

Debate Pack

CDP 087 (2021)
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14 June 2021

The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and the G7

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Summary

A general debate on the UK's preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative and the G7 will take place on Thursday 17 June 2021 in the Main Chamber.

1 Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

1.1 Conflict-related sexual violence

19 June is the [International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) refers to [sexual violence perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys in conflict zones](#). This includes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, and forced marriage. Perpetrators may be affiliated with a state or non-state armed group, including terrorist ones.¹

Due to local instabilities, repression and survivors' fear of reporting, there is a lack of reliable data on the prevalence of CRSV. The pandemic has also [hindered monitoring](#) of CRSV. Any figures are therefore [likely to be underestimates](#).²

In 2020, the UN reports that sexual violence was used as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism in [several conflict zones](#). From January to December 2020, it documented CRSV in states including Afghanistan (271 reports), the Central African Republic (221), Columbia (239) and South Sudan (193).³

In March 2021, the UN said [more than 500 rape cases](#) had been reported in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.⁴ It is believed [such violence is common](#).⁵ In 2021, the UN Population Fund in Ethiopia estimates [there may be 22,500 survivors of sexual violence](#) who will seek clinical care, up from 5,611 in 2020.⁶

Save the Children estimates that 72 million children, or 1 in 6 children living in conflict zones, [are currently at risk of sexual violence](#) by armed groups.⁷

The International Development Committee has also raised concerns for [sexual abuse committed by aid workers and peacekeepers](#).⁸

¹ UN Peacekeepers, [CRSV](#), accessed 14 June 2021

² Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI), [Conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse](#), 30 September 2020, section 2.2; UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SGSVC), [Implications of Covid-19 for the prevention of and response to CRSV](#), 22 May 2020

³ UN Security Council, [Conflict-related sexual violence: Report](#), 30 March 2021, paras 12, 17, 21, 24, 48

⁴ Al-Jazeera, [Ethiopia's Tigray: Men forced to rape family members, UN reports](#), 25 March 2021

⁵ New York Times, ["They told us not to resist:" Sexual violence pervades Ethiopia's war](#), 1 April 2021

⁶ UN Population Fund Ethiopia, [Preparedness and response plan for the Tigray crisis](#), April 2021, p2

⁷ Save the Children, [1 in 6 children living in conflict zones at risk of sexual violence by armed groups](#), 18 February 2021

⁸ International Development Committee, [Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: Next steps, 2020-2021](#); ICAI, [Sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers](#), September 2020

1.2 Establishment of the PSVI

In 2012, the UK Government established a cross-Government [Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#) (PSVI) with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Home Office. Its objective is to raise awareness of the extent of CRSV against women, men, girls and boys and to encourage global steps to eradicate it. It involves.

The PSVI focuses on three areas: challenging harmful attitudes towards survivors and victims of CRSV, delivering better access to healthcare and justice, and improving how security and peacekeeping forces prevent and respond to sexual violence.⁹

1.3 Budget and activities

In March 2021, the Chair of the APPG on the PSVI, Anthony Mangnall MP, called on the UK and the G7 to [take greater steps towards eradicating gender-based violence](#), arguing that the PSVI has been “downgraded [and] underfunded” in recent years.¹⁰

In September 2020, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, [said the PSVI remained](#) “very much part of our core priorities.”¹¹ The March 2021 Integrated Review of UK foreign policy [also included a commitment](#) to “build momentum” to prevent CRSV and to work with others to strengthen justice for survivors.¹²

From 2012/13 to 2020/21, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) [allocated £55 million to PSVI-related activities](#). The £20 million allocated for 2014/15 included £5.2 million to deliver the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence on Conflict in 2014. 2014 also saw the highest number of deployments by PSVI teams, at 27. The budget for 2021/22 [has not yet been confirmed](#).¹³

FCO allocation for PSVI-related activities

2012/13	£1.3m
2013/14	£5.0m
2014/15	£20.0m
2015/16	£8.5m
2016/17	£7.6m
2017/18	£2.7m
2018/19	£3.2m
2019/20	£4.1m
2020/21	£2.6m
Total	£55.0m

Source: PQ 146992 [[Armed conflict: Sexual violence](#)] 3 February 2021

⁹ UK Government, [PSVI: About us](#), accessed 11 June 2021

¹⁰ Anthony Magnall MP for the House, [We must put ending violence against women at the heart of our G7 presidency](#), 8 March 2021

¹¹ HC Deb, [2 September 2020](#), c 206

¹² UK Government, [Global Britain in a competitive age](#), March 2021, p79

¹³ PQ 183238 [[Armed conflict: Sexual offences](#)], 22 April 2021

Expenditure on PSVI and related activities comes from multiple sources, including the MOD and, previously, the Department for International Development. The PSVI may also bid for additional funds from country discretionary budgets and programmes such as the [Conflict, Stability and Security Fund](#).¹⁴

It is complemented by other aid programmes and strategies, such as the [Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy](#), the UK's [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#), and [What works to prevent violence](#).

