

Protecting Mothers, Protecting Children

Joint Statement in Support of a Human Rights Approach to Cross-Border Child Protection in the Post-2030 Agenda

We, the undersigned, warmly welcome the landmark report *Violence against Mothers*, issued by United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, Reem Alsalem.

The [report](#) recognizes that violence against mothers is a distinct form of gender-based violence and is often enabled or exacerbated by legal, judicial, administrative, migration, healthcare, social, cultural, and child protection systems.

Its findings underscore the need for an integrated, life-course and intergenerational approach linking the health and well-being of mothers and children to violence prevention, child protection and human rights principles. The report therefore presents a timely opportunity to inform the ongoing [WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and PMNCH evidence review](#) to determine future action to advance the health and well-being of women, new-borns, children and adolescents beyond 2030.

We urge these UN agencies and partner organisations to designate violence against mothers as a key topic for their evidence review, and invite them to further explore the UN Special Rapporteur's findings that:

- Patriarchal norms continue to contribute to the normalization of violence against mothers.
- Violence against mothers includes overlooked forms of abuse such as reproductive, psychological, institutional, economic, technological, and litigation abuse.
- There is a strong nexus between violence against mothers and violence against children. Protecting mothers is essential to protecting children.
- Family courts, migration systems and cross-border legal frameworks perpetuate abuse when they minimize or dismiss domestic violence and coercive control, and impose contact between abusive partners and mothers and children.
- Human rights-based, child-centred and survivor-driven approaches must guide family justice and cross-border child protection.
- Certain cross-border legal frameworks, particularly the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, can disadvantage protective mothers who are survivors of violence. Designed to ensure the prompt return of children, the Convention often prioritizes restoring the status quo over assessing and protecting against domestic violence.

We stand with the Special Rapporteur in calling for the following actions:

- Ensuring that courts prioritize the safety and economic security of mothers, taking into account caregiving responsibilities and experiences of abuse when determining custody and visitation.
- Recognizing the weaponization of mother-child relations as a core mechanism of coercive control and post-separation abuse constituting violence against mothers and their children, and also recognizing litigation abuse and court-induced poverty as forms of economic violence against mothers.

- Removing directives requiring mothers to facilitate abusive contact between the abusive parent and children, and ending the forced removal of children from protective mothers.
- Introducing a mandatory, child-centred and survivor-driven exception under the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction requiring courts to conduct a thorough domestic violence risk assessment before ordering return.

Our commitment

We welcome the Report's recommendations and are committed to partnerships and initiatives that strive to:

1. **Recognize** violence against mothers as a violation of both women's and children's rights, and affirm that protecting mothers is essential to protecting children.
2. **Interpret and implement** the Hague Convention consistently with the CRC, CEDAW and other applicable international human rights obligations.
3. **Ensure** that domestic violence, coercive control and the potential for post-separation abuse are fully assessed before any decisions regarding return, custody or contact are made, with the child's best interests as the primary consideration.
4. **End** punitive responses toward mothers who take protective action to safeguard themselves and/or their children, and distinguish protective flight from wrongful child abduction.
5. **Strengthen** trauma-informed, child-centred and survivor-driven judicial practice through specialized training, effective risk assessment, meaningful participation of children and enforceable protective measures.
6. **Guarantee** effective remedies, accountability, and international cooperation that protect the rights, dignity and safety of both mothers and children.

Call to Action

The UN Special Rapporteur's (UNSR) report makes a compelling case for trauma-informed, child-centred and survivor-driven approaches, while highlighting the critical nexus between violence against mothers and violence against children.

We call on all stakeholders to ensure that courts, migration systems and cross-border child-protection mechanisms—including international legal frameworks such as the Hague Convention—are firmly grounded in human rights, gender equality and the best interests of the child, and implemented in full harmony with international human rights law.

We call for the UN Special Rapporteur's findings to inform the post-2030 agenda, translating the UNSR's important analysis into concrete evidence-informed priorities, recognizing the interconnectedness of the health, safety and well-being of mothers and children.

No child is protected when their primary caretaking mother is left unprotected.

See over for signatories.

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