



SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: JOINT ACTION ON PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

Commission C

Objectives

Sexual and gender-based violence in situations such as armed conflicts and disasters has devastating consequences for victims/survivors, their families and communities. Ending and preventing such violence, protecting the victims/survivors and providing adequate responses to their needs is a critical humanitarian concern.

The alarming humanitarian consequences of acts of sexual and gender-based violence are an issue of particular concern to the international community. Some aspects of this issue were also addressed at the 26th,¹ 27th,² 30th³ and 31st⁴ International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference).

Despite these efforts, sexual and gender-based violence in situations such as armed conflicts and disasters remains a disturbing reality.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) have therefore decided to bring these issues to the 32nd International Conference in the form of a resolution.

The International Conference is a uniquely mandated global forum for discussing pressing humanitarian issues. A plenary discussion dedicated to the issue of sexual and gender-based violence is an opportunity to bring together States party to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and all the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) – which are often both the first responders and the last ones to leave – to discuss this issue.

The commission on sexual and gender-based violence will acknowledge initiatives undertaken by international, regional and domestic organizations to address this issue. It will briefly discuss **the nature of sexual and gender-based violence occurring in situations such as armed conflicts and disasters** across various regions and contexts.

The panel will mainly focus on victim/survivor-centred approaches, acknowledging gaps and progress made, and discussing how we can commit to building a framework that encompasses effective prevention, protection and assistance at the local and international levels. The panel will recall that **sexual and gender-based violence can occur in all**

¹ Resolutions 1 (“International humanitarian law: From law to action, Report on the follow-up to the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims”) and 2 (“Protection of the civilian population in period of armed conflict”)

² Resolution 1 (“Adoption of the Declaration and the Plan of Action”)

³ Resolution 3 (“Reaffirmation and implementation of international humanitarian law: Preserving human life and dignity in armed conflict”)

⁴ Resolutions 2 (“4-year action plan for the implementation of international humanitarian law”) and 6 (“Health inequities with a focus on women and children”)

situations such as armed conflicts and disasters. It will consider how this issue occurs in different regions, and will remind participants of existing prohibitions under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and of the unique and added value of the Movement and the International Conference in addressing these matters.

Chair and panellists

Chair:

Nazhat Shameem – Fiji’s Ambassador to the UN in Geneva

Panellists:

- Vesna Batistic Kos – Croatia’s Ambassador to the UN in Geneva (8 and 9 December)
- Prof. Moamena Kamel – Secretary General, Egyptian Red Crescent (8 and 9 December)
- Dr Elizabeth G. Ferris – Research Professor at Georgetown University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution (8 December) (to be confirmed)
- Soyata Maïga (Mali) – Special Rapporteur on Rights of Women, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (9 December)

Guiding questions

- How can we further improve victims/survivors’ access to services, and the quality of those services? How can we provide a holistic response, while also crafting effective prevention strategies to combat sexual and gender-based violence in situations such as armed conflicts and disasters?
- How can we better harness the complementarity of the Movement components and partnerships with States and other stakeholders?
- How can we ensure better implementation of the existing international legal frameworks prohibiting acts of sexual and gender-based violence by, for example, strengthening domestic legal frameworks?

Practical details

There will be two sessions of this commission in different language groupings; both will use the same guiding questions and format.

Timing and rooms:

- Session 1: Tuesday, 8 December, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m., room 2
- Session 2: Wednesday, 9 December, 10 a.m. – 12 noon, room 2

Language groupings:

- Session 1: English, Spanish, Russian
- Session 2: English, French, Arabic

References to official working documents

- Background report on sexual and gender-based violence: joint action on prevention and response, prepared jointly by the ICRC and the International Federation for the 32nd International Conference
- Draft resolution on sexual and gender-based violence: joint action on prevention and response, submitted by the ICRC and the International Federation to the 32nd International Conference
- http://rcrcconference.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/04/32IC-REVDR-and-report-on-Sexual-and-gender-based-violence_EN.pdf