

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



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H.E. Sir John Sawers, Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations
One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
885 Second Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

December 6, 2007

Dear Ambassador Sawers,

We at the PeaceWomen Project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom are writing to you as part of the 17th annual 16 Days Against Gender Violence global initiative to end violence against women. The theme of this year's 16 Day's Campaign is "Demanding Implementation, Challenging Obstacles: End Violence Against Women". The Security Council has a critical role to play in this in the context of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict.

Through Resolution 1325 and several Presidential Statements over the last 7 years, the Security Council has strongly condemned sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and has made commitments to addressing it. However, women and girls continue to be subjected to widespread and systematic sexual and gender-based violence and impunity reigns. One of the significant challenges is ensuring that the Security Council, in its day-to-day work and in making decisions on international peace and security matters, takes into account such violence.

On each of the 16 days of the Campaign from the International Day to End Violence Against Women on 25 November until International Human Rights Day on 10 December, we are addressing a member of the Security Council on this issue and call on you to ensure that the Security Council takes steps to fulfill its role and to turn commitments into reality.

We welcomed the United Kingdom's statement during this year's Open Debate on women, peace and security and, in particular, "The Security Council has a key role to play in providing for the protection of women from gender based violence, including torture, rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, prostitution and trafficking, which are all committed during conflict and continue in post-conflict situations. Conflict is the business of the Council [...] The cruelty of the sexual violence inflicted upon women and children, in particular as a weapon of war, is unspeakable. This is not a debate about the institutional niceties of whether the subject does or does not belong on the Council's agenda. This is a debate about protecting people who are suffering as a result of conflict [...] The Council has a duty to listen to, but also to act upon, such reports [...] It is imperative that the Security Council hears the often unpalatable testimonies of witnesses on the ground. [...] That sort of cruelty is something that concerns us all."

We look forward to you using opportunities for engagement on International Human Rights Day to make a statement that highlights this issue and calls for concrete and specific action. We also look forward to your ensuring the integration of these issues during the Council's consultations and decisions during December and throughout the year. In particular we call on you, as a member of the Security Council to:

- Support the establishment of a focal point or dedicated monitoring mechanism to increase the Council's contribution to preventing and redressing violence against women in armed conflict, as called for by the Secretary-General in his recent study on violence against women;
- Call for the Secretary-General to ensure that there is comprehensive country-specific reporting on sexual violence to the Council from peace-support operations and that such information is also included in regular country-specific reporting;
- Consider means by which the Council could more effectively end impunity and hold parties to account for these violations.

We also hope you will support local initiatives in the UK that address sexual and gender-based violence. For more information on 16 Days Campaign initiatives in your country please visit:

<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/kit07/europe.html>

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information and we look forward to following up with you on this in the near future.

Yours Sincerely,



Sam Cook
Project Associate, PeaceWomen Project (WILPF)

PeaceWomen is a project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) that monitors the progress made towards the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. PeaceWomen hosts a website, peacewomen.org, that provides accurate and timely news and information on women, peace and security issues. We also advocate for the integration of a gender analysis in the peace and security work of the United Nation system.