

Women, Peace and Security

March 2024

For March, in which Japan has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Afghanistan**, **Israel/Palestine** and **South Sudan**.

Afghanistan

Since taking power more than two years ago, the Taliban have systematically violated [women's human rights](#) in both policy and practice by codifying gender-based discrimination across nearly [every aspect](#) of [public](#) and [private](#) life. As reinforced by [UN human rights experts](#), the ongoing, escalating, systematic and grave [human rights violations](#) directed at women, girls and [people of all genders](#) may amount to [gender persecution](#), a [crime against humanity](#). [International experts](#) have further warned that the situation could be characterized as [gender apartheid](#), and [called](#) for the codification of this crime. The Taliban continue to target human rights defenders (HRDs) due not only to their work, but also their [gender](#). [Women human rights defenders](#) (WHRDs) and protestors have been [detained](#), without any charge or access to legal representation and have faced [abuses in custody](#), including [torture](#). [UN human rights experts](#) have expressed deep concern over women and girls being forcibly taken, arbitrarily detained and subject to ill-treatment for wearing "bad hijab" and allegedly violating the Taliban's dress code. During forthcoming meetings, Council members should:

- Ensure that any implementation of the recommendations of the [independent assessment](#) mandated by [Resolution 2679 \(2023\)](#) require protection of women's human rights, in accordance with Afghanistan's international obligations and swift [reversal](#) of any policies and practices that restrict them; and further, ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of diverse Afghan women and LGBTIQ people, especially WHRDs and peacebuilders, in all discussions and outcomes by the Security Council, UN or international community about Afghanistan's future. Further, the creation of any future mechanisms for international engagement on Afghanistan, including a UN Special Envoy, must prioritize women's human rights, include robust expertise on human rights and gender, and ensure regular and meaningful consultations with diverse Afghan WHRDs and women civil society representatives.
- Call for the immediate reversal of the [ban](#) on Afghan women [working](#) for the United Nations and NGOs, which is in violation of the UN Charter and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and call for all humanitarian actors to ensure safe, principled and non-discriminatory humanitarian delivery to all Afghans in need, as well as the leadership and participation of women in humanitarian action.
- Call for all parties, including the Taliban and other armed groups, to respect international human rights and humanitarian law, immediately stop targeting HRDs, peacebuilders and journalists, and [release](#) all those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained. Call for perpetrators of human rights violations, including [gender persecution](#) and other abuses targeting diverse women and girls, to be [held accountable](#).
- Call for current mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to be preserved and fully implemented, particularly its role advocating for the protection and promotion of women's rights; monitoring and reporting on human rights, including violations, abuses and reprisals against WHRDs, and all forms of gender-based violence (GBV); and ensuring meaningful engagement with diverse Afghan women's rights organizations.

Israel/Palestine

The current escalation of violence and deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza comes amid the more than half-century-long occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). The hostilities in Gaza since October 2023 have now killed over [30,000](#) Palestinians, approximately [70%](#) of whom are women and children, and displaced nearly [1 million](#) women. Further fighting in Rafah, where an estimated 1.5 million people are sheltering in dire conditions, risks a [humanitarian disaster](#) that must be [averted](#). The constant [bombardment](#) of hospitals, combined with the Israeli government's restrictions on fuel, water and aid, has led to the collapse of the healthcare system, putting mothers and their [newborns](#) at risk of significant [physical](#) and [mental](#) harm and violating women's [sexual and reproductive health and rights](#). Since 7 October, [406](#) Palestinians have also been killed in the [West Bank](#). Arrests are on the [rise](#), with more people, including [women](#), in administrative detention without trial or charge than in 30 years and concerning [reports](#) of Palestinian women and girls facing sexual violence in detention. UN experts have further expressed [alarm](#) regarding reports of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killing, inhuman and degrading treatment, and targeting of Palestinian women, including peacebuilders, WHRDs, journalists and humanitarian workers, which could amount to grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The Security Council must:

- Demand an immediate and sustained cessation of hostilities, and further demand all parties stop all unlawful attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure and humanitarian actors, including by refraining from a full-scale military operation in Rafah, which would have [devastating consequences](#) for civilians. 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 by refraining from acts prohibited under the [Genocide Convention](#), and create conditions to implement the provisional measures through an [immediate ceasefire](#) by all parties. All Member States must uphold their obligation to prevent genocide.

- Demand the immediate and unconditional [release](#) of all hostages, and treatment of all those captured, in accordance with international humanitarian law.
- Demand an immediate end to the forcible transfer of civilians in violation of international humanitarian law and an immediate end to all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of Palestinian territory, in line with [Resolution 2334](#) (2016).
- 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](#) (2023).
- Call on donors to fully fund the updated and extended Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to scale up sustainable, direct and flexible funding for national NGOs, particularly local women-led 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 without interruption.
- 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 GBV, 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, including WHRDs, peace activists and journalists, are upheld in line with international law, and that they are able to fully contribute to any de-escalation, ceasefire or other efforts to negotiate peace.

South Sudan

The Security Council's forthcoming discussion on South Sudan should be informed by gender-sensitive analysis of the drivers of the conflict, including widespread inequality, the exclusionary nature of peace and political efforts, lack of [implementation](#) of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the widespread availability of [weapons](#), [impunity](#) and the [impacts](#) of [climate change](#). The resulting situation is characterized by violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, forced displacement and food insecurity. Of the 9 million people estimated to experience critical need in 2024, [24%](#) are women. South Sudan is among the countries where there is highest concern for [starvation](#), with associated risks for vulnerable groups such as pregnant and lactating women and children, and for protection risks, including GBV, [early, child and forced marriage](#), and other negative coping mechanisms. [Access](#) to humanitarian assistance has been severely curtailed due to [attacks](#) on [humanitarian workers](#), [restrictions](#) on the work of civil society organizations, bureaucratic barriers and operational interference. Prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, risk mitigation and scale-up of response services must be a priority. The unprecedented [shrinking](#) of civic and political space and threats and reprisals against [WHRDs and peacebuilders](#) are a concerning indicator of backsliding into violence.

There has been limited to no progress in implementing crucial provisions of the [R-ARCSS](#). Key aspects of the agreement remain [incomplete](#) or barely initiated. Increased efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of diverse women in the peace process, and their representation in the government, national ministries and as state governors, which currently [falls short](#) of the 35% quota required in the R-ARCSS. Further, in planning for the elections in December 2024, women must be able to meaningfully and safely participate as candidates, poll workers and voters. Planning for regional humanitarian needs is critical in case of displacement due to potential election-motivated violence, alongside the continued [impacts](#) of the regional crisis in neighboring Sudan. While the [ratification](#) of the Maputo Protocol is positive after five years of delay, momentum should be leveraged to finalize the proposed [Anti Gender-Based Violence Bill](#), which has been pending since 2020, in order to address impunity. The recent outbreak of fighting in [Abyei](#) and Greater Pibor Administrative Areas, as well as in [Jonglei](#), [Warrap](#), Upper Nile, Western Equatoria and Central Equatoria States, has led to a rise in human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. Given the above context, the current mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) should be renewed and fully implemented, especially its protection of civilians mandate, capacity to undertake the documentation of violations for purposes of future accountability processes, and role in protecting HRDs.