



December 1, 2023

Ms. Jennifer Klein  
Director, Gender Policy Council  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington DC

Ms. Sima Bahous  
Executive Director of UN Women and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
220 E 42nd St.  
New York, NY 10017

**IWF and IWV Call On Advocates For Women's Rights and Women's Equality To Stand Up For Women And Against The Atrocities Committed By Hamas**

Dear Ms. Klein and Ms. Bahous,

Independent Women's Forum and Independent Women's Voice are the leading national women's organizations dedicated to advancing common-sense public policies and defending women's rights as a matter of policy, culture, and law.

All issues are women's issues - including war and terrorism - and we are horrified not only by the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel on October 7, 2023, including brutal, violent sexual assault, including rape of women and girls - but by the failure in too many quarters to condemn these acts. Silence is whitewashing the gravity of these crimes and sending a message that women are battlefields, and the dehumanization and degradation of their

bodies is legitimate.. This is wrong. It is grotesque. And it threatens women's safety and progress around the world.

***We call on all advocates for women's rights and women's equality to condemn the use of rape and sexual sadism against women and girls conducted by Hamas on October 7th in Israel.***

We were appalled at the unwillingness of a representative of UN Women during a recent interview on CNN to simply condemn Hamas for their mistreatment of women. This shouldn't be hard.

Debates about the geo-political aftermath of this horrific attack should not obscure this important fact: Women's bodies are not battlefields. Rape and mutilation must be universally condemned without equivocation. Those who orchestrated and carried out the mass rapes in Israel on October 7th should be brought to justice for war crimes.

Silence is consent. Failing to censure is to embolden. We urge you to use your platforms to stand up for women and against those who would use rape and sexual assault to demean, abuse, and terrorize women and girls.

Signed,

**Heather R Higgins**, Chief Executive Officer, Independent Women's Voice

**Carrie Lukas**, President, Independent Women's Forum

**Amber Schwartz**, Executive Vice President, Independent Women's Forum

**Andrea G. Bottner**, former Director of the International Women's Issues Office, U.S. Department of State and Vice President for External Affairs, Independent Women's Forum

**Dr. Qanta Ahmed**, Senior Fellow, Independent Women's Forum

**Meaghan Mobbs**, Senior Fellow, Independent Women's Forum