

HADASSAH



November 25, 2025

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

Her Excellency
Ms. Pramila Patten
Special Representative of the Secretary-
General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
United Nations
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Ms. Sima Sami Bahous
Executive Director
UN Women
405 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Guterres, Special Representative Patten and Ms. Bahous:

As the UN commences this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America and the undersigned 27 organizations join together to express our deep concern about the rising levels of violence against women and girls around the world. In particular, we are deeply alarmed by the record levels of conflict-related sexual violence documented for the second consecutive year in the July 2024 Report of The Secretary General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence¹ We urge you to take decisive action to reverse this disturbing trend and deter future acts of gender-based violence (GBV) in conflict. This requires advancing justice and ensuring accountability. As we have seen, the failure to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable simply emboldens terrorists and other malicious actors to continue using sexual violence as a weapon of war.

The ongoing denial of Hamas' weaponization of sexual violence on October 7, 2023, and against the hostages illegally held in Gaza, including at the UN, sends a dangerous message to Hamas and other terrorists that it can act with impunity in harming civilians. In 2023, it took UN Women nearly two months to condemn Hamas terrorists for the weaponization of sexual violence during their attack against Israel.² Just this month, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, denied the legitimacy of the UN's own investigation into Hamas' weaponization of sexual violence and falsely claimed that "no independent investigation found that rape took place on October 7."³

The brutal attacks carried out by Hamas on October 7, 2023, were a chilling illustration of conflict-related sexual violence. Moreover, as testimonies from newly released hostages

¹ United Nations Security Council, "[Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Report of the Secretary-General](#)," July 15, 2025.

² Haaretz, "[Eight Weeks After Oct 7 Massacre, UN Women Condemns Hamas' Use of Sexual Violence Against Israeli Women](#)" December 2, 2023.

³ The Jerusalem Post, "[UN rapporteur claims no independent probe found evidence of Oct. 7 sexual assault despite UN report](#)," November 15, 2025.

surface, it is clear that Hamas continued to weaponize sexual violence against the hostages it held in detention, including male hostages, through 2025. We appreciate and commend the Secretary General for listing Hamas as a party credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence in the 2024 Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.⁴ This was an important step in ensuring international recognition of Hamas' actions. However, as acts of conflict-related sexual violence continue to increase, existing gaps in international frameworks are creating obstacles to holding perpetrators, like Hamas, accountable. **We urge you to take the following actions: (1) advance measures to hold Hamas accountable for crimes against humanity, including by listing Hamas in the Annex to the next annual Secretary General Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and (2) establish and promote a comprehensive international protocol for states to respond to conflict-related sexual violence when it occurs.**

Multiple bodies from around the world, including the UN, collected and examined the evidence of Hamas' crimes against humanity. The Secretary General's 2024 report references the 2024 investigation by Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Under-Secretary General Pramila Patten, which drew upon witness testimonies, forensic analysis, and open-source investigations to present compelling evidence of widespread sexual violence perpetrated against women, men and children during these attacks. The fact-finding mission led by Special Representative Patten found a pattern of naked, often bound female bodies, some bearing execution-style gunshot wounds to the head, in multiple locations.⁵ These findings strongly suggested a systematic pattern of sexual violence used to terrorize, subjugate, and inflict suffering. The report also confirmed acts of rape and sexualized torture against hostages taken by Hamas to Gaza. The UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Alice Jill Edwards, released a report on the crime of hostage taking where she highlighted the evidence that hostages illegally held by Hamas experienced sexual and gender-based violence.⁶

Multiple independent organizations and news outlets also conducted their own investigations and found overwhelming evidence of Hamas' weaponization of rape, leading to condemnation and sanctions by international bodies and individual countries. The European Union (EU) sanctioned three terrorist organizations, including Hamas, for widespread sexual and gender-based violence in a systemic manner on October 7th, 2023.⁷ Human Rights Watch found evidence of crimes against humanity, including rape, by Hamas on October 7th, 2023.⁸ The US Department of Justice (DOJ) charged Hamas leaders with committing acts of terrorism on October 7th, 2023, including the use of sexual violence as weapon of brutality and the rape and genital mutilation of Israeli women.⁹ The All-Party Parliament Group for UK-Israel: 7 October Parliamentary Commission Report detailed the acts of systematic rape and sexual abuse

⁴ United Nations Security Council, "[Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Report of the Secretary-General](#)," July 15, 2025.

