



FORUM FOR
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

Forum for Foreign Relations

On the Violence Against Israeli Women
by Hamas, October 7, 2023
A Call for Redress & Accountability

Table of Contents:

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Foreword by Chemi Peres..... | 3 |
| Foreword by Mithal Al Alusi..... | 6 |
| Foreword by Oleksandra Matviichuk..... | 8 |
| Foreword by U.S. Ambassador Lisa Gable..... | 10 |
| Foreword by Dana White..... | 11 |
| I. Executive Summary:..... | 12 |
| Brief Overview of the Incident..... | 12 |
| The Purpose of the Report..... | 13 |
| Report's Mission and Scope..... | 14 |
| Key Recommendations..... | 14 |
| II. Introduction..... | 16 |
| The Hamas Onslaught of October 7, 2023..... | 16 |
| The Human Toll on Israeli Women..... | 16 |
| International Law and Resolutions..... | 17 |
| Systematic Nature of the Assault..... | 18 |
| UN Women's Mission and its Shortcomings..... | 19 |
| Failure of UN Women..... | 19 |
| Immediate Redress and Accountability..... | 20 |
| Report's Mission and Scope..... | 20 |
| III. International Law, Human Rights Violations and UN Women:..... | 21 |
| IV. The Role of UN Women:..... | 22 |
| The Mandate of UN Women..... | 22 |
| UN Women's Response to Gender-Based Violence..... | 23 |
| The Importance of Proactive Stance for Policy Makers..... | 23 |
| V. Call for an Official Inquiry:..... | 23 |
| The Necessity of an Official Inquiry..... | 23 |
| Benefits of an Impartial Investigation..... | 24 |
| VI. Recommendations for UN Women:..... | 24 |
| ➤ Prevention..... | 26 |
| ➤ Response..... | 27 |
| ➤ Advocacy..... | 27 |
| ➤ Implementation and Strategy Development..... | 27 |
| ➤ The 'Traffic Light' Framework Explained..... | 28 |
| ➤ Application of Financial Penalties..... | 28 |
| ➤ Precedent and Implementation..... | 28 |
| ➤ Ensuring Transparency and Fairness..... | 28 |
| ➤ Stakeholder Engagement..... | 29 |
| Key Elements of the Protocol..... | 29 |
| VII. Conclusion:..... | 31 |

Foreword by Chemi Peres

In a world where the echoes of discord and strife often overshadow the whispers of peace and cooperation, it is the torch of innovation that lights the path to a brighter future. As my father, Shimon Peres, once profoundly stated, "You are as great as the cause you serve and as young as your dreams." This belief has been the cornerstone of my journey in technology and venture capital, illustrating that the pursuit of peace and prosperity is not only possible but imperative through the lens of innovative diplomacy.

This policy briefing comes at a critical juncture, addressing the harrowing violence against Israeli women by Hamas on October 7, 2023. It underscores a reality that demands our immediate attention and action, yet also presents an opportunity to leverage our collective ingenuity towards creating sustainable solutions for peace, providing innovative approaches in how we address the denial and lack of action to combat violence against Israeli women.

Since that fateful day, the discourse has been fraught with division, oversimplification, and misinformation, highlighting a glaring need for accountability and nuanced understanding.

As you engage with the insights and recommendations within these pages, I encourage you to envision the role you can play in this transformative journey.

The nexus of technology, policy, and human compassion presents us with an unprecedented opportunity to address and heal the wounds of conflict. By embracing innovative solutions that transcend traditional boundaries, we can foster an environment where peace and prosperity flourish together.

In a devastating surge of violence that chillingly mirrored the darkest days of the Shoah, Hamas terror militants stormed through South Israel, leaving behind a trail of unbridled destruction and sorrow. With a ferocity that speaks to an abyss of hatred, they targeted civilians—ordinary men, women, and children, whose only transgression was their commitment to a life of peace. In a stark testament to their ruthlessness, lives were not just ended but obliterated, dreams shattered, and the fabric of entire communities torn asunder. The attack was not merely an act of terror; it was an assault on the very essence of humanity by religious extremists, an attempt to extinguish the light of hope with the shadow of despair.

Yet, in the face of such darkness, we are reminded of the resilience of the human spirit and the imperative of light. We owe it to the victims, to ourselves, and to future generations to confront this abyss with the brightest beacon of hope we can muster—a beacon lit by the belief that peace is not a distant dream but a tangible reality within our grasp. This conviction demands of us not just to dream the impossible but to act with courage and determination to make those dreams a reality. It calls us to

innovation, to thinking beyond conventional limits, and to harnessing our collective creativity to forge paths to reconciliation and understanding.

We stand at a critical juncture in history, faced with the imperious truth that the specter of terror, with its capacity to sow discord and fear, is encroaching upon us with increasing boldness. Nations across the globe must come together to acknowledge and confront this challenge head-on. It is a time for unity, for setting aside differences and working collaboratively towards a common goal—the establishment of a world where peace prevails over war, love overcomes hate, and hope dispels fear.

Innovation lies at the heart of this endeavour. Just as it has propelled humanity to great scientific and technological heights, so too can it pave the way for peace. Innovation in diplomacy, in education, in our approach to justice and equality—these are the tools with which we can dismantle the machinery of terror. Let us be guided by the wisdom that while optimists and pessimists may share the same end, the lives they lead are worlds apart. Let us choose optimism, not as a mere wishful thinking, but as a deliberate act of defiance against those who seek to divide us.

We must dare to dream the impossible, to envision a world not as it is, but as it could be. A world where the reign of terror is replaced by the rule of law, where the voices of hate are drowned out by the chorus of solidarity, and where every individual, regardless of race, religion, or nationality, can live in peace and dignity. This is the challenge before us, and it is one we must meet with the full measure of our courage, creativity, and commitment to the cause of peace.

My father, Shimon Peres, was a beacon of peace, his life a testament to the unyielding belief in the power of reconciliation over conflict. He understood, more intimately than most, the devastating toll of war—not just on the battlefield, but on the hearts and souls of nations and individuals alike. His commitment to peace was not born out of naivety but from a profound understanding of what is at stake when humanity chooses division over unity. His endeavours were not confined to the borders of Israel; they were expansive, seeking to sow the seeds of peace far beyond, in every corner of the globe where strife prevails.

Shimon Peres wanted to set a standard, to lay down a marker of what is possible when courage, vision, and perseverance lead the way. He dreamed of a world where dialogue trumps division, where understanding overcomes suspicion, and where the commonalities of our human experience are celebrated over the differences. His life's work was a clarion call to all who believe in the potential for a better world—a call to action not just for the leaders of today but for the generations to follow.

In embracing this legacy, we are not merely honouring the memory of a great leader; we are recommitting ourselves to a cause that is greater than any one individual. It is a call to ambitious hope, to a belief in the transformative power of collective action and shared dreams. As we navigate the challenges of our time, let us

do so with the same unwavering commitment to peace that guided my father throughout his life.

