

## UN Security Council Takes a Historic Stand Supporting Abortion Access for Women Raped in War

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - October 18, 2013 [NEW YORK, NY]**

New York, NY – In an historic first, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a groundbreaking resolution supporting abortion services for girls and women raped in armed conflict. Although the Security Council did not use the term “abortion” in Resolution 2122, its language makes clear that Member States and the UN must ensure that all options are given women impregnated by war rape: “*noting* the need for access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including regarding pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination.”

This provision directly responds to United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s September 2013 recommendation to the Council that girls and women raped in armed conflict be ensured access to “services for safe termination of pregnancies resulting from rape, without discrimination and in accordance with international human rights and humanitarian law.” The Secretary-General had previously recommended to the Council in March 2013 that women raped in war have access to abortion services.

“Forcing women raped in war to bear the children of their rapists is not only immoral, it is illegal,” said Global Justice Center President Janet Benshoof. “We applaud this historic step by the Security Council, which could save the lives of girls and women, some as young as 12, who survive rape in war only to die from risky childbearing, unsafe abortions, and suicide.”

There is growing support among legal experts that deliberately omitting the option of abortion from the medical treatment provided to girls and women raped in war violates their rights, as war victims, to comprehensive, non-discriminatory medical care under the Geneva Conventions. The former head of the International Committee of the Red Cross’ Legal Division, Professor Louise Doswald-Beck, argues that denying abortions to female war rape survivors—while, at the same time, providing male rape victims and all other persons “wounded and sick” in armed conflict the medical care required by their condition—constitutes unlawful discrimination and amounts to torture or cruel treatment under common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

“The Geneva Conventions are clear that all war victims must be given all necessary medical care in all circumstances,” said Benshoof “getting pregnant shouldn’t expel girls and women raped in war from the Geneva Conventions.”

Strongly supported by UN Women, Resolution 2122 also considerably strengthens the Security Council’s earlier resolutions on Women, Peace and Security by calling for stronger measures regarding women’s participation in conflict and post-conflict processes such as peace talks, gender expertise in peacekeeping missions, improved information about the impact of armed conflict on women, and more direct briefing to the Council on progress in these areas.

The Security Council’s call for access to abortion for war rape victims stands in stark contrast with the United States’ categorical ban on abortion attached to its humanitarian aid for war victims. Because the United States is the largest humanitarian aid donor in the world, its anti-abortion policy, which contains no exceptions for rape, life or incest, affects the medical care provided to women in every war zone.

“President Obama has shown incredible leadership on issues of equality for women at home and globally. This Resolution is an opportunity for him to lift the US ban and help save the lives of war rape victims around the world,” said Benshoof.

As rape is increasingly being used as a weapon of war in armed conflicts around the globe, it is critical that donor states, including the United States, abide by the call in Resolution 2122 to ensure all medically appropriate care to war rape victims. To do otherwise is to sentence female rape survivors to dire, even deadly, consequences,” said Benshoof.

###

For more information contact Akila Radhakrishnan, Senior Counsel, [akila@globaljusticecenter.net](mailto:akila@globaljusticecenter.net), 212.725.6530, ext. 203 or Sarah Vaughan, Senior Development and Communications Officer, [svaughan@globaljusticecenter.net](mailto:svaughan@globaljusticecenter.net), 212.725.6530 ext. 204.

---

---

*The Global Justice Center (GJC) is leading an international effort, The August 12<sup>th</sup> Campaign, to ensure access to abortion for war rape victims globally. The GJC is a non-governmental organization that works for peace, justice, and security by enforcing international laws that protect human rights and promote gender equality.*

---

---