From 2012 to 2020, PSVI experts have been [deployed 95 times](#). 65 deployments (68 percent) were before 2015. [PSVI experts](#) include lawyers, policy advisors, investigators, and psychosocial experts. They do not gather evidence themselves, but support the work of NGOs, governments, and international organisations.¹⁵

In its 2020 report on the PSVI, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) said that from 2014 to 2020, [around £21 million was allocated to ten countries](#) including Syria, Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁶ Half of spending was on improving justice and accountability. Other support included training troops on CRSV and improving health services.¹⁷

Deployment of PSVI expert teams

2012	2
2013	20
2014	27
2015	16
2016	6
2017	6
2018	11
2019	6
2020	1
Total	95

Source: PQ 146993 [[Armed conflict: Sexual violence](#)], 4 February 2021

As of June 2021, the Government is currently identifying PSVI staff [to deploy to Tigray](#) to support survivors of CRSV. It has also funded bodies such as UNICEF, the International Red Crescent and Ethiopian Red Cross to prevent violence and support women, girls and boys in the region.¹⁸ The UK has also sent a team to the area to ensure evidence collected on CRSV [meets international standards](#) to enable any potential prosecutions.¹⁹

Conservative Peer Baroness Helić and Chloe Dalton, both former advisers to William Hague when he was Foreign Secretary, have argued that a minimum of one percent of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) [should be allocated to addressing sexual and gender based violence](#).²⁰ The APPG on

¹⁴ ICAI, [The UK's PSVI](#), January 2020, paras 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10

¹⁵ PSVI, [PSVI: Partners](#), 9 March 2017

¹⁶ ICAI, [The UK's PSVI](#), January 2020, figure 3

¹⁷ ICAI, [The UK's PSVI](#), January 2020, paras 3.11, 3.12

¹⁸ PQ 8683 [[Tigray: Sexual offences](#)], 10 June 2021

¹⁹ HL Deb, [27 May 2021](#), 178GC

²⁰ Baroness Helić and Chloe Dalton for Conservative Home, [The victims of sexual violence in war have no #MeToo hashtag to highlight their story](#), 14 April 2018

PSVI has also [backed reserving a proportion of the ODA budget](#) for this purpose.²¹

1.4 Diplomatic initiatives

Through the PSVI, the UK Government has sought to improve access to justice and secure global agreements to prevent instances of CRSV.

In 2019, the UK planned to hold an international conference on the PSVI. However, it was postponed due to the 2019 General Election and then the pandemic. A new date has not yet been announced.²²

During 2019, at the UN the UK supported a [Resolution affirming a survivor-centred approach](#) to address CRSV in all UN peacekeeping initiatives. It also supported the NGO [TRIAL International](#) to improve access to justice for CRSV survivors and provided financial support to UN agencies working on CRSV.²³

In 2020, the UK announced the launch of the [draft Murad Code of Conduct](#) for documenting CRSV for global consultation.²⁴

In November 2020, Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on PSVI, launched the [Declaration of Humanity](#) with faith and belief leaders. The Declaration commits signatories to prevent CRSV, dismantle harmful interpretations of faith, belief and cultural norms that may be used to commit or justify CRSV and to increase support for survivors.²⁵ To January 2021, fifty faith and belief leaders, NGOs and countries have signed.²⁶

1.5 Evaluation of the PSVI

In 2020, an ICAI evaluation of the PSVI concluded that since 2014 ministerial interest in it has “waned” and [that it is fragmented, lacking both an overall strategy and sufficient funding](#). The ICAI recommendations included establishing a clear institutional home for the PSVI, improving project evaluation, and ensuring a survivor-led support process.²⁷

²¹ [APPG on PSVI to International Development Committee](#), April 2020

²² PQ 7697 [[Sri Lanka: Sexual offences](#)], 5 November 2019; PQ 157298 [[Armed conflict: Sexual offences](#)], 2 March 2021

²³ FCO, [Human rights and democracy report 2019](#), June 2020, pp10-11

²⁴ FCDO, [UK launches landmark draft “Murad Code” to support survivors of CRSV \[...\]](#), 19 June 2020

²⁵ FCDO, [Declaration of humanity by leaders of faith and leaders of belief](#), November 2020

²⁶ Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, [Tweet](#), 8 January 2021

²⁷ ICAI, [The UK's PSVI](#), January 2020, chapter 5

The Government [agreed with most of the recommendations](#) but defended its cross-departmental approach. It said this helped maximise UK expertise and overseas networks. It will also publish a three-year strategy for the PSVI.²⁸

As of May 2020, the strategy was [still being drafted](#). It will be in addition to the [UK national action plan on women, peace and security](#).²⁹

