



THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

May 29, 2012

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, I am delighted to extend my greetings to all those gathered for the launch of the United Kingdom's Initiative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict.

In many conflict zones, sexual violence as a tactic of war has reached epidemic proportions. These acts don't just harm a single individual, or a single family, or village, or group; they shred the very fabric that weaves together all of humanity. We know from abundant evidence and firsthand experience that the physical security of women is among the primary indicators of state security. Sadly, sexual violence in conflict zones often falls on a broader continuum of violence against women ranging from rape as a weapon of war to domestic and intimate partner violence. Together, we must work to address the root cause of this violence, namely: the low status of women and girls in too many parts of the world. We must confront and counter impunity, ensure protection, and work to secure the inclusion of women economically, politically, and socially.

The United States is committed to preventing and responding to gender-based violence in all its forms. I welcome the steps that Secretary Hague will announce today to increase resources and capabilities on this front, and applaud the United Kingdom's decision to use its G8 Presidency of 2013 to highlight the issue of sexual violence in conflict. Thank you for your hard work to advance women's rights and your efforts today to share information and identify opportunities for action. Resolving conflict and building peaceful societies requires ending sexual violence and ensuring women's participation in all phases of peace and reconstruction. It's not only the right thing to do; it's the smart thing to do, and I applaud your commitment.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

  
Hillary Rodham Clinton