

Center for Reproductive Rights

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Forum on Minority Issues – 7th Session

Oral Statement delivered by Paola Salwan Daher

Thank you Mr Chair,

The Center for Reproductive Rights is dedicated to ensuring the recognition of reproductive freedom as a fundamental human right that all states must respect, protect, and fulfill. We have in particular worked to ensure that states take special measures to protect the reproductive rights of women from minority groups – including Roma women in Europe, women of African descent in Brazil, and Latina women in the United States

Women and girls in general face gender-specific violence in times of conflict and internal strife and also face significant barriers to accessing needed sexual and reproductive health services following violence. As stated in the CEDAW committee general recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations *‘In conflict affected areas access to essential services such as health care, including sexual and reproductive health services are disrupted due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of professional medical care workers, basic medicines and health care supplies. Consequently, women and girls are at a greater risk of unplanned pregnancy, severe sexual and reproductive injuries and contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS, as a result of conflict-related sexual violence’.*

Practices violating women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights such as forced or coerced sterilization, forced injections of contraceptives, and virginity tests, to name a few, are targeted at women in times of conflict. These tactics are used to instigate fear, exact reprisals, or diminish the population of opposition forces, and they have been recognized as crimes against humanity, war crimes, or forms of torture or ill-treatment.

Women belonging to minorities, because they find themselves at the intersection of gender and racial, ethnic or religious discriminations, are even more at risk of facing such violence and acts of atrocities.

Draft Recommendation 44 on preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted at minorities states that *‘States must recognize that women belonging to minorities may be exposed to gender-specific forms of violence and must take appropriate measures to protect women from the risks and threats of such violence, including deliberate targeting for rape and sexual assault used as a “weapon” in conflict situations.’* Draft recommendation 64 underlines the need for states to pay particular attention to the situation of women belonging to diverse ethnic, national, religious or other minorities, who are often a target in post-violence scenarios because they are seen as symbolic representatives of their community.

Under the ‘appropriate measures’ mentioned in recommendation 44, we strongly encourage states to incorporate a sexual and reproductive rights component and ensure that sexual and reproductive health care for women belonging to minorities includes access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information; contraceptive services, including emergency contraception; maternal health services, including antenatal care, skilled delivery services and emergency obstetric care; safe abortion services; and post-abortion care, among others.

We also strongly encourage states to implement UN Security Council resolution 2106 that underlines the importance of providing timely assistance to survivors of sexual violence. Resolution 2106 urges United Nations entities and donors to provide non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, legal, and livelihood support and other multi-sectoral services for survivors of sexual violence. It also calls for support to national institutions and local civil society networks in increasing resources and strengthening capacities to provide the abovementioned services to survivors of sexual violence. Finally, it encourages Member States and donors to support national and international programs that assist victims of sexual violence, including in the provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you Mr Chairperson