



IJDH Demands Respect for the Constitutional and Human Rights of Haiti's Women and Girls on International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Today is **International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**, and the failure of that global promise in Haiti is staggering. Armed groups continue to use sexual violence, including gang rape, as a tool for terrorising and controlling civilians. The Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that gender-based violence (GBV) [quintupled](#) between the first months of the year. Some service providers for survivors report an average of [40 cases](#) of sexual violence every single day. Women and girls are also the [majority](#) of over 700,000 civilians who have been displaced in Haiti's crisis, and are distinctly [vulnerable](#) to GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in places where they seek shelter and humanitarian assistance. Support, protection, and accountability for survivors are virtually [nonexistent](#). And behind each of these overwhelming statistics are [actual women and girls](#) experiencing physical pain, constant fear, and the lonely struggle to survive with dignity in spite of it.

So today must become a wakeup call to take responsive action to ensure that Haiti's women and girls are safe and have the resources they need to thrive; and to center their voices, needs, and expertise in shaping the policies and practices necessary to confront GBV and underlying inequalities in the first place. The scale of Haiti's crisis is not an excuse but a further reason to do so: the globally recognized Women, Peace, and Security Agenda makes clear that addressing GBV is necessary for achieving a lasting peace. So is women's leadership. Treating women's rights as afterthoughts is a recipe for weaker government and less effective security and humanitarian responses. Yet women have been [excluded](#) from top decision-making positions in Haiti's government; their presence in the cabinet [diluted](#) below the constitutional threshold; and even at displacement sites where women and girls are the majority, they are [marginalized in management](#), with predictable consequences for increased violence and abuse. The near-total lack of government services for GBV survivors, and the absence of dedicated focus on GBV or a functioning SEA prevention mechanism months into deployment by the Multinational Security Support Mission are further illustrations of ongoing failures to center women's needs.

This is why **IJDH worked with feminist and human rights organizations to issue an [Open Letter](#) demanding that the transitional government center the rights of women and girls in its policies and appointments**. Sent today by 55 organizations from Haiti and around the world, the Letter **demands urgent action to address GBV against women and girls in Haiti, to center their specific needs in government policies, to adequately resource such efforts, and to ensure that they have an empowered voice in shaping and implementing related policies and programs**. The Letter is an extension of advocacy led by Haitian feminist and human rights organizations and joined by [over 160 organizations](#) in Haiti and around the world to demand respect for the rights of Haiti's women and girls in the transition and in Haiti's future through a [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#). We urge the transitional government of Haiti to adopt the Framework and to implement the recommendations contained in the [Open Letter](#) and [Framework](#) itself. We likewise urge the international community to prioritize related policies and programs, provide corresponding funding and expertise, and, throughout, to center the perspectives and leadership of Haitian women, especially those working most closely with affected communities.

[Read and share our Open Letter](#)
& [Endorse the Policy Framework!](#)