Separately, the Overseas Development Institute has argued there are [shortcomings to the CRSV agenda](#), as it focuses on the prevention on violence in war, rather than the prevention of conflict, and does not sufficiently consider reproductive health and rights in conflict areas.³⁰

1.6 The 2021 G7 Meeting

Calls for action by APPG and UN

In May 2021, the Chair of the APPG on PSVI, Anthony Mangnall MP, together with Baroness Helić, recommended that the G7 [create a new international body](#) to document crimes, gather evidence and work towards prosecutions.³¹

The creation of such a body has been [backed by the former Foreign Secretary](#), Lord Hague, who was in office when the PSVI was established in 2012.³² It would build on the existing [International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) (2014).

The UN has urged countries to [ensure the pandemic does not delay](#) steps to develop victim-centred support services or see responses to it underfunded.³³ The pandemic has delayed CRSV-related activities. In 2020, the UN, for example, had to [pause CRSV training in South Sudan](#) and investigations into a mass-rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were suspended.³⁴

UK Government and G7 statements

In 2013, the G8 agreed a [statement on PSVI](#). This had six elements, including increasing funding, building up judicial and legal capacities of other

²⁸ UK Government, [Response to the ICAI recommendations on the UK's PSVI](#), February 2020, pp1-5

²⁹ PQ 46797 [[Armed conflict: Sexual offenses](#)], 21 May 2020; FCO, Department for International Development, FCDO and MOD, [UK national action plan on women, peace and security, 2018 to 2022](#), updated 20 April 2021

³⁰ Overseas Development Institute, [Women, peace and security and humanitarianism—3 ideas for a return to radical action](#), 31 October 2020

³¹ Baroness Helić and Anthony Magnall in the Times, [UK must use G7 to lead way on ending sexual violence in conflict](#), 5 May 2021

³² Lord Hague in the Times, [We must stop barbaric crimes against women](#), 31 May 2021; Foreign Affairs Committee, [Oral evidence: The implications of Covid-19 for the Integrated Review](#), 19 May 2020, Q23

³³ UN, [Women still suffering in war zones. Special Representative tells Security Council](#), 14 April 2021

³⁴ UN Office of the Special Representative of the SGSC, [Implications of Covid-19 for the prevention of and response to CRSV](#), 22 May 2020, p5, 6

countries, and to never support amnesties for sexual violence in peace agreements.³⁵ As of January 2020, the [adopted declaration](#) has been signed by 156 UN Member States.³⁶

For the G7 in 2021, the UK Government said it would seek to [strengthen the G7's commitments](#) to end violence against women and girls.³⁷ The UK's G7 Presidency, [the FCDO said](#), is “an excellent opportunity for us to galvanise support for the PSVI.”³⁸

On 11 June, the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council recommended that G7 leaders [develop an international convention](#) to denounce the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, in line with other prohibited weapons such as chemical weapons and landmines.³⁹

In the [Summit Communiqué](#), G7 leaders denounced the use of sexual violence in conflict situations and said that such acts may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. They noted the varied legal and institutional frameworks in place and invited Foreign and Development Ministers to “consider how best to strengthen international architecture around conflict-related sexual violence.”⁴⁰ They also [condemned sexual violence in Tigray](#).⁴¹

Separate to the G7, in June NATO Defence Ministers [approved an Allied policy on preventing and responding to CRSV](#). This will ensure NATO personnel are trained to treat victims and survivors and ensure they get relevant support.⁴²

³⁵ FCO, [G8 Declaration on PSVI](#), 11 April 2013

³⁶ ICAI, [The UK's PSVI](#), January 2020, para 4.4

³⁷ PQ 157300 [[Armed conflict: Sexual offences](#)], 3 March 2021

³⁸ HC Deb, [2 March 2021](#), c114

³⁹ G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council, [Recommendations \[...\]](#), June 2021, p3

⁴⁰ G7 2021, [Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué](#), 13 June 2021, para 46

⁴¹ G7 2021, [Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué](#), 13 June 2021, para 54

⁴² MOD and FCDO, [UK Ministers lead NATO charge on innovation](#), 1 June 2021

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Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[We must stop barbaric crimes against women](#)

The Times (Subscription required)

William Hague

31 May 2021

[Call for Referring Conflict-related Sexual Violence to International Criminal Court](#)

IDN – In Depth News

Reinhard Jacobsen

27 May 2021

[Global Britain can make its Mark by Fighting for War Crimes Accountability](#)

European Views

14 May 2021

[Chinese envoy calls for eliminating conflict-related sexual violence](#)

CGTN

15 April 2021

[Ethiopia civil war: G7 'strongly concerned' about international law violations and human rights abuses in Tigray](#)

The Independent

Andy Gregory

2 April 2021

[We must put ending violence against women at the heart of our G7 presidency](#)

