly community awareness sessions, raising awareness of the formal justice options for victims of gender based violence, providing a safe and secure means of reporting rights violations and abuses. During 2019, LAW received and processed more than 800 complaints, supporting victims to access psycho-social support, medical care and to formally report crimes.

An awareness session at Midnimo IDP camp

Salma

Salma is a 20-year-old young woman who lives in an IDP camp in Garasbaley (a pseudonym is used to protect her identity). In July 2019, she was abducted by two men armed with a dagger while walking to her mother's home. One of the men gagged her while the other raped her, but she managed to shout for help. One man fled the scene, but Salma held onto the man who raped her while still shouting for help. Fortunately, people arrived and detained the man and called security agents who subsequently arrived and arrested him, taking him to Dharkenley Police Station.

Salma was referred to Medina Hospital for treatment, and a medical report confirming that she had been raped was obtained. The case was referred to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) for further investigation and the Attorney General's Office ordered a full investigation.

However, the CID investigator assigned to the case attempted to force Salma to accept an out-of-court settlement and he threatened her mother and brother to accept this. However, Salma refused. The investigator then instigated her unlawful arrest and detention at Dharkenley Police Station for three nights. Salma was subsequently ordered to pay two dollars per day for the detained suspect's food, and to attend the police station daily. These travel and food costs were prohibitively high for Salma. Salma sought legal assistance from Witness Somalia. Their lawyers made representations to the Attorney General's Office and the Director of CID on behalf of Salma. The lawyers noted that the investigator's actions constituted obstruction of justice. Following this, Salma was summoned by officers from Dharkenley Police Station. Two members of the project's Civilian Oversight Board, who monitor police investigations into sexual violence cases, accompanied her. Salma was then informed by CID that the case will be handled according to the law and a formal investigation was opened. The Civilian Oversight Board continued to follow-up on the case during their periodic meetings with CID.

In September 2020, Salma's rapist was prosecuted by the Regional Court in Mogadishu. He was convicted of rape and sentenced to five years imprisonment. This is a significant achievement in the context of Somalia which highlights the impact of legal representation and the Civilian Oversight Board on police investigations and on justice for sexual violence.

Widespread sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and sexual slavery, perpetrated against civilian women and girls has been a hallmark of the ongoing armed conflict in South Sudan. UN and civil society reports have indicated that the commission of sexual offences has become a significant feature of the conflict, and has been used as a military tactic in all ten states by government and rebel forces alike. LAW works closely with survivors and justice institutions in the country in the pursuit of legal redress for victims and accountability for perpetrators.



CEDAW

LAW currently represents 30 South Sudanese women and girl survivors of sexual violence in their pursuit of legal redress for the serious rights violations and crimes perpetrated against them by state security forces. In December 2018, LAW filed the first case against the government before the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2019 LAW continued to advocate on behalf of the 30 survivors to ensure that their abuse is recognised and the perpetrators brought to justice.

Capacity Building

In 2019 LAW trained 60 South Sudanese lawyers and human rights activists on documentation and collection of information and evidence on human rights violations and abuses with a gender sensitive approach.

KEY FACTS

- **120 Cases** documented in 2019;
-

JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS OF SOUTH SUDAN'S CONFLICT

A DISCUSSION WITH SOUTH SUDANESE RIGHTS ADVOCATE AND SURVIVOR,
AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS ON JUSTICE, INCLUDING
YASMIN SOOKA - UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR SOUTH SUDAN
NETSANET BELAY - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, AND
ANTONIA MULVEY - LEGAL ACTION WORLDWIDE
AT THE 18TH SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER
4

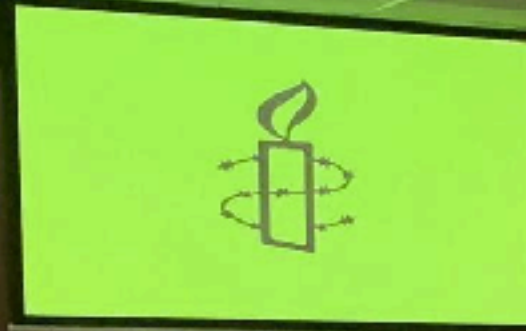


Antarctica, World Forum
Churchillplein 10, 2517
JW Den Haag, Netherlands



18:00-20:00

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED



LAW at the ICC Assembly of State Parties

On 4 December 2019, LAW, with the support of Amnesty International, cohosted a side event at the International Criminal Court Assembly of State Parties: 'Justice for Survivors of South Sudan's conflict.' The event included a discussion with a South Sudanese rights advocate and survivor, together with international experts on justice. The event centred around the need for continued pressure on the government of South Sudan to establish the Hybrid Court, which was agreed upon between parties to the conflict and the African Union as a part of the peace process, to hear cases of past atrocities committed against the Sudanese people and facilitate a sustainable peace in the country. LAW and its partners will continue to advocate for justice in South Sudan and will maintain pressure to set up the Hybrid Court, while pursuing other options for accountability.

