



THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 10, 2015

I warmly congratulate my friend, Special Representative William Hague, and the London School of Economics for today's launch of an academic center on Women, Peace and Security. This is part of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative and promises to be a major contributor to achieving a central goal of the international community: to put an end to violence against women.

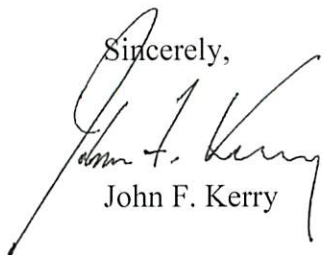
As the father of two daughters, and as a former prosecutor, this issue is personal to me as it should be to us all.

Let's be clear: the major reason violence against women and girls is so pervasive is that the perpetrators rarely expect to be arrested or punished for their actions. To solve the problem, we have to change the culture of impunity that has existed throughout history. That requires new thinking, new strategies, new standards, and new institutions. The new Academic Center reflects precisely this reality. It will pioneer a systematic and sustained approach to the challenge, accompanied by rigorous research, heightened public awareness, and the establishment of support networks to empower women and ensure that those guilty of sexual violence are held accountable for their crimes.

This initiative would have been welcome at any moment, but it is especially timely now as we strive to prevent further atrocities by Daesh, al Qai'da, Boko Haram, al-Shabab and other terrorist groups that are kidnapping and abusing women and girls and consigning thousands into slavery. Women continue to be primary victims of civil strife in, among other places, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Women and girls are exploited ruthlessly by the global industry engaged in trafficking in persons. Violence against women also remains a terrible problem closer to home, between couples and within families. That's why the message conveyed by the founding of this Academic Center needs to be understood not only in the British Isles, but across every ocean and frontier: zero tolerance for violence against women; an end to impunity; and a rising tide of justice.

To all who are involved in this project, I say again: congratulations. And I want you to know that the United States, and our own great academic institutions and civil society, will look forward to working closely with you in the months and years to come.

Sincerely,


John F. Kerry