United Nations
Secretary-General Video Message/Statement

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND COVID19

New York, April 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing untold human suffering and economic devastation around the world.

I recently called for an immediate global ceasefire to focus on our shared struggle to overcome the pandemic.

I appealed for an end to violence everywhere, now.

But violence is not confined to the battlefield.

For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest.

In their own homes.

And so I make a new appeal today for peace at home — and in homes — around the world.

We know lockdowns and quarantines are essential to suppressing COVID-19. But they can trap women with abusive partners.

Over the past weeks as economic and social pressures and fear have grown, we have seen a horrifying global surge in domestic violence.

In some countries, the number of women calling support services has doubled.

Meanwhile, healthcare providers and police are overwhelmed and understaffed.

Local support groups are paralyzed or short of funds. Some domestic violence shelters are closed; others are full.
I urge all governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans for COVID-19.

That means increasing investment in online services and civil society organizations.

Making sure judicial systems continue to prosecute abusers.

Setting up emergency warning systems in pharmacies and groceres.

Declaring shelters as essential services.

And creating safe ways for women to seek support, without alerting their abusers.

Women’s rights and freedoms are essential to strong, resilient societies.

Together, we can and must prevent violence everywhere, from war zones to people’s homes, as we work to beat COVID-19.

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