

On 9 February 2015 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, the UK's First Secretary of State, Leader of the House of Commons and Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, William Hague MP, and Special Envoy of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie-Pitt, formally opened an international conference in London of faith leaders on the role of faith leaders and communities in ending sexual violence in conflict. The meeting was co-hosted by the UK Government's Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the We Will Speak Out coalition against sexual violence.

At the end of two days of sharing experience and discussion, the faith leaders presented a declaration, together with a series of recommendations to all faith leaders, governments and humanitarian agencies.

You are warmly invited to add your voice and sign the declaration on line at
www.wewillsspeakout.org/interfaithevent2015/

Please share and bring this to the attention of others.

**INTER FAITH DECLARATION ON MOBILISING FAITH COMMUNITIES IN
ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT**

Lancaster House, London, 9-10 February 2015

We have come together at the inter faith consultation on 'Mobilising Faith Communities to End Sexual Violence in Conflict', 9-10 February 2015, because we recognise our particular role and responsibility as leaders in helping bring to an end the use of rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence in conflict. This consultation advances the discussion at the 'Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict' held in London in June 2014.

As faith leaders, we acknowledge that all faiths affirm the dignity of human beings and so condemn sexual violence. We share a common understanding of our potential to mobilise people at all levels to work together to end sexual violence in conflict. We will challenge the culture of impunity that exists for these crimes, and use our influence to mobilise and encourage leadership and commitment across governments, communities and religious institutions to protect human rights and provide safe spaces and support to survivors and their families.

We will promote the dignity and rights of survivors of sexual violence, both female and male. The shame for these crimes lies with the perpetrators and not those who suffer them. We have a critical role to play in tackling the root causes of sexual violence, including the subordinate and unequal status of women around the world, and harmful cultural, religious and social norms, including distorted notions of masculine identities. Ideas of culture or tradition, or misapplication of sacred texts, must never be used to allow impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence. We will also seek to work with perpetrators to end the cycle of violence.

Based on our discussions, we have determined the distinctive role of faith leaders in:

- Defending values of faith and human rights
- Tackling impunity and promoting justice and accountability
- Supporting survivors of sexual violence
- Engaging men and boys in promoting positive masculinities and transformed gender relations
- Peace building and peace processes

We have agreed to implement recommendations¹ for collaborative action in these areas, as set out in the Report of the Inter Faith Consultation on Mobilising Faith Communities to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. As faith leaders, we commit ourselves to take these actions:

- We will speak out against sexual and gender-based violence in conflict at every opportunity
- We will take action together to promote human rights and see girls, women, boys and men freed from the threat and impact of sexual violence in conflict across the world.
- We will stand together in solidarity with all those affected by sexual violence.
- We will promote the development and implementation of laws that protect and promote justice to bring an end to sexual, and other forms of gender based violence during and after conflict, holding governments to account.
- We will strive to build peace and promote reconciliation, challenging the internal and external causes of conflict.
- We will dedicate ourselves to finding lasting solutions; mobilising leadership at all levels and implementing these values within our own faith community.

We call on all faith leaders to join us in speaking out and to work together with governments, national and international stakeholders, and communities to help end the use of sexual violence in conflict.

We Will Speak Out

Email: contact@wewillsspeakout.org

Web: www.wewillsspeakout.org

Faith leaders' declaration: www.wewillsspeakout.org/interfaithevent2015/

¹ See the recommendations at <http://www.wewillsspeakout.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Key-recommendations-from-the-Inter-Faith-Consultation-London-Feb-2015.pdf>