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## **UN waters down rape resolution to appease US's hardline abortion stance**

***Measure on sexual violence in conflict passes after Trump administration threatened to veto document over references to reproductive health***

By Liz Ford

The Guardian (23.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2VY7HbW> - The UN has backed a resolution on combatting rape in conflict but excluded references in the text to sexual and reproductive health, after vehement opposition from the US.

The resolution passed by the security council on Tuesday after a three-hour debate and a weekend of fierce negotiations on the language among member states that threatened to derail the process.

The vote was carried 13 votes in favour. China and Russia abstained. On Monday, the US had threatened to veto the resolution but it is understood that last minute concessions on Tuesday morning got the US on side.

Other omissions included calls for a working group to review progress on ending sexual violence.

The UK backed the resolution, but expressed regret about the omission on reproductive healthcare. Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK prime minister's special representative on preventing sexual violence in conflict, said: "We emphasise the need for a survivor-centred approach. Survivor services should cater to all survivors – with no exception."

But he added: "We deeply regret the language on services for survivors of sexual violence, recognising the acute need for those services to include comprehensive reproductive and separate sexual healthcare."

The UK, he said, would continue to "support access to sexual and reproductive healthcare for survivors of sexual violence around the world. This is a priority. If we are to have a survivor-centred approach, we cannot ignore this important priority."

France and Belgium also expressed disappointment at the watered down text. French permanent representative to the UN Francois Delattre said: "We are dismayed by the fact that one state has demanded the removal of the reference to sexual and reproductive

health ... going against 25 years of gains for women's rights in situations of armed conflict."

In recent months, the Trump administration has taken a hard line, refusing to agree to any UN documents that refer to sexual or reproductive health, on grounds that such language implies support for abortions. It has also opposed the use of the word "gender", seeing it as a cover for liberal promotion of transgender rights.

Jessica Neuwirth, the director of The Sisterhood Is Global Institute thinktank and former UN special advisor on sexual violence, said: "It's shocking that the United States turned its back on these girls and jeopardised this urgently needed security council resolution."

During the debate, the secretary-general Antonia Guterres called on the council to "work together to reconcile differences" before the vote was cast.

Following the vote, Russia's UN envoy, Vasily Nebenzia, said the resolution overstepped the remit of UN bodies and required excessive reports to be delivered. He added: "Don't try to paint us as opponents of ending sexual violence in conflict. It is a scourge and has to be eliminated."

Nadia Murad, the Yazidi Nobel peace prize laureate who spoke at the debate, said: "I think this resolution is a step in the right direction. But adopting this resolution must be followed by practical steps to achieve reality."

The human rights lawyer Amal Clooney had called on members of the UN security council to stand on the right side of history in supporting the Yazidi survivors of sexual violence. "This is your Nuremberg moment," she said during the debate.

The agreed-upon resolution was a sliver of what the Germans had put forward earlier this month. The zero draft included progressive text on strengthening laws to protect and support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people who could be targeted during conflict.

It also made specific mention of the need for women to have access to safe terminations.

But the resolution – number 2467 – did for the first time make specific calls for greater support for children born as a result of rape in conflict, as well as their mothers, who can face a lifetime of stigma. It also gave prominence to the experiences of men and boys.

The resolution is the ninth introduced by the security council that has sought to address women's specific experiences of conflict, and advocate for their involvement in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. The first – resolution 1325 – was passed in 2000 after years of lobbying by women's rights campaigners.

Germany has made women, peace and security a priority of its presidency.

However, before the government introduced the resolution, there were concerns that it risked weakening the women, peace and security agenda.

In a statement published last month, 10 organisations, including the Gunder Werner Institut, UN Women and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy and the NGO Care, said: "Given the further hardening of antidemocratic and decidedly misogynistic stances in the UN security council, we believe there is a danger of a weak resolution text ultimately being negotiated and adopted."

"Some powerful members of the security council, such as Russia, China and the USA, are undermining women's rights and once again questioning, for example, women's and girls' right to self-determination. Through such actions, the achievements that have already been made could be shattered and the 'women, peace and security' agenda overall decisively weakened."

In November, ministers, government officials and civil society groups will attend a second global conference on ending sexual violence in conflict in London. The three-day event is part of the UK government's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). The first conference was held in June 2014.

The UK is expected to launch the "Murad Code" on sexual violence, named after the Yazidi Nobel peace prize laureate. The code will set out standards of behaviour and care when gathering evidence of sexual violence.

