

## **Members of the EDVAW Platform on Violence against Women Issue an Urgent Call to Action Regarding Alarming Rates of Sexual Violence against Haitian Women and Girls**

*Washington, DC, January 30, 2025.* The widespread and devastating violence, and especially sexual violence faced by Haitian women and girls - both within Haiti, but also externally, among migrant, and refugee communities - demands immediate and coordinated action from national governments and the international community. In response to this critical situation, the members of the EDVAW Platform who endorse this statement<sup>1</sup>, in their capacity as Independent Experts from regional mechanisms and the United Nations which focus on eliminating discrimination and violence against women, express profound concern and calls for decisive measures to address the extreme violence experienced by Haitian women and girls.

The members of the EDVAW Platform recognize that the widespread sexual violence in Haiti is rooted in systemic challenges, including political instability, poverty, weak governance, pervasive gender inequality, and exclusion of women from public decision-making processes. Addressing these structural issues is essential to achieving sustainable solutions to the crisis.

According to information reported by international organizations, between January and October 2024, nearly 4,000 cases of sexual violence against women and girls were reported in Haiti<sup>2</sup>. Local health services reported to the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti an average of 40 rape victims per day<sup>3</sup>. The Experts of the Platform express their concern regarding reports indicating that Haitian women and girls have become direct victims of the armed violence affecting the country, as well as victims of sexual violence used as a means of threat, control, and retaliation by criminal groups. The constant threat of sexual violence also limits the access of women and girls to transportation, to schooling and to health care. Practically all of this violence goes unpunished given the disruption of policing and the administration of justice.

Particular attention must be given to displaced women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, young girls and older women, and other vulnerable groups who face heightened risks of sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation. Tailored interventions must be designed to address their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Also of concern are reports by the authorities of the Republic of Haiti, and by Amnesty International, as well as, allegations received by the United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women and girls<sup>4</sup>, which indicate cases of sexual violence during

deportation operations involving Haitian migrant and displaced women and girls in the Dominican Republic.

In light of this extreme vulnerability, the members of the EDVAW Platform who endorse this statement underscore the shared responsibility of the Haitian state, transit and destination countries, and the international community to guarantee the protection, safety and integrity of Haitian women and girls in the face of sexual violence and other forms of violence and discrimination. These obligations are grounded in international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as well as, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention), which recognizes violence against women as a violation of international human rights and as a result of systemic discrimination. Furthermore, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, highlights the importance of safeguarding the rights of women and girls affected by conflict and generalized violence, such as that faced by Haiti, while ensuring their active participation in peace-building and sustainable development.

Transition and destination countries should refrain from carrying out summary expulsions of Haitian women and girls, as they violate international and regional law obligations of these countries, including the obligation on *non-refoulement*. In the case of girls from Haiti, such policies also violate the best interest of the child. They must also ensure that Haitian women and girls, including those who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence and who flee Haiti seeking protection and safety, have access to fair and efficient asylum procedures.

Efforts to combat sexual violence must adopt a survivor-centered approach, prioritizing the dignity, safety, and agency of survivors. This includes confidential reporting mechanisms, culturally appropriate psychosocial support, and long-term reintegration programs.

The members of the EDVAW Platform, therefore, urge all authorities involved, both national and international, to take immediate and effective measures to prevent sexual violence, ensure access to justice and reparation for women and girls, and secure their access to immediate care and protection services and psychosocial support. Furthermore, all relevant authorities must enhance public security, and train national security forces and peacekeeping missions in gender-sensitive practice and implement urgent actions to combat arms trafficking and dismantle armed groups that continue to use sexual violence as a weapon of control and destruction. The subscribing Experts also stress the urgent need to strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice. This includes enhancing investigative capacities, providing protection for survivors who come forward, and addressing systemic impunity.

The Experts of the Platform also urge the international community to redouble its support to Haiti, through technical and financial cooperation, to strengthen the capacity of the Haitian State to face this crisis. Regional cooperation between Haiti and neighboring countries, including the Dominican Republic, is essential to addressing cross-border challenges such as trafficking, migration-related violence, and deportation practices. Collaborative efforts are vital to ensuring the safety and dignity of Haitian women and girls, both within Haiti and abroad.

With determination and commitment, we must work together to protect Haitian women and girls, guarantee their safety and dignity, and end sexual violence in all its forms.

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<sup>1</sup> *The following members of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) have expressed their support for this statement: the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI); the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls; the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls; Rapporteur of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for the Rights of Women (IACHR); Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) - GREVIO is a monitoring mechanism with a regional mandate limited to Europe.*

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.hrw.org/es/news/2024/11/24/haiti-escasa-capacidad-de-proteccion-ante-la-escalada-de-violencia-sexual>

<sup>3</sup>See: [https://binuh.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/quarterly\\_report\\_on\\_the\\_human\\_rights\\_situation\\_in\\_haiti.pdf](https://binuh.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/quarterly_report_on_the_human_rights_situation_in_haiti.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28942>