

Women, Peace and Security

February 2024

For February, in which Guyana has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in [Iraq](#), [Israel/Palestine](#) and [Yemen](#).

Iraq

In Iraq, political violence and hate speech has placed diverse women human rights defenders and [women's groups](#) at risk of [targeted violence](#) and [hate campaigns](#) due to their work, including, over the past year, by a rapidly growing anti-gender movement. The NGO Directorate has ordered the suspension of several civil society organizations as well as the freezing of their bank accounts, while the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) issued a [directive](#) banning the use of the term “gender” and ordering all media outlets to replace the term “homosexuality” with “sexual deviance”. Council members should express strong support for civil society in order to push back against defamation campaigns targeting them and urge the reversal of the CMC directive. Council members must call for robust legal frameworks criminalizing all forms of [gender-based violence](#), including against [lesbian and transgender women](#) and other minorities, the establishment of gender-responsive justice institutions, ensuring access to multi-sectoral, survivor-centered services in order to address widespread [impunity](#), and the government of Iraq to enact the Family Violence Protection Law with a provision that ensures civil society engagement and legally recognizes civil society-run safe homes. Council members should further call on the General Directorate for Survivors Affairs (GDSA), which, as of December 2023, has issued reparations payments to [1,541 survivors](#) covered by the Yazidi Survivors Law, to [lift](#) the requirement to file a criminal suit in order to be eligible for reparations, and expand coverage to include children born in captivity to Yazidi parents. Council members should also urge Iraq not to pass a proposed bill that would amend the “Law on Combating Prostitution” to [criminalize](#) consensual same-sex intimacy and gender nonconformity, with sentences including the death penalty. The Security Council should establish [benchmarks](#) that must be reached before the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) [closes](#), including the development of a strategy for the prosecution of ISIL crimes both in Iraq and other jurisdictions, supporting Iraq in adopting a legal framework for the survivor-centered prosecution of international crimes, and ensuring UNITAD's continued support of the Iraqi government until the country is able to fully implement survivor-centered and fair trial prosecutions. Council members must continue to monitor and reiterate the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all political, [electoral](#) and peace and security processes through specific and targeted [measures](#), including quotas.

Israel/Palestine

The current escalation of violence comes amid the more than half-century long occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), and the humanitarian crisis has worsened as a result of not only the violence, but the [pre-existing](#) air, land and sea [blockade](#), in place since 2007, which saw the erosion of infrastructure and services across Gaza. The hostilities in Gaza since October 2023 have now killed over [26,000](#) Palestinians, approximately [70%](#) of whom are women and children. Out of 2.2 million people in Gaza, [1.7 million](#) people, including nearly [1 million](#) women, are internally displaced. The constant bombardment of hospitals, combined with the Israeli government's restrictions on fuel and aid, has led to the collapse of the healthcare system, resulting in specific consequences for women. Some maternity units are not operating at all, and women must travel to hospitals further away, putting them at additional risk. Of the estimated [5,500](#) women who are expected to give birth in Gaza in the next month, 840 are likely to experience pregnancy or birth-related complications. Over [60%](#) of all housing units in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, leaving women and their families homeless and obliged to seek safety in already severely overcrowded schools or hospitals or with other families, a situation that [officials](#) warn could lead to the rapid spread of infectious diseases. The violence has not been limited to Gaza; since 7 October, [370](#) Palestinians have been killed in the [West Bank](#), more than in any entire year since the UN systematically began recording fatalities in 2005. Arrests are on the [rise](#), with more people, including [women](#), in administrative detention without trial or charge than in 30 years. Peacebuilders and human rights defenders, including women, are [increasingly](#) under [threat](#) of violence and detention for [speaking](#) out, posting on [social media](#), and simply [expressing](#) support for people in Gaza. The Security Council must:

