



International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Statement by Legal Action Worldwide

There can be no long lasting peace without justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence

19 June 2023, Geneva-Global: Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) welcomes increased global efforts to document sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) related to armed conflict. However, we raise our concerns that only a handful of cases related to SGBV have been addressed by courts across the world today. Documenting SGBV remain insufficient without ensuring meaningful and transformative justice for survivors of sexual and gender based violence related to conflict. Domestic, regional and international courts should increase their efforts in prosecuting SGBV and work towards greater accountability of perpetrators.

Bringing justice to survivors of sexual and gender based violence is necessary for long term peace and stability. SGBV contributes to and reinforces gender inequalities; it can be used to limit the political (and economic) participation of women, girls, those of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as other minority groups. By attacking women and girls, perpetrators can impact negatively their capacity to engage in democratic process even when conflict is long over. The impunity of perpetrators encourages the ongoing cycle of violence against women and girls and perpetuates the gender inequalities.

Meaningful justice requires effective participation by survivors in justice proceedings. Survivors can only participate where their safety and security, and that of their families and communities, are guaranteed. We call on all states and stakeholders to ensure that adequate protections are in place for survivors: protection of identity, access to essential medical and psychosocial support, and adequate safeguards for the physical protection and wellbeing of communities. We further believe that education, legal information, and representation are critical to ensuring survivor interests are prioritised throughout different proceedings. Only with such measures in place can justice truly be survivor centred.

Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) works closely with victims and survivors of all forms of sexual and gender based violence, and supports them in their fight for justice, ensuring their voices and stories are heard. LAW represents more than 750 victims and survivors of sexual violence across Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia.

Today, Legal Action Worldwide thanks the victims, survivors, families, and communities who trust us by sharing their experience and who continue to fight against impunity.