



GA2: Social and Humanitarian Committee

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Issue: Combating gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict regions

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I. Introduction

Gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict zones constitutes one of the most pervasive and insidious violations of human rights, encompassing sexual assault, rape, forced marriage, domestic abuse, and other forms of violence, while also operating as a deliberate tactic of social control, intimidation, and community destabilization that seeks not only to harm individuals but to fracture families, disrupt social cohesion, and perpetuate cycles of fear, trauma, and marginalization. Yet despite decades of international resolutions, humanitarian interventions, and global advocacy, the persistence and even intensification of such violence underscores the profound difficulty of translating policy into meaningful protection in contexts where legal systems are weak or corrupt, health and social services are inaccessible or destroyed, cultural norms enforce silence and shame, and ongoing insecurity renders both survivors and aid workers vulnerable, leaving perpetrators largely unpunished and communities exposed to repeated harm, and where even post-conflict environments, often assumed to offer safety and stability, remain sites of continued abuse, retaliation, and impunity. It is within this complex and often contradictory landscape that this report seeks to examine the multiple dimensions of gender-based violence, exploring both the failures of past and current interventions and the potential strategies, drawn from international, state, and community-level initiatives, that might prevent violence, deliver support and justice to survivors, and establish the systemic accountability and social change necessary to disrupt the entrenched cycles of abuse that continue to plague conflict-affected populations worldwide.

II. Key Vocabulary

Impunity: Under national or international law, impunity is the failure to hold criminals accountable. When it comes to conflicts, it permits arbitrary killings, torture, and sexual assault to continue unpunished, which feeds abusive cycles. The absence of justice discourages victims from reporting and encourages perpetrators to continue.

State actors: State actors include national armies, police departments, and security agencies that act as representatives of a government. They are bound by both domestic and international law to protect civilians and maintain order. However, in some conflicts, state actors themselves have been implicated in human rights abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence.



Armed Non-State Actors: Armed non-state actors are organized groups that use armed force but operate outside the formal structure of a recognized state. They include militias, insurgent groups, or terrorist organizations and often exercise control over territory or populations. Their actions in conflict frequently constitute violations of international humanitarian law, including gender-based violence.

War Crimes: War crimes are grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed during armed conflict. Using illegal weapons, assaulting aid workers, committing sexual violence, and targeting civilians are a few examples. They can face charges in national courts or international tribunals like the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Crimes Against Humanity: Serious transgressions carried out as a component of a broad or organized assault on civilian populations are referred to as crimes against humanity. Unlike war crimes, they can occur in times of war or peace. Acts such as murder, forced displacement, enslavement, and sexual violence fall under this category when carried out in an organized or large-scale manner.

Political Repression: Political repression is the restriction of political freedoms by governments or authorities in order to maintain control. It often involves surveillance, censorship, imprisonment, or the violent suppression of opposition. Political repression in conflict-affected states can exacerbate gender-based violence and silence survivors.

Sanctions: Coercive measures imposed by governments or international organizations to change the conduct of actors who transgress international norms are known as sanctions. They can include asset freezes, trade restrictions, or travel bans and may target individuals, groups, or entire governments. Sanctions are often used in response to human rights violations, including sexual violence in conflict.

III. Involved Countries and Organizations

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC goes into conflict zones and detention sites. It gives medical care, mental-health support, and basic services. It also tries to check on prisons by monitoring and reporting where sexual violence is alleged. The ICRC talks to armed groups and states, quietly, to get access or to prevent abuse. Work is practical and imbalanced, and even though documentation matters, access is limited, and survivors are often afraid to speak.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC pursues legal accountability, investigations, indictments, and trials for rape and other sexual crimes in war. It focuses on commanders and those with responsibility, not on frontline services. The main



goals are evidence gathering, witness protection, and long legal procedures. The court aims to deter, to punish, and to set legal precedent. Consequently, progress is slow, cooperation is uneven, and cases are complex.

UN Women

UN Women funds and runs programs for women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings. They assist in setting up services in areas like health, psychosocial, and legal; train responders and counsel governments. They push for gender-sensitive laws and for women's inclusion in peace processes. Work ranges from community projects to policy advocacy, and they try to prevent violence and to support survivors, often plugging gaps left by others.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

HRW documents abuses, interviews survivors and witnesses, and produces reports intended to shame or pressure perpetrators and states. They assemble patterns from numerous testimonies, and their reports advocate for investigations and reforms. Access can be risky; in order to draw attention to abuse, compel accountability, and promote change, they occasionally rely on distant sources or the testimonies of refugees.

Amnesty International

Amnesty conducts investigations and campaigns to expose forced marriage, sexual slavery, rape, and trafficking in conflict zones. They combine field research with public advocacy tools such as press releases, petitions, and lobbying. They identify perpetrators, urge prosecutions, and advocate for policy change, so their work is both case-driven and structural, combining individual stories with system-level reform.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

OHCHR monitors, documents, and reports on human rights violations, including sexual violence. They advise governments on law and policy, help build capacity in police and courts, and recommend reparations and protections. Their reports feed UN bodies and can trigger investigations or sanctions. They balance technical advice with public exposure, but access and security often constrain their reach.

IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

1. Gender-Based Violence and Conflict Regions



Conflict regions are identified by the presence of an international or non-international armed conflict, the transition from an armed conflict to peace, widespread or serious human rights violations, political and social instability or repression, and institutional weakness or collapse of state infrastructure. By definition, conflict regions are subject to extreme conditions for civilians; however, gender-based violence (GBV) in these areas remains overlooked. Gender-based violence is described as forcing another person to do something against their will because of their gender, of which the majority of victims are girls and women (LGBTIQ+ are also notably targeted).

