

# GALMUN 2017



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## UN WOMEN

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### Research Report

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## **Background:**

Violent assaults take many forms, all abhorrent. Our committee will be debating a most dreadful and horrendous form. Acid attacks are defined as the act of throwing acid or a likewise corrosive material onto the body of another with the intent to disfigure, scar, maim, torture, or kill.

The offender usually targets the face of their victim, burning them, damaging skin tissue, often permanently blinding them, and exposing -in some cases dissolving- the bones. The majority of victims in our debate are of the female gender; and the consequences of the attacks can halt a woman's life and prevent her from performing even everyday tasks such as working, studying and mothering.

This gender based violence is attributed to more than one reason. However, the most common reason is vengeance of the male attacker against a female who refuses to marry him, or who resists sexual advances from him. When the attacker destroys the victim's face he believes he is destroying her most important asset, her beauty. Other reasons include failure to pay a dowry or religious motives. The effects of these attacks are not only medical, but also psychological and social. Victims go through psychological crises including those of identity, because of their lost and distorted appearance, anxiety, depression and psychological distress. Survivors often face social isolation which worsens their self-esteem and socio-economic status, even their position in their own family. An unmarried survivor is very unlikely to get married afterwards, denying her that joy that every person, male or female longs to feel. Many are forced to leave their homes and villages, to ensure their safety as there may be a counterattack against any legal action taken by the victim. Even worse, if the perpetrator is the father of the victim, she may lose trust in men as a group and become unwilling to engage fully in human relationships. If all of that was not enough, the acid survivor is not the only one affected; parents, siblings and other relatives often incur a huge economic, social and psychological burden in caring for the survivor.

The majority of female victims are between 13 and 35 years of age. This form of violence is reported in many countries around the world mainly in South Asian ones, with Bangladesh having the highest incidence for women with 3,512 acid attacks between 1999 and 2013.

After the Government of Cape Verde passed an inclusive new law against gender-based violence in 2011, UN Women recruited judges, attorneys and police for implementation and assistance in raising awareness of the law. UN Women supported female parliamentarians and political leaders in Pakistan, as well as non-governmental proponents, to support new legislation to prevent acid attacks on women and put a stop to harmful customary practices. The Palestinian Cabinet recently adopted the Arab region's first national strategy to combat violence against women. With UN Women's support, survivors of violence took part in drafting it. The Cabinet agreed on a by-law allowing the Ministry of Social Affairs to require all shelters for survivors of violence to boost quality and human rights standards. It draws from practices developed at the UN Women-backed Mehwar Centre, a pioneering initiative offering women a full range of services to recover from violence, seek legal reform and develop livelihood skills. A new helpline, backed by web-based counseling and referral mechanisms, has given 18,000 callers access to potentially life-saving information.

**Questions to consider in your position paper:**

- What is your country doing and what can it further do to help eliminate these attacks both locally and internationally?
- How can acid attack victims who are afraid of retaliation against legal action be helped?
- What support should acid attack victims get? Who should supervise and provide such support?
- What protective methods for potential victims can be provided in affected areas?
- Should there be an agreed-upon international penalty? What should it be? Who should set it? Should The UN interfere? Who should supervise its enforcement?

## **Useful links:**

- <http://www.acidviolence.org/index.php/acid-violence/>
- <http://www.dw.com/en/why-acid-attacks-are-on-the-rise-in-india/a-19313750>
- <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/indian-acid-attack-victims-share-stories-160309074926141.html>
- <http://www.acidsurvivors.org/Statistics>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23631395>
- <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/passing-strong-laws-and-policies>
- <http://www.news.com.au/world/asia/stolen-faces-the-female-victims-of-bangladesh-acid-attacks-refuse-to-be-beaten/news-story/2eeb5df3fe39bd3bbd6afae1a059b53e>
- <http://www.passblue.com/2016/02/29/as-acid-attacks-rise-against-women-laws-help-deter-such-assaults/>
- <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/11/cambodia-reclaiming-life-after-acid-attacks>
- <http://unausa.org/global-classrooms-model-un/how-to-participate/model-un-preparation>