

Statement of feminist activists to Tunis Forum for Gender Equality

Tunis, April 26th 2019

We, civil society participants of the Tunis Forum for Gender Equality taking place in Tunis from April 24th to 26th 2019, have gathered to review the progress of the UN resolution 1325 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

A day before this Forum started, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2467 in which it excluded references to sexual and reproductive health services for women having survived sexual violence in the context of conflict.

We are jolted once again, and reminded that we have to stand firm in our fight for women's equal rights.

We, as feminist activists at the Forum, are appalled by the US position to refuse survivors of sexual violence the full support they need.

In 2019 it is unacceptable that a Security Council Resolution on Sexual Violence in Conflict is adopted, while omitting essential sexual and reproductive health services.

This undermines the core human rights of women and girls', including the rights to life, health, non-discrimination, and freedom from inhumane treatment. . Yet again, violence is being perpetuated on the bodies of women and girls.

Sexual violence against women and girls in the context of conflict is systemic and continues to be employed as a tactic of war. For women and girls who have experienced such sexual violence it is essential that they have access to sexual and reproductive health services as well as meaningful accountability. By removing all references sexual and reproductive health services, the US have caused even more violence and harm to these same women and girls and put their lives in danger.

We strongly support and affirm the Statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden Margot Wallstrom who said in the opening plenary of the Forum, that women should never have to suffer the double discrimination of being raped as a tool of war, and then also being denied their right to sexual and reproductive services such as emergency contraceptives, safe abortion, and the right to know about HIV-AIDS.

The US decision to threaten a veto unless all references to sexual and reproductive health services for these women and girls was removed also undermines their commitment to the UNSCR 1325 agenda. Indeed, the US should reconsider its membership in the Friends of the Women Peace and Security group!

The CEDAW General Recommendation 30 adopted in 2013 explicitly called on States to provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for all women and

girls in conflict. States are obliged to provide safe abortion services including post-abortion care. States are also obliged to provide comprehensive SRHR information, psychosocial support, family planning services, maternal health services, skilled delivery services and care to treat injuries arising from sexual violence, complications from delivery and other reproductive health complications.

The Tunis Forum For Gender Equality started on the 1st official International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, the 24th of April. The US attack on women's rights, supported by Russia and China, denying women their sexual and reproductive health and rights, is also an attack on joint global and multilateral goals to achieve gender equality and the full implementation of human rights for all.

Twenty five years ago in Beijing, world leaders stood up for women's rights as human rights, including their reproductive rights.

We will not allow the clock to be turned back and we are calling on the leaders of the world to urgently resist US efforts to undermine sexual and reproductive rights. We expect all States to continue to be accountable to their obligations to women's human rights by ensuring adequate finance for sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls facing sexual violence in conflict.