

Focus

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS



TRIGGER WARNING: This fact sheet contains descriptions of physical, sexual and psychological violence.



**WOMEN'S VOICES
ARE STILL LARGELY
ABSENT FROM PEACE
PROCESSES AND
RECOVERY EFFORTS, AND
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GBV
CRIMES REMAINS RARE.**

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a widespread and devastating consequence of **conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crises**, disproportionately affecting women and girls. In contexts of armed conflict, political instability, and climate-induced disasters, the breakdown of protection systems and legal accountability fosters environments where sexual violence, exploitation, and trafficking become more prevalent. **Survivors face profound physical, psychological, and social harm**, often with limited access to essential services such as healthcare, psychosocial support, shelter, and justice.

While the international community has made significant commitments through the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda—initiated by UN Security Council [Resolution 1325](#),

and expanded in subsequent resolutions—to promote women's protection and participation in peacebuilding, progress remains uneven. Women's voices are still largely absent from peace processes and recovery efforts, and **accountability** for GBV crimes remains rare.

The recent global aid cuts have compounded these challenges and have severely weakened GBV prevention and response efforts. Funding shortfalls have forced frontline organizations to scale back or shut down life-saving services, including safe spaces, trauma counseling, legal assistance, and emergency medical care. Survivors are often left with nowhere to turn, while local women's rights organizations—critical lifelines in humanitarian settings—struggle to stay operational despite their deep community ties and expertise.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT (2025)

UN Secretary-General's Message



The focus of this year is the deep and lasting intergenerational wounds of conflict-related sexual violence. To break the cycle, we must confront the horrors of the past, support the survivors of today, and protect future generations from the same fate. That means ensuring safe access to vital, survivor-centered and trauma-informed services; delivering justice and holding perpetrators to account; and listening to - and amplifying - the vital voices of survivors."

António Guterres

GLOBAL OVERVIEW: GENDER-BASED

UKRAINE

Officials estimate that [hundreds](#) of CRSV cases have been committed against women and girls, men and boys, and persons of other gender identities, in Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. Sexual violence has become a predominant method of torture by Russian forces, with [reports](#) of victims as young as four and as old as 82. As of February 2025, the Office of the Prosecutor General has documented 340 cases of CRSV. 217 survivors are women, 123 — men. Among them 17 are minors. The actual number of survivors is much higher; reports [JurFem](#). The legal assistance line "JurFem: support" and its attorneys-at-law provide legal aid in [68 cases of CRSV](#). In the spring of 2024, one of the courts in Kyiv region [passed a verdict](#) in one of such cases. The Russian soldier was sentenced in absentia to 12 years in prison.

ISRAEL/PALESTINE

"[Women's voices are vital](#) to negotiations and in planning for a gender-inclusive recovery in the region. Despite Israeli and Palestinian women's leadership in grassroots [peace initiatives](#), the team that negotiated the January 2025 ceasefire draft agreement between Israel and Hamas was all male." (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security)

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel [documented](#) that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups committed war crimes of torture, inhuman or cruel treatment, rape and sexual violence and have violated the customary international humanitarian law prohibition on enforced disappearance. One released female hostage reported that she had been raped in an apartment. The Commission finds that hostages, both civilians and soldiers, taken by Palestinian armed groups were intentionally mistreated in order to inflict physical pain and severe mental suffering.

The Commission examined in a new [report](#) issued in March 2025 the sharp increase in sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by members of the Israeli Security Forces and settlers online and in person across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. According to the Report, Israel has increasingly employed sexual, reproductive and other forms of gender-based violence against Palestinians, and carried out genocidal acts through the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities. The report concludes that specific forms of sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of sexualized torture, were committed with either explicit orders or the tacit consent of the military leadership.

LIBYA

Women's rights in Libya are backsliding. In December 2024, the Public Morality Protection Unit was reintroduced to enforce compulsory veiling of women and girls. Girls over nine will be required to wear a hijab, women must travel with a male guardian, and every form of behavior between men and women deemed as **"inappropriate" behavior will be punishable by law.**

HAITI

According to [UN Women](#) 47% of women and girls in Haiti will need humanitarian aid in 2025. Sexual and gender-based violence is on the rise — especially in displacement sites where shelter, sanitation, and protection are severely lacking. Women are most targeted group of sexual violence (including rape, gang rape, and rape with kidnapping and killing) and are the **most vulnerable at home** when gangs raid homes in a neighborhood during an attack.