Let this be our guiding principle, our north star in the pursuit of a world where peace is the foundation upon which we build our shared future. Let us draw inspiration from Shimon Peres's vision and dedication, and commit ourselves with renewed fervor to the ambitious hope that peace is not only possible but achievable. This is the standard he set, the legacy he leaves us, and the path we must continue to tread with courage and conviction.

As you engage with the insights and recommendations within these pages, I encourage you to envision the role you can play in this transformative journey. Together, armed with the tools of innovation and driven by the courage to dream, we can turn the tide towards a future where peace is not just an aspiration but a reality. Let us commit to innovation in diplomacy as our guiding star, challenging the status quo and paving the way for a world where the dignity and safety of every individual are upheld and cherished.

Let this briefing not only inform you but also inspire you to action. For if we can imagine it, then, indeed, we can manifest it.

Chemi Peres - Chair of the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, Managing Partner and Co-Founder of Pitango

Foreword by Mithal Al Alusi

It is with profound honour and responsibility that I offer these remarks, not in person but through the medium of text, on a matter that deeply impacts the core of our collective humanity. As we engage with this document, symbolising governance, wisdom, and justice, we are acutely reminded of our duty to protect those in our society who are most vulnerable.

I am honoured to contribute my voice to the #MeToo_Unless_Ur_A_Jew campaign, an initiative spearheaded by the tireless Danielle Ofek and supported by innumerable individuals around the globe, myself included. This movement aspires not only to highlight the dark corners where injustice resides but to obliterate them entirely. It stands firmly on the conviction that delivering justice for women and girls subjected to violence is a reflection of our civilisation's maturity, our empathy, and our united will to shape a fairer world.

The harrowing events of the 7th of October, with hostages taken by Hamas, reveal an uncomfortable truth about the world's fleeting memory and its quickness to avert its gaze from such brutalities. The severe sexual violence endured by female hostages on this day, and the global community's hesitance to address such atrocities, unveil a disturbing reluctance to acknowledge our common vulnerability.

We must neither ignore nor allow the minimisation of the sexual violence that was an integral part of the terror experienced on October 7th. It was not merely an incidental by-product but a deliberate aspect of the terror inflicted upon the people, particularly the women, of Israel on that dark day.

This campaign urges us to directly confront these sobering realities, to refuse to turn away, and to stand in solidarity with all those who have endured such injustices. It renews our pledge to a future where no one is compelled to endure suffering in silence and isolation.

I invite you to pause and reflect on the individuals at the heart of this cause – they could be your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, and your friends. The stark reality of violence against women and girls is not just an abstract number; it represents the altered lives of countless individuals, a testament to our shared vulnerability and, crucially, to our shared resilience.

This campaign represents a fervent and just call for accountability, change, and the bravery to face difficult truths. It challenges each of us to question, to engage, and to take decisive action. The path to justice is strewn with hurdles, yet it is a journey we are compelled to pursue with steadfast determination and optimism. As we aim for a world where no woman or girl is overshadowed by the threat of violence, we go beyond mere advocacy; we become protectors of the future.

In conclusion, I urge you, the esteemed readers of these policy recommendations, to lend your voices, your influence, and your determination to this noble endeavour. Together, we can dismantle the edifices of violence and, in their place, erect a legacy of equality, safety, and justice. Let us unite in our determination, for the challenge before us is vast, affecting the lives and dreams of millions.

With the deepest respect and hope,

Mithal Al Alusi - Leader of the Iraqi Ummah Party

Foreword by Oleksandra Matviichuk

In an era defined by significant challenges and complex crises, the battle for human rights, particularly the rights of women and girls, necessitates unwavering commitment, bravery, and a profound sense of justice. Against this backdrop, the advocacy for the reform of UN Women emerges not merely as a suggestion but as an essential demand. As someone who has devoted their life to championing human rights, seeking justice, and offering a voice to those silenced, I recognise the crucial need for institutions like UN Women to operate with the highest levels of impartiality and objectivity.

The policy recommendations outlined in this document represent more than a framework for change; they are a compelling call to action. They highlight the pressing need for UN Women to refine its focus and bolster its mandate to effectively combat violence against women and girls. This cause transcends borders, cultures, and political beliefs, touching the essence of our collective humanity.

Violence against women and girls is not just a severe violation of human rights but also a widespread crisis that erodes societal fabrics, impedes development, and perpetuates cycles of violence and inequality. The distressingly common occurrence of this violence, in its myriad forms, underscores the necessity for a robust and steadfast advocate within the international arena. UN Women has the potential to be that advocate, yet as this document astutely notes, potential alone is insufficient.

The recommendations proposed herein stem from a thorough understanding of the existing challenges and a visionary strategy for surmounting them. They call for transparency, accountability, and a rejuvenated commitment to the principles of justice and equality. They demand that UN Women not only oppose violence in all its manifestations but also navigate the complexities of global politics with an unwavering ethical compass.

It is vital to acknowledge that advocating for the rights of women and girls is neither a partisan issue nor confined to any single region or community. It is a universal endeavour, rooted in the basic belief in the dignity and worth of every individual. Consequently, the reform of UN Women must be propelled by a comprehensive grasp of the global landscape of gender-based violence, informed by the testimonies of those it aims to support, and guided by the relentless pursuit of justice.

I stand in solidarity with the objectives delineated in this document and commend its author for their commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls. The road ahead is laden with challenges, but it is through the collective efforts of individuals, organisations, and governments that we can aspire to create a more just and equitable world.

In conclusion, I urge all stakeholders, policymakers, and advocates to regard these recommendations with the gravity and immediacy they warrant. Together, we

possess the capability to reshape the narrative, to reverse the tide of violence, and to ensure that institutions like UN Women can fulfil their mandate with integrity, courage, and an unwavering dedication to equality.

Let us proceed with determination, with empathy, and with an unshakeable dedication to the ideals of justice and human dignity. The time for action is now.

Oleksandra Matviichuk - Head of the Center for Civil Liberties Ukraine & Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Foreword by Ambassador Lisa Gable

As a former United States Ambassador and United Nations Delegate, I witnessed firsthand the profound impact of international collaboration and policy-making in addressing global challenges. The events of October 7, 2023, serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for concerted action to combat violence against women, an issue that transcends borders and cultures.

The document before you is not only a comprehensive account of the atrocities committed against Israeli women by Hamas but also a critical policy recommendation that demands our immediate attention. It lays bare the pressing issues at hand and provides a roadmap for redress and prevention of future injustices. As we navigate the complexities of international relations and human rights advocacy, this policy recommendation emerges as an indispensable resource for policymakers, diplomats, and all stakeholders committed to the cause of justice and peace.

The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated. It calls for a unified response from the international community to ensure accountability, provide support to victims, and implement measures to prevent such heinous acts from recurring. As we engage with this document, let us be guided by the principles of humanity, justice, and the unwavering pursuit of peace.

This policy recommendation is a necessary read for anyone dedicated to making a meaningful difference in the world. It challenges us to reflect on our responsibilities as global citizens and to take decisive action in the face of atrocities that threaten the fabric of humankind. Let it serve as a catalyst for change, inspiring us to work tirelessly towards a future where the dignity and rights of all individuals are respected and protected.

