

June 18, 2024

His Excellency  
Mr. Antonio Guterres  
Secretary General of the United Nations  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Cc: Ms. Pramila Patten  
Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

Cc: Ms. Sima Sami Bahous  
Executive Director, UN Women

Dear Secretary Guterres:

**The undersigned 54 organizations are writing to you ahead of International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict to urge you, once again, to publicly condemn Hamas for their weaponization of sexual violence against Israeli women and girls on October 7, and beyond.** There is abundant evidence of Hamas' brutal rape, mutilation, gender-based violence and murder of Israeli women and girls on October 7 and of the women and girls Hamas kidnapped and has continued to hold hostage for more than eight months.

Many of our organizations wrote to you in March around International Women's Day calling on the United Nations (UN) to establish a truly independent, impartial investigation into Hamas' use of rape as a weapon of war and pursue vigorous prosecution to hold Hamas accountable. An additional 150,000 individuals from around the world signed a petition delivered to you demanding action, justice and accountability for Hamas' war crimes.

June 19 is International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, a day led by the UN every year to commemorate the adoption of the first UN Security Council resolution recognizing conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. Ahead of June 19 this year, we hope you will stand up and speak out against Hamas' weaponization of sexual violence. By failing to do so, the UN falls short on promoting justice for not only Israeli women and girls, but also for all women and girls who are victims of systemic gender-based violence across the globe. Your silence also sends a message to terrorists everywhere that they can commit barbaric, heinous war crimes and not be held accountable.

A report released earlier this year by Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, found "clear and convincing information" of rape and sexualized torture being committed against hostages kidnapped during the October 7 terror attacks and evidence of sexual violence, including rape in multiple locations. While we applaud Her Excellency Patten and her team for their skilled and trauma-informed mission and findings, her report failed to condemn or hold Hamas responsible for their war crimes.

There is significant evidence of Hamas' systematic weaponization of sexual violence as a tactic of war. A fact sheet highlighting some of these reports from various sources is attached to this letter. Yet, you have repeatedly stated that the UN requires more evidence to speak out and take action.

If this is true, you must put forward a legitimate, unbiased and trauma-informed mechanism for gathering this evidence. Yet, the UN continues to publicly recommend that the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a body with a long and clear track record of bias and antisemitism, lead an investigation. We find this recommendation completely inappropriate.

The COI's report issued on June 12 ignored the overwhelming evidence and failed to hold Hamas responsible for its crimes against humanity, including the clear and systematic weaponization of sexual violence on October 7 and beyond. The COI's dangerous efforts to downplay and justify Hamas' terrorism and disregard for the lives of Palestinian and Gazan civilians paves the way for violent extremists across the globe to rape and murder civilians. We are concerned that the interactive dialogue scheduled with the COI and the UN Human Rights Council on June 19 will become a platform for spreading falsehoods, misinformation and bias.

In June 2023, the US issued a joint statement on behalf of 27 countries expressing concern about the Commission's bias.<sup>1</sup> The COI has a long and clear track record of antisemitism and bias against Israel. The COI chair, Navi Pillay, has repeatedly and falsely declared Israel to be an "apartheid" state, and promoted discriminatory boycotts against Israel.<sup>2</sup> Commission member Miloon Kothari has made statements to justify terror attacks against Israeli civilians, accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing," and made comments suggesting that Jews "control" social media.<sup>3</sup> The COI's past reports have also been widely criticized for displaying this bias.<sup>4</sup>

**We call on you and other UN leaders to speak out ahead of International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on June 19 and condemn Hamas by name for the systematic weaponization of sexual violence as a weapon of war, and call this what it is: a crime against humanity. We also hope you will work to ensure the COI's June 19 discussion before the Human Rights Council does not undermine the UN's efforts to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence by becoming a platform for denial, propaganda and harmful antisemitic narratives.**

**To ensure justice for Israeli women and girls, and all women and girls across the globe, we call on you to speak out against every instance of rape as a weapon of war, and ensure a thorough, independent and unbiased investigation into such war crimes.**

Sincerely,  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America  
American Muslim & Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council  
I Believe Israeli Women Global Movement  
Jewish Women International  
National Council of Jewish Women

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<sup>1</sup> United States Ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council Michele Taylor, "[Joint Statement on the COI of Israel](#)," June 20, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> UN Watch, "[Request for Navi Pillay to Recuse Herself for Bias or the Appearance Thereof](#)," February 24, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> US Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, "[Statement on Antisemitic Remarks by a Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on the Situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza](#)," July 28, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem Post, "[Jewish organizations denounce UN's COI report: 'Distorted and biased'](#)," October 22, 2022.

The following organizations have signed this letter:

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)  
AEquitas  
American Jewish Medical Association  
American Zionist Movement  
CCAR  
Center for Women's Justice  
Civil Commission on Oct 7th Crimes Against Women, Children and Families  
Coalition for Jewish Values  
Council of Women's Organizations in Israel  
Directors Leading Change  
Dvora Institute  
Elluminate  
Forum Dvora - Women in National Security and Foreign Policy  
Hadassah Foundation  
Hadassah International  
HERhealthEQ  
Hope Center  
I Was Supposed to Have a Baby  
International Council of Jewish Women  
International Women Forum (IWF) - Israel Chapter  
Israeli American Council (IAC)  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia's Women of Vision  
Jewish Federations of North America  
Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance  
Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Chicago  
Jewish Women's Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh  
Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago  
Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey  
Keshet  
League of Russian-Speaking Feminists in Israel  
MERCAZ USA  
Moving Traditions  
Murder Victims Families Organization  
NA'AMAT USA  
National Council of Jewish Women Australia  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
New York Jewish Agenda  
NOGAFem, Center for Women's Health Innovation and Policy  
Rabbinical Assembly  
Soroptimist International of Israel  
Union for Reform Judaism  
WiSpace - The Israeli Women in Space Association  
Women of Reform Judaism  
Women's League for Conservative Judaism  
Yahel - Israel Service Learning  
Yesh Tikva  
Zioness Movement  
Zionist Organization of America (ZOA)