

### Resolution 3: Sexual and gender-based violence: Joint action on prevention and response

In Finland, sexual violence is seen as a serious offence both in times of peace and during armed conflicts. Finland has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) in 2015. The sexual violence faced by refugees (often arriving from areas of conflict) is included in Finland's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security. The NAP emphasizes the strengthening of equality and gender perspective within the reception services for asylum seekers and other services and supportive measures during the integration process. Many services, which are meant for Finnish women who have faced sexual violence, are also available for women arriving from the conflict areas. One safe house is dedicated entirely to immigrant women.

Finland emphasizes the need to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda so that women can be protected, their special needs considered and their participation ensured in their countries of origin, in refugee camps, in-transit and as asylum seekers in their countries of destination. Refugees and people forced to leave their homes are particularly susceptible to violence and discrimination. Women and girls run a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases or HIV, having unplanned pregnancies and dying in childbirth in crisis situations. Finland takes measures to enhance the gender equality content and gender perspective in reception services for individuals seeking international protection and in the services and support measures promoting the integration of individuals granted international protection and other immigrants. Many of the women and girls arriving in Finland as refugees or asylum seekers have experienced sexual violence in their country of origin or during their flight. For this reason, reception centers should provide women and girls with a comprehensive range of services intended for victims of sexual violence. In this context, consideration should be given to their background and any cultural obstacles that affect their willingness to seek help. This prevents them from becoming victims again.

Work against sexual and gender based violence is a thematic priority for Finland. This is highlighted in the result-oriented National Action Plan 2018-2021 for the effective implementation of the UNSCR Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Armed conflicts are often accompanied by a dramatic increase in gender-based violence, including sexual violence. Finland actively works towards eliminating violence and emphasizes the importance of justice and accountability for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) occurring in conflict situations. Finland supports the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its work in the fight against impunity for crimes under its jurisdiction. Finland is taking measures to strengthen the status of victims and providing funds for the ICC Trust Fund for Victims so that the victims of SGBV crimes can receive assistance. Finland has in 2017 made a 4-year contract of support totaling 800.000 euros for the Trust Fund to be targeted at victims of SGBV in Sub-Saharan Africa. Finland is supporting the Justice Rapid Response Mechanism, which trains experts in investigating, for example, SGBV crimes and maintains a list of experts that are prepared, at short notice, to assist countries and international organizations by their request in the investigation of these crimes.

Finland highlights the fact that sexual violence against women, and sexual violence in conflict, must be confronted in an increasingly effective manner. We emphasize that SGBV should be addressed in a comprehensive way, seeing women as powerful agents of change rather than just victims. Finland has played an active role in Justice Rapid Response's activities since the network was established, and has held the Chair of JRR since September 2014. JRR, in collaboration with the Finnish Defense Forces International Centre (FINCENT) and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) have organized a training course for experts on the investigation of international crimes, held in Finland in October 2016.

Finland is committed to the full implementation of international humanitarian law. International humanitarian law applied in armed conflicts protects civilians against armed activities. Civilians must be respected, protected and humanely treated. There are special provisions for women and children. In the protection of the rights of women, international humanitarian law specifically emphasizes the need for special protection, health care and assistance. Integration of the gender perspective into humanitarian work will strengthen the situation analysis and allow assistance to be provided more effectively.

Female genital mutilation became an acute issue in Finland in the 90s, when immigrants started to arrive from areas where genital mutilation was practiced. Female genital mutilation remains an acute problem and it is criminalized as aggravated assault. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the National Institute for Health and Welfare have annually organized a working meeting on female genital mutilation to which key persons from different contact groups are invited. The National Institute for Health has promoted awareness concerning female genital mutilation as part of the national action plan starting in 2012.

Finnish military and civilian crisis management personnel both follow the Code of Conduct adopted by the crisis management operation/mission and the Finnish authorities. All exploitation cases shall be investigated in accordance with Finnish law. Finland pays special attention to the fact that the code of conduct of international organizations prevents discrimination and exploitation, that the management of the operation fully adheres to the rules and that delays in exploitation cases are investigated. Finland applies zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse. All Finnish soldiers participating in crisis management operations get a lecture on conduct and discipline in pre-deployment training.