

HADASSAH



שדולת הנשים בישראל
لوبي النساء في إسرائيل
The Israel Women's Network



The
Dinah Project
October 7. Sexual Violence.

I Believe Israeli Women
A JOINT INITIATIVE OF jwi AND SEED THE DREAM FOUNDATION

November 25, 2024

His Excellency
Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Her Excellency
Ms. Pramila Patten
Special Representative of the Secretary-
General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
United Nations
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Ms. Sima Sami Bahous
Executive Director
UN Women
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres, Special Representative Patten and Ms. Bahous:

As the UN's 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence launches this year, Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Jewish Women International (JWI), National Council of Jewish Women, the Hadassah Foundation, the International Council of Jewish Women, the Israel Women's Network, The Dinah Project, I Believe Israeli Women and the undersigned 57 organizations join together to express our deep concern about the rising levels of violence against women and girls around the world. In particular, we were deeply alarmed by the dramatic 50 percent increase in 2023 in conflict-related sexual violence worldwide documented in the April 2024 Report of The Secretary General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.¹ As women's organizations and humanitarian leaders, we urge you to help deter future acts of gender-based violence in conflict by advancing justice and accountability.

As you work to address and mitigate gender based and conflict related violence around the world, we urge you to include response to the sexual violence committed by Hamas on October 7th. We urge you to take the following actions: (1) declare Hamas' documented systematic weaponization of sexual violence a crime against humanity; (2) list Hamas in the Annex in 2025 Report of the Secretary General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence as a party credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual

¹ United Nations Security Council, "[Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Report of the Secretary-General](#)," April 4, 2024.

violence in situations of armed conflict; and (3) establish and encourage all states to adopt an international protocol for responding to conflict-related sexual violence when it occurs.

Evidence of Hamas' crimes against humanity has been collected and examined by multiple bodies from around the world, including the UN. The mission report released earlier this year by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict presented compelling evidence of widespread gender-based and sexual violence against women and girls committed during the attacks on October 7th, 2023. The report found a pattern of naked, often bound female bodies, some bearing execution style gunshot wounds to the head, in multiple locations. It also found "clear and convincing information" of rape and sexualized torture being committed against hostages kidnapped during the October 7th, 2023 terror attacks and evidence of sexual violence, including rape and gang-rape in at least three different locations in and around the Nova music festival site.² The UN Secretary-General's Annual Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence incorporated Special Representative Patten's report finding a pattern of sexual violence in three locations on October 7th, 2023.³ A June report by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict went further, clearly identifying a pattern of sexual violence against Israeli women and girls on October 7th, 2023, and attributing it to Hamas.⁴ In his request on May 5, 2024, to issue international arrest warrants, ICC Special Prosecutor Karim Khan listed "rape and other acts of sexual violence during captivity as crimes against humanity and as war crimes" among the international crimes that the three Hamas leaders were suspected to have committed on October 7th, 2023.⁵

Multiple independent organizations and news outlets also conducted their own investigations and found overwhelming evidence of Hamas' weaponization of rape. The European Union (EU) sanctioned three terrorist organizations, including Hamas, for widespread sexual and gender-based violence in a systemic manner on October 7th, 2023. Human Rights Watch found evidence of crimes against humanity, including rape, by Hamas on October 7th, 2023. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) charged Hamas leaders with committing acts of terrorism on October 7th, 2023, including the use of sexual violence as weapon of brutality and the rape and genital mutilation of Israeli women.

Despite this overwhelming body of evidence, the UN has yet to list Hamas in the Annex to the Report of the Secretary General as a party credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict or hold the terrorist organization accountable for these crimes against humanity. We urge you to please take swift action to hold Hamas accountable and send a clear signal to others around the world that sexual violence against women and girls will never be tolerated or excused.

We recognize that the horrific events of October 7th, 2023, are not isolated incidents but are part of a global crisis of rising gender-based and sexual violence against women. This global

² Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "[Official visit of the Office of the SRSG-SVC to Israel and the occupied West Bank 29 January – 14 February 2024](#)," March 4, 2024.

³ United Nations Security Council, "[Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Report of the Secretary-General](#)," April 4, 2024.

⁴ The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (COI), "[Detailed findings on attacks carried out on and after 7 October 2023 in Israel](#)," June 12, 2024.

⁵ "[Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for arrest warrants in the situation in the State of Palestine](#)", May 5, 2024.

crisis is occurring even though 15 years have passed since the establishment of the UN mandate of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and even after the UN's adoption of a body of international laws and resolutions to address the scourge of gender-based and sexual violence.

We recognize that, for many reasons, responses to conflict-related sexual violence vary greatly among states, which can impact efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. Accordingly, we urge the UN to put forward a singular, comprehensive international protocol that explicitly outlines the specific actions states must take in the event of conflict-related sexual violence, such as those included in the Murad Code.

We further urge the UN to adopt a resolution validating this international protocol and calling on nations to follow these provisions while cooperating with international mechanisms established to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence. This international protocol should outline guidance for ensuring survivors receive timely and appropriate medical and mental health care, as well as legal assistance. It should also delineate standard practices for gathering, documenting and preserving evidence in a way that helps facilitate effective prosecution of perpetrators.

We urge you to take decisive action against gender-based and sexual violence in conflict by focusing your efforts on providing justice and accountability -- including accountability for Hamas -- to promote greater deterrence of gender-based violence in the future. Further, we ask you to work together to develop and adopt a strong international protocol and related resolution to improve country response on conflict-related sexual violence worldwide.

We remain committed to taking bold action against gender-based violence in all its forms.

Sincerely,

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
Hadassah Foundation
Dinah Project
I Believe Israeli Women
International Council of Jewish Women
Israel Women's Network
Jewish Women International
National Council of Jewish Women

The following 57 organizations have signed this letter:

American Jewish Medical Association
American Zionist Movement
Association of Jewish Psychologists
Avoda Shava ("Equal Work")
BioMED MBA, Hebrew University
Center for Jewish Philanthropy of Greater Phoenix
Center for Women's Justice
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Coalition for Jewish Values
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations

ERAN
European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS)
Forum Dvora
FWMK Law office
Hadassah International, NAFFO (Middle East Peace Forum)
Hartman Institute
HERhealthEQ
Hope Center
I Was Supposed to Have a Baby
Israeli American Council (IAC)
IWF - Israel Chapter
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia's Women of Vision
Jewish Federations of North America
Jewish Fertility Foundation
Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance
Jewish Renaissance Foundation
Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago
Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey
Keshet
Liga of Russian Speaking Feminists in Israel
MERCAZ USA
mHealth Israel
Moving Traditions
Murder Victims Families Organization
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women Australia
NEBAF Inc. (New England Bangladeshi American Foundation)
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
NOGA Fem, Center for women's health innovation and advocacy
Partners for Progressive Israel
Rabbinical Assembly
Rabbinical Council of America
SHALVA
Simon Wiesenthal Center
Stand With Us
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
United Jewish Appeal (UJA)
Union for Reform Judaism
United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ)
We are NOT Weapons of War
WiSpace Israeli Women in Space Association
WIZO (The Women International Zionist Organization)
World Jewish Congress North America
Yesh Tikva
Zioness Movement
Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)