



Amnesty International Recommendations for the PSVI Conference: Domestic and International Concerns

A DOUBLE STANDARD APPROACH TO VICTIMS

The government defines itself as a global leader on action to tackle Conflict-Related Sexual Violence¹, recognizing that it 'has shattered lives and scarred communities around the world' and is prohibited under international law. Next week's global PSVI conference is hosted to galvanise global action on the issue and support survivors. However, the government takes a different approach when it comes to women asylum seekers and survivors in Northern Ireland by criminalising women seeking safety and legislating for impunity for rape in Northern Ireland.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UK GOVERNMENT

Amnesty International is calling on the UK government to:

- **Open** safe and legal routes for women victims of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence to reach the UK and claim asylum safely.
- **Expand** the opportunity to find safety in the UK under provisions for reunion with refugee partners or parents in the UK.
- **Recognize** that it is the lack of safe and legal routes that pushes women victims of GBV, including sexual violence, to reach the UK through dangerous journeys, including crossing the Channel.
- **Strengthen** the understanding of GBV, including sexual violence, across the asylum system.
- **End** the practice of detaining women victims of GBV, including sexual violence.
- **Repeal** the Ireland (NI) Troubles Bill.
- **Commit** to making the PSVI International Conference a decisive moment by building on commitments made, reflecting on critical feedback and recommendations from civil society and, crucially, centering the experiences and unique role of women and girls. To be credible, the Conference must go beyond being an event and produce a jointly owned statement underpinned by time sensitive commitments, adequate resources and accountability measures.
- **Commit** to lay out a costed, time bound plan to implement the commitments of the conference and report to Parliament on progress.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-ministerial-conference-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative-2022-overview/international-ministerial-conference-on-preventing-sexual-violence-in-conflict-initiative-psvi-2022-an-overview#:~:text=the%202014%20conference,-.Preventing%20Sexual%20Violence%20in%20Conflict%20Initiative,since%20its%20launch%20in%202019.>

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK ADVOCACY OFFICE

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INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Amnesty International welcomes the 2022 PSVI global conference to reinvigorate commitments to prevent conflict related sexual violence. Whilst there has been progress since the 2014 Global Summit, much more remains to be done to secure prevention, protection and justice for survivors.

Amnesty International reiterates its 2014 [recommendations](#) to states. In addition, our research continues to demonstrate that more needs to be done to prevent sexual violence and protect the human rights of victims. Amnesty's calls and research on the situation of sexual violence in conflict internationally is outlined in the ['Calls for the PSVI Conference' document](#).

CRIMINALISATION OF WOMEN SEEKING SAFETY

According to evidence provided by Women for Refugee Women², an organization supporting women refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, most of women refugees have been victims of violence, including rape, in their country of origin and on their journey to the UK. Despite the commitment to survivors of sexual violence in conflict, as soon as these women seek safety in the UK the government's action does not match their rhetoric.

The asylum process is riddled with a lack of understanding of gender-based violence and experiences of survivors are often not believed. When asylum applications are refused, victims risk ending up in immigration detention or being destitute, with no concern for their rights and wellbeing.

The situation of women seeking asylum will worsen because of the provisions of the Nationality and Borders Act, including the government's policy of offshore processing in Rwanda and the establishment of a two-tier systems for asylum seekers, substantially punishing those arriving by means other than safe and legal routes, which are extremely limited and for many nonexistent. Essentially, many women victims of sexual violence in conflict are unjustly penalised for a decision by the UK not to create such routes.

Earlier this year, a pregnant survivor of rape who embarked on a dangerous journey to the UK on a dinghy was threatened with deportation to Rwanda³. The UK government is focused on curbing the crossings of the Channel to the UK without recognising that women who have suffered rape have not found safety in France nor have other safe routes available to reach safety and that they might have significant links to the UK through relatives. Spending taxpayer's money on stopping people crossing the Channel without addressing their needs and rights to safely claim asylum will only lead to more dangerous journeys and more profits for the smugglers the Government says it wants to crack down on. This is especially egregious given the government's recognition and concern for women victims of gender-based violence,

² <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/42825/documents/705>

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/13/home-office-eritrean-woman-pregnant-rape-survivor-rwanda>

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including sexual violence, in Afghanistan and Ukraine⁴ as well as its PSVI programmes in Burma, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Somalia⁵.

IMPUNITY FOR RAPE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Another group of victims is being failed by the government's attempt to legislate impunity for perpetrators of crimes, including sexual violence, committed at the time of the Northern Ireland Troubles. The contested Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill is an attempt to deal with the past by protecting perpetrators, rather than ensuring truth, justice and accountability for victims. No one has ever been held accountable for crimes committed during a conflict that claimed the lives of over 3,600 people and injured 40,000. If the law passes perpetrators of serious crimes, including sexual violence, will be granted immunity from prosecution.

The Bill has been rejected by victims, victims' groups, Amnesty International, Northern Ireland political parties and others. Serious concerns have also been raised by the UN, Council of Europe Commissioner on Human Rights and the US Congress. While one of the pillars of the PSVI initiatives in ending impunity it looks like the government is not extending this priority to women victims in Northern Ireland.

EXPLAINER: WHAT IS THE PSVI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE?

On 28th and 29th November the government is hosting an international PSVI conference to galvanise the global response to the issue¹. The conference follows the 2014 Global Summit on PSVI under the leadership of former FCO Secretary William Hague and Angelina Jolie. Following the Summit, 113 states endorsed the UN Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict¹, a number which has now risen to 156 UN member states. However, following strong leadership and investment from the then FCO the profile of the PSVI has waned and the initiative was awarded a red/amber mark from a 2020 report of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact¹.

To date the outcomes of the PSVI Initiative, in addition to in country programmes are:

- The Murad code, a global code of conduct with focus on better gathering of information about conflict-related sexual violence from survivors¹.
- Two Survivor Champions to support the initiative and champion all survivors of sexual violence in conflict, including children born of rape¹.
- Declaration of humanity by leaders of faith and leaders of belief in support of survivors, including children born out of rape and against stigma¹.

Priorities for the upcoming conferences are:

- **Strengthening the global response**
- **Preventing conflict related sexual violence**
- **Justice and accountability**
- **Supporting survivors and children born of conflict-related sexual violence**

⁴ See statement on Ukraine here <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/humanitarian-situation-in-ukraine-uk-statement-to-the-osce> and on Afghanistan here <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-50-uk-statement-on-women-and-girls-in-afghanistan>

⁵ <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-version/psvi/>

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