

# Human rights violations are prohibited by international human rights law

Severe abuse is considered illegal by international human rights law. Human rights are rights to which all human beings are entitled. Because you are a human being, you have human rights. Every person is born with human rights. International human rights treaties affirm that every individual has dignity and physical integrity, and that these should never be violated.

Human rights are among others stated in the document the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948. Every human being has the right to life, to liberty, and to freedom of expression. Human rights prohibit all forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. People whose rights have been brutally disrespected – survivors – also have specific rights. These are described in more detail under the heading The right to redress and rehabilitation.

Despite international human rights law and all the work that has been done around the world to prevent human rights violations, we know that a lot of human rights violations happen in the world today. Also, although survivors have the right to redress and rehabilitation, this help is not always available and provided. It can also be difficult and even dangerous to report a human rights violation, making it very difficult for the survivor to claim her or his rights. We hope that the resources that we provide on this page can be helpful in situations where other forms of help and support are not available.

## The perpetrators are guilty

The human rights violation that the survivor has been exposed to never is the fault of the survivor or person(s) who involuntarily had to witness the abuse. The only ones who are guilty are those who have committed the crime of severely abusing another human being. What happened to the survivor is prohibited by international human rights law and totally unacceptable. The perpetrator is guilty, not the survivor.

Despite this, sometimes, the survivor may still feel shame and even guilt linked to what happened to them. And sometimes people who are close to a survivor may have such feelings of shame and guilt too. Sometimes people who are close to a survivor may consider the survivor as guilty or partly guilty for what happened to her or him. We want you to remember that the survivor is never guilty or responsible in some way for what happened.



# Possible mental and physical reactions

Practice during the day good things that you can do when you wake up from nightmares at night. For example, getting to know your bedroom well during the day can help you to orient yourself easily during the night and help you to know that you are in your bedroom. Make a plan or create a routine for what you will do if you wake up from a nightmare.

If you wake up from a nightmare, try to use your senses to connect with the present moment. For example, you can start by trying to move your body, first your fingers and toes, then your hands and feet, your neck and then your arms and legs. Then touch your pillow or mattress and feel the texture of it against your skin. You can sit up and feel your feet planted on the ground.

You can turn on the light (if possible) and look at the objects in the room. You can also practice a grounding exercise, we explain this under the heading Self-care: grounding exercises on this page.

## What happened?

What type of abuse you may have gone through and the context within which it took place may be different from one person to another. Maybe some of you knew about the threat of being abused and have lived with this fear for a while? Maybe it suddenly happened or you had not been aware of any danger? Maybe you knew that your work or activism put you in a heightened risk?