GBV can take various forms, and all of them violate fundamental human rights through international law. *Sexual violence* is any done, attempted, or threatened sexual act without the clear consent of the victim, such as rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual slavery, sexual trafficking, exploitation, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, and forced prostitution. It is important to note that sexual violence can occur within marriages, and any sexual activity with a minor (any person who has not yet completed 18 years of age) constitutes sexual violence. *Physical violence* constitutes any physical act, like beating, punching, maiming, and even killing the victim, which is often combined with other forms of violence. *Emotional or psychological violence* is degrading or insulting verbal abuse, and *socio-economic violence* excludes the victim from participating in society, or the denial of access to their civil, social, economic, cultural, and political rights. *Domestic violence* is any sexual, physical, emotional, or psychological, and socio-economic violence committed by a family member (spouse, partner, relative, or someone considered a family member)—despite its prevalence, not necessarily in the same household. Other harmful practices include honor killings, female circumcision, polygamy, and forced marriage (including but not limited to any marriage with minors).

2. Conflict-Related Dynamics of GBV

The profile of the perpetrator, who frequently has ties to state or non-state armed groups, including those the Security Council has designated as terrorist groups, or the profile of the victim, who may be a real or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic, or religious minority or targeted due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, may make the connection between the conflict and the perpetrator clear. Other factors that may be present include a climate of impunity, cross-border repercussions, such as trafficking or displacement, and/or violations of the terms of a ceasefire agreement.

“Women continue to pay the price of the wars of men,” said UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous (“War on Women”). GBV, especially sexual violence against girls and women in conflict regions, continues to be used as a tactic of war and a severe and brutal type of political repression. In an alarming number of contexts, conflict-related sexual violence is also used as a tactic to consolidate territory and natural resources, which explains the difference in extremity between GBV and GBV in conflict regions, as it



transforms an already systematic sociological problem into an even more organized and sensitive one. Although the profile of victims usually remains the same—civil girls and women in conflict or post-conflict regions—the profile of perpetrators needs to be examined and addressed in order to solve this issue on a global scale. In recent years, non-state armed groups, including organized criminal groups, groups under sanctions enacted by the Security Council, and transnational criminal networks, appear to be the most common political groups that use sexual violence as a tactic of war.

3. Global Situation in Recent Years

GBV, realistically, has been a major problem throughout war and human history. However, in the post-World War II era, the new age of diplomacy has yet to solve this issue. In recent years, GBV in conflict regions has significantly increased, especially due to conflict regions such as Palestine. In 2023, the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts and UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence doubled compared to the previous year. Also, four out of every ten people who died as a result of conflict in 2023 were women despite the fact that men make up the majority of military forces. Violence in conflict-affected regions is even more prone to be systematic as the rule of law and state authority remain weak, which allows entities under sanctions enacted by the Security Council or organized criminal groups to enter the area and take advantage of civilians. Notably, in Sudan, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique, cases of abduction and trafficking of persons continue to be reported—the abduction of women and girls by non-state armed groups was used to incentivize and recruit fighters in Nigeria's case.

Sexual violence is also used as a form of torture in detention (the deprivation of liberty caused by the act of confining a person in a narrowly bounded place, under the control or with the consent of a state, or, in non-international armed conflicts, a non-state actor), reportedly in Israel and the State of Palestine, Libya, Myanmar, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, and Yemen. In fact, most of the incidents against men and boys happened in these conditions, in which forms of sexual torture



Image 1: Women and Armed Conflict (YWCA)



include rape, threats of rape, and the electrocution and beating of genitals in order to humiliate them, dominate them, or strip them of their humanity and dignity. As for women and girls, particularly in Libya, there is a concerning trend of prison guards or armed individuals exploiting the difficult conditions of detention to coerce detainees into performing sexual acts, including in exchange for food and other services. Humanitarian access to detention sites is severely restricted or blocked in several settings, impeding monitoring and reporting while also raising protection concerns, particularly for migrant, refugee, and displaced women and girls who are at a higher risk of conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls were attacked in their homes, on the roads, and while carrying out essential livelihood activities. The victims' ages ranged from one to 75 years old.

Stigma, which stemmed from harmful practices, continued to cause survivors' socioeconomic exclusion and impoverishment. Violations committed in front of family members, including children, tore apart family ties and networks. For survivors who become pregnant as a result of rape, pregnancy may be interpreted as proof of affiliation with an armed group or as a loss of "honor," exacerbating ostracism and endangering victims and children. Women in detention were often stigmatized and rejected by their families and communities in Afghanistan, Libya, and the Syrian Arab Republic because it was assumed that they had been raped while in detention. In a similar vein, women detained by Da'esh (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) experience social exclusion and stigma following their release. Furthermore, survivors' and their children's lives can be significantly impacted by the particular stigma associated with a perceived affiliation with a terrorist organization, which lowers their chances of social acceptance, integration, and financial survival.

4. Conflict Regions

In Afghanistan, the Taliban authorities sought to erase women and girls from public life, creating a climate of fear and impunity that obstructed reporting of sexual violence. In 2024, UNAMA confirmed cases of rape and forced marriage affecting five women, four girls, and two boys, involving Taliban officials and unidentified men. That same year, the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice formalized restrictions such as mandatory male guardianship (mahram), dress codes, and gender segregation. The Special Rapporteur received reports of abuse directed at detainees based on their gender identity or sexual orientation, as well as torture and sexual violence against detained women and protesters. The ICC prosecutor concluded in January 2025 that Taliban members had committed crimes of persecution and sexual violence against women since April 2021, primarily targeting those who protested, violated discriminatory rules, or were detained.

