



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 9

Specially Selected Topic: Violence against Women and Children

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At the Ljubljana Ministerial in 2005, we pledged “to take all necessary steps to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls during and after armed conflict and emergencies, including the bringing to justice of perpetrators of crimes, and to take special measures to address the needs of women and girls in the post-conflict environment.” We committed our governments to “integrating into the activities of the OSCE, as appropriate, the relevant parts of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on the role of women in all levels of conflict prevention, crisis management and resolution, and post-conflict rehabilitation.” We also acknowledged that, in some circumstances, such crimes can constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes.

Unfortunately, the OSCE region has experienced gender-based violence during conflict. Rape was used as a weapon during the war in the Balkans and was especially egregious in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. More than twenty years later, little has been done to help victims heal from their trauma or hold the attackers responsible for their crimes. There are trials. However, only cases regarded as the most serious or involving high-ranking officers are being dealt with at the state level, where witnesses are given anonymity and protection. Cases involving women raped by rank-and-file soldiers are often passed to lower-level regional courts, where there is no witness-protection and victims may be reluctant to give evidence in the presence of their attackers. We urge Bosnian authorities at all levels to ensure that cases proceed as expeditiously as possible and with appropriate protection for witnesses, so that justice can be served.

More recently, rape during conflict also occurred in **Kyrgyzstan** during the inter-ethnic violence in the southern part of that country in 2010, according to several international reports. The actual number of victims is difficult to ascertain, as victims may have been murdered after being raped or may not have reported the crime for fear of being stigmatized by their community. Some survivors who have courageously spoken out say that they continue to suffer not only from the trauma of the rape, but also from sexually transmitted diseases contracted from the rape. We call on Kyrgyz authorities to bring perpetrators to justice and to provide assistance to survivors.

Rape as a method of warfare must stop. The United States has addressed this scourge as part of our National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security and in our Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. As an active partner in the United Kingdom’s *Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative*, the United States is pursuing several initiatives to stop gender-based violence during conflict. First, the *Accountability Initiative* will support the development of specialized mechanisms to improve access to justice for

survivors and bring perpetrators to justice in partner countries. Second, we are providing more than \$22 million to the *Safe from the Start* program that funds NGO efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence during humanitarian emergencies. Third, we have committed an additional \$2.5 million to expand our partnerships with countries that conduct Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Violence Against Children surveys. Another survey tool is offered by *Together for Girls*, which helps countries undertake comprehensive surveys to document the magnitude, nature, and effects of physical, emotional, and sexual violence against children, with a focus on girls. Fourth, we are nearly tripling to \$1.4 million our commitment to the *Gender-Based Violence Emergency Response and Protection Initiative*, which provides urgent assistance to survivors of extreme forms of gender-based violence as well as training on implementing laws that address gender-based violence. And last, we have updated our visa policies and guidance to ensure that even those in the highest echelons of the military or government who order, engage in, or look the other way when their subordinates commit acts of sexual violence will not be welcome in the United States, and we urge all participating States to join us by restricting travel of those responsible for such crimes.

The OSCE has been an international leader in ensuring that persons serving in international missions – including OSCE field missions – are part of the solution, and not part of the problem. Women in conflict areas are not only vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual violence, but also to trafficking in persons. The OSCE was one of the first international organizations to adopt a code of conduct for its mission members and guidelines to ensure they did not contribute to the trafficking cycle. At the Ljubljana Ministerial in 2005, the participating States committed to “Ensuring the Highest Standards of Conduct and Accountability of Persons Serving on International Forces and Missions” by strengthening preventative measures, training civilian and military personnel before deployment, and investigating and punishing any cases of misconduct.

At the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict this past June in London, Secretary Kerry stated that “acts of sexual violence demean our collective humanity and are a stain on the conscience of the world.” We stand firmly with others in calling on all participating States to adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual violence.