In endorsing this document, I underscore its significance as a tool for shaping a more just and equitable world. It is a testament to the power of collective action and the indomitable spirit of those who strive to uphold the highest ideals of the international community. Together, we can confront the challenges before us and pave the way for a future free from violence and injustice.

Ambassador Lisa Gable

Foreword by Dana White

As the former Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, my career has been dedicated to navigating the intricate nexus of defence, diplomacy, and strategic communication. The relentless pursuit of justice, accountability, and the protection of human rights, especially in conflict zones, has always been paramount. It is within this context that the harrowing events of October 7, 2023, unfold—a stark reminder of the atrocities that can occur when hatred and extremism are allowed to proliferate unchecked.

The report compiled in the aftermath of the Hamas-led attacks against Israeli civilians, with a distressing focus on women, serves as a critical document for policymakers, defence experts, and advocates for human rights. It underscores a chilling strategy of sexual violence and terror, intended not just to inflict immediate harm but to erode the very fabric of society over generations. This insidious use of sexual violence as a tool of warfare is a gross violation of international law and human decency, necessitating a resolute and unwavering international response.

From my experience in the Department of Defense, I've witnessed firsthand the complexity of addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The challenges are manifold, involving the integration of military strategy, diplomatic engagement, and humanitarian aid. Yet, the urgency to act is clear. The international community, led by institutions like the United Nations and specifically UN Women, must leverage its collective might to ensure these heinous acts do not go unpunished. Accountability, support for survivors, and preventive measures must be the pillars of our response.

This report highlights a pivotal moment for the international community to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of justice and human rights. It calls for a concerted effort to not only provide redress for the victims but to also address the systemic issues that allow such atrocities to occur. As defense and policy experts, our role extends beyond traditional security concerns; it encompasses the advocacy for and implementation of measures that protect the most vulnerable, especially women and children, from the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence.

The events of October 7, 2023, and the subsequent findings of this report should serve as a catalyst for change. It implores us to look beyond the immediate crisis and to commit to a long-term strategy that encompasses defence, diplomacy, and development. By doing so, we honour the victims, challenge the perpetrators, and take a stand for a future where the dignity of every individual is respected and protected.

As we delve into the details and recommendations of this report, let us be guided by a resolve to make tangible differences in the lives of those affected. The path forward requires collaboration, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to human rights. It is a call to action that we must all heed.

Dana White - Former Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

I. Executive Summary:

Brief Overview of the Incident

On the 7th of October, 2023, a grave and barbaric act of aggression was perpetrated by Hamas in Israel. The attack unleashed widespread violence against Israeli women and girls, characterised by systematic sexual violence, murder, and kidnappings, leading to profound physical and psychological trauma. The attackers demonstrated a blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and the rights of women during armed conflicts.

The hostilities commenced at approximately 6:30 AM following a breach by Hamas-led militants of the barriers separating Gaza and Israel. Reports¹ from a wide array of civilian sites—over 20 in total—uniformly indicate the activation of air raid sirens at this juncture. Communities within the vicinity of the Gaza Strip, colloquially referred to as the Gaza Envelope, have grown accustomed to such alerts and the ensuing rocket attacks from Palestinian factions in Gaza. Inhabitants of these areas are equipped with "safe rooms," fortified areas designed to offer protection from attacks, into which many retreated. However, even these shelters could not provide safe haven.

The toll from the October 7 attack included: over a thousand lives lost, predominantly civilians, alongside widespread looting and the torching of homes, and upwards of 230 individuals—comprising men, women, and children—abducted.

Hamas, an entity that has unequivocally committed itself to the destruction of the Jewish people and the elimination of Israel as a sovereign state, conducted this assault with indisputable genocidal intent, specifically targeting Israeli civilians, with a particular focus on women and girls. In the context of Hamas's declared objectives and the severity of the offences committed, these acts of rape and sexual violence against Jewish and Israeli women should be considered a tool of war, and constitute crime against humanity.²

Crimes against humanity are defined in international law³ to include a range of acts such as murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane

¹ Human Rights Watch. "Interview: Building Evidence of Crimes Committed in Israel, October 7." Human Rights Watch, January 31, 2024.
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/31/interview-building-evidence-crimes-committed-israel-october-7>.

² "UN Finally Condemn October 7 War Crimes Against Women," *The Jewish Chronicle*, accessed February 27, 2024,
<https://www.thejc.com/news/world/un-finally-condemn-october-7-war-crimes-against-women-af0sy0j2>.

³ United Nations, "Crimes Against Humanity," United Nations, accessed February 26, 2024,
<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/crimes-against-humanity.shtml>.

acts, all committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population. The systematic sexual violence directed at Jewish and Israeli women and girls during this assault fulfills the criteria for crimes against humanity, highlighted by both the genocidal intent and the extent of the violence.

Moreover, the Hamas sexual violence perpetrated on October 7 and since has illuminated significant violations of international humanitarian law, which establishes the rights and protections to be afforded to individuals, notably women and children⁴, within the context of armed conflicts. The situation continues as hostages continue to face the threat of sexual violence. Testimonies⁵ emerging since the liberation of some hostages have confirmed that such fears are well-founded, with the survivors themselves attesting to the abuses they endured. This ongoing threat amplifies the urgency for international intervention.

The international community, in particular the signatories to UN Women, the UN's Women's Chapter, should unequivocally utilise their influence to demand immediate action from the UN in response to these crimes against humanity. This includes, at a minimum, advocating for an exhaustive investigation, ensuring accountability for the perpetrators, and providing comprehensive support and care for the victims as a basic human right and fulfilling their Charter. The reality of the lack of advocacy amongst the international community to support Jewish and Israeli women and girls, suggests a new mandate is required, through the establishment of new protocols to ensure that a genuinely independent UN Women fulfils its mandate free from bias and prejudices. Women and girls in Israel continue to face systematic sexual violence and other forms of physical and psychological damage.

The Purpose of the Report

The aim of this report is to catalogue and highlight the grave human rights violations and gender-based violence committed against Israeli women and girls on the 7th of October, 2023. It seeks to bring to light the harrowing experiences of the victims and the critical need for accountability, justice, and support for those affected. Moreover, this report calls for action from all countries that are signatories to UN Women, urging them to use their standing to compel UN Women to address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross, "International Humanitarian Law: Protecting Persons Not Participating in Hostilities," ICRC, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/article/other/57jmat.htm>.

⁵ Staff, "Israeli report submitted to UN on Hamas's mass-scale weaponization of rape," The Times of Israel, [publication date not provided], <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-report-submitted-to-un-on-hamass-mass-scale-weaponization-of-rape/>.

Report's Mission and Scope

With a steadfast dedication to the principles of justice and human rights, this report has been crafted with the primary aim of bringing to light the profound consequences of the events on 7 October 2023. This document transcends the traditional confines of a report; it is an unequivocal call for decisive action, both internationally and within the communities most deeply affected.

The scope of this briefing is comprehensive, offering an in-depth analysis of the assault's genocidal nature against the backdrop of Hamas's declared objective to obliterate the Jewish populace. It meticulously examines the systematic sexual violence inflicted during the attack, categorically identifying these acts as crimes against humanity within the parameters of international law.