In the Central African Republic, in 2024, sexual violence escalated in both western and eastern regions as clashes intensified. MINUSCA documented over 400 cases of rape, gang rape, forced marriage,



and sexual slavery affecting women, girls, and a few men. Armed groups such as 3R, CPC, CPC-F, UPC, and FPRC were major perpetrators, targeting civilians during raids, in schools, and near agricultural fields. In Yade, 3R fighters used sexual violence to secure mining sites, while in Mbomou, UPC and FPRC members abducted and raped women, sometimes accusing them of collaborating with state forces. Attacks on Muslim communities have been linked to the Wagner Ti Azande organization. Over a hundred victims were reported in bases, and the national defense and security forces were also accountable. Humanitarian actors registered more than 1,800 additional cases, mostly attributed to armed groups. The government took steps to strengthen accountability, launching its second national action plan (2024–2028) on conflict-related sexual violence, developing an armed forces action plan, and appointing a Deputy Chief of Staff to oversee implementation. A joint rapid response unit prepared a five-year strategy with UN support, though resources remained limited. Victims of the Limouna and Koundjouli attacks in 2019 received \$32,000 in reparations from the Special Criminal Court.

In Colombia, eight years after the peace accord with FARC-EP, implementation of gender provisions remained limited. Renewed clashes between armed groups and national forces, as well as disagreements over illegal economies, raised the stakes, and peace talks with the ELN collapsed in early 2025. 1,097 cases of conflict-related sexual violence (1,009 women, 73 men, and 15 LGBTQI+ persons) were reported by the National Victims' Unit in 2024, a 68% increase from 2023. Over one-third of cases involved Afro-Colombian or Indigenous victims. Perpetrators included Clan del Golfo, ELN, FARC dissidents, Estado Mayor factions, and, in some reports, security forces. The UN separately verified 80 cases, mainly affecting women and girls, with children involved in 49. Survivors faced persistent barriers to reporting and accessing services, especially in rural areas. The government launched its first national action plan on UNSCR 1325, allocating funds to address sexual violence. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued rulings in Macro Cases 7 and 11, holding former FARC leaders accountable and registering 127 survivors. The Attorney General's Office opened 99 criminal proceedings, while the Victims' Unit granted reparations to 191 individuals. To improve the protection of women journalists, a dedicated fund was established following an Inter-American Court ruling.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 2024, conflict in North and South Kivu escalated. Displacement increased, and so did the risks of trafficking and sexual slavery. More than 22,000 cases of sexual violence were recorded in 2023 in North Kivu, and by May 2024, another 17,000 survivors had already sought treatment. Attacks were often brutal, with gang rape and penetration using objects. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) documented 823 cases of rape, gang rape, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. Non-state groups were behind the majority. Still, state forces were implicated in nearly 200 incidents, including rape in detention and even killings after assault. Food shortages meant women and girls had to leave camps to search for food,



which made them targets. Forced prostitution was another coping mechanism. Groups used sexual violence as a strategy. M23 cases rose sharply to 152 in 2024. Nyatura factions attacked villages, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki terrorized mining zones, CODECO carried out gang rapes, and ADF abducted and enslaved girls. In Tanganyika, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale and former Twa militias carried out rapes in front of families. Human rights defenders who spoke out were threatened and MONUSCO supported three investigation missions and four mobile courts.

In the State of Palestine (the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which encompasses the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, as well as in Israel) in March 2024, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General confirmed, through extensive interviews, site visits, and corroborated evidence, that a number of hostages taken to Gaza were subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence during their time in captivity, with allegations including sexualized torture and other forms of gender-based abuse, and there were also reasonable grounds to believe that sexual violence had occurred during the attacks of 7 October 2023 across multiple locations in Israel, including incidents of rape and gang rape, while several bodies were recovered, mostly women, found partially or fully undressed from the waist down, hands bound, with multiple gunshot wounds, often to the head, and although circumstantial, patterns of undressing and restraint strongly indicated sexual violence prior to death, findings that were corroborated by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, which also reported reasonable grounds to conclude that sexual violence occurred at sites such as the Nova festival, along Road 232, at the Nahal Oz military outpost, and at the kibbutzim of Re'im, Nir Oz, and Kfar Aza, while additional credible reports indicated that hostages had been subjected to sexualized abuse and gender-based violence while held in captivity under extremely controlled and coercive conditions. Hamas led and coordinated the 7 October attacks in collaboration with a number of other Palestinian armed groups, including the military wings of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Resistance Committees, and the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement, as well as civilians from Gaza, demonstrating a level of planning, coordination, and intelligence on the selected targets that reflected detailed prior knowledge and strategic intent. Following the attacks, military operations in Gaza by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and ongoing hostilities throughout the territory contributed to a catastrophic humanitarian situation, with thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children arrested and detained by Israeli armed and security forces in conditions that deteriorated dramatically over the reporting period. The United Nations verified 12 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the Israel Defense Forces, Israel Prison Service, including the "Nachshon" Unit and Keter special forces, the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet), and the Police Counter-Terrorism Unit (Yamam), in detention facilities such as Naqab/Ketziot, Ofer, and Etzion, involving acts ranging from rape and attempted rape to squeezing, pulling, and beating of detainees' genitals, forced nudity, and repeated abusive strip searches. Furthermore, the



Commission of Inquiry also documented additional cases of rape and genital violence against male detainees in prisons and military bases and received credible reports of burns to the anus, and outside of detention settings, further incidents were verified during raids and at checkpoints, while in Gaza, Palestinian men, women, and children were subjected to prolonged forced nudity, sometimes filmed or photographed by Israeli forces, with all cases constrained by limited access, and the lack of trust in complaints mechanisms, fear of reprisals, shame, and stigma continuing to impede reporting, while Israeli authorities provided some information on standard operating procedures and oversight mechanisms, but accountability measures for sexual violence remained limited despite the availability of witness testimony and digital evidence.

