

Message from Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

The crime of rape is a severe human rights violation, yet it remains widespread around the globe.

Sexual violence is an epidemic that thrives in times of conflict and during emergencies, once the rule of law and criminal justice systems collapse and, far too often, rape is wielded as a weapon of war.

As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and launch the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, we must stand up together, speak out together and take action together — against rape and all forms of violence against women and girls. An estimated 15 million adolescent girls worldwide have been forced to have sex, but only around 1 in 100 will seek help.

Victims and survivors need short, medium and long-term support to heal, reintegrate into their communities, and rebuild their lives — from clinical management of rape and physical trauma to addressing mental health issues and social stigma.

Let's work towards a world where women and girls can live in freedom and equality. Let's counter misogyny and the underlying inequities that lead to a culture of impunity for perpetrators. And let's provide survivor-centered care, because it's the wound you don't see that cuts most deep.

At the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, ending gender-based violence and harmful practices was a top priority among the more than 1250 commitments in support of sexual and reproductive health and gender equality programmes.

Today, we are once again reminded of the urgent engagement and re-commitment needed from all of us to build a future free of sexual and gender-based violence.

Together, we must stop rape now!