

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Waxman, Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations.*

Let me begin by thanking you, Sir, for convening this important debate. It brings much needed awareness and attention to an important subject. I would also like to recognize the excellent work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and her team.

This fall will mark 13 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000) and three years since it adopted resolution 1960 (2010). Those resolutions reflect the international community's desire to advance gender equality and denounce sexual violence in conflict. While those aspirations are the subject of frequent discussions and debates within these halls, on the ground — where it really counts — women continue to be marginalized and victimized. Around the world, at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. International resolve must be met with concrete action.

We cannot hope to tackle the issue of sexual violence in conflict while even in times of peace women are victims of gender bias and discrimination. The first step is to address the significant gaps that exist in many countries' legal systems. Violence against women takes root in cultures of discrimination that relegate women to second-class citizens and deny them the political, legal and economic rights that men enjoy.

Israel believes that women's rights are integral to building a just society in which all citizens live free of violence and their human rights are respected and protected. Israel is proud to sponsor resolution 2106 (2013) as we have with all previous resolutions on women and peace and security.

It is the legal and moral obligation of all States to protect women and girls from sexual violence. There must be a system of law and justice that leaves no doubt that sexual intimidation and violence aimed at women is inexcusable. In the Middle East, many legal systems do not meet basic international standards when it comes to protecting women. In some instances, marital rape is not regarded as a criminal offence, and there are no procedures in place to deal with cases of domestic sexual abuse.

In certain States, thousands of women are victims of so-called honour killings. Owing to weak and indifferent justice systems, perpetrators who claim to have preserved family honour are rarely prosecuted, or if they are, they receive light sentences. In those instances, women are victimized twice — first by the perpetrator of the crime and then by an indifferent justice system. Often, rape survivors are forced to marry their rapists, and there are countless examples in which women and girls have been imprisoned for so-called moral crimes.

In Syria, under Bashar Al-Assad's brutal regime, the death toll has surpassed 93,000, and more than one-third of the population requires humanitarian assistance. The Syrian army and its State-sponsored militia, known as the Shabbiha, have employed sexual violence as devastating weapons in a ruthless campaign of intimidation. As described in the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflict of March 2013 (S/2013/149), Syrian forces have committed rape, torture and other inhumane acts that constitute war crimes. Approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees have fled their homes. Thousands of women and children who escaped sexual violence in Syria now live in constant fear of kidnapping, assault and rape inside refugee camps.

As a family of nations, our responsibility to one another stems from our common humanity. Our

moral imperative supersedes whatever politics, religion or geography may divide us. There can be zero tolerance for sexual violence. We must tirelessly persist until the day when women are the agents of peace rather than the victims of war.