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THE
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Speech given by

Chair of
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Berit Reiss-Andersen

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Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2018 to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict. Their common struggle may be summed up in three simple statements:

- Rape and other forms of sexual violence are unacceptable weapons in any and all warfare.
- Systematic rape as part of a military strategy in war or conflict is a war crime.
- Those responsible for war crimes must be punished, and the impunity they have enjoyed must end.

This is the message shared by both Peace Prize laureates. The fight for justice unites them, despite their very different backgrounds. Denis Mukwege is a mature man and a Congolese. Nadia Murad is a young woman and Yazidi. Nonetheless, they are related to one another, just as they are related to every person who is a victim of abuse.

They bring to mind the words of an earlier Peace Prize laureate, Tawakkol Karman of Yemen, whose prize also recognised the struggle for women's rights. From this podium she said: "Injustice against one person is injustice against all mankind." She, a Muslim Arab woman, invoked the battle waged by women in male-dominated societies, and described it as a fight for the dignity and rights of women and men alike. She dedicated her award "to all those women, whom history and the severity of ruling systems have made unseen, to all women who made sacrifices for the sake of a healthy society with just relationships between women and men, to all those women who are still stumbling on the path of freedom in countries with no social justice or equal opportunities".

Today's Peace Prize laureates join a long tradition of champions of human dignity, carrying on the work of Tawakkol Karman and other Peace Prize laureates to highlight the struggle and oppression of women. It is the dream of ending oppression that brings us together on this occasion to honour two of the strongest voices in the world today. It is so appropriate that we are able to celebrate these two laureates on the exact date of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that declares that all human beings are born free and

equal in dignity and rights. Sexual abuse is also an abuse of these fundamental rights.

The war waged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1997 has cost the lives of almost six million Congolese. Physician Denis Mukwege saw among his patients a growing number of women with severe injuries caused by rape and gross violence. Soldiers from all sides of the conflict have attacked young women. They have attacked old women. And they have attacked children. The point is to injure them and degrade them, but also to destabilise and demoralise the community in which they live. Gross sexual violence hurts the victim, hurts her family, and hurts her entire village and the larger community. A woman who has been raped by a group of 30 soldiers cannot simply put the experience behind her and continue her life as before.

As a doctor, Denis Mukwege saw these women and the fact that they lacked health care and social support. He founded Panzi Hospital to meet the needs of the thousands of women victimised by these war crimes. Today he is one of the world's foremost surgeons specialising in the repair of physical injuries caused by brutal, devastating rapes. However, Panzi Hospital also provides trauma treatment and programmes to reintegrate women into society. As a result of the sexual assaults, many of the women have lost their families and the support of their local communities. Without the efforts of Denis Mukwege and his staff at Panzi Hospital, these women would have been alone to fend for themselves.

Denis Mukwege has helped these women as a physician, but he has also been a fervent advocate of their cause and their human dignity. His mission has been to tell the world of this abuse, to demand acknowledgement of the victims' suffering and to insist the perpetrators be held accountable. Denis Mukwege has made enemies by unconditionally taking the victim's side. He and his staff have endured threats, attempts on their lives and smear campaigns. In 2012, one of his bodyguards was killed in an attack targeting Dr. Mukwege and his family. For some people, defending the cause of women is clearly an intolerable offence.

Denis Mukwege, we thank you for seeing the suffering and devoting your life to the battle *for* women and *against* sexual violence.

Nadia Murad grew up in the Yazidi village of Kocho. She had a good life with her large family, dreaming, like many girls, of an education, but also of make-up and clothes. All her dreams were shattered, however, when war came to Kocho. In 2014,

ISIS launched a campaign to gain control of northern Iraq and exterminate the Yazidi minority. Nadia Murad's mother and six of her brothers were brutally killed. Young women and girls were spared, but another brutal fate awaited them. They were taken prisoner by ISIS and transported to the city of Mosul to be used as sex slaves. Each woman was a piece of property, an object that could be bought at the slave market, then used, discarded, sold or given away as a gift. The women were *supposed* to be circulated among many men. They were *supposed* to be treated brutally and humiliated, with the aim of breaking them down completely. The ultimate goal was the extermination of the Yazidi people. As ISIS saw it, the men had to be killed and the women so damaged that they became social outcasts. The most effective way of destroying a community is apparently to destroy the women.

It is beyond comprehension that the extermination of an ethnic group and the commission of atrocities against individuals can be rationalised by a religious belief.

Nadia Murad is a victim of war crimes and has experienced brutality and abuse of the most horrific kind. In her autobiography, she has described her shock, pain, fear and sense of debasement. At times she wanted to give up, but she preserved an innate ability to resist and was never cowed. Managing to escape as she did was in itself a great feat. But today she is receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for her activities subsequent to her time in ISIS captivity. She has defied the social codes of shame and silence, and dared to speak up on the abuses perpetrated against herself and thousands of Yazidi women and children. In doing so, she has broken a stigma that has afflicted millions of women victims of wartime sexual violence. She has dedicated her life to bearing witness to war crimes and making sure that the world does not forget.

Nadia Murad, we thank you for your extraordinary courage.

Ladies and gentlemen, both Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad have made significant contributions to combating this type of war crime by focusing attention on the suffering inflicted on women in Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and everywhere else in the world where sexual violence is used as a weapon. We must be aware of these crimes if we are to combat them. The war waged on women through the use of sexual violence has been a hidden war. When the time has come for peace negotiations and transitional justice, these crimes have rarely been on the agenda.

The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, so accurately stated: “Sexual violence in conflict needs to be treated as the war crime that it is; it can no longer be written off or treated as an unfortunate collateral damage of war...”

Ladies and gentlemen, our understanding of the particularly vulnerable position of women in war has evolved. It is an old problem, but the will to establish legal protections for women is relatively new.

The Rome Statute of 1998 is the legal basis for the International Criminal Court and defines acts such as rape and sexual slavery as war crimes when these acts are committed as part of a systematic attack on the civilian population. The same principles were applied by the tribunals that dealt with war crimes in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia (ICTR and ICTY). These tribunals also handed down judgments against persons who initiated systematic rape as part of a widespread attack against civilians. The United Nations Security Council followed up by adopting Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security* in 2000. Security Council Resolution 1820 from 2008 goes a step further, establishing that sexual violence against women in war and conflict is a threat to international peace and security. It is important that international bodies set such legal and political standards but it is our common duty to live up to them. Denis Mukwege is spot on when he says: “Justice is everyone’s business.”

Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad have both made significant efforts to advance this process. Both have been able to communicate the scale of the atrocities and to demand prosecution of all those responsible. They have thereby fulfilled key criteria in Alfred Nobel’s will. Their work is, in fact, a contribution to disarmament. Sexual violence is an intolerable weapon that cannot be accepted in warfare. Their primary contribution, however, is to what Alfred Nobel called the “fraternity of nations”: they have shown us that human suffering in war is universal. They have pointed out that women are predominantly invisible victims of the horrors of war. Both laureates have demanded that injustice be combated with justice. War crimes must be punished, and the responsibility rests with the entire international community. Both of them are thus fully deserving of Alfred Nobel’s Peace Prize.

Ladies and gentlemen, this award obligates Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad to continue their vital work. But the award also obligates us to stand side by side with them in the struggle to end wartime sexual violence. Only then can the hopeful message of Nadia’s autobiography *The Last Girl* come true. Together we must make

her generation of young women and girls the last generation to suffer from the barbarism of sexual war crimes.