Leaders will also be lobbied to support calls by the actor Angelina Jolie and the former foreign secretary William Hague for the UN to established a permanent, independent body that will gather and assess evidence in cases of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

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## **Security Council adopts resolution calling upon belligerents worldwide to adopt concrete commitments on ending sexual violence in conflict**

***Members pass Resolution 2467 (2019) by 13 votes in favour, none against, as China, Russian Federation abstain***

UN (23.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2GuB5jx> - The Security Council called today upon warring parties around the globe to implement concrete commitments to fight what many speakers described as the heinous, barbaric and all-too-often silent phenomenon of sexual violence during conflict.

Adopting resolution 2467 (2019) by a vote of 13 in favour to none against, with 2 abstentions (China, Russian Federation), during a wide-ranging debate on the prevention and implications of sexual violence, the Council reiterated its demand for the complete cessation of all acts of sexual violence by all parties to armed conflict.

Calling upon the latter to implement specific, time-bound commitments to combat the crime, the Council welcomed efforts by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and other relevant officials in seeking such commitments and implementation plans, aimed at preventing and addressing all acts and forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Council reiterated its deep concern that — despite its repeated condemnation of violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict, including sexual violence — the phenomenon continues to occur, often with impunity, and in some situations has become systematic and widespread, or reached appalling levels of brutality.

Encouraging Member States to adopt a survivor-cantered approach to ensure that survivors receive the care required by their specific needs without discrimination, the Council also called upon parties to conflict to include stipulations prohibiting such crimes in all ceasefire and peace agreements. It further urged States to recognize the equal rights of all affected individuals — including women, girls and children born of sexual

violence — in national legislation and recognized the need to integrate prevention, response and elimination of the crime into all relevant Council resolutions, including authorizations and renewals of the mandates of peace missions.

Further by the terms of the resolution, the Council urged existing sanctions committees — where within the scope of the relevant designation criteria and consistent with the present and other relevant resolutions — to apply targeted sanctions against those who perpetrate and direct sexual violence during conflict. It reiterated its intention to consider including designation criteria pertaining to acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence when adopting or renewing targeted sanctions in situations of armed conflict.

Several experts, high-profile activists and survivors briefed the Council at the outset. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad from Iraq recalled that Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) enslaved thousands of Yazidi girls and women before the eyes of the world in a genocide that continues today. The social fabric of an entire society has been torn and the hopes of entire generations wasted, she said, recalling that her repeated calls for the creation of a working group to rescue those still missing or held in captivity have fallen upon deaf ears. While Yazidi girls and women broke the barriers of silence, stigma and fear by telling their stories, not a single person has been tried for sexual enslavement crimes, she pointed out.

Denis Mukwege, another Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, contrasted today's international landscape to that of 10 years ago, when many doubted the link between sexual violence and peace and security. Today, no political or military official can continue to overlook the fact that the use of rape and sexual violence as tools of terror is a violation of international law, he emphasized. Expressing support for all initiatives seeking to draw a red line against such barbaric actions, he pressed the United Nations and Governments to adopt sanctions against perpetrators. "Healing is complete only when justice has been served," he stressed, welcoming the adopted resolution's focus on children born of rape, the need for a survivor-centred approach, the imposition of sanctions, ensuring justice and accountability, and providing reparations.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict declared: "Wars are still being fought on and over the bodies of women and girls." She added that in the 10 years of her mandate, "a crime that has often been called 'history's greatest silence' has seized the consciousness of the international community and global action has escalated in an unprecedented way". However, the pace of implementation remains slow and criminal accountability largely elusive, she said, adding that sexual violence casts a long shadow over humanity, undermining the prospect of peace and development. Calling for tailor-made responses to the unique circumstances of each situation, she stressed the urgent need to ensure comprehensive health services for survivors. "Yet, if we are ever to prevent these crimes from occurring in the first place, we must confront the unacceptable reality that it is still largely 'cost-free' to rape a woman, a child or a man in armed conflicts around the world," she noted.

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said the decade since the establishment and mandating of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has seen a paradigm shift in the world's understanding of the crime of sexual violence in conflict. While an increasing number of Governments are demonstrating their willingness to pursue justice and provide services for survivors, "sexual violence continues to fuel conflict and severely impacts the prospects for lasting peace". Indeed, the reality on the ground remains unchanged, with sexual violence continuing to constitute a horrific feature of conflicts around the globe, he added.