Additionally, the briefing ardently calls for the establishment of an official investigation into the incidents of 7 October 2023, steadfastly adhering to the stringent criteria of international law. It implores every nation affiliated with UN Women to utilise their esteemed position to collectively urge UN Women to categorically condemn the violence and to reaffirm its dedication to eradicating gender-based violence in conflict zones.

Furthermore, the briefing highlights the critical need for comprehensive and sustained assistance for the survivors of the 7 October onslaught. Such support should include a full spectrum of medical, psychological, and social aid, aimed at enabling the survivors' recovery and the rebuilding of their lives.

In conclusion, this briefing serves as a detailed and emphatic appeal for justice, accountability, and aid for the victims of the atrocious attack on 7 October 2023 in Israel. It lays bare the urgency of the situation and firmly reiterates the moral obligation of the international community to act with definitive purpose and effectiveness.

Key Recommendations

- **Official Inquiry:** We strongly recommend initiating an official inquiry into the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas to ensure a thorough and impartial Official Inquiry Recommendation. This investigation must be exhaustive, conform to the highest international benchmarks, and engage all relevant parties. Crucially, the inquiry should culminate in a detailed situation report on the events. The inquiry must outline definitive actions to ensure accountability, both for individual perpetrators and Hamas as an entity. It should also present strategies to counteract the ideology that justified and advocated for these crimes, aiming to dismantle the foundations that support such acts of violence.
- **Enhancement of UN Women's Advocacy:** We call upon nations affiliated with UN Women to leverage their standing not only to seek a vigorous denunciation of the violence but also to ensure UN Women remains true to its core principles

of objectivity, impartiality, and a consistent stance against all manifestations of violence against women and girls. Partners of UN Women, including corporate sponsors, should condition their financial support on UN Women's commitment to these tenets, thereby exerting pressure on UN Women to actively and continually address gender-based violence in conflict scenarios. This approach underscores UN Women's pivotal role in combating global gender-based violence, emphasising its responsibility to act decisively and without bias in confronting crimes against humanity targeting women and girls.

- **Support for Victims:** It is paramount for UN Women, together with allied organisations, to offer acknowledgement, and immediate and ongoing support to the victims of the 7 October attack. Such support must encompass a broad spectrum of medical, psychological, and social assistance, facilitating the survivors' journey toward recovery and the rebuilding of their lives.
- **Task Force Formation:** We recommend establishing a specialised task force within UN Women, focused on addressing gender-based violence in conflict zones. This team should concentrate on prevention, response, and advocacy, with the goal of preventing the recurrence of such egregious acts.
- **Financial Accountability Mechanism:** To maintain UN Women's dedication to its mission of equitable representation and addressing gender-based violence, we propose a financial accountability mechanism. Envisioned as a 'traffic light' system, this would allow signatory countries and private donors to impose financial sanctions, including the conditional suspension of funds, should UN Women fail to meet its statutory obligations. This mechanism will serve as a proactive measure to champion the principles of gender equality and equitable representation.
- **New Protocol for UN Women Leadership:** A new protocol must be established for the vetting and appointment of UN Women leadership, incorporating clear restrictions, control methods, and limitations for individuals employed by UN Women. This protocol is essential to guarantee impartiality and prevent any bias or conflicts of interest, ensuring that UN Women's leadership is beyond reproach in its commitment to the organisation's core values and objectives. This measure is vital in reinforcing UN Women's credibility and effectiveness in advocating for gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence globally.

This report serves as an urgent appeal to all signatories to UN Women, to employ their stature and collective capacity to demand that UN Women steadfastly honour its Charter. The moment to act is upon us, and it is incumbent upon the global community to unite in the repudiation of violence against women, irrespective of where it transpires.

II. Introduction

The Hamas Onslaught of October 7, 2023

On 7 October 2023, the international community bore witness to a stark violation of human rights, perpetrated by the terrorist group Hamas in southern Israel. This calculated act of violence reverberated through Israel, a beacon of democracy and a pillar of stability in a region beset by turmoil. The assailants launched indiscriminate violent attacks against civilians, subjecting Israeli women and girls to particularly severe atrocities.

Hamas, an organisation with a declared commitment to the destruction of the state of Israel⁶, operates under an ideological framework rooted in extremist interpretations of political and religious beliefs. This group's worldview is characterised by a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the Israeli state and a call for its eradication, often through acts of violence and terrorism.

Central to Hamas' operations is the notorious 'pay-per-slay' programme⁷, a policy that financially rewards individuals and their families for carrying out attacks against Israelis. This reprehensible incentive scheme not only encourages acts of terrorism but also systematically targets Israeli civilians, exacerbating the cycle of violence specifically targeting these groups, Hamas aims to instil fear and suffering within the Israeli population, undermining the social fabric and cohesion of Israeli society.

The focused aggression towards Israeli women and girls by Hamas is particularly heinous, representing not just acts of terror but a concerted effort towards ethnic cleansing. The use of sexual violence and rape against women and girls.

The Human Toll on Israeli Women

The systematic nature of the atrocities inflicted upon Israeli women and girls is evidenced in the report of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers, "Silent Cry: Sexual Crimes in the October 7 War" The Report found that these acts were not isolated incidents but as part of a concerted strategy employed by Hamas militants, thereby fulfilling the criteria for crimes against humanity as stipulated in international law.

The report documents the widespread and deliberate use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, executed with uniformity across various locations. Such actions were designed to inflict maximum psychological trauma on both the victims and their

⁶ Wilson Center, "The Doctrine of Hamas," Wilson Center, accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/doctrine-hamas#:~:text=Since%20its%20creation%20in%20Decemb,movement%20committed%20to%20destroying%20Israel>.

⁷ EMET (Endowment for Middle East Truth), "Pay for Slay Fact Sheet," last modified July 2017, https://emetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Pay4Slay_Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf.

communities, often conducted in the presence of family members, increasing the trauma. The atrocities extended to grotesque physical mutilation, indicating a level of brutality that starkly contravenes the principles of international humanitarian law and underscores a strategic intent to terrorise and debase the populace.

Eyewitness accounts within the report offer a visceral insight into the extent of the barbarity. One testimony recounts the relentless nature of these assaults, where the aggressor persisted in their violation even after the victim had ceased to show signs of life, a chilling testament to the depravity of the attackers ("The girl wasn't moving anymore. But the terrorist continued raping her" - Gettelmanm, Schwartz & Sella, The New York Times, 28.12.23). Another describes the mockery and ultimate execution of victims post-assault, highlighting the assailants' utter disdain for human dignity (The Jewish Chronicle, 3.12.23). The international community must respond with a robust mechanism for accountability, demanding justice for the individuals and the organisation responsible.

International Law and Resolutions

A wealth of international legal frameworks and United Nations resolutions underscore the severity of crimes against humanity, highlighting the international community's duty to both prevent and address such offences. These include the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Geneva Conventions, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among others.

