

20 June 2023

Dear colleagues

Re: Supporting the Red Line Initiative to end conflict-related sexual violence

This October at the XXIV FIGO World Congress, during the President's session "Violence against Women in Conflict", Congolese Gynaecologist and Nobel Prize Laureate Dr Denis Mukwege, together with members of SEMA, the Global Network of Victims and Survivors of Wartime Sexual Violence, will call on health professionals to speak out and join the campaign to finally put an end to the wholly unacceptable use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

In the lead up to the World Congress, we are writing to seek the support of your society for [the Red Line Initiative](#) call for action to end the use of sexual violence in conflict. We hope that your society is willing to express early support – ahead of the Congress – and take a lead to inspire others during the Congress to join this fight.

Background to the Red Line Initiative

In 2021, at the G7 Conference, Dr Mukwege called for bold and new thinking to draw a Red Line to finally put an end to the wholly unacceptable use of sexual violence as a weapon of war.

Out of his call, the Red Line Initiative was born. It aims to create focused action needed to address this systemic problem and to establish a clear legal framework for strong and timely action by. The Red Line Initiative has three core aims:

- Evoke a clear moral rejection and outcry against the use of CRSV in all its forms, including as a method of warfare.
- Strengthen and clarify the legal obligations on states to prohibit the use of sexual violence in conflict, prevent and punish it, as well as to repair the harms it causes.
- Build political will to ensure a more robust and timely response by states in line with their international obligations.

Effecting change as health care professionals

FIGO is dedicated to the improvement and protection of the health and rights of women and girls worldwide. We share Dr Mukwege's profound frustration and have been an early supporter of the Red Line Initiative. As health care professionals, we see first-hand the severe and often lifelong negative health consequences caused by wartime sexual violence.

This International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, FIGO and the Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation have [published a statement](#) calling for action to evoke the international outcry that CRSV deserves and to mobilise the global community to act. The statement accompanies a more comprehensive [editorial authored by Dr Muwege and Dr Conry](#), and published in the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*.

At our World Congress in October this year we will discuss how, as obstetricians, gynaecologists, and members of FIGO and our national societies, we may join Dr Mukwege, SEMA and the Mukwege Foundation in this fight for a world where sexual violence is no longer used in conflict. We seek a world where States hold other States to account and meet their international obligations by taking concrete actions to prevent, respond to and repair the grave harms sexual violence is causing.

Our call to you: act now to end CRSV

Our hope is that by the end of our World Congress, all of FIGO's member societies will be committed to join this fight and will have expressed support for the Red Line Initiative. Together, we will commit to become champions and advocates to end the use of sexual violence in conflict.

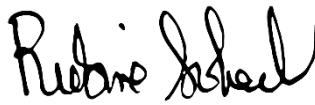
Our kind request to you is for your society to express its support with a letter, so that we can announce at the opening of our World Congress that your society is actively supporting this important Initiative. To assist you in this matter, we have provided a [template Word document](#) that you may wish to use – simply download, add your logo and signature(s) and return your letter of support to membership@figo.org.

The voice of OBGYNs is needed, alongside those of survivors. The expertise of OBGYNs is needed. Together, it will be possible to achieve concrete, meaningful change so that war is no longer waged through the use of sexual violence.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Jeanne Conry
FIGO President



Dr Rubina Sohail
Chair, Committee on Women Facing Crises