In Libya, the combination of insecurity, widespread availability of illicit arms, and ongoing political divisions created conditions in which conflict-related sexual violence could persist with very little accountability, affecting particularly vulnerable groups such as migrant women, asylum-seekers, and Libyan girls, who in 2024 were verified by the United Nations as having been subjected to rape and sexual exploitation in detention centers operated by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration, including facilities in Kufrah, Abu Salim in Tripoli, Zuwara, Sabrata, and Assah, among other locations. Reporting these abuses remained extremely limited because survivors faced fear of reprisals, social stigma, harmful norms, and practical barriers when attempting to file complaints, while historical patterns of abuse, such as those committed by the Kaniyat armed group during their control of Tarhunah from 2013 to 2020, demonstrated that rape, mutilation of men's genitals, and other forms of sexual violence had long been used as methods of torture and domination, and that such practices have become deeply entrenched over time.

Threats and incidents of sexual violence continued in detention centers, while humanitarian access was severely restricted, leaving victims with almost no safe avenues for support. Reports indicated that detainees held by the Deterrence Agency for Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime were subjected to forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence, and that prisons controlled by the Internal Security Agency in eastern Libya, including Kuwayfiah military wing and Gernada, were sites of sexual slavery and coercion, while the Bi'r al-Ghanam detention facility in western Libya also experienced documented incidents of sexual violence, showing a pervasive pattern across multiple institutions. Migrants, refugees, and displaced persons remained at high risk, with traffickers, smugglers, armed groups, and state actors all implicated in acts of sexual violence, exploitation, and slavery, and most survivors having extremely limited or no access to services or justice.

In Mali, in 2024, the situation continued to be defined by persistent conflict, a deteriorating humanitarian situation, and a shrinking civic space, with the intensification of violence by armed groups alongside ongoing military operations exacerbating the risks of conflict-related violence, particularly against displaced women and children, while sexual violence remained largely underreported due to limited access



to services, fear of reprisals, widespread insecurity, movement restrictions related to landmines, and the stigma surrounding such crimes. Despite these obstacles, the United Nations verified, as part of its monitoring of grave violations against children, the rape of thirty-two girls, while humanitarian service providers also registered one hundred and fifty-seven cases of sexual violence committed by armed actors—including rape, gang rape, forced marriage, and sexual slavery—affecting one hundred and twenty women and thirty-seven girls, with some cases resulting in pregnancy, occurring across the regions of Timbuktu, Ménaka, Gao, Ségou, and Mopti, and gang rapes perpetrated by armed actors were reported in Gao, Ménaka, Bandiagara, and Koro, with attacks on civilians travelling by road in central and northern Mali often involving the sexual assault of women and girls, though these figures likely reflect only a fraction of the actual scale and prevalence of such crimes, as the closure of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the dismantling of the monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangement significantly curtailed the capacity to monitor and report sexual violence. Access to gender-based violence services remained uneven across rural areas of Kidal, Ségou, Koro, Gao, Timbuktu, Ménaka, and Bandiagara, with many survivors lacking access to medical care due to insecurity, poor road conditions, floods, and damage to at least thirty-four health facilities, particularly in regions such as Ségou and Gao. While stigma, a lack of awareness of legal procedures, and the requirement to travel long distances prevented the majority of survivors from reaching legal and protection services. Additionally, open cases dating back to 2013 that had been prioritized in 2021 before national judicial authorities have yet to be prosecuted, reflecting systemic challenges in the justice system, and one notable development during the reporting period was the adoption, in December 2024, of a new Penal Code and a Code of Criminal Procedure, which broadened the definition of rape, although these reforms also introduced the criminalization of homosexuality, further complicating access to justice for certain vulnerable populations.

In Myanmar, in 2024, reports of conflict-related sexual violence continued to emerge across Myanmar, with women, men, girls, boys, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons disproportionately affected, predominantly by the Myanmar armed forces during military operations, at checkpoints, in detention, in displacement sites, and while tending to agricultural fields. In the meantime, fighting intensified between the Myanmar armed forces and multiple armed groups, resulting in 1.5 million newly displaced people since hostilities escalated in October 2023, and was further compounded by the earthquakes that struck in March 2025, affecting over two million people, amid which escalating conflict, widespread poverty, and the collapse of social services heightened the risks of trafficking of women and children, including allegations of sexual slavery and forced marriage, creating a situation in which civilians were increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and in which sexual violence functioned both as a tactic of control and a tool of terror. In detention, authorities reportedly used sexual violence to punish or extract information, with verified reports of rape, including anal rape and penetration with objects, perpetrated by individual or multiple actors. Women, men, children, and LGBTIQ+ persons were subjected to rape and



gang rape during interrogations, including with bamboo sticks, and during ground operations civilians were subjected to sexual slavery, gang rape, and assaults at checkpoints, with instances of rape in front of family members and bodies recovered with objects inserted into genitals, crimes intended to punish, terrorize, and assert control, often targeting victims for their gender, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, or sexual identity. Allegations also involved elements of ethnic armed organizations and people's defense forces. The collapse of the judiciary and rule of law severely limited access to justice, while the military denied allegations of sexual violence, and no personnel were reported held accountable. Customary justice mechanisms controlled by ethnic armed organizations sometimes forced survivors to marry their perpetrators. The National Unity Government reportedly strengthened guidelines to prevent gender-based violence and announced investigations into sexual violence committed by people's defense forces and certain armed groups, while mandatory conscription in February 2024 prompted thousands to flee, increasing trafficking risks, and exemptions for married women reportedly led to forced marriages.