Definition of Crimes Against Humanity: Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute⁸ of the International Criminal Court (ICC), crimes against humanity are elaborately defined as any act committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with full knowledge of the attack. This encompasses:

- Murder
- Extermination
- Enslavement
- Deportation or forcible transfer of population
- Imprisonment or severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of international law
- Torture
- Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of severe sexual violence
- Persecution against any identifiable group on internationally impermissible grounds
- Enforced disappearance of persons
- The crime of apartheid

⁸ International Criminal Court, "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court," International Criminal Court, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>.

- Other inhumane acts causing great suffering or injury

UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)⁹: This resolution identifies sexual violence as a tactic of warfare and advocates for its prevention and prosecution. It reaffirms the commitment to fully implementing all resolutions related to women, peace, and security, notably resolution 1325 from the year 2000. It further outlines the intention to enhance the response of peacekeeping and political missions to sexual violence in collaboration with local and national stakeholders.

UN Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010)¹⁰: This resolution bolsters the stance against sexual violence in conflict, stressing its potential as a component of broader conflict-related abuses. It acknowledges the significance of addressing sexual violence within the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, recognising that successful prosecution of such crimes can serve as a deterrent and substantially aid in civilian protection.

These documents collectively form the legal foundation for understanding crimes against humanity and delineate the responsibilities of global entities, such as UN Women, in tackling gender-based violence within the context of armed conflict. The outlined legal instruments and UN resolutions serve as a reminder of the imperative for concerted international action to address and mitigate the impacts of such crimes effectively.

Systematic Nature of the Assault

The orchestrated attack on 7 October 2023 by Hamas marked a profoundly troubling episode of systematic violence. This episode was not characterised by random acts of aggression but rather by a methodical and orchestrated campaign specifically targeting Israeli women. This level of systematic planning and execution of the 7 October attack aligns with the definitions provided in international legal frameworks, notably the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to Article 7 of the Rome Statute, crimes against humanity encompass a range of acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with the perpetrator's knowledge of the attack.

The deliberate targeting of Israeli women and the nature of the violence inflicted upon them meet the criteria established under this statute, thus constituting crimes against humanity. The Rome Statute elaborates on various forms of such crimes,

⁹ United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1820 (2008) [S/RES/1820(2008)]," United Nations, <https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1820-2008-sres18202008>.

¹⁰ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1960 (2010) [S/RES/1960(2010)]*, accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.un.org/shestandsforpeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1960-2010-sres19602010>.

including murder, enslavement, deportation, torture, sexual violence, and persecution, among others, all of which are pertinent to the acts committed on 7 October. The premeditation and organisation behind the assault, aimed explicitly at a civilian population segment based on their identity, underscore the violation of international legal standards set to protect human rights and dignity during conflict.

This interpretation of the events necessitates a call to the international community and legal bodies to recognise the gravity of these actions under the established parameters of international law. It underscores the urgent need for accountability and justice for the victims, through mechanisms provided by international legal institutions like the ICC, to ensure that such atrocities are duly addressed and prevented in the future.

UN Women's Mission and its Shortcomings

UN Women, as a UN entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, bears the responsibility of addressing gender-based violence during armed conflicts. Its mission is rooted in the principles of promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls globally. However, in the wake of the October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas, UN Women's response has been alarmingly inadequate.

Failure of UN Women

UN Women's woeful response to the systematic violence against Israeli and Jewish women¹¹ not only represents a failure to adhere to its foundational mission and obligations under international law but also raises serious concerns regarding antisemitism. This reticence to speak out in the face of targeted aggression against Israeli women, in a context where their Jewish identity appears to have been a factor in their victimisation, suggests a troubling oversight of antisemitic elements within such acts of gender-based violence.

The organisation's mandate, as reinforced by international legal instruments like United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1820 and 1960, is to advocate vigorously for women's rights in conflict zones and unequivocally condemn all forms of gender-based violence. These resolutions acknowledge sexual violence as a warfare tactic, demanding both its prevention and the prosecution of its perpetrators. However, UN Women's reticence regarding the 7 October 2023 attacks not only indicates a failure to champion these principles but also implicitly overlooks the antisemitic underpinnings of these atrocities.

This situation underscores the necessity for UN Women to reassess its approach and ensure its actions and advocacy do not inadvertently perpetuate or ignore

¹¹ Uproar Mounts Over UN Women's Failure to Single Out Hamas for Its Sexual Crimes Against Israeli Civilians," *Young Kim*, December 1, 2023, <https://youngkim.house.gov/2023/12/01/uproar-mounts-over-un-womens-failure-to-single-out-hamas-for-its-sexual-crimes-against-israeli-civilians/>.

antisemitism. By failing to adequately address and condemn the violence against Israeli and Jewish women, particularly when such violence is tinged with ethnic or religious hatred, UN Women risks contravening its mandate and contributing to the marginalisation of Jewish women's experiences in conflict zones.

Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to integrate a clear understanding of antisemitism into UN Women's operational framework. This involves recognising antisemitic violence as a specific form of gender-based violence that requires explicit condemnation and targeted action. Such a recalibration of UN Women's focus and policies is essential to uphold its commitment to all women's rights and to ensure it acts decisively against all forms of discrimination and violence, including those motivated by antisemitism.

Immediate Redress and Accountability

Given the grave nature of the systematic crimes perpetrated against Israeli women, the onus rests squarely on the shoulders of the global community to seek swift rectification and accountability. It is imperative that UN Women is pressed to unequivocally denounce the violence and renew its pledge to fight gender-based violence amidst armed conflict. This demand for action transcends moral obligations, finding its foundation in the bedrock of international law and bolstered by preceding UN resolutions.

To conclude, the orchestrated assault on Israeli women on 7 October 2023, marked by acts of sexual violence, murder, and kidnappings, indisputably falls under the category of crimes against humanity as per the dictates of international law. The inaction of UN Women in this regard underscores a profound failing in its core mission. There exists a collective imperative for the international community to advocate for redress, accountability, and justice, thereby safeguarding the rights and dignity of Israeli women and girls in alignment with the tenets of international legal standards.

Report's Mission and Scope

With a steadfast dedication to the principles of justice and human rights, this report has been crafted with the primary aim of bringing to light the profound consequences of the events on 7 October 2023. This document transcends the traditional confines of a report; it is an unequivocal call for decisive action, both internationally and within the communities most deeply affected.

The scope of this briefing is comprehensive, offering an in-depth analysis of the assault's genocidal nature against the backdrop of Hamas's declared objective to obliterate the Jewish populace. It meticulously examines the systematic sexual violence inflicted during the attack, categorically identifying these acts as crimes against humanity within the parameters of international law.

Additionally, the briefing ardently calls for the establishment of an official investigation into the incidents of 7 October 2023, steadfastly adhering to the stringent criteria of international law. It implores every nation affiliated with UN Women to utilise their esteemed position to collectively urge UN Women to categorically condemn the violence and to reaffirm its dedication to eradicating gender-based violence in conflict zones.

Furthermore, the briefing highlights the critical need for comprehensive and sustained assistance for the survivors of the 7 October onslaught. Such support should include a full spectrum of medical, psychological, and social aid, aimed at enabling the survivors' recovery and the rebuilding of their lives.