Politics Home (The House)

Anthony Mangnall

8 March 2021

[Angelina Jolie's campaign against 'rape in war' sees landmark UN sanctions imposed](#)

Evening Standard

Nicholas Cecil

26 February 2021

[The War Crime No One Wants to Talk About](#)

New York Times

Judith Matloff

22 September 2020

[Gender-based violence is a global pandemic](#)

The Times (Subscription required)

Anthony Mangnall

19 June 2020

[Britain must spearhead action against sexual violence or relinquish the reins](#)

The Guardian

William Hague

9 January 2020

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Press releases

Ending the use of sexual violence in conflict

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

14 April 2021

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to our briefers for their compelling and informative testimonies. The UK is proud to be a partner in this vital work.

Sexual violence is a feature of conflict in countries around the world.

We are particularly concerned about the credible and widely corroborated reports of rape and sexual violence in Tigray. We urge Ethiopia to work closely with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to address this.

Caroline Atim's briefing reminded us, too, of the disproportionate impact of gender-based violence on women and girls in South Sudan. There have been ambitious commitments but little peace dividend for women and girls in South Sudan. We look to South Sudan to expedite the establishment of the Hybrid Court, and to partner with the UN to deliver justice.

In these and other post-conflict situations, survivors carry the effects of their trauma, while perpetrators most often walk free.

So first, I want to underline the UK's commitment to tackling sexual violence in conflict. We are the only country with a Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, with a dedicated team and funding.

Since 2012, we have committed over £48 million to supporting survivors, tackling stigma and reducing impunity, supporting projects across 29 countries.

Second, I want to emphasise, as we've heard from our speakers, the importance of a survivor-centred and human rights based approach, which prioritises the rights and needs of survivors. That includes the right to accessible sexual and reproductive healthcare services and access to justice, which take into account the specific needs of victims and survivors living with disabilities, LGBTQI individuals and other at-risk groups.

The UK has committed £1.3 million to the Global Survivors Fund, run by Dr Mukwege, which works to ensure survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have access to reparations and other forms of redress in conflict and post-conflict countries.

In the last year, the UK has also launched two key tools to support survivors.

First, last June, Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative, launched the draft Murad Code for global consultations. This is a code of behaviour for those collecting evidence, to respect survivors' rights, and ensure investigation is safer, more ethical, and more effective.

Second, last November, Lord Ahmad inaugurated the Declaration of Humanity by faith and belief leaders, which calls for the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and denounces the stigma faced by survivors, including by children born of rape.

Finally, alongside supporting survivors, we must do all we can to ensure accountability for the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. As the SRSG said, zero tolerance cannot have zero consequences.

The recent UN Security Council Resolution 2564 sanctions against Sultan Zabin demonstrated that the international community can and will take action against perpetrators of torture and sexual violence in conflict.

But there is more we can do to strengthen accountability for these crimes in UN-supported international and hybrid criminal courts and tribunals so that perpetrators are justly prosecuted.

As we've heard, there are millions today who are affected by conflict-related sexual violence – survivors, children born of sexual violence, families, entire communities. I thank the Presidency for convening this debate and our briefers for highlighting the problem and what can be done. I assure you of our continuing support to end the use of sexual violence in conflict and as a weapon of war.

Putting survivors first when combatting conflict-related sexual violence

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

17 July 2020

Mr President, thank you. And it's a delight to join you from London. It's my immense pleasure, an honour to join you again on this very important subject.

I remember a year or so ago working with you, Heiko, on 2467 and the importance that it did bring to bear. I know Angelina Jolie mentioned in her contribution about how important it was putting survivors at the heart of our approach and also the reference to children. And I think that's reflective of the real challenge we have in front of us.

In doing so, I again want to pay especially a tribute to my good friend, SRSG Patten. Pramila, your leadership on this role is exemplary and we look

forward to further strengthening your hand and the role of the UN on this important priority for us all.

I also want to record my thanks to the other briefers, to both Miss Ohmar and to Ms Fornel-Poutou for your insights that you brought from specific, live conflict challenges that we're currently facing. Your briefings have really once again set a compelling base and renewed a determination for all of us, I feel, to do so much more.

Amongst my responsibilities as a Minister, as our President today mentioned, I am the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. And I am honoured by the role that I have and the leadership we have been able to show over several years now from the UK in our determination to work together with partners in tackling these appalling, abhorrent crimes. And I'm proud of our record of working together on this.

Since 2012, the UK has committed over £46 million supporting worldwide efforts with a single objective to eradicate this scourge. Yet we continue to witness, as we've heard again today, the suffering experienced by so many survivors. And so we put those survivors at the heart of our efforts. And I'm delighted we have two survivors directly advising me, the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister on our efforts on this important priority.