Barrister Amal Clooney shared her experience providing legal counsel to women previously kidnapped, bought, sold, enslaved and raped by ISIL. She recalled that as the group's territorial presence declined, Nadia Murad and other survivors called upon the Council to send investigators to gather evidence in Iraq, and just weeks ago the exhumation of mass graves and the identification of victims remains began. However, the trials brought against suspects do not include charges of sexual violence and do not stand as a measure of justice for Yazidis, she emphasized. Laying out several legal options — including referral to the International Criminal Court — she recalled that similar discussions about the value of justice emerged after the Second World War. "If this august body cannot prevent sexual violence in war, then it must at least punish it," she stressed, adding: "This is your Nuremburg moment."

Inas Miloud, Chairperson of the Tamazight Women's Movement, said her group has been working with indigenous women affected by sexual and gender-based violence in Libya since that country's 2011 revolution. Hundreds of testimonies outline a common pattern of physical violence, rape, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, abduction and domestic violence, all underpinned by patriarchal norms, she added. Citing the unchecked flow of weapons into Libya and decades-old discrimination against indigenous minorities, she said the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement fails to reflect such crucial issues as gender equality, sexual and gender-based violence and fear of reprisals for activism.

More than 90 delegates also took the floor, with many expressing outrage over the continued prevalence of a crime as abominable to humanity as sexual violence in conflict. While some hailed the adoption of the resolution and welcomed the concrete recommendations laid out in the Secretary-General's most recent report (document S/2019/280), others emphasized that not enough is being done to tackle the crime's root causes.

Germany's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs underlined the need to strengthen accountability for sexual violence in conflict and to improve the channels through which information on non-compliance reaches the Council. Emphasizing the importance of targeted sanctions and criminal prosecution at the national level, he pointed out that a deadly culture of impunity already exists in many places around the world. "Those who suffer sexual violence often remain victims long after the crimes are committed," he said, underscoring the importance of addressing the persistent stigma suffered by survivors.

Lebanon's representative said conflict is synonymous with women who suffer indelible traumas when their bodies are turned into assault weapons. Cautioning against reducing terrorism to a simple ideology, she spotlighted the moral and ethical imperative to prevent both State and non-State actors from brandishing women's bodies as weapons against them. Urging strict respect for international humanitarian law in times of war, she said the involvement of women in negotiations ensures a path towards sustainable peace. She added that the Council must move from the silence of humiliation to the courage of truth, from indifference to compassion and from injustice to redress.

Several speakers recounted national experiences in seeking to heal the rifts and wounds of war. Sri Lanka's delegate said her country is emerging from a 30-year conflict that left deep-seated scars. Women were major victims due to their heightened vulnerabilities, he said, emphasizing that as Sri Lanka works to rebuild society and heal communities through reconciliation and justice mechanisms, it is committed to addressing the immediate concerns of women and girls.

Iraq's representative, meanwhile, reported that his country has turned the page on a sombre history since recovering all its territory from the grasp of Da'esh — which carried out atrocious crimes unprecedented in the history of humanity. Outlining practical measures to return all displaced persons to their homes and provide them with redress

for their suffering, he said a draft bill aimed at providing compensation, rehabilitation and reintegration into society for Yazidi survivors was up for debate this month, and a list of persons accused of human trafficking has been submitted to the national prosecutor's office.

Serbia's representative outlined national measures aimed at establishing an effective prevention system and punishing perpetrators of sexual violence. As a signatory party to the Rome Statute, Serbia supports the International Criminal Court's prosecution of sexual violence during conflict, and cooperated fully with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, she said. Expressing support for a victim-centred approach, she nevertheless warned against speculating about numbers of victims or insisting upon a "hierarchy of victims" either by ethnic or religious affiliation or by gender, saying that often leads to politicization.

The Russian Federation's representative, decrying sexual violence in conflict as an "odious military crime" emphasized that the Special Representative must continue to abide by her mandate, saying the Council's efforts to end sexual violence depend on overcoming differences and ending politicization of the issue.

Iran's representative said efforts to eradicate sexual violence in conflict cannot succeed without addressing the phenomenon's root causes — the occurrence of conflict itself. "As long as terrorism, violent extremism, foreign occupation and foreign intervention exist, such a solution remains regrettably out of reach," he said, adding that destructive advocates of hatred, racism, discrimination and unilateralism are currently uniting against multilateral solutions.

Many speakers conveyed their condolences to the Government and people of Sri Lanka following the series of terrorist attacks that claimed more than 300 lives on Easter Sunday, 21 April.

