

# Press release: Fighting the stigma of sexual violence: Lord Ahmad launches film festival

The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI), Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon has announced that the PSVI film festival, '[Fighting Stigma through Film](#)' will take place on the 23-24 November 2018 at the British Film Institute (BFI) in London. PSVI Co-Founder and UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie will take part in the event.

The festival aims to harness the power of film to help fight the discrimination and social stigma faced by survivors of warzone rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict, and to support filmmakers from conflict-affected countries who are part of the fight against impunity and stigma in their own societies and worldwide.

Over two days there will be screenings of more than 35 films and documentaries from 14 countries, including Syria, Burma and Nigeria that illuminate the reality of conflict-related sexual violence. The screenings will be open to the public and will be combined with a series of discussions with filmmakers and leading experts on conflict-related sexual violence.

PSVI Co-Founder and UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie will join young filmmakers from conflict-affected and Commonwealth countries including Yemen, Burma, Sri Lanka and Syria, who are taking part in a series of workshops designed to help build their capacity to tell their stories and change attitudes in their own societies. Ms Jolie will also lead a Q+A session with Congolese Nobel Peace Prize winner and preventing sexual violence activist, Dr Denis Mukwege.

Over two thirds (68%) of all the films being screened are directed or produced by women. Among the titles, the festival will host the world premiere for Leslie Thomas' film 'The Prosecutors' which explores the fight to get justice for survivors of sexual violence.

The film festival is part of the build-up to the UK-hosted Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict International Conference in November 2019, which will aim to galvanise governments around the world into taking tangible new steps to address sexual violence in conflict, and to uphold international commitments to bring perpetrators to account.

The Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Since launching the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) in 2012, the UK has continued to lead global efforts to end the horror of sexual violence in conflict. We're

calling on the international community to provide better justice for survivors and to hold perpetrators to account, strengthening global legal mechanisms needed to do so.

But alongside this, social change is needed. Stigma is a global problem that entrenches poverty and disenfranchisement. That's why changing hearts and minds is not only a moral imperative, but also a vital component of upholding international peace and security.

PSVI Co-Founder Angelina Jolie said:

Artists and human rights defenders often take significant risks to tell the truth about crimes committed against defenceless women, children and men during war. The perpetrators of war crimes often go to extreme lengths to keep the truth from being told. So I am proud to support the filmmakers taking part in the festival.

Stigma compounds the suffering of survivors of warzone rape. It is an unbearable injustice on a human level, and it is a major obstacle to achieving justice for victims of these sickening acts of violence. We need to examine and change the entrenched social attitudes that treat sexual violence as an inevitable consequence of war or lesser crime – including harmful attitudes to women.

The UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, who will be taking part in the event, said:

Rape is a crime that can turn victims into outcasts, undermining social cohesion and unravelling family ties. It is time to take a more proactive approach to tackling stigma as a specific harm.

### **Films being screened include:**

- 'The Prosecutors' (Dir. Leslie Thomas) – Kickstarter backed film about a Congolese and Bosnian lawyer's fight to get justice for survivors of sexual violence.
- 'I Am Not Who They Think I Am' (Dir. Marta Martinez) – Documentary set in Uganda about the stigma faced by children born from sexual violence.
- 'Libya: Unspeakable Crime' (Dir. Cécile Allegra) – First-hand accounts of the systematic use of rape following the fall of Col Gaddafi.
- 'City of Joy' (Dir. Madeleine Gavin) – Documentary following the beginning of City of Joy, a centre in the DRC which was set up with the

help of Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr Denis Mukwege to help women victimised by conflict.

- 'The Uncondemned' (Dir. Michele Mitchell and Nick Louvel) – Drama telling the story of how international law was changed by a single case in a Rwandan court room.
- 'Silent War' (Dir. Manon Loizeau) – Accounts by women and children systematically abused by members of the Assad regime.