
THE MURAD CODE: INFORMATION SHEET (December 2019)

Developing a global code of conduct for documenting & investigating conflict-or atrocity-related sexual violence

Summary: The “Murad Code” is a consultative project to develop a global code of conduct for the documentation and investigation of conflict-or atrocity-related sexual violence (CARSV). It is a collaboration between the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) of the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI), in consultation with Nadia’s Initiative.

Background to & need for Code: In order to minimise harm or unintended consequences, those who investigate, document, monitor, research, advocate and report on (“document”) CARSV amounting to international crimes and other grave violations of international law should be guided by existing law, minimum standards and best practices on how to properly undertake such documentation. Easily accessible publications which reflect such standards and best practices include the *International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict* (2017). However, there are persistent and growing reports that some documenters, ranging from international bodies to NGOs, do not know, understand, or uphold that guidance. Ineffective and unsafe documentation practice, however well-intentioned, causes or exacerbates harm suffered by survivors/victims, violates their human rights, undermines trust in the rule of law and otherwise damages their prospects for accountability and redress. How can the international community effectively discourage harmful CARSV-documentation practices and incentivise documentation (where documentation is necessary, appropriate and what survivors want) which:

- is safe and survivor-centric;
- because of its content and format could effectively support justice and redress initiatives (*effective*); and
- respects the roles and objectives of other actors working with survivors (such as other accountability and fact-finding efforts, first-response and humanitarian assistance, advocacy, research, journalistic reporting), while minimising risks of re-traumatisation and duplication to survivors (*deconflicted and coordinated*)?

A global code of conduct widely supported and implemented by governments, UN bodies, other inter-governmental organisations, international and national investigating authorities, NGOs, civil-society organisations, donors and other actors could help to answer this important need.

Overall goals with the Code:

- To distil existing axiomatic (instead of creating new) minimum or core standards which are critical for safe, effective and survivor-centric CARSV documentation through the development and implementation of a globally supported Code.
- To strengthen respect for, and fulfilment of, survivors’ and witnesses’ human rights, including their rights to dignity, privacy, well-being, justice, remedies and development in relation to national and international accountability-relevant documentation processes.
- To prevent and avoid further harm, including re-traumatisation, being caused to survivors.
- Generally, to raise the effectiveness of such documentation efforts, thus improving the chances of better outcomes for survivors, and, consequently, for those who document and the wider local, national and international communities.
- To set in place support systems and provide practical guidance to ensure all actors can commit and adhere to the Code, in their roles, without creating any unnecessary barriers to those willing and able to act in survivors’ best interests.

Provisional process:

- Up to late January 2020: Preliminary consultations (“soundings”) on the Code with key actors and stakeholders, including survivors; and development of a draft Code and supporting materials.
- March 2020: Target date for formal launch of draft Murad Code, with NGOs, states, the UN, donors and other actors pledging support to survivor-centric CARSV documentation standards & further development of the Code towards future implementation and adherence. Launch at UK-hosted PSVI International Conference, or other suitable event.
- Post-launch: Global consultations on the target audience, content, further development and implementation of the Code towards publication around the end of 2020 of the following:
 - the final Code
 - a commentary on the Code (with practical examples to support application across settings)
 - a survivors’ charter (it will add the voices and requests of survivors to the Code, helping documenters understand and apply the Code)
 - a Code-implementation roadmap setting out options for any necessary Code-support system (including implementation tools).