But not only are our efforts to respond effectively and compassionately where incidents occur, but also our efforts must be to stop this happening to anybody else. Accountability, as we've already heard, is a critical part of this. First, because for many, achieving justice is a vital step to the road to recovery. Second, because ending impunity is a crucial deterrent in preventing future violence.

When we look at conflicts of the past in Iraq and Bosnia, we know how long justice can take and continues to take. And that is why the United Kingdom continues to commit to strengthening justice for all survivors and to holding perpetrators of these horrendous crimes to account. This means upholding the highest international standards of evidence collection. It means aiding efforts to secure convictions. And crucially, it means protecting survivors from further harm when they report crimes and making investigations safer and more ethical.

Pramila, I recall our visit to Iraq when we sat there and met Yazidi victims of the atrocities of Daesh, who had gone through the worst horrors against a person. When you see their eyes, it just compels you. It prioritises in your own mind how much more needs to happen and needs to be done.

And we must tackle the conscious and unconscious bias that still exists within the criminal justice systems and build the capacity of judges and prosecutors to understand the impacts of these crimes.

In light of the current pandemic, this approach is even more urgent. Limited legal services are under strain and diverted government resources have

further narrowed the bandwidth for safe, survivor-centred reporting. We also know that survivors' journeys do not end in the courtroom.

And we've heard before and we've heard today from SRSG Patten and Special Envoy Jolie about the importance of supporting - not just talking, but providing and giving. And that's why I am proud to announce the United Kingdom's £1.3 million contribution to the Global Survivors Fund. This fund was launched by Nobel Laureates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, whose work has championed reintegration, redress and restorative justice for so many. And we'll also be proud to be working with Nadia Murad on the Murad Code for all those seeking to engage and collect evidence. It supports community action through grassroots organisations and survivors' networks. This fund supports states and civil society to cater to the specific concerns of survivors and communities. And most importantly, as I'm sure everyone acknowledges, it places survivors' voices firmly at the centre of its work, spearheading efforts for a truly survivor-centred approach to justice.

Finally, 15 months since the passing of Security Council Resolution 2467, we must all recognise that the only response to sexual violence is a survivor-centred response. The more we empower survivors to lead, the more effectively we support their reintegration, their recovery and our ability to respond to these abhorrent crimes. This means safeguarding minimum standards for investigation and preventing harm through the Murad Code, through the implementation of the highest standards through the Murad Code. It is supporting all survivors and children born of conflict-related sexual violence. It is funding crucial initiatives, like in South Sudan, that have reached 700,000 women, girls, men and boys to empower survivors and support their recovery. It is about raising awareness of the devastating impact of these crimes and tackling the appalling stigma that too many face. And finally, it is why we must prevent these crimes, including those committed against the youngest and most vulnerable, by supporting international commitments like the Safe Schools Declaration to keep girls and boys safe, secure and successful in their lives.

This year we proudly marked the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Conflict-related sexual violence still remains rife. It remains real to so many around the world. We have a collective responsibility to ensure UN Security Council Resolution 2467 becomes an equally historic resolution by holding Member States and the UN accountable to implement our collective obligations.

It is not a minute too soon to turn words and action, ideas into reality and commitments into concrete change. And it is only through concerted, collaborative international effort, we will succeed in eliminating the horror of conflict-related sexual violence. And I continue to look forward to working with partners, with United Nations, but, most importantly, survivors, to put them at the heart of our response.

It is time for justice. It's time to put survivors first.

UK launches landmark draft 'Murad Code' to support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as COVID-19 pandemic increases suffering

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

19 June 2020

HRH The Countess of Wessex, alongside Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, joined member states at a virtual UN event for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on Friday

during the event the UK launched the draft Murad Code, created alongside Nobel Laureate Nadia Murad and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI), to strengthen justice for survivors around the world

it upholds international standards for recording crimes with sensitivity to survivors. It prevents the further traumatising of survivors by governments, international organisations, or civil society actors. It reinforces evidence collection, strengthening justice and accountability

the Code comes as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic amplifies suffering for survivors, with restrictions on movement in some countries limiting routes for survivors to report crimes or move to safety, and stay-at-home measures mean those in abusive situations are even more vulnerable

Speaking at the event, the UK's Minister of State for Human Rights Lord Ahmad, said:

We are determined to tackle these most abhorrent of crimes. The UK remains committed to take action – action to prevent violence, action to support survivors and tackle the stigma they face – the appalling sense of stigma – and action to hold perpetrators to account.

Yet, as we mark this important day, we know that conflict-related sexual violence is a pandemic we have yet to cure.

COVID-19 is an unprecedented threat to how we respond to these crimes. The impacts of this pandemic are stark.

Crucial medical and psychological services are directly at risk, as governments divert resources towards their response. Restrictions on movement limit physical routes for survivors to report crimes, or indeed to move to safety. Stay-at-home measures mean those in abusive situations are even more vulnerable to violence.

