

## Joint Statement

by **Muhannad Hadi, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator  
for the Syria Crisis and Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Regional Director**

### International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

**Amman and Cairo, 19 June 2021**

Today, as we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, we firmly reiterate the United Nation's commitment to making the prevention of and response to gender-based violence a key humanitarian priority in Syria. After a decade of conflict and crisis in Syria, women and girls continue to be subject to gender-based violence, including rape, sexual abuse, and assault, particularly those detained.

Gender based violence and in particular sexual violence, is used as a punishment against perceived opponents or critics in the context of detention, or as a means by conflicting parties to assert control over a particular community or population. There are also reports of sexual violence against men and boys.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, survivors fear social stigma, as disclosure often comes at a cost, leading many to adopt silence and discretion as a coping mechanism. This is reinforced with fears of repercussions by perpetrators, their families, or communities in the form of so-called "honour killings". Prevailing impunity fuels further abuses, and patriarchal laws continue to disenfranchise survivors. The dire socioeconomic situation, compounded by COVID-19, has also meant that more communities are turning to harmful strategies to cope, including child and serial marriage, survival sex, and other forms of exploitation.

A concerted effort must be maintained to ensure that survivors receive the support they need and that perpetrators are held accountable. We urge all parties to commit to a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence, in line with their respective obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and on all stakeholders to remain committed to addressing the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Syria.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://undocs.org/S/2021/312>