



Women Nobel Peace Laureates Launch
THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STOP RAPE & GENDER VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT
Week of Action May 6-13

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The first ever collaboration between Nobel Peace Laureates, international advocacy organizations, and groups working at the regional and community levels in conflict areas, launches this week with The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict.

A powerful and coordinated effort for change, the Campaign was formed in response to the prevalence of systematic rape in conflict. Campaign members are concerned with the continuing lack of support for survivors of gender violence and the culture of impunity throughout justice mechanisms for perpetrators of rape in conflict.

“We believe that by bringing people into a concerted effort—harnessing the power of all the amazing work around the globe to end this scourge—we can stop rape and gender violence in conflict,” said Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, chair of the Nobel Women’s Initiative and co-chair of the Campaign. “How many of us need to be raped before the world says no? We are launching the Campaign to finally bring an end to this senseless violence that impacts generations of people around the globe. Together, we can make this happen.”

A Week of Action May 6-13, with events around the world and online will mobilize support for the Campaign, bringing necessary action to stop rape in conflict to the attention of decision makers, media, and the general public.

The Campaign will demand urgent and bold political leadership to prevent rape in conflict, to protect civilians and rape survivors, and call for justice for all—including effective prosecution of those responsible.

The Campaign launches as recent news highlights continuing failures to stop rape in conflict. Armed groups in northern Mali are targeting women and girls during turmoil in the region, while grassroots organizations are tracking incidences of gender violence in Syria. Recent developments also demonstrate progress within the international judicial sector and continuing need for support, with the Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court announcing he is moving forward with his investigation into rape during the Libyan conflict. In addition, former Liberian President Charles Taylor was found



guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery in Sierra Leone's civil war. The landmark ruling at the Special Court for Sierra Leone makes Taylor the first head of state to be convicted by an international court.

In conflicts on all continents, rape is used as a weapon against members of both genders as battles increasingly move into communities. This type of violence has been employed by rebel and insurgent groups, armed gangs, as well as government troops—with various motives, ranging from tactical to personal. Rape causes psychological and medical trauma, with reverberations continuing for decades for the survivor, their family, and the entire nation when systemic violence has been waged.

While data on rape tends to be highly inaccurate due to the extreme stigma attached to survivors and the failure of reporting mechanisms, we have been able to determine its widespread prevalence throughout the world. The shocking numbers available only begin to tell a part of the story.

Recent research found that within the entire country of the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 400,000 women were raped between 2006-2007. The high number demonstrates how gender violence has moved beyond regions where military operations take place and violence is a factor in daily life, with 48 women raped every hour. On the opposite side of the world in Colombia, the most recent survey on gender violence found that in the 407 municipalities facing active insurgencies, almost 500,000 women reported being raped between 2001-2009—six women raped every hour.

"I witnessed the power of women coming together and demanding a stop to violence in Liberia. Now when we all come together—men and women side-by-side all around the world, and say no to rape, no to gender inequality—I believe that we will be able to shake the world into hearing what we have to say," said Leymah Gbowee, the newest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her mobilization of women which helped end the Civil War in Liberia.

The Campaign launches with four target countries where immediate attention is needed: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Burma, and Colombia. Williams will join activists in Colombia for the Week of Action May 6-13, Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire will attend events in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Events will also be held in a number of conflict countries around the world, including Liberia with events led by Gbowee.



A virtual component to the Campaign will unite supporters online at www.stoprapeinconflict.org. All are encouraged to Take the Pledge in support of the Campaign. During the Week of Action, all are also urged to make a personal pledge and share an action they will take within their own community for the Campaign.

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The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict is led by the women Peace Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative in Ottawa, Canada. The Campaign's Advisory Committee is comprised of 25 organizations—working at the international, regional, and community levels to support survivors and stop rape including: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, V-Day, AIDS Free World, Global Fund for Women, Sonke Gender Justice Network, Panzi Hospital, Women's League of Burma, Center for Women War Victims, Femmes Africa Solidarite.

www.stoprapeinconflict.org

Media contact:

Rachel Vincent

Nobel Women's Initiative

rvincent@nobelwomensinitiative.org

613-569-8400 ext. 113

613-276-9030