

IPPF ISSUES PAPER 1: IPPF and countering the expansion of U.S. Foreign and Military Policy that causes Reproductive Violence: Standing Up and Speaking Out to the first 100 days.

This paper builds on discussions had at CSIP and aims to help position IPPF and its asks to the upcoming US administration at a crucial point in time.

1. Background

At the 2022 General Assembly¹, in support of its ongoing commitment to decolonization, to confronting historical concerns of eugenics in our movement, to speaking to the universality and inalienability of human rights, and to reckoning with our shared colonial past so as not to perpetuate a similar future, Member Associations committed to an Anti-Racism Declaration of Intent. This paper applies those principles to one of the most challenging issues of our time and addresses IPPF's role in denouncing the violation of sexual and reproductive rights.

This issues paper – the first in a series dealing with the most controversial issues that IPPF grapples with – comes at a time of elections in the U.S. (who is an IPPF donor and where we have a member) and relentless bombing and killing in Palestine (where IPPF has a member).

The paper is presented in the belief that without urgent opposition by civil society to the current course of action, the Harris-Walz Administration will very likely pursue its bloody path, and a Trump-Vance Administration would simply and viciously expand the pathway prepared for it by the Biden-Harris team. The gravity and depravity of the violence against already marginalised populations, and their threat to the sexual and reproductive justice agenda demands a deliberate effort from IPPF to bring the Anti-Racism Declaration of Intent to action.

2. What is IPPF's moral obligation?

The gravity of the moment demands a more fulsome approach beyond IPPF's consistent and rightful refusal of the conditions associated with the Global Gag Rule.² This treatment is in an attempt to offer an analysis that provides greater scrutiny and acknowledges the wider impact of the U.S. foreign and military policy landscape which impacts on sexual rights and directly facilitated reproductive coercion and violence: last year's bombardment of the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association's own health site, the resulting freeze on services and the forced displacement of all health staff in Gaza a case in point. Whilst the U.S. is certainly not the only government complicit in a plausible genocide, *it has used its power in the Security Council to veto calls for a ceasefire, and it has financed 70% of the cost of Israel's military operations since October 2023*³. These actions have escalated a downwards spiral to a world war of which Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and neighbouring countries are its bloodiest indicator.

¹ <https://www.ippf.org/news/anti-racism-declaration-intent#:~:text=IPPF%20recognizes%20the%20fundamental%20need,recognizing%20that%20racism%20violates%20them.>

² The IPPF Board of Trustees passed a resolution to refuse the conditions of the Global Gag Rule on 29 October 2024.

³ <https://home.watson.brown.edu/news/2024-10-07/us-spending-israels-military-operations>

3. U.S. foreign policy concerns itself with the most intimate of rights.

Since the 1960's, US foreign policy has made strides on a few core components of the Sexual and Reproductive Health agenda, with access to contraception and HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment, it's most significant contribution⁴. USAID assistance for 'family planning' first came under fire with concerns it had a eugenic origin more concerned with a 'population explosion' in global south countries⁵, and so strong policies designed to ensure voluntarism and informed consent followed⁶. But with that came more opposition. In 1973, under President Richard Nixon and in the wake of the Roe V Wade decision, the Helms Amendment was passed by the U.S. Congress to limit the use of US foreign assistance for abortion; it continues to be carried through by both the Democrats and the Republicans. President Ronald Reagan took it a step further with the enactment of the Global Gag Rule in 1984, and it is this that yo-yo's between the Democrats (who rescind) and the Republicans (who reinstate). The policies are often conflated, and ultimately work together in a sort of bipartisan perpetuity⁷ to deny women access to safe abortion, regardless of the legislative or policy framework in each country.

Whilst USAID funds a very small proportion of IPPF's funding – and even less so for Marie Stopes International who also refuse its conditions – the GGR conveniently overshadows other *bipartisan* policies that are destructive and linked to reproductive harm, not only the Helms Amendment⁸, but the continued funding of anti-choice, anti LGBTQI actors⁹ and so on. Critical observers of U.S. foreign policy note its relentless focus on policing bodily autonomy, with the 'womb as a target of aggression and a tool of resistance'¹⁰. A critical point as we seek to better comprehend the harm of military policies on these same bodies. Recent revelations of reproductive and obstetric violence in militarized zones¹¹ where the U.S. is most active has forced the gaze back onto a reproductive justice¹² for ALL mandate, recognizing the global political, social and economic struggle with which our movement intersects. But in parallel, sexual and reproductive rights is once again the critical issue in this U.S. election which is often pitched as the Trump-Vance team against and the Biden-Harris team for reproductive freedom. While they do have different takes on domestic policy on abortion and on the re-instatement of the Global Gag Rule, on other aspects such as Helms and the escalation of reproductive violence against Palestinians they are indistinguishable.

The "Blueprint for SRHRJ Policy Agenda"¹³ is a proposal by US organizations, and signed onto by global organizations, that flags the intention of the sexual and reproductive rights community. It acts as a counterweight to the Heritage report (Project 2025)¹⁴. As things stand – and without sustained pressure - few, if any, of the *foreign* policy asks included that IPPF cares about will likely materialize, as remains the case with the Biden-Harris Administration. And any reference to an end to the supply of weapons to Israel, and thus sexual and reproductive justice for ALL has been shut down. Even the

⁴ This paper is largely concerned with reproductive justice, of which contraception is a single part.

⁵ <https://www.wilsonquarterly.com/quarterly/summer-2008-saving-the-world/how-did-population-control-movement-go-so-terribly-wrong>

⁶ <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2012/10/governmental-coercion-reproductive-decision-making-see-it-both-ways>

⁷ <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/ggr-helms-amendment>

⁸ In practice, the Helms Amendment has also been used to prohibit the use of federal funding for all abortions even in the circumstances of rape, incest, or risk to the life of the pregnant person, exceptions that have been allowed in other areas of U.S. international abortion law and policy.