- Demand an immediate and sustained cessation of hostilities and further demand all parties immediately stop all unlawful attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian actors; call on all actors to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law, and all relevant Security Council resolutions, including on women, peace and security; and work towards a long-term and peaceful resolution to the conflict.
- Call on the government of Israel to immediately and fully comply with the [provisional measures](#) ordered by the International Court of Justice to protect Palestinians in Gaza from acts of genocide, including refraining from acts under the [Genocide Convention](#) and taking immediate and effective measures to ensure provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. All Member States must uphold their obligation to prevent genocide.
- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. All those captured, including combatants, must be treated humanely, with dignity, and in accordance with international humanitarian law.
- Demand an immediate end to the forcible transfer of civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. Forcibly relocating large numbers of civilians to an even smaller strip of land that is an active war zone, without safe passage or adequate services on arrival, risks exacerbating the current humanitarian catastrophe and loss of life.

- Demand the lifting of the total blockade of Gaza, which is a violation of international law and amounts to collective punishment of a civilian population.
- Ensure immediate, safe, [unhindered](#) and expanded humanitarian [access](#) for the provision of basic services and life-saving relief assistance, including food, water, fuel, medical supplies and care, electricity and internet access, and safe access of humanitarian and medical personnel into Gaza, as required by [Resolution 2720](#).
- Call on donors to fully fund the 2023 [Flash Appeal](#) for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to scale up sustainable, direct and flexible funding for national NGOs, particularly women-led local civil society organizations. Further, donors should urgently [reverse](#) recent decisions to withhold funds from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and support its continued and vital operations.
- Urge all parties to cooperate with independent, impartial, investigative mechanisms, including the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel](#), to monitor, collect and verify evidence, and report on human rights violations and abuses, including all forms of gender-based violence, committed by all parties on and since 7 October; and further, ensure that all justice and accountability efforts are human rights-based, survivor-centered and non-discriminatory, and designed and implemented in partnership with survivors.
- Demand that the rights of diverse Palestinian women and other marginalized groups, including human rights defenders, peace activists and journalists, are protected and upheld in line with international law, and that Palestinian women are able to fully contribute to any de-escalation, ceasefire or other efforts to negotiate peace.

Yemen

The situation in Yemen continues to worsen with multiple crises, including [climate change](#), the alarming increase in [cholera cases](#), the “[pause](#)” of the General Food Assistance program—which will adversely impact nearly 9.5 million people already experiencing food insecurity, especially women—and violation of human rights, including the [right to water](#). Any forthcoming discussions about the situation in Yemen should be based on gender-sensitive conflict analysis. Security Council members should articulate their unwavering support for an inclusive Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned political process with the full, equal and meaningful participation of [diverse women](#), youth and civil society of all political backgrounds from all regions of Yemen, including in the truce and ceasefire negotiations, as well as broader political and peace processes. Relatedly, Council members should demand that all UN-supported peace committees include women, including the Prisoners’ Exchange, the Taiz Committee, and the Security and Military Committees, as well as any committees formed in the future. Council members should demand all parties to the conflict, and their allies, uphold international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and emphasize that women’s human rights should be non-negotiable in any peace and political process. Women and girls face [restrictions](#) on their [freedom of movement](#), resulting from the requirement that women be accompanied by a mahram (male guardian), lack of [access](#) to basic services, including higher education and [sexual and reproductive health](#) services, and [threats](#) and risks, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, hate speech and even targeted killings, particularly for [women human rights defenders](#) and [journalists](#). Ongoing [restrictions](#) on the operations of women-led and civil society organizations have created a shrinking space for women’s social and political participation. Council members should reinforce the unacceptability of the increase in [cyber-attacks](#) and violence targeting women, which is threatening their safety and preventing their participation in public life. Military action, such as airstrikes on Yemen’s port facilities, is likely to have a disproportionate impact on women and girls and can [prevent aid](#) from reaching those most in need. Council members should prioritize diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region and reiterate their full support for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen to secure a sustainable settlement to Yemen’s protracted conflict.