CHAD AND THE WIDER SAHEL

Chadian women are disproportionately vulnerable to and uniquely harmed by negative coping strategies like child marriage, displacement, and food insecurity as a result of severe climate change events and ongoing conflict. (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2025)

In the Ouaddaï Region, more than [620,000 refugees](#) have sought protection, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, who have fled the ongoing hostilities in Sudan. Large number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence in the Eastern provinces of Chad have been reported, in the crisis resulting from the influx of civilians from Sudan, comprised of around 90 per cent women and children. (UN)

United Nations-appointed independent human rights experts stated that displacement to insecure camps and shelters has worsened the vulnerability of refugees. Further concern was expressed over continued **attacks on women human rights defenders and frontline workers**. "These violations cause profound harm to individuals and communities, while steadily dismantling remaining protections and undermining prospects for recovery and justice." ([Sudan Tribune](#))

VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS

LEBANON

According to the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Information Management System (IMS) 2024 [Midyear Thematic Report](#), the GBV environment is negatively impacted by the overall developments in the country, especially the latest war that started in South Lebanon in 2024. The escalation led to internal displacement of residents and displaced Syrians, therefore higher risk of exploitation and abuse. It is noted that targeting migrants in the existing programming, including through GBV programming, is still a gap. Access to safe shelter has been considered as one of the major issues and challenges faced by the GBV service providers, despite the availability of a list of operational shelters in Lebanon. Physical **assault** (27%), **forced marriage**, and psychological/emotional abuse (25%) were the most reported types of GBV followed by 12% **sexual assault**, 6% **denial of resources** and opportunities, and 3% **rape**. The data included in this report are derived from reported cases by GBVIMS users in Lebanon and do not represent the total number of GBV incidence or prevalence of GBV in the country.

SYRIA

The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented in its 12th annual report on violations against females **11541 incidents of sexual violence committed against females** (the vast majority of these violations were perpetrated by Syrian regime forces).

Since the Syrian conflict began in 2011, men and boys and transgender women have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Syrian government and non-state armed groups (according to the report of [Human Rights Watch](#), based on interviews with 40 survivors and 20 caseworkers). While **heterosexual men** are vulnerable to sexual violence in Syria, gay or **bisexual men**, as well as **trans women are particularly at risk** of experiencing sexual violence.

AFGHANISTAN

Afghan women today are experiencing systematic oppression, and are excluded from almost all aspects of public life by Taliban edicts. "In 2025, women and girls will continue to face brutal repression, arrest, corporal punishment, and sexual violence, with new laws set to curtail their few remaining rights." (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security)

IRAN

The [repression](#) of women in Iran is drastically higher this year. Despite protests for reform and a more democratic society, initiated by the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, calls for even harsher gender-based repression persist. Regional [instability](#) and the most recent escalation of armed conflict risk distracting international and even domestic attention away from morality laws and violence against women. (GIWPS)

SUDAN

In 2025, at least 330 cases of conflict-related sexual violence have been documented in Sudan, although the real number is believed to be significantly higher due to underreporting ([OHCHR](#)). Survivors, including children, face enormous barriers to accessing medical or psychological care. Sexual violence is used to humiliate, dominate, disperse, forcibly relocate and terrify an entire population, and there are currently an estimated [12.1 million women and girls — and increasingly, men and boys — at risk](#) of such violence. This is an 80 per cent increase from 2024. Women are facing brutal (sexual) violence, the world's worst displacement crisis, expanding famine conditions, inability to access aid and stigma following rape. In Darfur, massacres and sexual violence by the Rapid Support Forces have been deemed [genocide](#). (GIWPS)

The [Amnesty International](#) report, [They raped all of us: Sexual violence against women and girls in Sudan](#), documents RSF soldiers raping or gang-raping 36 women and young girls, in four Sudanese states between April 2023 and October 2024.

GLOBAL OVERVIEW: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS

INDIA

More than 260 people have been killed, and some 60,000 displaced in the ethnic conflict, that has been raging for over a year and a half in India's north-eastern state of Manipur. Allegations of sexual assault against women played a major part in fueling violence, setting off spirals of retaliatory sexual violence ([International Crisis Group](#)) In the wake of another conflict - the India-Pakistan escalations in May 2025, following the Pahalgam attack - the Digital Rights Foundation published a short [investigative report](#), which examines the surge in technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), gendered disinformation, and hate speech that accompanied the conflict. The report highlights how gender and misogynistic narratives were weaponized online, causing real harm to women and gender minorities on both sides, and intensifying hostilities (DRF).

YEMEN

Over 23 million people – 75 percent of the population — are in need of humanitarian assistance in Yemen. Since late 2024, [escalating conflict](#) has deepened one of the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Despite the fact that preventing, mitigating, and responding to protection risks – including gender-based violence (GBV) – is one of the objectives of coordinated response, the appeal for GBV prevention and response of \$61.4 million is [only 16 percent funded](#). (Relief Web)

MYANMAR

According to the GIWPS women continue to have limited roles in decision-making at all levels, despite their participation in the democratic movement and armed resistance. Women are facing displacement, trafficking, sexual violence, severe economic hardship, and death in [Myanmar](#). More than 70 percent of refugees are women and children, while an economic crisis triggered by conflict has forced many into sex work. However, the International Criminal Court issued its first arrest warrant for one of Myanmar's junta leaders for crimes against humanity, including sexual violence against the Rohingya - a step towards accountability.

NIGERIA

[Two-thirds](#) of women in northeastern Nigeria—where Boko Haram is most active—have experienced one or more forms of sexual or gender-based violence. Women and girls face additional challenges like stigma after being kidnapped into armed groups. ([GIWPS](#)). The [paper](#) "Conflict Related Sexual Violence: Exploring Humanitarian Law and Sexual Violence on Women in the Boko Haram Mayhem" (Idris, M., 2025) revealed that in spite of International legal framework prohibiting the act of rape and other forms of CRSV, the brutality persists, particularly against the girls and women. Acts of conflict-related sexual violence cannot be prosecuted because the international treaties recognizing and criminalizing conflict-related sexual violence have not been domesticated into Nigeria's laws, and there are no domestic legislations on CRSV. The only way perpetrators of CRSV could be persecuted is under the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act in states where it is effective.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

UN Officials [raise the alarm](#) over the devastating impact of the prolonged conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly on women and children. Since the beginning of 2025, offensives by non-state armed groups in South and North Kivu provinces, have contributed to dramatically increasing CRSV. Over 1.1 million Congolese people have fled years of ongoing violence. Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been forcibly displaced to areas without adequate protection. Restrictions of humanitarian access have worsened the conditions of survivors of CRSV, while insecurity is expanding to neighboring countries. Over a five day period (Jan/Feb) 23 health facilities in and around Goma reported [treating 492 survivors](#) of sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors.

FOREIGN AID CUTS

Across 44 crisis contexts, 411 women-led and women's rights organizations have been surveyed for the new UN Women report *At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide* published in May 2025. The report finds that 90 per cent of surveyed organizations have been hit by funding cuts, and the most affected services include gender-based violence prevention and response (67%), protection services (62%), livelihoods and cash assistance (58%), and mental and sexual health care (52%). This might create even more precarious conditions for women and girls already disproportionately affected by crisis, suffering from preventable pregnancy-related deaths, malnutrition, and high rates of sexual violence.

FURTHER READING ON IMPACT OF AID CUTS:

- Funds for NGOs: <https://news.fundsforngos.org/2025/02/25/the-impact-of-u-s-foreign-aid-freeze-on-women-and-girls-worldwide/>
- Women's Refugee Commission: <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/blog/every-hour-counts-in-a-crisis-the-us-funding-freeze-must-be-lifted-now/>
- Danish Refugee Council: <https://drc.ngo/resources/news/ukraine-how-humanitarian-aid-is-addressing-gender-based-violence/>
- ICVA Network: <https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2025/02/Impact-of-US-Funding-Suspension-Survey-Results-ICVA.pdf>
- AllAfrica: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202504020329.html>
- Refugees International: <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/new-york-times-were-just-keeping-everybody-alive-the-damage-done-by-the-u-s-a-i-d-freeze/>

TO ADDRESS CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE, RESPONSES NEED TO BE:

- **Multi-sectorial:** encompassing medical, psychosocial, and economic support, with some being anchored in law, and others, when more suitable, in form of policy or humanitarian in nature.
- **Addressing structural root** causes and structural drivers of conflict-related sexual violence, primarily, structural political, economic, and social inequities in all their forms, in particular gender-related power imbalances within a society.
- **Dismantling misconceptions** about conflict-related sexual violence and persons of all genders and ages subjected to it. From the reform of procedural laws to policy decision and humanitarian responses, any consultations must be informed by survivor's perspective of justice.
- **Gender and anti-discrimination competency in law**, policy and advocacy must be strengthened so that the structural drivers and misconceptions can be identified for the benefit of prevention and harm-mitigation of CRSV.

HOW CAN I HELP?



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DISCLAIMER:

Every effort has been made to provide information that is current and accurate, taking into consideration that some conflicts as well as investigations of CRSV are ongoing at the time of research. Nevertheless, inadvertent errors in information may occur.

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