In conclusion, this briefing serves as a detailed and emphatic appeal for justice, accountability, and aid for the victims of the atrocious attack on 7 October 2023 in Israel. It lays bare the urgency of the situation and firmly reiterates the moral obligation of the international community to act with definitive purpose and effectiveness.

III. International Law, Human Rights Violations and UN Women:

Given UN Women's stated mission to advance gender equality and advocate for women's rights globally, the absence of a pronounced response or formal condemnation regarding the violence against Israeli women presents a notable discrepancy. This inaction seems at odds with the organisation's avowed purpose to protect women's human rights and to empower every woman and girl to realise her full potential, which logically mandates a prompt and unambiguous reaction to such stark infringements of women's rights during armed conflicts. The lack of significant measures in this regard prompts questions concerning UN Women's capacity to uphold its commitment to women's rights, independent of geographical location or political context. This report highlights the critical need to address this incongruity, urging UN Women to ensure its operations reflect its declared objectives.

When evaluating the breaches of international law perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023, it becomes essential to reflect on the United Nations (UN) and UN Women's responses to similar situations historically. These precedents affirm the international community's dedication to safeguarding the rights of women and civilians amidst armed conflicts.

- **UN Security Council Resolutions:** The UN Security Council has actively engaged in combatting sexual violence in conflicts. Notably, UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)¹² identified sexual violence as a war tactic and called for actions to prevent and sanction such crimes, marking a significant step in recognising the severe impact of sexual violence on women in conflict

¹² United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1820 (2008)* [S/RES/1820(2008)], accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.un.org/shestandsforspeace/content/united-nations-security-council-resolution-1820-2008-sres18202008>.

zones. In the context of the Hamas attack, UN Women is impelled to apply the tenets of Resolution 1820 in advocating for the rights and justice for the victims of sexual violence.

- **UN Women's Initiatives:** In past conflicts, such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹³, UN Women has been instrumental in aiding survivors of sexual violence, providing essential medical and psychological support, and facilitating their empowerment and societal reintegration. Drawing from these successful interventions, UN Women is encouraged to offer similar comprehensive support to Israeli women impacted by the Hamas attack.
- **UN Commission on the Status of Women¹⁴ (CSW):** The CSW's work in enhancing gender equality and women's rights worldwide includes addressing the challenges faced by women in conflict zones. Their efforts in documenting and recommending measures to protect women's rights during armed conflicts should guide UN Women's actions in response to the attack.
- **International Criminal Court (ICC):** The ICC's role in prosecuting individuals accountable for sexual violence and other crimes against humanity in conflict settings underscores the potential for legal recourse. UN Women could advocate for the ICC's involvement in investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the 7 October 2023 atrocities.

Drawing upon these examples of UN and UN Women's engagements in similar circumstances emphasises the necessity for their proactive participation following the Hamas attack. It underlines the global commitment to prosecuting offenders and supporting survivors of gender-based violence in armed conflict situations.

IV. The Role of UN Women:

The Mandate of UN Women

UN Women, founded July 2010, formally known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was established with a clear mandate to promote gender equality and women's rights worldwide. Its mission, as articulated in its founding documents and resolutions, is to deliver programs, policies, and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential.

¹³ UN Women, "Bosnia and Herzegovina," accessed February 26, 2024 , <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/bosnia-and-herzegovina>.

¹⁴ UN Women, "Commission on the Status of Women," accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>.

UN Women's Response to Gender-Based Violence

In the aftermath of the heinous attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and the resulting widespread violence against Israeli women, the role of UN Women in addressing gender-based violence and women's rights has come under scrutiny. The UN Women's response, or rather, its lack thereof, to the violence against Israeli and Jewish women has not met its own standards. Despite the explicit mandate to uphold women's human rights and the condemnation of gender-based violence, the organisation has remained conspicuously silent.

The Importance of Proactive Stance for Policy Makers

Policy architects must acknowledge the paramount significance of UN Women adopting an active stance on gender-based violence during armed conflicts. Such an approach is not merely in harmony with the organisation's declared objectives but also crucial for upholding international norms and protocols. A lack of action not only detracts from UN Women's integrity but also fosters a culture where impunity for violence against women remains unchallenged.

UN Women must critically reassess its strategies and embrace a robust defence of the rights of Jewish and Israeli women who have suffered due to the conflict. It must lead a sustained and coordinated effort with nations that are party to UN Women to ensure the organisation lives up to its commitments towards gender equality and the safeguarding of women's rights.

The role UN Women plays in combating gender-based violence and advocating for women's rights holds unparalleled significance in the international arena. However, its response—or lack thereof—to the violence endured by Israeli women underscores a troubling disparity between its professed mandate and its actual undertakings. It is incumbent upon policy influencers to scrutinise this misalignment and propel UN Women towards realising its avowed mission of promoting women's rights and gender equality, irrespective of political or geographical considerations.

V. Call for an Official Inquiry:

The Necessity of an Official Inquiry

There is an urgent and compelling need for an official inquiry into the events that transpired on October 7 2023. Such an inquiry is not only a matter of justice but also a fundamental requirement to uphold international humanitarian law and human rights standards.

The attack, marked by its brutality and systematic violence against Israeli and Jewish women and girls, constitutes a grave violation of international law. The deliberate targeting of civilians, particularly women, during armed conflicts is strictly

prohibited under international humanitarian law and are considered war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Benefits of an Impartial Investigation

An impartial investigation conducted in accordance with international standards would serve several crucial purposes:

- **Accountability:** It would establish accountability for the perpetrators of these heinous acts. This is essential not only for the victims and their families but also for the international community to send a clear message that such crimes will not go unpunished.
- **Justice for Victims:** An inquiry would ensure that justice is served for the victims of the attack. Survivors and their families deserve to see those responsible held accountable for their actions.
- **Deterrence:** By investigating and prosecuting those responsible, an inquiry would act as a deterrent against future acts of violence targeting civilians, especially women and girls. It would send a strong signal that such actions will have severe consequences.
- **Precedent:** This case could set a precedent for addressing gender-based violence during armed conflicts. It would reaffirm the international community's commitment to protecting women's rights even in the most challenging circumstances.

The necessity of an official inquiry into the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, cannot be overstated. It is a matter of upholding international law, ensuring justice, and sending a powerful message that gender-based violence during armed conflicts will not be tolerated for any women and girls. Such an inquiry is not only in the best interest of the victims but also a fundamental step towards a more just and humane world.

VI. Recommendations for UN Women:

To address the critical issues surrounding UN Women's response to gender-based violence, particularly in the context of the 7 October attack, the following recommendations are made.

1. Strengthening UN Women's Advocacy: To operationalise the goals of ensuring UN Women's adherence to its core principles and enhancing its response to gender-based violence, particularly in conflict zones, several mechanisms can be deployed. These mechanisms, informed by precedent and the collaborative nature of international relations and corporate governance, can catalyse significant improvements in UN Women's operations and strategic focus.