These are exceptional times. We must provide an exceptional response.

That is why I am delighted, on behalf of the UK today, to announce that we are launching the draft Murad Code for global consultation. Developed with Nobel Peace Laureate, the courageous and incredible Nadia Murad, this code of conduct puts survivors rightly at the heart of our collective response.

It seeks to uphold international standards for recording the sensitive nature of sexual violence crimes. It prevents the further traumatising of survivors by ensuring that governments, international organisations, and indeed civil society actors adhere to the principles of the Code. It reinforces evidence collection, strengthening justice and accountability.

In light of this pandemic, the Murad Code is all the more urgent and important. Limited legal services are under increasing strain, and diverted government facilities and personnel have narrowed the bandwidth for safe, survivor-centred reporting and collection of evidence.

To succeed in eliminating the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence, more than ever today, now, in these most unusual and unprecedented of times, we must continue to work together to put survivors at the heart of all our work.

Lord Ahmad also urged UN members to consult and collaborate on the Murad Code, building international consensus to eradicate rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war, and to give support in ways led by survivors themselves.

Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First conference update, April 2020

Foreign and Commonwealth office

14 April 2020

Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, said:

“The UK remains at the forefront of the global efforts to tackle conflict-related sexual violence through our Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). We are committed to ensuring survivors and their views, needs, and expertise are at the heart of the international response.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, we have taken the difficult decision to postpone the Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First conference.

The UK remains committed to strengthening justice and accountability, and supporting all survivors, while tackling the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence. We will continue to work for this with our international partners, agencies and civil society organisations around the world. We will confirm dates for a rescheduled conference in due course.”

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PQs

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

22 Apr 2021 | 183238

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the budget is for the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team in 2021-22.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The portfolio agreed by the Foreign Secretary will focus our investment and expertise on issues where the UK can make the most difference and achieve maximum strategic coherence, impact, and value for money. We will now work through what this means for individual programmes, in line with the priorities we have identified.

Ethiopia: Human Rights

20 Apr 2021 | 692 c833

Asked by: Nickie Aiken

I am sure that my right hon. Friend shares my concern and, frankly, horror at the ongoing reports of rape and sexual violence being used as weapons in the ongoing Tigray conflict, and joins the US Government in calling for a joint investigation by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into such reports. Does he agree that, with the UK hosting the G7 this summer, this is the perfect opportunity to put preventing sexual violence in conflict on the agenda and to lead a global response to such heinous crimes?

Answered by: Dominic Raab | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I totally share my hon. Friend's passion and outrage at the human rights violations we have seen—indeed, not just there, but in many other parts of the world—and I can reassure her in relation to the G7 presidency priorities that, along with tackling covid and climate change, pressing for human rights, freedom of speech and accountability for human rights violations are high up on the agenda.

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

17 March 2020 | 673 c783-784

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

What steps he is taking to support the preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative.

Answering Member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative remains a top Government priority. The UK is recognised as a global leader on the issue. We have committed over £46 million across 29 countries since 2012 and deployed the UK PSVI team of experts over 90 times. We are currently reassessing potential dates for the PSVI international conference in the light of developments on coronavirus, but we are committed to progressing conference ambitions of strengthening justice for survivors and holding the perpetrators of these horrific crimes to account.

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

I thank the Minister for his response. In 2019, 14 million women were subject to gender-based violence. We know that this figure rises during conflicts and crises. Will the ministerial team work with international groups and make representations at the UN later this year—presuming that the conference goes ahead—on preventing sexual violence in conflict and ensuring that we keep a firm eye on gender-based violence?

Answering Member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I thank my hon. Friend for his question. I know that he takes a keen interest in this area, given his previous work for Lord Hague, the former Foreign Secretary.

This is a big year for gender equality, as it includes the 25th anniversary of the Beijing declaration and platform for action, and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. The UK is proud to be a global leader in efforts to eradicate gender-based violence, and this year we will launch a new £67.5 million multi-country programme to prevent gender-based violence. We have expressed a strong interest in leading the Generation Equality action coalition on ending gender-based violence, and we will announce plans for the proposed UN General Assembly summit in due course.

Asked by: Fabian Hamilton

The aforementioned Lord Hague—the architect of the preventing sexual violence initiative—recently said that if the UK was not prepared to take effective action in this area,

“it would be better to let another country take the lead”.

Does the Minister agree, or will he listen to Lord Hague and give this vital initiative the funding and political leadership it deserves?

Answering Member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are wholly committed as a nation to ensuring that all efforts to tackle conflict-related sexual violence are survivor-centred, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2467, and that this policy and practice avoids the re-traumatisation of survivors.

Asked by: Theresa Villiers

Some appalling incidents of gender-based violence occurred during the Sri Lankan civil war. Will the Foreign Office do everything in its power to persuade the Sri Lankan Government to live up to the commitments they made in sponsoring resolution 30/1 in the UN Human Rights Council?