In July 2019, LAW conducted a field mission to further engage South Sudanese sexual and gender based violence survivors, listening and documenting their views, concerns, demands for justice and reparations for the violations they suffered. Survivors emphasised their demand for justice and comprehensive reparations that take into account their daily challenges, such as medical care and education. One survivor said: "I want my issue to be taken seriously. The right steps should be taken to bring justice for what the government and the soldiers have caused me." Another survivor stated: "the government of South Sudan should be brought to justice for what happened during the war and the soldiers held accountable."

BENEFICIARY STORY / photo from mission?



The Guardian

Aung San Suu Kyi impassive as genocide hearing begins

World's failure to act over Myanmar is 'stain on collective conscience', UN court told

Owen Bowcott in The Hague

Tue 10 Dec 2019 15:26 GMT

Aung San Suu Kyi has sat impassively through graphic accounts of mass murder and rape perpetrated by Myanmar's military at the start of a three-day hearing into allegations of genocide at the UN's highest court.



Rohingya survivors Hamida Khatun (far left), Younsuf Ali (second left) and Hasina Begum (far right), with Antonia Mulvey.

Among those in court were several Rohingya survivors who had flown in from Kutupalong refugee camp, the largest in Bangladesh outside Cox's Bazar.

Hamida Khatun, Younsuf Ali and Hasina Begum were supported by the human rights organisation Legal Action Worldwide, which was founded by a former UN investigator of the violence, Antonia Mulvey.

"This is a momentous occasion. They have travelled a long way to be here," Mulvey said outside the court. "They are seeking justice and this is the first and most important step."

"Aung San Suu Kyi did nothing to stop the killing. She could have asked for help from the international community at the time. And now, as the final insult, she's defending the army's behaviour in court."



Aung San Suu Kyi to face international court

Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, will appear later today at the United Nations' highest court to defend her country against accusations of genocide.

Her appearance comes after the west African nation of Gambia filed a lawsuit accusing Myanmar of carrying out mass murder, rape and destruction of Muslim Rohingya communities.

Many Rohingya survivors have travelled to the Hague for the three-day hearing and are being represented by the international human rights group Legal Action Worldwide.

Guest: Antonia Mulvey, founder and executive director, Legal Action Worldwide



Specialized investigation into sexual violence in conflict is essential for justice, experts say

Dear Tuesday April 30, 2019



Antonia Mulvey, former gender adviser to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, says her findings from Myanmar, and emphasizes the importance of timely investigations into sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Photo: UN Women/Jodie Mann

On the sidelines of the UN Security Council open debate on sexual violence in conflict, experts came together to discuss what it takes to achieve justice for conflict-related sexual and gender-based crimes through investigation and documentation.

Nearly 20 years since the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 1825, which calls on all parties in conflict to uphold women's rights and respond to violations, impunity for conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence continues to undermine international peace and security.

"When I interviewed survivors, they said 'we want justice,'" said Antonia Mulvey, former gender adviser to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. "Many of them cannot read or write, but they know what justice is, and they wanted accountability".



ALJAZEERA
NEWS / IMMIGRATION

Women support group wants justice for Rohingya refugees

Refugee 'peace women' are putting themselves at the heart of the fight for justice.

By Othman Dabir

19 Mar 2019



Eva Buzo interviewed on Aljazeera, 19 March 2019

Medium Equality

Apps can help fight impunity for conflict-related sexual violence



UN Human Rights
July 10, 2019 - 5 min read *

Bardet's NGO battles against the use of rape as a weapon in conflict. Her organization has recently created Back Up, an app that allows victims of rape to report it and access help. The app also gathers the data on rape instances for use in later prosecutions.

Yet technology will do little good if people who need it don't have access to it, said Antonia Mulvey, executive director of Legal Action Worldwide, who co-sponsored the round table. The digital gender divide is real, with the proportion of men using the internet is still higher than those of women worldwide, with only one in seven women online in developing countries. Mulvey said any tech that looks into handling CRSV must consider how to overcome this gap.

"There are so many issues, such as many people being illiterate, not having access to smart phones, and lack of accessibility to the internet," she said during the round table. "How can this be overcome? How can you make the technology survivor friendly?"