- **Diplomatic Engagement and Collective Resolutions:** Member nations can exercise their diplomatic leverage through the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council to propose and adopt resolutions that specifically call for UN Women to intensify its efforts against gender-based violence in conflict areas. Precedent for such collective action can be found in the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security, which underscored the importance of women's roles in conflict resolution and called for their protection in conflict settings.
- **Public-Private Partnerships for Enhanced Advocacy:** Leveraging the influence of the private sector through partnerships can amplify advocacy efforts and resource mobilisation to combat gender-based violence. Such collaborations could draw upon the model of the HeForShe campaign, where UN Women successfully partnered with global corporations to advocate for gender equality. These partnerships can serve as platforms for corporate entities to advocate for stringent adherence to UN Women's mission and to support specific initiatives aimed at preventing gender-based violence in conflict zones.
- **Independent Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:** The establishment of independent monitoring bodies to assess UN Women's adherence to its mission and the effectiveness of its interventions in conflict zones could foster greater transparency and accountability. Drawing from the precedent set by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank, which evaluates the outcomes of projects and policies to ensure alignment with the bank's goals, a similar mechanism could provide impartial assessments of UN Women's initiatives, informing strategic adjustments and enhancing credibility.
- **Engagement with Civil Society and Survivor Advocacy Groups:** UN Women could enhance its responsiveness by forging closer ties with civil society organisations and groups representing survivors of gender-based violence. These entities often possess critical on-the-ground insights and can advocate for the needs and rights of survivors directly. The collaboration between UN Women and grassroots organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo to support survivors of sexual violence exemplifies how such partnerships can effectively address the needs of affected women and girls.

2. Comprehensive Support for Victims: To effectively provide comprehensive support for the victims of the 7 October attack, UN Women, alongside its partner organizations in Israel, needs to implement a multifaceted approach that addresses the immediate and long-term needs of the survivors, the families, and those directly impacted by Hamas' crimes. This approach should encompass medical care, psychological support, and social assistance, drawing on precedents and models of best practice where similar support structures have been successfully implemented.

- **Medical Care:** Immediate medical intervention is crucial for addressing physical injuries sustained during the attack. Drawing on the model implemented by the

Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, founded by Dr. Denis Mukwege, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, UN Women could advocate for or support the establishment of specialised medical facilities. These facilities should be equipped to deal not only with the physical aftermath of sexual violence but also with complex gynaecological and reconstructive surgeries, as necessary.

- **Psychological Support:** The psychological trauma experienced by survivors of gender-based violence requires expert intervention. Programs similar to those developed by the Tahirih Justice Center, which provides holistic support to female survivors of violence, could serve as a model. UN Women could facilitate access to trauma-informed care, including counselling and therapy sessions, to support survivors' mental health and emotional well-being.
- **Social Assistance:** Reintegrating survivors into their communities and ensuring they can lead fulfilling lives post-attack is critical. The Women for Women International program, which supports women in war-torn regions through economic, health, and social education, offers a blueprint for how UN Women might structure its social assistance programs. This could include vocational training, legal assistance, and community sensitization initiatives to combat stigma and promote the inclusion of survivors.
- **Tailored Support:** Recognising the individuality of each survivor's experience is essential. The approach adopted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which tailors support to the specific circumstances and needs of each woman, could inform UN Women's strategy. This could involve offering a range of services from which survivors can choose, ensuring they receive the most relevant and effective support.
- **Collaboration with Local Partners:** Engaging with local NGOs and survivor networks can enhance the reach and effectiveness of support services. For example, the partnership between UN Women and local organisations in Nepal to support survivors of trafficking demonstrates the value of leveraging local expertise and networks to provide comprehensive care.

By adopting a holistic and survivor-centred approach to support, informed by successful precedents and best practices, UN Women can significantly contribute to the healing and empowerment of the survivors of the 7 October attack. This not only aids in their recovery but also reaffirms UN Women's commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of women and girls, even in the most challenging circumstances.

3. Formation of a Specialised Task Force: The establishment of a specialised task force within UN Women, dedicated to tackling gender-based violence in conflict zones, represents a strategic and targeted approach to addressing prevention, immediate response, and sustained advocacy to effectively combat gender-based violence.

➤ **Prevention**

The task force should initiate and support programs focused on the prevention of gender-based violence. This includes educational campaigns aimed at both potential perpetrators and the community at large to challenge and change harmful gender norms and behaviours. Drawing from the example of the UN's HeForShe campaign, which engages men and boys as advocates for gender equality, similar initiatives could be developed to specifically address the attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women in conflict zones.

➤ **Response**

In terms of response, the task force should ensure that there are mechanisms in place to provide immediate support to survivors of gender-based violence. This includes access to safe spaces, medical care, legal assistance, and psychological support. The task force could look to models like the Women's Protection Centers in Afghanistan, which provide a comprehensive range of services to women and girls who have experienced violence, as a template for establishing similar support systems in conflict-affected areas.

➤ **Advocacy**

Advocacy efforts should be directed towards both national and international audiences. Nationally, the task force should work with governments to strengthen laws and policies protecting women and girls from violence and ensuring perpetrators are held accountable. Internationally, the task force should leverage UN Women's platform to raise awareness about the issue of gender-based violence in conflict zones and advocate for global action to address it. The campaign against sexual violence in conflict led by Nobel Peace Prize laureates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad offers a powerful example of how advocacy can mobilize international support and resources.

➤ **Implementation and Strategy Development**

For effective strategy development and implementation, the task force should engage with a range of stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, government bodies, and international organisations. This would ensure that the strategies developed are grounded in the realities of those affected by conflict and have the support needed for successful implementation. The task force could also draw on the expertise of entities like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has extensive experience in dealing with the consequences of armed conflict on civilian populations, to develop guidelines and best practices for intervention.

By focusing on these core areas, the dedicated task force within UN Women can play a crucial role in both mitigating the immediate impact of gender-based violence in conflict zones and working towards the long-term goal of eradicating such violence. Through a combination of prevention, response, and advocacy, informed by successful precedents and collaborative efforts, UN Women can significantly contribute to protecting and empowering women and girls in some of the world's most volatile regions.

4. Implementation of a Financial Accountability Mechanism: The proposal to introduce a financial accountability mechanism within UN Women represents a pragmatic approach to ensuring the organisation's adherence to its mission and objectives, especially regarding gender equality and the protection of women's rights. A 'traffic light' framework offers a structured, transparent way to monitor performance and enforce accountability, inspired by mechanisms used in other international organisations and development aid contexts: Building on the principle that financial support should be contingent upon adherence to core principles, member nations and corporate sponsors could implement a structured funding framework. This could involve the establishment of clear benchmarks related to UN Women's responsiveness and effectiveness in addressing gender-based violence. The Global Fund's performance-based funding model serves as a relevant precedent, where funding allocations are tied to verifiable results, encouraging accountability and efficiency in program implementation.

➤ **The 'Traffic Light' Framework Explained**

This framework could categorise UN Women's performance in key areas, such as response to gender-based violence in conflict zones, advocacy efforts, and program implementation, using a simple colour-coded system: green for satisfactory performance, amber for areas needing improvement, and red for unsatisfactory performance.