In Somalia, in 2024, the situation remained trapped in a complex and worsening web of conflict, insecurity, and competition over scarce resources, with armed actors, shifting local tensions, and fragile governance creating an environment in which displaced women and girls, already navigating the hardships of displacement, extreme poverty, and disrupted livelihoods, were uniquely exposed to conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, and forced marriage, perpetrated primarily by Al-Shabaab but also by unidentified armed men and, in certain instances, members of the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force, while restricted access to areas controlled by armed groups, the protective influence of clan structures shielding alleged perpetrators, and a pervasive climate of fear, stigma, and impunity combined to ensure that most of these crimes went unreported, leaving survivors isolated and with limited avenues for redress, as traditional justice mechanisms frequently prioritized clan reconciliation or compensation over accountability, effectively shielding perpetrators from criminal responsibility, and in this context violence became both a deeply personal trauma for victims and a systematic tool of power, control, and social domination, disrupting not only families and communities but the social fabric of entire regions, while humanitarian actors, constrained by insecurity, financial gaps, and the destruction or closure of support infrastructure, struggled to provide life-saving services. The United Nations, despite these challenges, supported the delivery of services through one-stop centres to 314 survivors of sexual violence, including victims of forced marriages to members of Al-Shabaab and persons with disabilities, though following the handover of five rehabilitation centres to the Federal Government in June, operations ceased due to financial constraints, while 42 other support centres were forced to close, and government-led services, where available, remained severely underresourced, lacking trained personnel particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, and although progress in implementing the 2013 joint communiqué has stalled, the Ministry of Family and Human Rights Development indicated in August that an implementation strategy



was under development, reflecting both the persistent structural obstacles and the ongoing, albeit limited, commitment to address sexual violence and improve access to justice and protection for survivors.

In South Sudan, in 2024, the abduction of women and girls for the purposes of sexual slavery remained a grim and persistent feature of intercommunal violence across South Sudan, with repeated reports of women and girls being forced not only to witness the execution of male family members during clashes between the Azande and Balanda communities in Western Equatoria State from March to April, but also subsequently being subjected to gang rape, sometimes held in sexual slavery, while in Jonglei and Unity States, clashes between farming and pastoralist communities were likewise marked by systematic sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls who were frequently attacked in their homes, near military barracks or checkpoints, in detention, or even while fleeing conflict, with perpetrators spanning a range of actors including community-based militias, other non-State actors, and elements of government security forces such as the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, the South Sudan National Police Service, and the National Security Service, alongside cases attributed to the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition and splinter groups of the National Salvation Front, particularly in Central Equatoria State, and with community-based militias accounting for over half of the incidents in Western Equatoria, Unity, and Jonglei States, while victims, including displaced persons and people with disabilities, were targeted while undertaking essential livelihood activities or travelling to and from school, making clear that the sexual violence was not incidental but rather a deliberate and pervasive tool of intimidation, control, and terror across multiple regions of the country, leaving survivors to navigate trauma, displacement, and insecurity in their daily lives.

In Sudan, in 2024, hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces intensified, fuelled by a steady flow of arms into the country, creating what has become the largest displacement crisis globally, with reports of conflict-related sexual violence continuing to emerge across multiple States, as women, girls, men, and boys were abducted, raped, gang-raped, or subjected to sexual slavery, often in the context of indiscriminate attacks by the Rapid Support Forces, which, following the defection of a commander to the Sudanese Armed Forces in October 2024, attacked villages in Al-Jazirah State, looting, killing, and committing acts of sexual violence against civilians, while monitoring remained extremely challenging due to restricted access for service providers, stigma, and the near-collapse of the rule of law, yet despite these obstacles, the United Nations documented numerous cases including rape, gang rape, attempted rape, and abduction for sexual exploitation, occurring primarily in Al-Jazirah, Kassala, Gedaref, Sennar, North and West Kordofan States, North, West and South Darfur, and Khartoum, affecting 90 women, 36 girls, 4 men and 1 boy, and with 82 of these cases dating to 2023, while perpetrators included elements of the Rapid Support Forces and allied militias, members of armed movements, and elements of the Sudanese Armed Forces, with service providers recording a total of 221 rape cases since



the start of 2024, 16 percent involving children under five, including one-year-olds, and incidents resulting in pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and severe physical injuries, often committed in homes, displacement sites, or during flight from conflict. Widespread sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, was systematically documented during the invasion of cities, attacks on internally displaced persons' sites, and against individuals fleeing conflict-affected areas, with women and girls assaulted in their homes, in front of family members, or, in some cases, abducted and held over several days or months, while non-Arab women, particularly Masalit, were specifically targeted on the basis of ethnicity in El Geneina, West Darfur, and displacement camps in Nyala, South Darfur, and similar patterns of large-scale sexual violence were observed in Zalingei, Central Darfur, El Fasher, North Darfur and Greater Khartoum, alongside documented cases of rape, gang rape, and sexual slavery committed by Rapid Support Forces elements in September 2023 in the Nuba Mountains, South Kordofan, and reports of sexual violence by the Sudanese Armed Forces and its Military Intelligence, including sexual exploitation of women and girls in exchange for food, were also recorded. In July 2024, Special Representatives of the United Nations visited eastern Chad, where Sudanese refugees have sought protection, meeting survivors, frontline service providers, women-led organizations, and Chadian authorities, hearing detailed accounts of sexual violence, including gang rape by Rapid Support Forces elements targeting women activists and first responders, causing severe injuries and unwanted pregnancies, while Sudanese women-led organizations continued to play a pivotal role in documenting and responding to cases, often at great personal risk, in a context where up to 80 percent of health facilities are damaged or non-operational, severely limiting access to services, and in some areas controlled by the Sudanese Armed Forces, administrative barriers imposed by the Humanitarian Aid Commission, Military Intelligence, and General Intelligence Service further restricted the work of civil society organizations. The conflict has severely curtailed the functioning of rule of law institutions, disrupting policing and court systems across multiple States, and in response, Sudanese authorities established a National Committee of Investigation on Human Rights Violations, War Crimes, and Violations by the Rebel Rapid Support Forces and Other Crimes in July 2023, which as of September 2024 had registered 18,741 cases against members of the Rapid Support Forces and allied Arab militias for alleged crimes including genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and sexual violence, with at least 65 cases tried, 2 including charges of international crimes, while the Fact-Finding Mission reported that cases have targeted lawyers, activists, human rights defenders, and emergency response coordinators based on perceived affiliations with the Rapid Support Forces.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, after 14 years of conflict marked by arbitrary detention, torture, and widespread sexual violence, the regime of Bashar al-Assad fell on 8 December 2024, following the takeover of Damascus and other major cities by a coalition of armed opposition groups led by Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham, leaving women, men, girls, and boys at continued and heightened risk of sexual violence, particularly in displacement settings and detention facilities, where vulnerabilities remained extreme and often



compounded by ongoing instability, restricted access to services, and pervasive threats to safety, while the effects of previous years of systemic violence and coercion persisted across communities throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2024, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic documented cases of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence in detention facilities, including against two detainees in late 2023 and early 2024, while still under the custody of the Military Intelligence Directorate controlled by the former government, and further reported that between March 2011 and December 2020, women, men, girls, and boys as young as 11 were subjected to sexual violence in at least 20 official and unofficial detention facilities, often during interrogations intended to coerce, intimidate, or extract confessions, with men constituting the majority of victims, while women and girls were repeatedly raped and gang-raped in cells, male and female detainees were systematically targeted for perceived support to political opponents or non-state armed groups, and acts included rape with objects, beatings, electrocution, burning of genitals, anus and breasts, tying of men's genitals to prevent urination, genital mutilation, forced nudity, and being forced to witness sexual violence against others. Outside detention facilities, allegations of gang rape and other forms of sexual violence implicated members of the so-called opposition Syrian National Army, including cases against two Kurdish women, one of whom had been a former member of the Women's Protection Units of the Syrian Democratic Forces, and underreporting was exacerbated by stigma, fear of reprisals, and limited access to multisectoral assistance, while in the northwest of the country, prior to the fall of the former regime, women-led organizations and women's human rights defenders working on gender equality, reproductive health, and violence against women were reportedly subjected to threats, harassment, defamation, and violent rhetoric, both online and offline, by elements of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and certain religious leaders, further constraining their ability to provide support, document violations, or advocate for survivors.

In Ukraine, in 2024, a human rights monitoring mission recorded 209 cases of conflict-related sexual violence—a catalogue of horrors that included rape, attempted rape, threats of rape and castration, genital mutilation, electric shocks and beatings to the genitals, and forced nudity—affecting 156 men, 46 women, 6 girls and 1 boy, and committed by members of the Russian armed forces, by law-enforcement personnel and by penitentiary staff; these abuses took place against Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war both in territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation and inside the Russian Federation itself, with Ukrainian prisoners of war repeatedly subjected to sexual violence at all stages of captivity as a means to humiliate and to extract confessions or information, while civilian detainees suffered sexual violence during apprehension, at admission and through subsequent detention, and outside detention facilities occupying authorities were reported to have forcibly entered homes—sometimes occupying them for prolonged periods—restraining men before raping women and, in some instances, killing victims' husbands. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine similarly found rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls aged between 15 and 83 during house searches and in



detention, and the monitoring mission collected reports that point to systematic torture and sexual violence of Ukrainian prisoners of war across dozens of official and unofficial detention sites—a picture made harder to fully document because Russian authorities denied United Nations monitors access, and because trauma, stigma, and the fear of reprisals against family members in occupied areas continue to suppress reporting. In 2024, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine documented a total of 24 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in the territory of Ukraine under the control of the government. These cases comprised threats of rape and castration, electric shocks and beatings to the genitals, as well as forced nudity against men, including civilian detainees and Russian prisoners of war. In the territory of Ukraine under the control of the government, Ukrainian authorities continued to grant independent monitors access to civilian detainees and Russian prisoners of war. The human rights monitoring mission also collected reports indicating that since 2022, cases implicating members of the Ukrainian authorities, mainly from the Ukrainian armed forces and the Security Service, against Russian prisoners of war occurred primarily in the initial stages of captivity, and against civilians, mainly following their apprehension and prior to being detained, with sexual violence used to humiliate them and elicit confessions or information. Since 2022, cases against Russian prisoners of war have been documented in 3 official and 23 unofficial detention facilities, while cases against civilian detainees have been recorded in 18 official and 6 unofficial facilities in Ukraine. The Government of Ukraine continued to provide access for civilian detainees and Russian prisoners of war to lawyers and to their families. In August 2024, the Office of the Prosecutor General established a new unit to coordinate the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence committed by Ukrainian authorities, the documentation of possible war crimes and the provision of guidance to criminal proceedings. Ukraine became a State Party in January 2025 after ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in October 2024. Article 124 of the Statute states that the Court will not have jurisdiction over war crimes committed by Ukrainian nationals for seven years following ratification. In November, the parliament adopted a law on the protection of the rights of survivors and interim reparations.

In Yemen, women and girls were exposed to heightened risks of conflict-related sexual violence, which, due to harmful social norms, the fear of reprisals and stigma, remained dramatically underreported. Six boys and five girls were victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, according to the United Nations. The Panel of Experts on Yemen reported that conflict-related sexual violence remained pervasive, with reports of sexual violence—including as a form of torture—being perpetrated in detention against women, children, and men. In “summer camps” used by the Houthis to indoctrinate children, there are reports of incidents of sexual violence, including rape against children. The recruitment of girls by the Zaynabiyat—the female security wing of the Houthis—reportedly increased, often through abduction, and resulted in girls’ alleged exploitation for domestic labor and sexual violence. Further reports indicate that the forced marriage of children is incentivized to secure loyalty to the Houthis’ cause. In 2024, the Houthis



arbitrarily detained personnel of the United Nations, international and national non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and diplomatic missions, resulting in the suspension of critical services for survivors of gender-based violence in northern Yemen. Such services were further hindered by movement restrictions on female Yemeni staff of United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations, and those challenges were compounded by funding shortfalls.

5. Post-Conflict Regions

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, reparations for survivors remained uneven and inadequate owing to the different terms applicable to survivors under the legislation in their place of residence. A decision by the Council of Ministers to extend the deadline for processing complex war crimes cases, including sexual violence, until 2025, may not resolve the current backlog. In the territory of the Republika Srpska in particular, the deadline for claiming status as a victim under the law on the protection of victims of wartime torture has expired. In Kosovo, despite the two-year extension of the deadline for obtaining recognition as a victim of sexual violence, potential survivors continue to be excluded due to the limited temporal scope of the legislation and underreporting. Research on the long-term consequences of sexual violence in Kosovo found that 86 percent of survivors continued to experience post-traumatic stress disorder 25 years after the conflict, despite having received psychosocial care. It also showed the negative impacts of sexual violence on survivors' family life, as well as the continued trauma after conflict.

In Iraq, the government made significant progress in addressing some of the needs of survivors, notably through the implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors enacted in 2021. National authorities continued to engage with my Special Representative on the implementation of the 2016 joint communiqué and appointed a new high-level focal point for this purpose in December. Of the estimated 6,417 Yazidis abducted by Da'esh, 1,229 women and 1,363 men remain missing. Following the rescue of eight Yazidi women from the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2024, the United Nations verified that Da'esh had abducted them as children in 2014 and sold them multiple times as sexual slaves. In addition, reports indicate that out of 580 Shi'a Turkmen (460 girls and 120 boys) abducted by Da'esh in 2014, only 26 female survivors have been rescued and returned to Iraq, including two in 2024. Gender-based violence in detention remains a grim and persistent reality, and the accounts from survivors carry the weight of that history: scenes that recall Abu Ghraib—sexual humiliation, coercive stripping, assaults used as a method of interrogation or punishment—have been invoked by those who survived detention and by humanitarians trying to document abuses, and this is no mere historical comparison but a live warning about how detention settings, when left unchecked, become instruments of terror and control that amplify vulnerability rather than protect human dignity; that legacy of abuse makes the task of monitoring, of establishing independent oversight, and of building accountability mechanisms a matter not just of policy but of urgent moral imperative. Under the Law on Support to Female Yazidi



Survivors, the General Directorate for Survivors Affairs under the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs referred 189 survivors to mental health and psychosocial support services in 2024, and in December, national authorities initiated a pilot program to allow survivors to file criminal complaints in third countries, easing barriers to justice and redress for those resettled abroad. As of December 2024, a total of 2,276 applications for compensation under the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors had been approved, with 1,155 for Yazidi, Turkmen, Shabak, and Christian survivors of sexual violence as beneficiaries. In August, the Kurdistan Regional Government began disbursing a complementary monthly allowance of approximately \$100 to Yazidi survivors of Da'esh atrocities, including survivors of sexual violence crimes. Nevertheless, some challenges remain, including gaps in protection and assistance for children born of rape. Civil society organizations and survivors also expressed concerns over the lack of justice and accountability for sexual violence crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq and the need to prosecute the full range of substantive crimes beyond terrorism.

In Nepal, the Federal Parliament in August amended the Transitional Justice Act to require the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to operate “transparently in a victim-centric, gender-friendly” manner, a move that explicitly foregrounds survivors’ needs and stresses enhanced access to services for victims of sexual violence and torture, and alongside that reform the statutory limitation on filing cases related to sexual violence was removed and a special three-month window opened for complaint registration, measures that have created new formal pathways for redress even as they expose the practical and procedural hurdles that remain. Procedural challenges persist—most notably the heavy burden of proof required to corroborate accounts of sexual violence—and underreporting continues to obscure the true scale of harm, yet implementation of the second national action plan on resolution 1325 for 2022–2025 has nevertheless improved capacities among duty-bearers and rights-holders through the establishment of local-level mechanisms, signalling incremental but meaningful steps toward survivor-centered justice and service provision.