V.O.A. South Sudan Rape Victims Demand Justice

By John Faris
March 04, 2019 08:50 PM



International aid workers who were targeted in South Sudan during an attack on a hotel in Juba say the government or President Salva Kiir has ignored their appeals for compensation and damages.

The aid workers were attacked at the Terrain Hotel in July 2016 by the South Sudan army.

One of the victims, called Jane to protect her privacy, spoke Monday to VOA's South Sudan in focus. She said the international community should put pressure on the South Sudan government to compensate the victims.

They killed me from the inside

Jane said she went back to South Sudan last year to testify because she wanted to be the voice for the other women who cannot face the government or seek justice.

A group of human rights lawyers filed a lawsuit against the government of South Sudan last year for sexual violence on behalf of 40 women and girls who were allegedly raped by members of the army and the presidential guard. Antonia Mulvey, director of Legal Action Worldwide, a nonprofit network of human rights lawyers said the South Sudan army committed "brutal" sexual violence, including sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, rape and gang rape against women and girls.



Has the US failed rape victims in wars?

US threatened to veto a UN Security Council resolution on rape in conflicts over wordings it said encouraged abortion.

25 Apr 2019 20:20 GMT

The [United Nations](#) has passed a resolution to combat sexual violence in conflict zones, but only after it was watered-down amid objections from the [United States](#).

Washington threatened a veto at the UN Security Council vote on Tuesday over references to "sexual and reproductive health", saying the wording amounted to support for [abortion](#).

Eventually, 13 countries voted for an amended text without the controversial phrase.

The final version also removed a reference to a UN monitoring body that would report acts of sexual violence.

What's really behind Washington's position? And how much is politics at play?

Presenter: Inmran Khan

Guests:

Rina Shah - Republican strategist and consultant

Antonia Mulvey - Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide

Angela Muvumba Sellstrom - Researcher at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, University of Uppsala



South Sudan's Hidden Crime: Fighting 'Brutal Sexual Violence' In Conflict

by Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of Legal Action Worldwide

John Faris

In November 2016, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) provided emergency and psycho-social support to 125 women and girls who were sexually abused in northern South Sudan in a span of just 10 days.

68% of young to 10 pregnant women and women older than 55 were assaulted.

The following month, Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) submitted the first-ever case against the Government of South Sudan for the rape, mass rape and sexual slavery of South Sudanese women and girls by members of the South Sudan Army and the Presidential Guard.

The organization is now representing 30 women who suffered from sexual violence in South Sudan who were aged between 12 and 42 at the time of the attacks.

"They have alleged that the South Sudan military raped, gang-raped them and subjected them to sexual slavery, as well as forced mutilation," explained Antonia Mulvey, Founder and Executive Director of LAW.

She said in the case, LAW has filed a complaint at the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

"We have requested that there is compensation for the victims, a review of these actions, and a provision of medical, psycho-social and legal support for the victims," said Mrs. Mulvey.

Women who have been attacked often find themselves shunned by their family and community.

The perpetrators are rarely held to account, with thousands speaking out for victims as often as just lookers, but dangerous.

"It is quite shocking that of all of these cases of sexual violence in South Sudan, the only case that has had prosecution involved international aid workers," added Mrs. Mulvey.

LAW explained Mrs. Mulvey is trying to help those who had the courage to come forward and speak up about their experiences of conflict-related sexual violence in the country.



Myanmar: Rohingya refugee recalls 'horrific' mass killings

Hazina Hagan says 15 of her family members were killed when the Myanmar military set fire to their village and opened fire on the community.

She travelled from refugee camps in Bangladesh, where over 700,000 Rohingya are living, to attend a court case in which genocide allegations have been made.

Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi has defended her country against the allegations at the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Hazina says she hopes that the refugees will get justice.

Interview by Rebecca Herschler

Filed by Kevin Kline

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International court hears of Rohingya horrors as refugee calls Suu Kyi 'a shield' for Myanmar's military

HAZINA HAGINA - **STAFF INTERNATIONAL COURT JUDGE**
THE HAGUE
PUBLISHED: DECEMBER 10, 2019



Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi attends the start of a three-day hearing on the Rohingya genocide case before the UN International Court of Justice on Dec. 10, 2019.

HAZINA HAGINA IS A STAFF JUDGE.



‘Making Technology Work for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence’ Roundtable in Geneva FEBRUARY

The expert roundtable brought together leading minds from law, gender and technology to explore how technological innovation could be used to address sexual and gender-based violence. Key areas of dialogue included the use of technology to prevent violence occurring in the first place, improving security for survivors and rights defenders, interviewing survivors and the investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.



