

It's time to 'eliminate the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence', urges UN chief

The effects of conflict-related sexual violence echo across generations, in the form of trauma, stigma, and unwanted pregnancy, said the UN chief on Tuesday, describing the scourge as “a threat to our collective security” and “a stain on our common humanity.”

That was the central message from [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) to mark the [International Day](#) for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

“Children conceived through wartime rape often [struggle](#) with issues of identity and belonging for decades after the guns have fallen silent,” explained Mr. Guterres.

“They may be left in a legal limbo, or at risk of becoming stateless,” he continued. “They are vulnerable to recruitment, trafficking and exploitation, with broad implications for peace and security, as well as human rights.”

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– *UN Chief António Guterres*

Many of those children scarred by violence in war are rarely accepted by society, have been labelled “bad blood” or “children of the enemy,” and are alienated from their mothers’ social groups, according to the UN.

Meanwhile, unsafe abortion, following violent rape, remains a leading cause of maternal mortality in conflict-affected settings.

“Their mothers may be marginalized and shunned by their own families and communities. These women and children are sometimes seen as affiliates of armed and violent extremist groups, rather than as victims and survivors,” Mr. Guterres maintained.

Moreover, the issue of children born of war has been missing from both the international human rights framework and from peace and security discourse, rendering them a voiceless category of victims.

Under this year’s theme, “The Plight and Rights of Children Born of War,” the Day encourages solidarity with the survivors who have endured multiple ordeals, in the wake of sexual violence.

“On the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we amplify the voices of these forgotten victims of war, who suffer stigma,

shame and exclusion in societies polarized by armed conflict,” spelled out Mr. Guterres.

He underscored that the UN stands ready to work with governments, civil society, traditional and religious leaders, and all partners “to support children born of rape in wartime and their mothers, and those working on the frontlines to support them.”

“Let us reaffirm our global commitment to eliminate the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence and to provide justice, services and support to all those affected,” concluded the Secretary-General.