

Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict: Global Summit One Year On

Robin Marsh
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Rape as a weapon of war has caused so much suffering that many people packed into a House of Lords Committee Room to hear an update on the campaign from the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict, Rt Hon Baroness Anelay DBE. Some had suffered sexual violence in conflict and provided powerful and shocking testimonies. Others shared their personal experiences of growing up where such experiences were common. They explained the tactics they were taught to avoid being raped even from the age of seven years old.



As the Host, Rt Hon Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for International Development, prefaced her remarks by stating how proud she was to be a part of a department that puts girls and women's interests at the heart of all they do. It is her Department's role also to ensure that these goals are included in the Sustainable Development Goals that are being launched at the end of this year. She explained that the Rt Hon Baroness Anelay DBE had been called to make a statement in the House of Lords at the same time and was hoped to attend later.

Charlotte Simon, founder of Mothers of Congo, told the conference that she had seen too much suffering of women due to sexual violence. She praised the role of Dr Denis Mukwege and his Panzi hospital in Bukavu that specialises in the healing of rape victims. She said that the Mothers of Congo congratulated the UK Government for its efforts to end sexual violence and for providing aid but asked them to speak out so that the Congolese people could find justice for the human rights violations they are suffering.

Muzvare Betty Makoni spoke passionately about the suffering of African women who have endured sexual violence that affects them for their whole life. She accused African leadership as being predominantly men and of poor quality in dealing with the problems of Africa.

Keith Best introduced the Survivors Speak Out Network who had participated in a UN international conference in 2014 on sexual violence. He spoke of the role of the International Criminal Court and localised branch courts to remove the impunity that provides perpetrators with the assurance to continue such a heinous crime.



Rt Hon Baroness Anelay DBE's speech was read by Baroness Verma. To paraphrase her words that:

At the Global Summit last year the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Government committed itself to a national strategy and has taken a number of steps. The UK Department for International Development has been supporting these steps. However the UN still has documented 1000's of violations in particular in North Kivu and Oriental Provinces. There are estimates that 50% of the human rights violations in the DRC are committed by the DRC's own security forces.

Baroness Anelay wrote that slowly the tide is changing. She has three Goals:

To ensure that rape and crimes of sexual violence are recognised and treated as the war crimes that they are.

To ensure that addressing sexual violence in conflict is integral to our discussions of peace and security

To end impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in war zones

Baroness Anelay highlighted the need for an 'International Protocol against Rape as a Weapon of War'. She asked, 'We have protocols for many areas including the treatment of prisoners or the use of landmines. Why should rape as a weapon of war be ignored?'

Much of the discussion focussed upon the Democratic Republic of Congo and in particular its eastern region. Christelle Ngama shared that while growing up in Goma she was taught to wear sanitary pads even before she was at the age of menstruation so that men would not rape her. She explained some of the circumstances of families living in Goma and how dangerous it is to live in such a lawless area.

Robin Marsh gave a wider perspective highlighting this as a problem for humanity that affects many parts of the world. The Universal Peace Federation was created to bring a consciousness of humanity as one family under a loving God. Each person has sacred value and should be treated as sons and daughters of God. Men need to be educated to treat women as daughters of God. We all have responsibility as part of this wider human family to take upon the issues and concerns of the vulnerable in our world. The audience is part of this network of common concern invited this time by UPF and Mothers of Congo but also can respond to others in this network to work for the solution of humanity's problems. Universal Peace Federation has a role to promote forgiveness to allow peace to grow among peoples. Rape is an inter-generational crime that exacerbates the cycle of revenge. UPF was created by its Founders as an agency of healing. Therefore we have to be involved in a campaign to help end sexual violence in conflict.



The Rt Hon. Baroness Anelay of St Johns
Speech – Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict: One year after the Global Summit
Wednesday 15th July 2015

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for the kind invitation to speak here this afternoon.

It is a great pleasure to join so many of you in supporting the important work of the Mothers of Congo, the Girl Child Network Worldwide, Freedom from Torture and the Tatiana Giraud Foundation.

The devastating conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo highlights the devastating power of rape and sexual violence used as weapons of war. The DRC has for some time faced an additional challenge – to rid itself of the label of “rape capital of the world”. Being described as such creates a crushing sense of inevitability and suggests that the people of the DRC and the survivors of these terrible crimes are powerless – that the cycle of violence can never be broken.

