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For Immediate Release

UK PARLIAMENT REPORT'S SOLUTIONS FAIL TO MATCH THE PROBLEMS

Human Rights Lawyers say sector-wide sexual misconduct and accountability failures in humanitarian sector require stronger response.

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A coalition of lawyers from the [Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti](#) (IJDH), the [Disaster Law Project](#) (DLP) and [Doughty Street Chambers](#) commends the report of the UK Parliament's International Development Committee (IDC) inquiry on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the humanitarian aid sector for accurately exposing the "horror" of SEA committed by humanitarian workers against vulnerable people where they work and their own colleagues. The lawyers likewise commend the findings that "self-regulation has failed" for victims of SEA by humanitarian workers." But they note that the IDC's recommendations fall short, skipping over the need for enforceable sector-wide standards, criminal accountability and remedies for victims, and ignoring calls for an independent inquiry that could assess organizations' practices on the ground and hear directly from affected communities on needed reforms.

"The IDC's recommendations are a step forward, but this horrific situation calls for a leap, not a step," said Nicole Phillips, IJDH Staff Attorney. "If the UK wants to lead a serious reform effort, it should start with an independent inquiry that can analyze the full scope of the problem and propose mandatory sector wide solutions". Kathleen Bergin of the Disaster Law Project added that "the IDC recognized that international standards for humanitarian actors are not implemented but failed to provide systemic solutions. We have almost no idea of the

level of compliance with standards on the ground, but we do know they fail to protect girls and women in Haiti and other vulnerable countries.”

IJDH, DLP and Doughty Street Chambers submitted a [briefing](#) to the Committee in April, explaining the need for a, a victim-centered approach, improved complaint mechanisms, real accountability to victims, and an external inquiry into reporting and safeguarding practices and policies to analyze failures and establish sector wide enforceable standards. The IDC Report echoed many of these recommendations, but not the most impactful ones, such as an inquiry and the need for criminal referrals and victim remedies for SEA. The IDC did recommend a Humanitarian Ombudsman, and an audit of whistleblowing systems, and suggested that the sector adopt more reforms at the International Safeguarding Conference in October.

“The Ombudsman can play a useful back up role, but is no substitute for accessible grievance mechanisms that help victims obtain legal remedies, including civil and criminal cases against perpetrators,” said [Jennifer Robinson](#) of Doughty Street Chambers.

IJDH, which is seeking justice for the [victims of SEA in Haiti](#), appreciates the IDC reports findings of dysfunction in the UN’s response to SEA by its personnel, but agrees with the [conclusion of Aids Free World](#) that the IDC shies away from proposing structural reforms necessary to improve the structural dysfunction. IJDH Staff Attorney Sienna Merope noted that “it is important to recognize—as the IDC did—the UN’s lack of coherence and consistency in its investigations. But the focus on the procedures should not overshadow the deeper problem: that by hiding behind immunity and denying victims remedies, the UN makes justice for most SEA victims impossible”.

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