

Your Rights

As a victim of sexual exploitation or
abuse committed by United Nations
staff or related personnel



United Nations
Office of the Victims'
Rights Advocate

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Your Rights

As a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse committed by United Nations staff or related personnel

You have the right to seek assistance and support from the United Nations if you are a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse committed by any United Nations staff or related personnel. You suffered sexual abuse if you engaged in a sexual act because you were threatened, or were forced to do so, or agreed to engage in a sexual act under unequal conditions, for example because you were unable to decide freely, or felt fearful of the consequences of refusing to participate in such an act. Under United Nations rules, you suffered sexual abuse if you engaged in, or were subjected to, a sexual act when you were under 18 years of age. You are also a victim of sexual abuse if any of these wrongs were attempted.

You suffered sexual exploitation if you were promised or given money, food or any other benefit, like housing or a job, in return for engaging in a sexual act with United Nations staff or related personnel.

If you have experienced sexual exploitation or abuse, the United Nations will help you obtain medical care and other assistance you may need and wish to receive. It will also help you explore available legal remedies, if you wish to do so.

Sexual exploitation and abuse are prohibited for all United Nations staff and related personnel.

Such acts are unacceptable, whatever the circumstances. The United Nations will refer complaints of sexual exploitation or abuse for investigation. The United Nations will use its best efforts to hold the offender accountable. This could involve internal disciplinary action or cooperation with Member States.

This document describes your rights, and how the United Nations will assist you.

The United Nations' guiding principles:

Your rights, needs, safety and dignity are priorities.

You have the right not to be judged, blamed or held responsible for the harm you suffered from sexual exploitation or abuse.

You will be offered assistance to promote your well-being and to support you to recover.

You will not be discriminated against because of your race, ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, religion, belief, sex, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, health, disability, residence status or any other ground.

Your rights as a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse:



1. The right to be treated with respect

A. You will be treated with courtesy, compassion, professionalism and fairness.

B. Your culture, values and views will be respected. Your individual needs and informed-choices will be considered as a central priority.



2. The right to receive assistance and support

- a. You have the right to receive assistance and support in accordance with your individual needs.
- b. Your access to assistance and support does not depend on whether, or how, you cooperate with any investigation or accountability process.
- c. If you need and want it, the United Nations will help you seek and obtain emergency assistance, such as medical care, including on sexual and reproductive health; psychological support; livelihood and basic material assistance, such as food, clothing, transportation and safe shelter.
- d. If you need and want it, the United Nations will help you seek and obtain longer-term assistance, such as comprehensive health care, psychological support, access to legal assistance, livelihood support, skills training.
- e. For your emotional support, and in keeping with your wishes and best interests, you have the right to be accompanied by a person whom you trust when choosing or accessing assistance and support.
- f. If you are under 18 years of age, any assistance or services provided to you will take account of your age and individual needs, including, for example, school reintegration.
- g. You have the right to refuse any form of assistance or support at any time, including after you have begun to receive it. Such a decision will not prevent you from requesting and receiving it at a later stage.



3. The right to justice and accountability

- a. You have the right to submit a complaint of sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations staff or related personnel to the United Nations, which has the responsibility to refer your complaint for investigation.
- b. You have the right to seek justice and accountability for the harm you suffered through criminal and civil processes as well as administrative, disciplinary and non-judicial mechanisms that may be available to you.
- c. If you wish, the United Nations will help you obtain information on how to access legal assistance and how best to seek justice and accountability, including in national proceedings.
- d. If you had a child born of sexual exploitation or abuse, the United Nations will seek to assist you to get information and legal help to establish paternity and related claims, if you so wish.



4. The right to decide how involved to be in United Nations processes

- a. You have the right to decide whether to participate or cooperate in any United Nations processes and proceedings, including those resulting from the fact that you are a victim of sexual exploitation or abuse.
- b. If you decide not to participate or cooperate at any point, this choice may affect the outcome of the investigation, including whether the offender is held accountable.



