



**ICRC**

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**Statement by the International Committee  
of the Red Cross (ICRC)**

**at the 6411<sup>th</sup> meeting of the United Nations  
Security Council**

***Women, peace and security***

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Delegation to the United Nations

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Mr. President,

I would like to thank you for giving the opportunity to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to address the Security Council today.

The ICRC as an independent and neutral humanitarian organization, also independent from the United Nations, recognizes the importance of the Security Council's efforts to address the situation of women in the context of peace and security.

Women and girls are frequently placed at the epicentre of conflicts, endangered not only because of their proximity to the fighting, but also because they are deliberately being targeted as a method of warfare. Since the adoption, ten years ago, of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, women's issues are very much at the forefront of the international agenda.

For its part, the ICRC decided some ten years ago to emphasize across all its programmes and operational activities the particular respect and protection accorded to women and girls by international humanitarian law (IHL). Women separated from their family are often left without financial and emotional support. Displaced women, having been forced to flee their home, may have to assume extra responsibilities and are left at greater risk of sexual violence and abuse. Moreover, their access to safe drinking water, food or health care is often hampered.

To heighten its response in promoting the protection of women, the ICRC has developed a multidimensional approach to identify and address the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in armed conflict and other situations of violence. This approach recognizes first and foremost that women are not totally vulnerable and display remarkable strength and courage in wartime, often finding ingenious ways of coping with the difficulties they face.

When considering the needs of women during conflict, prevention is essential. While it is imperative that the international community reacts to sexual violence as to any other crime, it is also essential that Member States resolutely engage in preventing sexual violence. Through the promotion of IHL, the ICRC presses all parties to an armed conflict to respect the categorical prohibition of all forms of violence against women.

Activities in the communities are often carried out together with the Red-Cross and Red-Crescent Societies, especially those aiming to break the taboos surrounding this issue and sensitise local communities so that survivors of sexual violence are not stigmatised.

Through instruction and IHL training programs for armed forces and armed groups, the ICRC emphasizes the prohibition of rape and other forms of sexual violence, and advocates its inclusion in the internal regulations and manuals of armed forces and groups.

The ICRC strongly encourages United Nations Member States to include in their national legislation provisions to ensure better respect for women and girls at all times, and particularly in times of war and other situations of violence. Such measures have both a preventive and accountability impact.

Mr. President,

The ICRC's key message today is simple: existing rules of IHL must be respected. Where they are not, those responsible for violations must be held to account. The ICRC welcomes the importance the Security Council attaches to full respect for international humanitarian law. Indeed, better respect for existing rules of IHL would ensure much better protection for women and girls in armed conflict and other situations of violence.

Mr. President,

To conclude, the ICRC reiterates its commitment to the spirit of this resolution and more importantly, the ICRC will continue to promote, in its own work, the respect that international humanitarian law guarantees for women and girls.

Thank you.