

CENTER FOR HEALTH AND GENDER EQUITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MORE THAN 20 ORGANIZATIONS HOLD WHITE HOUSE RALLY TO HELP WOMEN RAPED IN CONFLICT

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than [20 organizations](#) from around the world joined with the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) in support of a rally today in front of the White House to stand with women and girls raped in conflict.

Held on the eve of Human Rights Day, the rally is the culmination of the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and is designed to urge President Obama to use his executive authority to assist women and girls raped in conflict and break barriers to post-rape care, including access to safe abortion services.

“Groups from all over the world are gathering to make their voices heard so that we can finally open the doors to comprehensive health care for these women,” said Serra Sippel, President of CHANGE.

At the United Nations in September, [President Obama acknowledged](#) the seriousness of the problem: “Mothers, sisters, daughters have been subjected to rape as a weapon of war.” In previous [executive orders](#) and [strategies](#), the president has called for action on women, peace, and security.

“This rally is designed to draw attention to what is missing,” said Sippel, “ensuring that the U.S. response to survivors of sexual violence in conflict includes access to comprehensive care, including safe abortion services.”

The Helms Amendment, a decades-old provision, forbids the U.S. to pay for abortion services as a “method of family planning” but does not prohibit U.S. support in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Despite this distinction, lack of clarity around implementation of Helms has served as a barrier to care.

“With a stroke of his pen,” said Sippel, “President Obama [can eliminate](#) these barriers and join [with clergy](#), [human rights forces](#), and women survivors to right this wrong.”

Speakers at today’s rally included: Serra Sippel, **CHANGE** • Purnima Mane, **Pathfinder International** • Bafana Khumalo, **Sonke Gender Justice** • Rev. Harry Knox, **Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice** • **D.C. Councilmember** David Grosso • Viviana Bohórquez Monsalve, **La Mesa por la Vida y la Salud de las Mujeres** • Joel Davis, **Youth to End Sexual Violence** • Tala Haikal, **American Task Force on Palestine** • Imani Marks, **Advocates for Youth** • Jon O’Brien, **Catholics for Choice** • Carrie Wilson, **International Campaign to Stop Rape and Gender Violence in Conflict** • Liesl Gerntholtz, **Human Rights Watch**.

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