

FIGO Statement on sexual violence in conflict, Sudan

Violence against women and girls is a major public health problem globally, affecting an estimated 35 percent of women worldwide. [Humanitarian crisis can exacerbate this harm](#), as seen in the recently reported wide range of human rights violations in response to peaceful demonstrations in Khartoum, Sudan, including multiple sexual and physical assaults on women and medical staff.

As a global federation committed to promoting women's health and upholding women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights, FIGO recognises the strategy or practice of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terror.

We note that Sudanese [women and youth are playing an important role](#) in pro-democracy demonstrations, and are deeply concerned about serious impacts on their physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health. Credible reports show that [at least 100 people have been killed](#) since April, including women and girls, and the health care community working under threat of reprisal is also a major concern: such gender-based violence has many [short- and long-term health impacts](#) including unwanted pregnancy, injury, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, chronic pelvic pain, gynecologic problems and fistula, among others.

Health services are critical for supporting survivors to heal, recover and thrive. If accessed in time, health services can prevent unwanted pregnancies and the transmission of HIV and other STIs following rape.

FIGO urgently repeats the [call from Dr Natalia Kanem](#), Executive Director of the UNFPA, that survivors of sexual violence in conflict must be able to access quality care.

We further call attention to the deeply troubling reports from Sudan of sexual violence towards female doctors, as well as reported destruction of hospital property and threats towards health care personnel providing care to the wounded.

We echo [the call of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres](#) to allow unimpeded access to deliver essential care, and express in strongest terms our support for our colleagues at, FIGO member society, the [Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society the Sudan](#) (OGSS).

Access to health is a fundamental human right, and the security and capability of OGSS members and their community to provide health care without fear of targeting must be assured.

Violence against women is deeply rooted in pervasive gender inequality, particularly discrimination against women and unequal gender norms. FIGO and our 132 National Member Societies commit to supporting efforts to address violence against women, and [affirm Mr Guterres' call](#) for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in all areas, before, during and after conflict.

We condemn the violence against women and girls in Sudan, and call for an immediate end to these human rights violations.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives, we lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO are in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).