Also speaking today were representatives of the United Kingdom, Equatorial Guinea, United States, China, Belgium, Indonesia, Peru, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, France, South Africa, Poland, Dominican Republic, Hungary, Finland, Republic of Korea, Ghana, Spain, Albania, Romania, Uruguay, Canada, Argentina, Namibia, Italy, Switzerland, Ukraine, Norway (on behalf of the Nordic countries), Fiji, Greece, Portugal, Turkey, Japan, Netherlands, Estonia (also for Latvia and Lithuania), Ireland, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Slovenia, Mexico, Jordan, Djibouti, Australia, Afghanistan, Luxembourg, Malta, Qatar, Viet Nam, Botswana, Brazil, Bangladesh, Kenya, Sudan, Pakistan, Morocco, Georgia, Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Myanmar, India, United Arab Emirates, Liberia, Ecuador, Chile and Paraguay, as well as the Permanent Observer of the Holy See.

Delegates representing the European Union, African Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also participated delivered statements.

[Read more on UN.org](https://www.un.org/)

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## **UN committee sides against Russia in first domestic violence ruling**

The Moscow Times (12.04.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2UI1Ewd> - Russia has breached the rights of a Chechen domestic abuse victim, a United Nations women's rights panel ruled

on Friday in what has been called the UN's first decision on domestic violence in the country.

Domestic violence complaints have skyrocketed since President Vladimir Putin passed a 2017 law decriminalizing first-time abuse where beatings resulted in "minor harm." Each year, 12,000 women are killed in Russia as a result of domestic violence, according to official numbers.

NGOs submitted a complaint to the UN in 2013 accusing a court in Chechnya of effectively clearing the victim's husband of attempted murder, instead finding that she had "provoked" him into attacking her with an axe.

Russia violated the victim's rights as a result, the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ruled, "including by failing to uphold her rights as a victim of domestic violence and by directly perpetuating sex-based discrimination and stereotypes in its handling of her case."

CEDAW ordered Russia to award her "adequate financial compensation."

Russia must revise its laws to criminalize gender-based violence and investigate thoroughly all allegations of violence against women, CEDAW also said.

The Stichting Russian Justice Initiative (SRJI) Dutch-based NGO has called the ruling in favor of Shema Timagova the UN's first decision on domestic violence in Russia.

Russia has six months to submit a written response on steps taken in the case.

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## **UN agencies call for action to bolster rights of Europe's stateless children**

***United Nations agencies are calling on States and regional organizations across Europe to take urgent action to ensure that thousands of currently stateless children are given the support and protection they deserve.***

UN News (14.02.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2DZCHAh> - With more than 500,000 people in Europe estimated to be unrecognized as a citizen of any country, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) underscored that children without a nationality have limited access to basic rights and services, like education or healthcare, and can face life-long discrimination.

"Life is stacked against a stateless child right from the start", said UNHCR's Europe Bureau Director Pascale Moreau, adding that legal obstacles often mean their dreams are "dashed before they are adults, and their potential squandered".

As the overall number of asylum-seeking children in Europe has grown since 2010, so too has the number of children identified as stateless. In 2017 some 2,100 children were registered as such, representing a four-fold increase compared to seven years earlier.

Basic rights and services, including education and healthcare, are denied to children without a nationality. Lacking official documents, they are also at greater risk of violence, trafficking and life-long discrimination. Moreover, along with their families, they are often exposed to arrest and detention.

"Every child has the right to a name and a nationality," said UNICEF Regional Director and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe, Afshan Khan.

He underscored that Governments have a responsibility to adopt safeguards that prevent a child from being born stateless and “to provide legal aid and support to ensure every stateless child realizes their right to citizenship.”

The UN agencies said children born stateless are at a particular disadvantage, explaining that they cannot inherit their parents’ nationality due to gender discrimination and gaps in nationality laws. Children born in Europe whose births are not registered are another vulnerable group that includes minority populations, like the Roma.

And children from countries with known stateless populations who enter Europe as refugees and asylum-seekers are particularly defenseless.

While birth registration rates are high in Europe, UNHCR and UNICEF are pushing for information campaigns that target families most at risk, to help identify and register them.

Achieving legal identity for all through birth registration, is one of the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

While UNICEF is working to ensure all children are registered at birth, UNHCR’s #IBelong Campaign aims to end Statelessness by 2024.

### ***What solutions are there to help tackle statelessness?***

- Properly identify and protect every stateless refugee or migrant child upon arrival in Europe.
- Simplify procedures for stateless children to acquire a nationality as soon as possible.
- Adopt or amend legislation to include safeguards that grant nationality to all children born in a country who would otherwise be stateless.