Hamida Khatun addresses the Human Rights Council in Geneva MARCH

In March, Rohingya woman Hamida Khatun became the first person directly affected by the Myanmar Army’s ‘clearance operations’ in 2017 to appear before the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Legal Action Worldwide was proud to support her in this historic occasion. Hamida described her experience fleeing Rakhine state following the attack on her village and the murder of her family. She emphasized that her experience was not unique and set out three requests from her victims group the ‘Shanti Mohila’: justice including compensation; to return home in safety and secure citizenship; and access to education.



Youth Champions Event Colombo APRIL

In April, LAW participated in a Youth Peace Champions Event in Colombo. The event was organised by LAW’s partner, the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka. Students from 12 universities across Sri Lanka came to share their ideas on reconciliation and transitional justice. LAW’s three ‘champions’ were selected from the University of Colombo



LAW at UN Women Event in New York APRIL

Antonia Mulvey addressed a panel discussion at the United Nations in New York on sexual violence in conflict. Speaking about her experience as a former investigator to the UN Independent Fact Finding Mission in Myanmar, she highlighted:

“When I interviewed survivors, they said ‘we want justice ... Many of them cannot read or write, but they know what justice is and they wanted accountability.”

Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises Oslo MAY

At this conference LAW's Executive Director Antonia Mulvey chaired a panel discussion called "Moving from a culture of impunity to a culture of deterrence." It brought together leading experts in conflict, healthcare and international law to discuss ways to improve access to justice for survivors of these crimes. LAW and Human Rights Watch issued a joint statement for increased funding and support to local women-led and survivor-led civil society groups.

LAW's 5th birthday in Beirut JUNE

In June, LAW celebrated its fifth birthday and the launch of the Lebanon office. The event was held on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, to bring attention to LAW's work in that very important space. The celebration was attended by one hundred guests from embassies, non-governmental organisations and journalists. The speakers included the EU Ambassador to Lebanon, Christina Lassen, who spoke about LAW's important work in Lebanon with domestic migrant workers. The UK Ambassador, Chris Rampling, told the gathering that LAW as an organisation was 'strengthening justice for survivors and shattering the culture of impunity.'

Justice for the Survivors of Gendered Crimes - The Case of Myanmar - at the Human Rights Council in Geneva SEPTEMBER

LAW organised a side event to the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, co-sponsored by the UK Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Canada and the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN. The event was attended by almost one hundred representatives from across the world and brought together members of the Independent Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar. The main discussion centred on how survivor-centred justice can be secured for gendered crimes.

ICC Assembly of State Parties on justice for survivors of South Sudan's conflict in the Hague DECEMBER

LAW worked in partnership with Amnesty International to host a panel discussion. The speakers included Yasmin Sooka, the UN Commissioner on Human Rights for South Sudan and Netsanet Belay from Amnesty International.



LAW is grateful to its donors, without whom LAW's work would not be possible. In 2019, LAW's donors included: **The Allen & Overy Foundation; The Australian High Commission in Nairobi; The Canada Fund for Local Initiatives; The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA); US AID; The UN Voluntary Fund for Torture Victims, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, United Nations Peace Building Fund, Diakonia, Swiss Solidarité and the European Union.** A breakdown of LAW's finances is provided below.

LAW is also grateful for the support and assistance of: **Allen & Overy, Hogan Lovells; Sanataria & Jakob; AbdelSater AbuSamra & Associates; Kaplan & Stratton; PKF and PricewaterhouseCoopers.**

LAW wishes to thank our Swiss Committee and UK Board Members who provide oversight and management of the organisation. LAW is also thankful to members of the LAW Advisory Council who provide

LAW's UK Board and Swiss Committee

- Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC (Bindmans)
- Dr Shamsul Bari (Research Initiatives, Bangladesh)
- Raj Chada (Hodge, Jones & Allen)
- Daniel Machover (Hickman & Rose)
- Simon Black (Lexical Labs)
- Ingrid Gubbay (Hausfeld)
- Andre Collomb (Swiss Life)
- Christine Van Nieuwenhuys (Formerly World Food Programme)
- Alexandre Davidoff (MDFH)
- Yusuf Abdi Hassan (MP for Kamukuu Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya)

LAW's Advisory Council

- Monica Fera Tinta (20 Essex Street)
- Professor Guy Goodwin Gill (Oxford University)
- Professor Rick Wilson (American University Washington College of Law)
- Nick Flynn (Avaaz)
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38

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LAW
Legal **Action** Worldwide

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) is an independent, non-profit organisation comprised of a network and think-tank of prominent human rights lawyers and advisors. LAW provides innovative legal assistance to those who are least represented and most vulnerable in fragile and conflict-affected areas of the globe. **LAW uses a survivor-centred and survivor-led approach throughout all its projects and programmes.**