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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women



PERMANENT MISSION
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Concept Note

Strengthening the Work of the Security Council on Sexual & Gender-Based Violence in Conflict: The Strategic Use of Evidence from UN Investigations

UN Headquarters, Conference Room 11

1:15-2:45pm, Wednesday, 24 April 2019

Sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Canada, Liechtenstein, the Gambia, Ireland

Register by Friday, 19 April here: <http://bit.ly/20QeOjP>

This event, on the sidelines of the Security Council open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (to be held on 23 April), will feature former gender advisors from UN human investigations on Myanmar and Syria, and the Head of the Independent, International, Impartial Mechanism for Syria, sharing the outcome of their work and strategies in documenting sexual and gender-based violence and in the integration of a gender perspective. The organizers of the event seek to share key guidance and practice of UN inquiries to open a discussion with decisionmakers in New York on the strategic use of these inquiries, particularly relevant for the Security Council and the women, peace and security agenda, to strengthen policy and practice on preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

The findings of UN human rights inquiries offer important insights into the drivers and structural causes of conflict and mass atrocities, by documenting and analysing a wide range of crimes and human rights violations. These investigations have revealed critical linkages between the violations committed during armed conflicts or crisis, and pre-existing forms of gender-based violence and discrimination, especially against women and girls, as well as in cases of sexual violence against men and boys and gender-based violence against LGBTI persons.

The Secretary-General, in his 2019 report to the Security Council on conflict-related sexual violence, draws upon the findings of UN investigations in conflict-affected contexts in his description of violations in Burundi, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Likewise, the 2018 report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security, also draws upon the findings of recent UN investigations, including Burundi, Myanmar and Syria, where sexual and gender-based violence amounts to crimes under international law. The investigations received their mandates from the Human Rights Council (HRC), and report directly to that body in Geneva. However, their reports are also directly relevant to the work of the Security Council, as they identify crimes and potential perpetrators, and recommend avenues for prevention and non-recurrence.

Since 2010, Justice Rapid Response, UN Women and OHCHR have partnered to deploy a gender advisor or SGBV investigator to UN investigations mandated by the HRC and Secretary-General. In 2018, investigations took place in eight countries and territories, including: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (Kasai), Mali, Myanmar, Occupied Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. With the support of dedicated gender expertise, each of these investigations uncovered evidence of the gendered impact of these crimes and violations and on sexual and gender-based violence in these specific and different contexts - often rising to the level of crimes under international law. In 2018, UN Women and Justice Rapid Response also deployed experts on sexual and gender-based crimes to the Independent, International, Impartial Mechanism for Syria to support the comprehensive integration of a gender perspective across its work.

Sexual violence was used as a tool to displace populations; for example, in Myanmar, where rape and other forms of sexual violence were a “hallmark” of the clearance operations which resulted in more than a half-million Rohingya fleeing the country. Women and girls were often targeted for SGBV because of their association to male relatives: examples include to punish Burundian women for the alleged political affiliation of their husbands and to target Syrian women in order to extract information from them or coerce male Syrian relatives to surrender. Men and boys were also subjected to sexual violence, often in detention centers, including in Syria, Yemen and Burundi. Deeply entrenched impunity was an important factor in the “normalization” of sexual violence and its use as a tactic of war, including in South Sudan and Myanmar, underscoring the importance of accountability. An intersectional gender analysis helps explain why particular women and girls were targeted and the significance of religious and ethnic slurs accompanying SGBV: these include the targeting of Sunni women and girl detainees in Syria; Christian Kachin and Muslim Rohingya women in Myanmar; ethnic and clan affiliations in Burundi; and detainees with African heritage in Yemen.

SPEAKERS

- **Amb. Christian Wenaweser**, Permanent Representative, Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations
- **Amb. Richard Arbeiter**, Deputy Permanent Representative, Mission of Canada to the United Nations
- **Andrew Gilmour**, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights
- **Catherine Marchi-Uhel**, Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic
- **Serena Gates**, former gender advisor to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
- **Antonia Mulvey**, former gender advisor to the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar
- **Georgina Mendoza**, SGBV Program Coordinator, Women’s Rights and Gender Section, OHCHR
- **Federica Tronchin**, Head of Office JRR USA and SGBV Programme Manager
- **Emily Kenney**, Policy Specialist on Transitional Justice, UN Women