5. The right to get information

- a. You have the right to be informed, as early as possible, about the processes and procedures involved in reporting incidents of sexual exploitation or abuse.
- b. You have the right to receive information about all the services available to help you. If you have a child born as a result of sexual exploitation or abuse, this will include information on ways to establish paternity, claim child support and other rights for your child.
- c. You have the right to be informed about the status of the investigative process and any other proceedings. You also have the right to be informed about your role and the choices you have in participation in the investigation and any other proceedings. The United Nations will help you obtain and fully understand this information.
- d. You have the right to request that information is provided to you in a language that you understand, and in a way that it is clear and accessible to you, taking into account your personal circumstances, such as any hearing, visual or intellectual disability. If you are under 18 years of age, you have the right to receive the information in a way that takes account of your age.



6. The right to be heard

- a. You are entitled to express your views on any issue relating to these rights, and be listened to and heard. You are also entitled to advocate on your own behalf and to identify your needs. What you have to say will be taken into account in any decisions or actions made by the United Nations that may impact on your safety, dignity or well-being or that of those who are close to you.
- b. For your emotional and practical support and in keeping with your wishes and best interests, you have the right to be accompanied by a person you trust, in any investigative procedures, interviews and meetings. You may be accompanied by a legal representative in some circumstances.
- c. You have the right to have your individual needs and personal circumstances that may affect your ability to exercise effectively your right to be heard taken into account. If you are under 18 years of age, you have the right to have any investigative procedures, interviews or meetings conducted in a manner that takes account of your age. You have the right to choose to be accompanied by a person you trust, or not, during any of these procedures, interviews or meetings.
- d. You are entitled to associate and organize with other victims if you and they wish to do so.



7. The right to privacy and confidentiality

- a. You are entitled to decide what information to provide about your situation to the United Nations. You may not wish to provide any information, or you may wish to stop providing information. This may impact or affect the scope and/or outcome of the investigation.
- b. You are entitled to confidentiality, although if you provide any information that may identify you to a United Nations staff member this may be transmitted to those within the United Nations who need to know it to ensure that the offender is held accountable. You have the right to request that any information that may identify you personally is not released to actors outside of the United Nations.
- c. You are entitled to be told of the intended use of any information you decide to provide, including to whom this information may be disclosed. You should be informed that any choice to keep information confidential may limit the scope of the investigation, including the possibility of holding the offender accountable. Your decision not to provide information will not affect your right to receive assistance and support.
- d. You are entitled to be informed by the United Nations about its assessment of any potential implications of your complaint for your safety and that of those close to you.



8. The right to be protected

- a. Keeping you safe is of utmost importance to the United Nations. Any harassment, intimidation, and retaliation for reporting what happened to you, faced by you or those close to you, or any witnesses on your behalf, are unacceptable. If you report such acts to the United Nations, it will take action to protect your physical safety and you from further trauma or additional victimization, in accordance with your wishes, by working with State authorities or non-governmental organizations.
- b. The United Nations will do everything possible to protect you from any contact with the alleged offender during any process or proceedings conducted by the United Nations.
- c. The United Nations will cooperate with Member States to seek that protection measures are available in any national proceedings.



9. The right to a remedy

- a. Offenders are individually responsible for acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. You have the right to seek remedies from them that acknowledge the harm you have suffered and help to repair it. The remedies you are entitled to will depend on the law of the country where your case is investigated or heard and could consist of financial compensation; physical and psychological rehabilitation and material support; an apology; or measures to ensure that there is no repetition of the wrong.
- b. If paternity of a child born as the result of sexual exploitation or abuse has been established, you are entitled to bring proceedings against the father to require him to accept his parental responsibility, including by obliging him to provide child support in line with the applicable national law of the country where your case is determined. Your child may be able to claim further rights, such as to the father's nationality or citizenship. The United Nations will help you with these processes and work with the relevant State to facilitate a fair and just resolution of these claims.



10. The right to complain of the treatment you have received

- a. If you consider that the rights in this document have not been respected by the United Nations, you have the right to complain to the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate. In line with your wishes, your complaint will be considered and you will be informed of the status of any action taken in response.
- b. You will be protected against reprisals from the United Nations if you complain.

Contact the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate at: ovra@un.org.