

## Stand with Survivors of Wartime Rape on June 19<sup>th</sup>- Take a moment to hear their stories



In 2018, Dr. Denis Mukwege, famed Congolese gynaecologist and Nadia Murad, a Yazidi survivor of ISIS kidnapping and rape, were named co-recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. In his Nobel address, Dr. Mukwege accepted the prize in honour of the survivors of conflict-based sexual violence.

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, the day proclaimed by the United Nations as the International Day to recognise conflict-related sexual violence, we will ask the world to stand in solidarity with survivors of rape during war by listening to their stories.

Across the world, rape is utilised as a cheap weapon of war, not only injure but also to demoralize and destabilise entire communities. The bodily and psychological damages incurred are often horrific and catastrophic: rape with bayonets and other foreign objects, rape of children, forced rape in front of family members, and sometimes between family members. Compounding this horror is that communities often shun traumatised survivors, forcing them to rebuild their lives without compassion or support. And yet, rape in war is seldom reported and even more rarely punished.

Despite this bleak and brutal reality, sexual violence is not an inevitable aspect of war. Rape never happens accidentally. It is a choice to employ and to tolerate it, and, therefore, it can be STOPPED.

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, we salute the incredible heroism of survivors of sexual violence. In the face of trauma and often crippling stigma, survivors across the world have summoned the courage to speak out against rape as a weapon of war. Survivors from 21 countries have formed SEMA, the global network of victims and survivors to end wartime sexual violence facilitated by the Mukwege Foundation. To learn more about the survivors' stories and how to end rape as a weapon of war around the world, visit the Mukwege Foundation website at [mukwegefoundation.org](http://mukwegefoundation.org).



**“In my case, the names of the perpetrators are known, their faces are in the photos; however, they calmly returned to Russia and they are not in danger.” – Iryna, Ukraine**

Pro-Russian factions in Ukraine discovered Iryna was providing support to the Ukrainian army. They captured, raped, publicly tortured and humiliated her. She is now an advocate for survivors and peace in Ukraine.



**“I want to work to change the image of victims in the world. The story of survivors has to change and we are starting that fight.”**

-Mwamini participates in the Mouvement des Survivantes, an outspoken advocacy group in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



**“Sexual violence against indigenous women illustrates the power of rape as a weapon, male dominance and the power of racism against the indigenous population.”** -Carmen, Colombia

Carmen is not only a survivor but also a local organizer as well, working with indigenous populations and the disabled.



**“I didn’t come here to talk about my sorrows. I came to talk about hope.”- Ekhlas, Yazidi**



**“I dream one day I will be the Grand Duchess of the Congo, so I can fight against the impunity that reigns in my country today.”**

- An excerpt from a poem by Desanges, survivor of wartime sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She wrote this poem after attending a forum on sexual violence sponsored by the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg



**“What happened to us was against our will. By staying quiet, we are keeping their crimes secret. We have to speak up for the world to know.”**

Vasfije, a survivor of sexual violence in Kosovo, is the one of the first survivors to come forward without anonymity and report the conflict related rapes that occurred in Kosovo. She has spoken in many public forums including testifying the United States. She is the 2019 winner of the Kim Bok Dong Peace Prize.



**"Rapists have to be brought to justice, but how can we do this when the rapists are those in power?"** - - Mildred, a conflict related sexual violence survivor from Zimbabwe. Mildred is also a advocate for We are not Weapons of War.

Interviews with these survivors and others can be facilitated.

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