Answering Member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We certainly will. My right hon. Friend raises an important point. We are in regular contact and will ensure that, through our network and all channels, we discuss this with our Sri Lankan friends.

Tigray: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Offences

09 Mar 2021 | 160709

Asked by: Patrick Grady

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by sexual and gender-based violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We also note the statement on 21 January by Pramila Patten, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy for such crimes and we continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses. The UK is particularly concerned about the increased risks that conflict presents for women and girls in relation to gender-based violence and to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We continue to lobby for the protection of women, girls and boys at official level. We encourage the

Government of Ethiopia to invite an independent UN fact finding mission to support their current accountability effort on international law compliance. We note that the Government of Ethiopia has declared a zero policy on sexual violence and the stated intention to establish a national joint taskforce (including the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) to investigate alleged cases of sexual violence against women in Tigray. We will monitor the effectiveness of this taskforce in bringing perpetrators to justice. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The UK is currently working closely with its partners to ensure that survivors have an increasing access to specialised services and justice. I [Minister Duddridge] re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

03 Mar 2021 | 157301

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent discussions his Department has had with its counterparts in the US on preventing sexual violence in conflict.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We continue to engage with international partners, including the United States, on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative in our efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence. Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights on the international stage are core elements of the UK's role as a force for good in the world.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

03 Mar 2021 | 157300

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oral contribution of the Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas of 28 January 2021, Official report, col 655, what his objectives are for the forthcoming G7 summit, in relation to the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Foreign & Development (F&D) Track will have three key priorities: to promote open societies; to lead a sustainable recovery; and to renew global

outreach. Gender equality will fall under the second of these priorities, and we are clear that success is a recovery that leaves no one behind, and places gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at its core. To do this, the F&D Track will be guided by the framework of the '3 Es' - Educating girls, Empowering women, and Ending violence against women and girls. Within the Foreign & Development track, we will seek to strengthen the G7's commitment to women's political and economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls. We also aim to secure G7 agreement on ambitious new access and learning targets for girls' education, demonstrating the continued importance we place upon tackling gender inequality, one of the root causes of Conflict-related Sexual Violence.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

03 Mar 2021 | 157299

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what progress his Department has made in delivering a three-year strategy to support the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative remains a top priority for the FCDO. We continue to develop a three-year strategy, with clear deliverables and performance indicators, which will be underpinned by an evidence-based Theory of Change, with embedded monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

Topical Questions

02 Mar 2021 | 690 c114

Asked by: Anthony Mangnall

The Government have made it clear that we must protect the reputation of organisations such as the UN Human Rights Council. Given our work on gender-based violence and the fact that next Monday is International Women's Day, I would be grateful for an update on what work is being undertaken on the preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative and what steps we might take to implement an international body that can support survivors, document crimes and lead prosecutions.

Answered by: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The PSVI remains a top priority for the UK Government. Since its launch in 2012 we have committed £48 million and funded 85 projects across 29 countries to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. Of course, the UK's

G7 presidency is an excellent opportunity for us to galvanise support for the PSVI.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

04 Feb 2021 | 146993

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative UK team of experts has been deployed in each year since 2012.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Since 2012, the Team of Experts have been deployed 94 times to build capacity of governments, the UN, and non-governmental organisations. Deployments have included Mali, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Uganda. The number of deployments per year were as follows: two deployments in 2012; 20 deployments in 2013, including to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina; 27 deployments in 2014, including to Turkey, Mali, and Kenya; 16 deployments in 2015; six deployments in 2016; six deployments in 2017, 11 deployments in 2018 including to Dhaka, Mali and Zimbabwe; six deployments in 2019; and one deployment in 2020.

Armed Conflict: Sexual Offences

04 Feb 2021 | 146992

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill | Party: Labour Party · Cooperative Party

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what the budget has been of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict team in each year since 2012.

Answering member: Nigel Adams | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Since 2012, the FCO has allocated over £55 million to Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI)-related activities. This includes funding to support survivors, contributions to international and civil society organisations, and deployments of the UK PSVI Team of Experts. On average, the UK has committed over £6 million per year to the PSVI since its launch. In 2014-15, £20 million was allocated, including £5.2 million to develop and deliver the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2014.

	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Total	£1.3m	£5m	£20m	£8.5m	£7.6m	£2.7m	£3.19m	£4.14m	£2.6m

Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

26 Jan 2021 | HL12056

Asked by: Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 10 December 2020 (HL10811) and further to their cross-Government review into the allocation of UK Official Development Assistance, what proportion of the £821 million provided to the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund in Spending Review 2020, published on 25 November 2020, will be allocated (1) to the women, peace, and conflict agenda, and (2) to preventing sexual violence in conflict.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Foreign Secretary is currently in the process of concluding the cross-Government review which will agree Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations for all government departments. The process will drive coherence across the entire UK ODA budget and ensure the UK acts as a force for good across the globe. The Foreign Secretary will communicate the outcome shortly. Following this, the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will seek cross-ministerial approval of its allocations for Financial Year 2021/22.

