

A participant's view on the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, London, 10 – 13 June 2014

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Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and to participate in the discussion panel organized by the [Global Diplomacy Forum](#) on the theme: how can we change the perceptions of perpetrators that sexual violence in war zones is acceptable and non-punishable? The full report from the roundtable will be available shortly.

The [Global Summit](#), hosted by British Foreign Secretary [William Hague](#) and Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, [Angelina Jolie](#), was the first of its kind. It drew considerable attention and started an unprecedented momentum on the topic of combatting sexual violence in conflict. In parallel to the Global Summit, [the Fringe Summit](#) – a series of events open to the public - took place at the same location. The “Fringe” was organized and hosted by non-profit organizations and activists, with the participation of British Secretaries, Members of Parliament and other relevant stakeholders.



Global Diplomacy Forum Panel on changing perceptions of perpetrators that sexual violence in war zones is acceptable and non-punishable (photo courtesy: GDF).

Discussions during the Summit also raised less discussed – and rather taboo - topics, including [sexual abuse by peacekeepers and humanitarian workers](#), acceptance of children born out of rape, as well as sexual violence perpetrated against men. Such topics were further documented in the [Silent Cinema](#): a unique and innovative installation, where three giant screens were set up in the same room, participants were given headsets and the possibility to choose and to flick between screens and documentaries at their discretion.

The Summit raised various questions, sometimes more than it was able to answer. Roundtables and keynote addresses are a fantastic way of exchanging ideas but are also often an occasion to repeat well-known truths over again without proposing concrete solutions. This Summit was no exception.

However, the Summit was exceptional at least in one way: the unheard voices of countless victims of rape were ultimately heard through the voice of a world-renowned celebrity: Angelina Jolie. Her engaged participation (she was present all four days of the Summit) and commitment to ending sexual violence in conflict constitute a key factor in bringing attention to the issue.



Angelina Jolie and William Hague at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (photo courtesy: VOA news)

The participation and continued engagement of Angelina Jolie does much to raise visibility and awareness about sexual violence in conflict amongst the general public and ensures the crucial media coverage, which it deserves. It also allows the untold stories of countless invisible women who have been abused and have received no justice to be heard. As Lauren Wolfe [writes](#) "Jolie's stratospheric visibility is making these women and girls visible".

Jolie's presence was essential in lifting sexual violence in conflict from an experts' (and relatively unknown) topic to a topic that touches us all. However, although Jolie can draw the necessary worldwide attention to the issue and non-governmental organisations and activists can bring the visibility and momentum to this topic, concrete action and implementation still falls in the hands of governments. Let's work to ensure that the [pledges](#) and [promises](#) made during the Summit are kept. So we can finally bring justice to the victims and work to make sexual violence in conflict history. It's Time To Act.

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