



## **Rape as a Weapon of War: End the Nightmare Support the International Violence Against Women Act**

In conflicts around the world, rape of women and girls has become one of the most horrific weapons of choice used systematically to attack civilians, devastate families and destabilize societies. Despite the recognition of rape as a war crime, a crime against humanity and a form of genocide, over the years the brutality and frequency of this crime has only increased. Rape is a highly destructive weapon that is cheaper than bullets or bombs and increasingly widespread. Estimates are:

- 20,000 to 50,000 women and girls raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s
- 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls raped during the Rwandan genocide in 1994
- Hundreds of thousands (an average of 40 per day) of women or girls raped in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, since 2002

“It is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier right now in Eastern DRC.”  
*Major General Patrick Cammaert (ret.)*

The **International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594 / S. 2982)** builds on U.S. efforts to end violence and respond effectively to women and girls during violent conflicts. Over 150 U.S. groups – including faith-based, human rights, refugee and women’s organizations – contributed to the creation of IVAWA and urge passage of this bill. Whether the goal is to stop rape during war, trafficking in women and girls, attacks on girls going to school, or violence within the home, IVAWA elevates this issue to be a greater priority in U.S. foreign policy and improves programs to make them more efficient and effective. IVAWA will:

- Direct the State Department and U.S. AID to coordinate U.S. approaches and, in the first year of implementation, to develop a strategy for stopping violence against women and girls. The strategy will be informed by research and best practices, coordinate programs across relevant sectors, and include data collection to assess success and transparency measures to track funds.
- Integrate this concern when the U.S. responds to humanitarian crises so that U.S. efforts take into account, for example, how to protect women and girls who are especially vulnerable to attacks in camps for refugees or internally displaced people or support survivors of sexual violence.
- Integrate this issue broadly into relevant U.S. programs so that, for example, programs to build schools will also include efforts to ensure girls arrive safely and remain safe while at school; service providers working with persons with HIV and AIDS will be trained to recognize signs of violence and support women who face violence; officers who train foreign security personnel will include instruction on ending violence against women.
- Instruct U.S. AID and the State Department to undertake pilot programs in select countries that are identified in the comprehensive strategy, created and implemented in collaboration with local partners, include mechanisms to collect data on outcomes, and track the use of U.S. funds.

Help end violence against women and girls by improving U.S. diplomacy and making U.S. foreign assistance more effective and efficient. **Support the International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594 / S. 2982).**