➤ **Application of Financial Penalties**

Under this framework, financial penalties would be linked to the 'amber' and 'red' categories, serving as a deterrent against complacency and inefficiency. For instance, an 'amber' rating might trigger a warning and set a timeline for improvement before any financial implications are applied, whereas a 'red' rating could result in immediate financial penalties, such as the withholding of a portion of funds until specific benchmarks are met.

➤ **Precedent and Implementation**

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS¹⁵, Tuberculosis and Malaria employs a similar performance-based funding model, where disbursements are closely tied to the achievement of specific results and outcomes. Adopting a comparable approach, UN Women could establish clear, measurable targets for its initiatives and programs, with funding contingent on achieving these targets.

¹⁵ The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, "Home Page," accessed February 26, 2024, <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/>.

➤ **Ensuring Transparency and Fairness**

For the financial accountability mechanism to be effective, it must be implemented transparently and fairly. This requires the establishment of clear, agreed-upon criteria for performance evaluation, developed in consultation with UN Women's stakeholders, including signatory nations, private contributors, and civil society partners. Regular, independent audits and reviews could ensure the integrity of the evaluation process and foster trust among all parties involved.

➤ **Stakeholder Engagement**

Engaging signatory nations and private contributors in the development and oversight of the financial accountability mechanism is crucial. This could be facilitated through the creation of an advisory board comprising representatives from donor countries, private sector partners, and experts in gender equality and women's rights. Such a body could oversee the implementation of the framework, address disputes, and ensure that financial penalties are applied judiciously and constructively.

By introducing a financial accountability mechanism modelled on the 'traffic light' framework, UN Women can reinforce its commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls worldwide. This measure not only incentivizes performance and accountability but also aligns financial contributions with tangible outcomes, ensuring that UN Women's activities have a meaningful impact on the lives of women and girls in need.

5. Establishment of a New Leadership Protocol: The establishment of a rigorous protocol for the vetting and appointment of UN Women's leadership represents a critical foundational measure in ensuring independence. Such a protocol would function as a protective barrier against potential biases and conflicts of interest, thereby guaranteeing that the leadership remains both efficacious and unbiased. Furthermore, to enhance accountability and trust in the process, there should be a comprehensive publication detailing the protocol's application. This publication should include a transparent account of the procedural steps undertaken, the individuals responsible for key decisions, and the final approval signatures. By doing so, the process becomes verifiable and subject to scrutiny, ensuring a higher level of transparency and reinforcing the organisation's commitment to principles of fairness and integrity in its leadership selection process.

Key Elements of the Protocol

- **Transparency in Recruitment:** The process should be transparent, with clear criteria for leadership positions publicly available. This would involve detailed job descriptions, requisite qualifications, and the competencies needed to lead initiatives on gender equality effectively. The recruitment process used by the World Health Organization (WHO), where positions are advertised publicly and the selection criteria are clearly outlined, can serve as a model.

- **Comprehensive Vetting Process:** A thorough vetting process, including background checks and interviews focused on professional ethics, past achievements in gender equality, and understanding of gender issues in a global context, is essential. The vetting process employed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which assesses candidates' commitment to UNDP's core values, provides a precedent for creating a robust framework.
- **Conflict of Interest Declarations:** Mandatory declarations of potential conflicts of interest should be a prerequisite for all leadership candidates. This practice, common in corporate governance, ensures that any potential biases are identified and addressed before appointment. The International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s approach to handling conflicts of interest could offer useful guidelines for developing this aspect of the protocol.
- **Diverse Selection Panel:** The selection panel should be diverse, comprising members from different geographical regions and backgrounds, to ensure a broad perspective in the selection process. The selection panel for the United Nations Secretary-General, which includes representatives from various member states, exemplifies the value of diverse perspectives in executive appointments.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Engaging with stakeholders, including civil society organisations, feminist groups, and survivor advocacy networks, can provide valuable insights into the qualities needed in UN Women's leadership. This inclusive approach can help identify candidates with a deep understanding of and commitment to gender equality and women's rights.
- **Performance-Based Appointments:** Leadership positions should be linked to performance, with clear benchmarks for success. Regular evaluations based on predefined objectives and outcomes would ensure accountability. The performance review system within the European Union, which assesses the impact of leaders on policy implementation, could inspire a similar approach for UN Women.
- **Training and Induction:** For the establishment of objectives, standards, and gender concerns, it is essential to embark upon a process initiated by an open invitation. This approach would welcome submissions published from a broad constituency, ensuring a rich diversity of viewpoints and inclusive engagement in articulating pivotal gender-related ambitions. The subsequent phases should be marked by a commitment to transparency, encompassing the publication of all submissions received, a comprehensive report detailing the evaluative process, and the benchmarks employed for the adoption of specific objectives and standards. Further to bolstering the integrity and robustness of this endeavour, it is critical to embed mechanisms of peer review and independent evaluation. These frameworks are designed to offer a meticulous appraisal of the submissions and the overarching methodology, assuring that the finalised objectives and standards not only command wide-ranging consensus but are also underpinned by thorough analysis and authoritative advice. Such a strategy

not only elevates the credibility of the resulting directives but also promotes a culture of responsibility and empirical policymaking within the sphere of gender disparity resolution. By pursuing this methodology, the initiative is poised to establish a precedent for openness, inclusivity, and analytical rigour in confronting gender inequities. The activation of peer review and independent evaluation further ensures that the delineated objectives and standards are both visionary and attainable, representing a significant advancement in the collective endeavour to efficaciously tackle gender-based issues, aligning with the ethos of the Tony Blair Institute for transformative and pragmatic policy solutions.

By instituting such a protocol, UN Women can strengthen its leadership structure, ensuring that it is well-equipped to lead the global fight against gender-based violence and advance the cause of gender equality. This will not only bolster UN Women's credibility but also enhance its capacity to make a tangible difference in the lives of women and girls around the world.

VII. Conclusion:

The systematic nature of the attacks, which, against the backdrop of Hamas's declared aim to destroy the Jewish populace, unequivocally constitutes crimes against humanity under the ambit of international law, using rape and sexual violence as a tool of war.

Despite UN Women's stated commitment to championing women's human rights and empowerment, its response to the atrocities faced by Israeli and Jewish women has been markedly insufficient. This report stresses the necessity for UN Women to adopt an assertive stance in addressing gender-based violence amidst armed conflict scenarios.

We advocate for an official investigation into the events of 7 October 2023, highlighting the imperative of an impartial probe to ensure accountability and justice. This call for an inquiry transcends legal requirements, embodying a profound moral duty.

In light of these findings, we propose a suite of recommended actions for UN Women, encompassing the outright condemnation of the violence, the promotion of an independent investigation, and the provision of support to the victims. We also recommend the creation of a dedicated task force within UN Women aimed at tackling gender-based violence in conflict zones in a holistic manner.

Moreover, we suggest the implementation of a financial accountability and partnership framework within UN Women to reinforce its dedication to equitable representation and the safeguarding of women's rights.

Through concerted action, we can strive towards a reality where the dignity and rights of women are universally respected and protected, irrespective of geographical or political considerations.