For too long we have believed that sexual violence is a fact of conflict - the result of issues too complex to challenge. Conflicts such as that in the DRC are held up as examples. This may have been true in the past but conflicts have evolved, increasing numbers of civilians are targeted and suffer unimaginable violence from state and non-state actors. But so has our understanding of the causes and drivers of instability and the impact that it has on those whose lives face the consequences of such conflict. With greater understanding comes a greater responsibility to act.

It should go without saying that all forms of violence against women and girls are unacceptable. But for too long the particular issue of sexual violence in conflict has been taboo – for too long it has been left unexamined, unchallenged, undiscussed.

The British Government is determined to reverse that.

Last year, the UK hosted two landmark summits: the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June and the Girl Summit in July, which focussed on ending Female Genital Mutilation and Child, Early and Forced Marriage.

Those ground-breaking events brought together experts, decision makers, representatives from civil society, people in the room today, and most importantly the brave, inspirational survivors who have been the victims of these “unspeakable” crimes. Today, they represent some of the most powerful advocates for ending sexual violence in conflict.

For me, the scale of international support for these events is a remarkable reflection of our growing collective resolve. A resolve to see an end - once and for all - to these devastating crimes.

Last year’s Summits and the UK’s campaign to end sexual violence in conflict - launched three years ago - were not an end, but just the beginning.

Over the last year, I and my colleagues at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development have been working hard with partners around the world to tackle this challenge head on. We are determined to turn the commitments made at these events into practical action.

The Government of the DRC is one such partner. At the Summit last June Congolese Ministers committed to implement their National Strategy to Fight Sexual Violence and the provisions of the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The government has, since then, taken a series of impressive steps:

launching an action plan for the Congolese Army;

Setting up a national helpline for victims of sexual violence in need of medical and legal advice;

prosecuting high ranking army officers and new efforts to deliver justice closer to home for victims using mobile courts;

and paying the reparations that survivors deserve.

In addition President Kabila's appointed Madame Mabunda as his Special Adviser on Conflict Related Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment who I was delighted to meet when she visited London in February to discuss best practice with our health and law-enforcement professionals.



The UK has supported this work. We have conducted training on documenting and investigating sexual violence in conflict. DFID has put in place a £203 million programme, many elements of which address the complex issues which contribute to sexual and gender based violence.

These developments are impressive, heartening and most welcome... but we cannot be naive.

The Congolese government has been making progress... but the UN has reported thousands of new cases of sexual violence, particularly in North Kivu and Orientale provinces.

There is plenty more work to be done. There are many areas we have not reached; many of those who occupy positions of power or are sent to offer protection then abuse the trust of their communities. Estimates indicate that over 50% of human rights violations in the DRC are committed by the country's own security forces. More must be done to bring those perpetrators to justice.

This is long-term project, not just in the DRC but around the world. Changing beliefs takes time, and the fruits of this labour will not be borne overnight... but the actions the Congolese government are taking are, without doubt, positive steps.

In Congo, and around the world, this journey will not be easy...

... but slowly, the tide is changing.

It is a great honour to succeed William Hague as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

I am passionate about this agenda. I have three goals:

To ensure that rape and crimes of sexual violence are recognised and treated as the war crimes they are.

To ensure that addressing sexual violence in conflict is integral to our discussions on peace and security;

To end impunity for perpetrators of sexual crimes in warzones

However, 30 years in political life has taught me that no deep social problem can be fixed by politicians alone.

To succeed, we must work together. For there is much we can learn from you.

Changing legal frameworks and political discussions only go so far. We need to start at the bottom. We need to make boys and girls equal classmates; to make men and women equal partners, all around the world.

I am delighted to see such a broad range of participants here today. It is of crucial importance that we bring our collective ideas, our collective energy, our collective resources to bear so that future generations of are spared the life-long suffering and devastation so keenly felt as a result of conflict around the world today.

Some say that we cannot succeed. That rape is a part of war. That we shouldn't even try.

I fundamentally disagree.

I say, let's show the nay-sayers what we can do, together.

For history has shown that when governments and civil society come together as one, we can end barbaric practices for good.

Today, we have international protocols and laws regulating everything from the treatment of prisoners to the banning of landmines.

Why should rape as a weapon be a category apart?

Why should the wounds of rape survivors be treated differently to those of victims of landmines, or of mustard gas?

Why should these crimes be ignored?

My friends, I really believe this is a movement whose time has come.

Today, we must continue to make waves - to make sure that survivors know we stand with them, and that perpetrators understand that their acts will have consequences.

We must come together as allies... and we must end these heinous practices once and for all.