

Foreign Secretary launches campaign to tackle sexual violence in conflict around the world

- Liz Truss to drive new global agreement to condemn use of rape and sexual violence as weapons of war as a 'red line' on a par with chemical weapons.
- UK will host global summit to unite world around action to prevent sexual violence in conflict next year.
- Foreign Secretary announces women & girls will be at the centre of her foreign policy priorities, with more than £20 million of new funding to help stop violence against women and girls around the world.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss today (Tuesday 16 November) launches a major global campaign to stop sexual violence against women and girls in conflict around the world.

Speaking at an event for the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) – established under the UK's G7 Presidency to support women and girls around the world – the Foreign Secretary, who is also the UK's Minister for Women and Equalities, will kick start a major new push by the UK to shatter the culture of impunity around the use of rape and sexual violence as weapons of war.

She is bringing together close partners to condemn rape and sexual violence in conflict as a "red line". All options are on the table, including an international convention, to end such heinous acts once and for all.

The Foreign Secretary will also announce today that the UK will host a global conference next year to unite the world in action to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The conference will bring together Foreign Ministers from all over the world in support of the campaign to end impunity for violence against women and girls.

The announcements are the start of a wider move by the Foreign Secretary to ensure women & girls are at the centre of the UK's foreign policy priorities.

The UK is already a world leader in tackling violence against women and girls, and supporting their rights internationally. While Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister signed the UK up to the Safe Schools Declaration, committing to protect schools during military operations and armed conflict. Under the UK's Presidency, G7 countries have committed to get 40 million girls into education and this year the UK hosted the Global Partnership for Education Summit, raising £2.9bn to get children into school. This included £430m pledged by the UK.

The Foreign Secretary will step up the UK's commitment to women and girls around the world today, announcing:

- £18 million of new funding to end child marriage through partners UNICEF and UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund). This funding will benefit women and girls in 12 countries, including Sierra Leone, Uganda, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Yemen. UK support for this work has already helped avert 25 million child marriages over the last decade.
- A £3 million boost to organisations on the frontline of tackling violence against women and girls. This will help survivors access health and counselling, as well as helping to prevent violence, including by educating men and boys. This funding will also support work with governments to improve policies and legislation.
- £1.4 million of new funding for the Global Survivors Fund, which help support survivors of sexual violence, including through financial support and education.

Foreign Secretary and Minister for Women & Equalities, Liz Truss, said:

In conflicts around the world women and girls continue to face horrific sexual violence, with rape repeatedly used as a weapon of war.

I am absolutely clear the UK must lead the way to shatter the impunity and indifference in which these acts are carried out. I will make it my mission to work with countries and international partners to establish a new agreement to condemn them as a 'red line' and end them for good.

Women and girls across the world should live without fear of violence, with access to education and employment, and the chance to reach their full potential.

The Foreign Secretary's campaign will build on years of work carried out by her predecessor William Hague, who set up the Preventing Violence in Sexual Conflict Initiative with UN Special Envoy Angelina Jolie in 2012. Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative, works directly with the Foreign Secretary on this initiative.

After the last UK-led summit in 2014 the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict was launched, which has been used by the International Criminal Court, the UN and by lawyers, police, medical personnel and NGOs to gather evidence and investigate crimes to help strengthen prosecutions in at least a dozen countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America.

Globally, one in three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. A UK-funded study in South Sudan found that up to 73% of women had experienced domestic abuse and one in three experienced conflict-related sexual violence.

The announcements come following a report by the GEAC, an independent group of experts convened by the Prime Minister under the UK's G7 Presidency, which sets out the scale of the challenge of making progress on gender equality in

the age of Covid. It recommended to G7 leaders that global action is needed to end violence against women and girls through increased investment in prevention and response.

Chair of the GEAC Sarah Sands said:

It is very good news that the Foreign Secretary has pledged that the UK will not look away when confronted by these war crimes.

We had to call for sexual violence in conflict zones to become a red line after hearing the testimony of our council member Dr Mukwege, who has seen first-hand the casualties and the consequences for women, families and communities. As he asked: 'When does this end?' We must work to make sure it does.

- The GEAC's report included a recommendation that the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war be condemned as a 'red line'. [It can be found here.](#)
- The GEAC is an independent group of experts who were convened by Prime Minister Boris Johnson under the UK's G7 Presidency. The GEAC is responsible for championing the core principles of freedom, opportunity, individual humanity and dignity for women and girls around the world. Against the backdrop of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, the GEAC's recommendations focus on education, economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls.
- £18m will be invested in the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage (UNGP), the largest multi-donor programme on child marriage. The UNGP works in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia and Yemen. This will be the second phase of UK support to the UNGP. Phase I supported almost 8 million adolescent girls with life-skills education, skills training, comprehensive sexuality education and girls' clubs to prevent and respond to child marriage.
- The UK has committed an additional £3 million for the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, which supports small civil society and women-led organisations to end violence around the world bringing our total contribution to £25m since 2014.
- Since 2013, UK aid programmes have helped over 10,000 communities, representing over 27 million people, pledge to abandon female genital mutilation (FGM).
- The UK's flagship What Works to Prevent Violence Programme has established new approaches around the world that have shown reductions in violence of around 50%. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a project with faith leaders halved women's experience of domestic abuse and led to a more than five-fold reduction in non-partner sexual violence. The second phase of this programme began this year with the aim to drive down rates of violence globally by increasingly using methods which have already delivered results.