

Lead Commissioner speech at British Future

Sara Khan gave a speech at the launch of the British Future report, Calling Out Hatred and Prejudice on Monday 17 June 2019.

UK troops teach women to protect themselves against sexual violence in conflict

As the UK recognises the UN International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, personnel deployed as part of the UN Peacekeeping mission to South Sudan have been delivering empowerment-based self-defence workshops in partnership with the UN Human Rights Division.

These classes aim to coach women living in the Malakal camp on methods to help them identify risks to their personal safety and teach them moves to defend themselves.

In South Sudan, vulnerable groups, such as women, are subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence. Gender-based violence is a major human rights violation in conflict zones, which tends to increase during post-conflict periods and affect communities for many years afterwards.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Sexual violence is now used as a weapon of war and the consequences of it perpetuate conflict. Defence forces must be equipped to help end sexual violence in conflict.

I am proud our Armed Forces can help protect and empower women and other vulnerable groups across the globe. From self-defence workshops to training other militaries on gender rights our personnel bring their professionalism and expertise to help end this terrible practice.

Practicing a palm strike on the pads being held by Captain Rosie Hamilton

Women who attend the workshops will become focal points for their communities

and the programme aims to build their confidence, so the participants are able to report cases of sexual violence to the authorities. Many instances go unreported due to the stigma attached to such crimes and the UN is working to encourage greater reporting and accountability.

This is part of the UN's survivor-centred approach in South Sudan that aims to join up services to tackle gender-based human rights violations. By increasing the provision of services, including legal redress mechanisms, and holding awareness-raising sessions there has already been an increase in the number of cases reported to the police for their attention.

Preventing sexual violence in conflict is contributing to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to make the world fairer, healthier, safer and more prosperous by 2030. Key to the success of the UN Goals is the prevention of violence, crime and terrorism in conflict and with over 600 personnel deployed on peacekeeping operations the UK military is making a sizeable contribution to this vital UN mission.

Captain Euan Irvine, lead instructor and Malakal Engineer Group Second in Command, said:

We are continually seeking opportunities to assist with the protection of the most vulnerable people in South Sudan to prevent incidents of sexual violence in conflict. This initiative allows us to contribute to empowering the women we live and work alongside.

By coaching women on basic self-defence methods, it gives them the self-confidence to be able to make an assessment of the situation and react effectively to keep them safe

Workshop participant Nyakot John Jok has lived in Malakal camp since 2012 with her mother, commenting on the workshops she said:

The situation in the camp is very poor because of money. We have food but we do not have money to buy things. I like the British Soldiers; they are protecting us from anything that is coming. I have learnt how to escape from someone who wants to fight me or wants to attack me. It makes me feel safer and I am very happy with that.

Guidance: Immunoglobulin: when to use

PHE's immunoglobulin handbook, providing guidance on administering immunoglobulin to prevent serious disease.

UK announces PSVI Survivor Champion role to end sexual violence in conflict

The PSVI Survivor Champion will support the work of the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict to support and champion all survivors of sexual violence in conflict, including children born of rape.

The role will put survivors at the centre of UK efforts to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, regularly engaging with survivors and their networks, advocating for holistic care for all survivors and for an end to the stigma they face from their families, communities and wider societies.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said in his capacity as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict:

Putting survivors at the heart of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative is vital to honouring all survivors of this horrific crime. The PSVI Survivor Champion will ensure that the needs and concerns of survivors are central to our policy and programming on this issue. Now is the #TimeForJustice.

On the 18 – 20 November 2019, the UK Government will host theTime For Justice: Putting Survivors First international conference in London. Convening governments, international agencies, civil society and survivors, the international conference will seek to strengthen justice for survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

Further information

UK announces PSVI Survivor Champion role to end sexual violence in conflict

Today on the UN International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has announced the creation of its first PSVI Survivor Champion role as part of its Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI).