

Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict: Global Summit One Year On

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By Robin Marsh

The campaign against rape as a weapon of war brought many people to a packed Committee Room in the House of Lords. Some had suffered sexual violence in conflict and provided and provided powerful and shocking testimonies. Others shared their personal experiences of growing up where such experiences were common. They explained the tactics they were taught to avoid being raped even from the age of seven years old.

As the Host Rt Hon Baroness Verma, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the PSVC Room Department for International Development, prefaced her remarks with stating how proud she was to be a part of a department that **puts girls and women's interests at the heart of all they do**. It is her **Department's role also to ensure that** these goals are included in the Sustainable Development Goals that are being launched at the end of this year. Rt Hon Baroness Anelay DBE had been called to make a statement in the House of Lords at the same time and was hoped to attend later.

Charlotte Simon, founder of Mothers of Congo, told the conference that she had seen too much suffering of women due to sexual violence. She praised the role of Dr Denis Mukwege and his Panzi hospital in Bukavu that specializes in the healing of rape victims. She said that the Mothers of Congo congratulated the UK Government for its efforts to end sexual violence and for providing aid but asked them to speak out so that the Congolese people could



find justice for the human rights violations they are suffering.

Muzvare Betty Makoni spoke passionately about the suffering of African women who have endured sexual violence that affects them for their Betty Makoniwhole life. She accused African leadership as being predominantly men and of poor quality in dealing with the problems of Africa.



Keith Best introduced the Survivors Speak Out Network who had participated in a UN international conference in 2014 on sexual violence. He spoke of the role of the International Criminal Court and

localised branch courts to remove the impunity that provides perpetrators with the assurance to continue such a heinous crime.

At the Global Summit last year the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Government committed itself to a national strategy and has taken a number of steps. The UK Department for International Development has been supporting these steps. However **the UN still has documented 1000's of** violations in particular in North Kivu and Oriental Provinces. There are estimates that 50% of the human rights violations in the DRC are committed by **the DRC's own security forces**.

Baroness Anelay wrote that slowly the tide is changing. She has three Goals:

To ensure that rape and crimes of sexual violence are recognised and treated as the war crimes that they are. To ensure that addressing sexual violence in conflict is integral to our discussions of peace and security

To end impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in war zones

Baroness Anelay highlighted the need for an **'International Protocol against Rape as a Weapon of War'**. She asked, **'We have protocols for many areas including the treatment of prisoners or the use of landmines. Why should rape as a weapon of war be ignored?'**

Much of the discussion focussed upon the Democratic Republic of Congo and in particular its eastern region. Christelle Ngama shared that while growing up in Goma she was taught to wear sanitary pads even before she was at the age of menstruation so that men would not rape her. She explained

some of the circumstances of families living in Goma and how dangerous it is to live in such a lawless area.

Robin Marsh gave a wider perspective highlighting this as a problem for humanity that affects many parts of the world. The Universal Peace Panorama of Room Federation was created to bring a consciousness of humanity as one family under a loving God. Each person has sacred value and should be treated as sons and daughters of God. Men need to be educated to treat women as daughters of God. We all have responsibility as part of this wider human family to take upon the issues and concerns of the vulnerable in our

world. The audience is part of this network of common concern invited this time by UPF and Mothers of Congo but also can respond to others in this network to work for the solution of **humanity's problems. Universal Peace Federation** has a role to promote forgiveness to allow peace to grow among peoples. Rape is an inter-generational crime that exacerbates the cycle of revenge. UPF was created by its Founders as an agency of healing. Therefore we have to be involved in a campaign to help end sexual violence in conflict. [Read More](#)