5

Other Parliamentary material

5.1

Written Ministerial Statement

Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict

19 Jun 2018 | House of Lords | HLWS748

Member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict and as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on this issue, I wish to inform the House of the next steps for the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) ahead of a UK-hosted international meeting in November 2019.

Four years on from the UK hosted Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict in June 2014, the scale of these crimes remains truly appalling. UK leadership since then has secured the international political attention that preventing sexual violence in conflict rightly deserves. Our collaboration with partners is essential to ensure this remains the case. Recent examples include a joint visit I made with UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General Pramila Patten to Iraq in February to shine a spotlight on the need for accountability for survivors of sexual violence and an end to the stigma they face. During a visit to Mosul, I saw for myself the awful devastation Daesh has had on people's lives and livelihoods, especially for women and girls, including through sexual slavery and forced marriage.

Our political drive has also been backed up by wide-ranging practical support, through ground-breaking work such as the development of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict. Its second iteration, launched last year, is now being used by the International Criminal Court, the UN and in countries as diverse as Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Burma, DRC, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Since 2012, £44m of UK funding has been allocated to support over 70 projects in 26 countries to provide capacity building on advocacy, protection, survivor support, evidence gathering, judicial reform, prosecution and reparations work. We have also seen our Team of PSVI Experts deployed more than 90 times to provide support and training on a range of issues from documenting crimes to rehabilitating survivors. We know this support and assistance has had real impact and is delivering real change on the ground.

Implementing and galvanising effective action to bring perpetrators to account, to tackle stigma and to prevent sexual violence in conflict remains a high priority for the UK. We will continue to use our influence to rally sustained international action and push this issue up the global agenda.

Therefore, the UK will host an international meeting on PSVI in 2019, marking five years since the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. This meeting will seek to achieve a number of outcomes. These include progress on accountability and tackling the culture of impunity; addressing sensitive issues such as support for children born of rape and male, LGBT and disabled survivors; the role of media organisations and faith leaders in tackling survivor stigma; and, working with armed forces to prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

To deliver on this ambition, the UK will work to strengthen both our bilateral and multilateral levels with international partners to secure commitments and make progress on this agenda between now and November 2019. This will include an event at the UN General Assembly in September and a PSVI film festival this November. We have already engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including PSVI champion and focus countries and fellow Commonwealth Member States. International organisations remain key partners, such as the office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten; UNFPA; OHCHR and the ICRC. We will uphold the spirit of PSVI and reach out to British and global civil society, parliamentarians and the public. Staying true to the Principles for Global Action on tackling stigma, we will place survivors at the heart of our collective work.

In 2014, we told the world that it was Time To Act, now is the time to deliver upon that pledge.

I will keep the House informed of progress on this work.

5.2

Debates

[International Development and Gender-based Violence](#)

26 November 2020 | 684 cc490-510WH

[Sexual Violence](#)

02 Apr 2019 | 797 cc46-62GC

Lords question for short debate on what assessment they have made of the adequacy of international mechanisms to hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account; and what steps they are taking to ensure justice for survivors.

5.3

Early Day Motions

Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia

EDM 112 (session 2021-22)

Helen Hayes

26 May 2021

That this House notes the high level of sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, resulting in an estimated 10,000 women being raped in the four months to March; further notes the leadership role the UK government has played in global efforts to eliminate sexual violence in conflict; notes that the UN Day for the Elimination of sexual violence in conflict is on 19 June; and calls on the UK government to table a resolution at the UN Security Council setting up a tribunal to investigate sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray as a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act of genocide.

6

Further reading

[International development and gender-based violence](#), Commons Library Debate Pack, 23 November 2020

[Sexual abuse and exploitation](#), Commons Library Debate Pack, 29 October 2020

[Human Rights & Democracy: the 2019 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report](#), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Cp 273, 16 July 2020

- Violence against Women and Girls, pages 9-10
- Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI), Pages 10-11

[APPG on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative response to the International Development Committee inquiry into the 'Effectiveness of UK Aid'](#), APPG on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, 15 May 2020

[Improving the lives of women and girls overseas](#), National Audit Office, 29 April 2020

[What Works to Prevent VAWG: Research and Innovation Programme - Final Performance Evaluation](#), Department for International Development, 31 March 2020

[Government response to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recommendations on: The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, January 2020](#), UK Government, 20 February 2020

[The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#), Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 9 January 2020

[Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative APPG](#) (Webpage)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#) (Membership page)

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