⁵ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, "[Official visit of the Office of the SRSG-SVC to Israel and the occupied West Bank 29 January – 14 February 2024](#)," March 4, 2024.

⁶ UN Human Rights Council, "[Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: Hostage-Taking as Torture](#)," February 6, 2025.

⁷ European Council, "[7 October 2023 terrorist attacks in Israel: Council sanctions three entities over widespread sexual and gender-based violence](#)," April 12, 2024.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, "[I Can't Erase All the Blood from My Mind](#)," July 17, 2024.

⁹ US Department of Justice, "[Justice Department Announces Terrorism Charges Against Senior Leaders of Hamas](#)," September 3, 2024.

committed by Hamas on October 7, 2023.¹⁰ A report by The Dinah Project concluded that Hamas used sexual violence as a tactic of war.¹¹

While it was a critical step forward that Hamas was included in the Annex to the 2024 Report of the Secretary General as a party credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for conflict-related sexual violence, further action must be taken to hold Hamas accountable for its crimes against humanity, ensure justice is achieved for the victims of Hamas' brutal weaponization of rape, and send a clear signal to bad actors around the world that sexual violence in conflict will never be tolerated or excused. Accordingly, we urge you to list Hamas in the Annex to the next annual report by the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for its continued weaponization of sexual violence against the hostages, including male hostages, while it held them in detention.

We also urge the UN Security Council to consider and pass a resolution designating Hamas as a terrorist organization. The weaponization of sexual violence is a tactic of terrorism that Hamas clearly employed on October 7th and beyond. Numerous countries have already recognized Hamas as a terrorist organization, including Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Israel, the Organization of American States, Paraguay, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and it is time that the UN does so as well.

We recognize that the horrific events of October 7th, 2023, and beyond by Hamas are not isolated incidents but are part of a global crisis of rising gender-based and sexual violence against women. This global crisis is occurring even as we mark thirty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, one of the most progressive international agreements on women's rights to date. We call upon the international community to take decisive action to address the global scourge of conflict-related sexual violence. The atrocities witnessed on October 7, 2023, and beyond, and the continued rise of conflict-related sexual violence in other areas across the globe reflect the prevalence of sexual violence as a weapon of war and demand a unified and robust response.

We urge you to put forward a singular, comprehensive international protocol, such as those in the Murad Code, that explicitly outlines best practices for countries responding to conflict-related sexual violence events. The protocol should offer clear guidelines for the collection, preservation, and analysis of forensic evidence, effective reporting mechanisms, and trauma-informed care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. We further urge you to call upon countries to adopt and implement these practices while cooperating with international mechanisms established to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence.

It is critical that the UN take decisive action against gender-based and sexual violence in conflict to promote greater deterrence in the future and reverse the rising incidence of these acts. As part of this effort, we urge you to take action to hold Hamas accountable for its systematic weaponization of sexual violence, including by listing Hamas in the Annex to the next annual Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence from the Secretary General, and urge you to develop and call upon countries to adopt a strong international protocol that articulates best practices to improve the global response to conflict-related sexual violence.

¹⁰ All-Party Parliament Group for UK-Israel, "[7 October Parliamentary Commission Report](#)," March 18, 2025.

¹¹ The Dinah Project, "[A Quest for Justice: October 7 and Beyond](#)," July 8, 2025.

Sincerely,

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America
ADL (Anti-Defamation League)
AEquitas
American Muslim and Multifaith Women's Empowerment Council
B'nai Brith International
Coalition for Jewish Values
Elluminate
Eemunah of America
Forum Dvora
HERhealthEQ
I Believe Israeli Women
I Was Supposed to Have a Baby
International Council of Jewish Women
Israeli American Council (IAC)
Jerusalem Institute of Justice
Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
Jewish Federations of North America
Jewish Women International (JWI)
Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago
Manhattan Multicultural Counseling
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women Australia
October 7 Justice Without Borders Ltd.
The Civil Commission on October 7th Crimes Against Women and Children
The Rabbinical Assembly
The Women's Rabbinic Network (WRN)
World Jewish Congress
Yesh Tikva