In Sri Lanka, allegations of human rights violations—including sexual violence against Tamil individuals by Sri Lankan security forces in areas most affected by the conflict—continued to surface in 2024 against a backdrop of prolonged delays in reconciliation and accountability, and these reports have fed a wider sense of grievance and mistrust that complicates any effort to move forward; following the publication in January 2024 of a bill to establish a Commission for Truth, Unity and Reconciliation, special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council raised concerns that the draft was not aligned with international norms and standards, suggesting that the proposed mechanisms may fall short of offering credible, rights-centred remedies, while the Office for Reparations, with United Nations support, initiated programmes in northern Sri Lanka to provide psychosocial support to survivors—programmes that, despite



their importance, have been met with reluctance by many survivors who remain deterred by stigma and fear of retraumatisation.

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
08/08/1945	The signing of the London Charter, which established the Nuremberg Tribunal, one of the first international courts to prosecute war crimes
09/12/1948	Adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by the UN General Assembly
10/12/1948	Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the UN General Assembly affirming the principle of equality and dignity for all
12/08/1949	Adoption of the Geneva Conventions, establishing the core framework of international humanitarian law, including protections for civilians and prisoners of war
10/12/1984	Adoption of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
16/12/1993	The UN General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAV)
09/12/1994	The UN General Assembly established the Trust Fund for Victims of Torture, later expanded to include victims of sexual violence in conflicts
17/07/1998	Adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), defining crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, including sexual violence
27/05/1999	The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) issued its first conviction for sexual violence as a crime against humanity (the Furundžija case)
31/10/2000	Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, a landmark in addressing gender in peace processes and conflicts
19/06/2008	Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1820, recognizing sexual violence as a tactic of war and a threat to international peace and security



VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [Resolution 1325 \(31/10/2000\)](#)

This was the first landmark Security Council resolution on Women, Peace, and Security. It recognized that armed conflict disproportionately affects women and girls, and emphasized the importance of women's participation in peace processes, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction. It also called on parties to armed conflict to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and sexual abuse.

- [Resolution 1820 \(19/06/2008\)](#)

This resolution explicitly acknowledged sexual violence as a tactic of war and a matter of international peace and security. It demanded the immediate cessation of all acts of sexual violence in armed conflict and stressed the need to end impunity by prosecuting perpetrators of such crimes. It also linked sexual violence directly to the maintenance of international peace and security, marking a shift in Security Council language.

- [Resolution 1888 \(30/09/2009\)](#)

Building on 1820, this resolution strengthened the framework for addressing conflict-related sexual violence. It established the position of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and called for the deployment of experts to support governments in combating sexual violence. It also mandated stronger leadership and accountability mechanisms within peacekeeping missions.

- [Resolution 1960 \(16/12/2010\)](#)

This resolution introduced monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements (MARA) on conflict-related sexual violence. It created a systematic way to track and list parties to armed conflict credibly suspected of committing patterns of sexual violence. It also called for time-bound commitments from listed parties to address these violations, enhancing accountability.

- [Resolution 2106 \(24/06/2013\)](#)

This resolution reinforced previous commitments but focused more heavily on operationalizing justice and accountability. It emphasized the importance of investigating and prosecuting perpetrators, addressing root causes, and ensuring survivor-centered responses. It also called for better training for peacekeepers and national security forces to prevent sexual violence in conflict.



- [Resolution 2467 \(23/04/2019\)](#)

This resolution advanced a survivor-centered approach, highlighting the need for comprehensive services, including health care, psychosocial support, justice, and reparations. It also recognized the importance of addressing stigma faced by survivors, particularly children born of rape. While debated for its compromises on language around reproductive health, it reaffirmed sexual violence in conflict as a threat to peace and security and called for stronger accountability measures.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

Efforts to combat gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict zones have persistently struggled, hindered by a confluence of factors including weak legal frameworks, the collapse or dysfunction of state institutions, social stigma that silences survivors, and the chaotic dynamics of societies emerging from conflict, which together render even the most well-intentioned international resolutions and humanitarian interventions insufficient, leaving gaps in protection, access to justice, and support that perpetrators often exploit with impunity, while peacekeeping operations and transitional justice mechanisms, though designed to deter violence and ensure accountability, frequently confront structural, logistical, and political limitations, resulting in delayed, partial, or uneven enforcement that undermines public trust and perpetuates cycles of abuse.

VIII. Possible Solutions

Addressing these challenges effectively requires a multi-layered, systemic approach that simultaneously strengthens legal and institutional frameworks to prosecute perpetrators, integrates gender sensitivity and protection measures into security operations, provides comprehensive, survivor-centered support including medical, psychological, and economic assistance, and empowers local civil society actors to develop culturally attuned, community-based programs capable of sustained impact, while international actors contribute through monitoring, capacity building, and accountability mechanisms that reinforce both local and state-level initiatives; only through such coordinated, persistent, and contextually grounded efforts can the pervasive and cyclical nature of gender-based violence in these fragile environments be meaningfully mitigated, recognizing that policy alone is insufficient without practical, on-the-ground implementation that addresses both immediate protection needs and the deeper social and structural conditions that enable such violence to persist.

IX. Useful Links



[Security Council resolution on conflict related sexual violence](#)

[Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and instability | OHCHR](#)

[War on women – Proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubles in 2023 | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

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