⁹ https://centrefor feministforeignpolicy.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Progressive-cash-for-the-anti-LGBTQI-backlash_.pdf

¹⁰ <https://feminism-mena.fes.de/e/the-womb-as-a-weapon-in-palestine.html#:~:text=The%20article%20examines%20the%20systematic,during%20both%20war%20and%20genocide.>

¹¹ <https://www.justsecurity.org/92562/a-zone-of-silence-obstetric-violence-in-gaza-and-beyond/>

¹² <https://shado-mag.com/know/what-is-reproductive-justice/>

¹³ <https://reproblueprint.org/>

¹⁴ <https://www.heritage.org/life-and-family>

request to 'grow' FP funding (stuck at USD600m for over a decade) to the USD1.73 billion that is required would likely fail as the 'President's request' budget is a 'polite suggestion to Congress and not really meaningful at all; it is political posturing'¹⁵.

The bright spots are that a Harris-Walz win *will* bode better for UN funding (even as they continue to undermine the UN and UN Security Council) and organizations like IPPF would likely see a continuation of funds. A Harris-Walz win may well mean the appointment of an Ambassador in the State Department to coordinate SRHR policies, and whilst this is welcome, it would not result in the permanent repeal of the GGR, nor resolve the issue of Helms, which Democrats have carried through and implemented for time immemorial.

The elephant in the room is that many substantial U.S. foreign and military policies that continue to have a catastrophic impact on women and girls of reproductive age, LGBTQ communities, sex workers and other marginalized groups will continue, regardless of the outcomes of the election.

Both parties - through their financial and military support of a regime that is using said support to actively perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence, to attack health facilities and personnel who provide life-saving SRHR, to block humanitarian aid that includes life-saving SRHR commodities and medicines in occupied territories and neighboring states, means that when the gloss of campaign speak is stripped away, the United States has increased the extent to which it contributes to obstetric and reproductive violence against women and girls in all their diversity. U.S. 'aid' to Israel has translated to the steady supply of weapons which have disproportionately killed women of reproductive age and girls and have destroyed essential maternal health infrastructure in Gaza¹⁶. Whilst this reproductive violence is not limited to Palestine, it has had extreme impacts on women of reproductive age in Gaza particularly, where the WHO has documented the major impact on maternal deaths¹⁷. Gaza is now the most dangerous place in the world to be a pregnant woman. The ICJ in its order for provisional measures has stated that "there is a real and imminent risk" to Palestinian's plausible rights under the Genocide Convention¹⁸. Additionally, the UN Special Rapporteur of violence against women and girls stated that the 'reproductive violence inflicted ... on Palestinian women, newborn babies, infants, and children could be qualified as... acts of genocide under Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide ...' including 'imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group'.¹⁹ At the time of writing, Israeli attacks on hospitals, and the continual bombardment of Gaza have killed at least 986 medical workers including 165 doctors, 260 nurses, 184 health associates, 76 pharmacists and 300 management and support staff,²⁰ resulting in almost complete destruction of health sites and infrastructure.

IPPF has already communicated a clear position on zero tolerance for attacks on medical and humanitarian workers and facilities, and rape as a weapon of war. We continue to join calls for all hostages and all those arbitrarily detained to be released immediately and unconditionally. With all of the above in mind, IPPF has a clear ask to the US administration in its first 100 days, the most critical window of possibility for either transition team.

¹⁶ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/more-women-and-children-killed-gaza-israeli-military-any-other-recent-conflict>

¹⁷ <https://www.who.int/news/item/03-11-2023-women-and-newborns-bearing-the-brunt-of-the-conflict-in-gaza-un-agencies-warn>

¹⁸ <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>, paras 54 and 74. See also <https://opiniojuris.org/2024/04/05/the-icjs-findings-on-plausible-genocide-in-gaza-and-its-implications-for-the-international-criminal-court/> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3g9g63jl17o>.

¹⁹ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/03/1147976>

²⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2024/10/8/one-year-of-israels-war-on-gaza-by-the-numbers>

KEY ASKS:

1. Do not re-introduce the Global Gag Rule.
2. *Only if a Democrat win*, commit to appoint an Ambassador in the State Department to coordinate SRHR policies in the first week, including on trans rights and care, and
3. Either Administration to publicly declare intentions of and concretely work with congress on:
 - a. **The Global HER Act**
 - b. Permanent repeal of Helms through the **Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act**
 - c. Advancing global LGBTQ rights through the **Greater Leadership for the Benefit of Equality (GLOBE) Act**.
 - d. Supporting **UNFPA Funding Act** authorizes funding to UNFPA, (Kemp Kasten Amendment).
4. Commit to growing US investment for SRHR from 600m to \$1.7 billion²¹.
5. Commit to ceasing arms trade with Israel and other states committing offences under Article 2d of the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide; and to use all diplomatic channels to support a ceasefire and to refrain from blocking ceasefire agreements in the Security Council.
6. Official public apology for the reproductive / obstetric violence committed or facilitated by the U.S., aligning all foreign/defense policy areas and recommitting to principles of International Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, even if not a signatory.
7. Develop a pathway toward improved transparency and accountability for funding faith-based organizations and ensure their history with homo/transphobia and safe abortion are on the public record.
8. Dismantle the Geneva Consensus (and Protego)²²; and apologize to the global community in the name of the US for leading the Consensus, an initiative which advances policy measures which lead to human rights violations for women and LGBTQ+ people.

END.

²¹ As per the US Blueprint for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Justice Agenda.

²² <https://inthesetimes.com/article/project-2025-protego-trump-huber-abortion>