

NOVEMBER 28, 2022

Presidential Memorandum to Promote Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

Today, President Biden will sign a Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence to strengthen the U.S. government's efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), a too-often overlooked and underreported crime. For each rape reported in connection with a conflict, the United Nations estimates that 10 to 20 cases go undocumented. The United States does not accept CRSV as an inevitable cost of armed conflict, and is committed to supporting survivors through all available measures — including legal, policy, diplomatic, and financial tools—to deter future violence.

President Biden is issuing this Presidential Memorandum on the occasion of the United Kingdom's international ministerial conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, and at a time when CRSV persists with impunity around the world, including in Russian-occupied Ukraine and Ethiopia.

Today's action complements the Administration's comprehensive efforts to support survivors of CRSV, including by promoting gender equity and equality, addressing the root causes of conflict, and advancing Women, Peace and Security. In particular, it is aimed at:

- Leveraging sanctions authorities, assistance restrictions, and other tools to promote accountability for perpetrators of CRSV;
- Ensuring acts of CRSV are given equal consideration alongside other serious human rights abuses in developing designations under existing sanctions authorities; and
- Continuing to build a coalition of like-minded nations and international organizations to prevent and promote accountability for acts of CRSV.

To further demonstrate the Biden-Harris Administration's unwavering commitment to supporting survivors of CRSV and all forms of gender-based violence, the United States has also pledged to:

- **Strengthen Support to the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.** In addition to our annual contribution of \$1.75 million to the Office of the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United States announced an additional \$400,000 during the 77th UN General Assembly to support the SRSG. These additional resources will advance the SRSG's work to promote justice and accountability for CRSV through consistent and effective prosecution; foster greater engagement by governments to provide sustainable, survivor-centered responses to CRSV; and enhance prevention efforts to address the root causes of this violence.
- **Bolster Civil Society Efforts to Investigate and Document CRSV.** The State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) has provided more than \$4.5 million in projects that support civil society efforts to investigate and document acts of CRSV to aid in the pursuit of justice for victims and survivors. In Burma, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka, these programs will contribute to a global effort focused on supporting civil society and survivor groups pursuing accountability. Over the next two years, DRL will invest nearly \$5.5 million in additional funding to support this initiative, for a combined investment of \$10 million, subject to the availability of funds.
- **Deliver Services and Support for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Emergency & Conflict Settings.** The State Department and USAID will revive and expand their flagship program to provide lifesaving services and support to survivors of gender-based violence in emergency and conflict settings, including CRSV. Originally launched as the Safe from the Start Initiative in 2013, *Safe from the Start ReVisioned* will prioritize prevention, mitigation, and service provision to address gender-based violence in humanitarian responses to global crises, and shift funding, influence, and decision-making power in humanitarian systems to women and girls, particularly those from marginalized and underrepresented communities. From 2013, when the initiative was first launched, through fiscal year 2021, the United States invested more than \$167 million to strengthen support for survivors in emergencies.
- **Increase Access to Justice, Protection, and Services to Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, including CRSV.** The State Department will also expand the Voices Against Violence (VAV) Initiative, dedicated to ensuring that survivors of gender-based violence and harmful practices have increased access to justice, protection, and services. The VAV Initiative has benefited more than 2.3 million people across 66 countries and has directly supported more than 3,000 survivors of gender-based violence, including CRSV survivors. Over the next year, DRL will invest \$6 million in additional funding to support the VAV Initiative, subject to the availability of funds.

Together with today's Presidential Memorandum on Promoting Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, these initiatives signal President Biden's ongoing commitment to confront gender-based violence—in all of its forms—around the world. The Biden-Harris Administration stands with survivors of sexual violence in conflict, and invites the international community to join us in strengthening accountability for CRSV as part of a holistic response that includes fostering the health, well-being and healing of survivors; expanding access to justice; enhancing provision of psycho-social support and other life-saving services; and supporting economic empowerment.

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