

Women, Peace and Security

May 2020

Protection of Civilians

In the expected open debate on protection of civilians (POC), the Security Council should mainstream gender throughout its discussion and ensure that the meaningful participation of women and women's CSOs are at the forefront of any POC strategy. The Council's work must be grounded in age, gender, and disability-sensitive conflict analysis that contributes to the development of POC strategies and responses that are non-discriminatory and appropriate for all survivors and victims. The Council should encourage the participation and protection of women human rights defenders (WHRDs), peace activists, and survivors with full consideration of their rights, safety, dignity, and the long-term needs of those individuals and their families. The Council should:

- Demand cessation of attacks against civilians, healthcare workers and humanitarian actors, which violate [international humanitarian, criminal and human rights law](#) and [Security Council Resolution 2286 \(2016\)](#).
- Urge Member States and the UN system to prioritize the full range of medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services to women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations, including essential sexual and reproductive health services in line with [Resolution 2122 \(2013\)](#).
- Support the [Secretary-General's call](#) that national authorities designate humanitarian workers as essential, given their direct and indispensable role in delivering life-saving assistance.
- Emphasize the importance of providing financial and technical support to local women's civil society groups providing humanitarian assistance to civilians in order to ensure access to local communities in need.
- Urge Member States and the UN system, including peace operations, to actively support women's participation and leadership in pandemic decision-making and response planning and ensure there are consistent, regular and ongoing consultations with civil society, including women-led organizations, and resourcing for frontline women's civil society organizations.
- Encourage host Governments to develop and implement nationally owned multi-sectoral strategies for preventing and responding to SGBV, including effective access to justice.

For May, in which Estonia has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on **Protection of Civilians, Iraq, Libya, and Sudan (Darfur)**.

Iraq

In its renewal of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the Council should maintain existing WPS language ([S/RES/2470 \(2019\)](#), PP, OP 2(e)) and further:

- Add a provision in UNAMI's mandate which requires the mission to regularly and meaningfully consult with women's civil society groups in all aspects of its work, particularly in supporting capacity-building of essential civil and social services, many of which are being carried out by frontline women's civil society organizations.
- Add a provision in UNAMI's mandate requesting gender-responsive monitoring and public reporting, as part of its human rights mandate, on the abuse and use of lethal force against Iraqi civilians protesting, and efforts to restrict and close civic space, including for women's rights groups ([AI](#), [UNAMI](#), [AI Jazeera](#), [AP](#)). Council members should also support calls of Iraqi CSOs to follow this up with an impartial and transparent mechanism to hold perpetrators accountable.
- Call on the Government to ensure its response to the COVID-19 pandemic is gender-responsive and grounded in evidence-based gender-sensitive analysis.
- Call on the Government to enforce the rule of law and immediately stop, but also prevent, the violence and use of excessive force, mass arrests and attacks by security forces against demonstrators and other civil society actors, such as journalists and human rights defenders, including under the pretext of emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Call on the Government to urgently enact the Protection Against Domestic Violence law with a provision that ensures civil society engagement. This is especially important in the context of the rising rates of sexual and gender-based violence linked to confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic ([HRW](#), [UNFPA](#), [OHCHR](#), [UNICEF](#), [UN Women](#), [CEDAW](#)).

- Call on UNAMI to prioritize SGBV programming and response in its role mobilizing and coordinating funding in order to concretely advance survivor-centered approaches to SGBV, including supporting efforts to develop confidential mechanisms for reporting SGBV, advancing the urgently needed domestic violence legislation, and supporting the establishment of NGO-managed shelters for survivors.
- Call on the Government to prioritize its finalization and immediate endorsement of the second NAP on Resolution 1325 (2000), ensure that mechanisms for implementation have full financial and human resources, and that there are systematic consultations with women's CSOs as part of monitoring efforts.
- Call for transparency in the status of the Commission for International Justice and Accountability ([S/RES/2379 \(2017\)](#)), and implementation of inclusive and gender-responsive transitional justice programs.

Libya

Despite calls for a ceasefire in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, violence and attacks against civilians have increased in recent weeks, including targeting of civilians who are under curfew ([ICRC](#), [ACLED](#)). The resulting violence has displaced thousands of Libyans, forcing them to flee further into Tripoli, putting stress on resources and increasing the risk of spreading COVID-19 ([IOM](#)). Further, recent attacks against hospitals ([OCHA](#)) and health care workers as well as safe water sources are in violation of international humanitarian law (IHL). Such attacks undermine the country's ability to respond to COVID-19 by cutting off more than 2 million residents to safe water and electricity ([UNSMIL](#), [OCHA](#), [UN](#), [NYT](#)). In its discussion of the situation and the latest report of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Council members must demand an immediate and unconditional ceasefire, ensure all civilians and civilian objects are protected in accordance with IHL, and support actions to hold accountable those parties from all sides of the conflict that use violence to influence State institutions, commit serious human rights violations and exploit detainees in official and unofficial places of detention ([HRW](#)). The Council should call on the Government to refrain from enacting indefinite emergency measures that limit or entirely curtail the right to movement, assembly, and information, or impose undue restrictions on civic space or the work of civil society and human rights defenders, including women's rights organizations, as part of pandemic response. Further, the Council should emphasize the importance of taking measures to prevent, address, and document incidences of intimate partner violence exacerbated by the pandemic due to government policies ordering quarantines, social distancing, curfews, and closure of non-essential services. Finally, the Government must take all necessary measures to prevent outbreaks in detention centers and prisons, including by releasing prisoners that have been arbitrarily detained, such as children, people detained without charge or trial, migrants held solely because of their status, political prisoners and human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, and allowing unhindered access to humanitarian personnel and ensuring access to testing and medical care is available to anyone detained ([HRW](#)).

Sudan (Darfur)

Across Darfur, there continues to be violence and insecurity, as well as human rights violations, including rape and civilian attacks ([Dabanga](#)). In late December 2019, attacks in Krinding Camp led to the re-displacement of 48,000 IDPs to Geneina ([FIDH](#)). UNHCR reported that as of March 20, more than 16,000 Sudanese citizens – mainly women and children – had fled into neighboring Chad as a result of the violence ([UN](#)). In this fragile context of continuing internal discord, and now with the threat of COVID-19, the Council must proceed with utmost caution when considering any further drawdown of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The current dynamics constitute an unprecedented situation that has the potential to reverse progress, therefore it requires extraordinary measures and response by the international community that is grounded in the needs and perspectives of the Darfuri people – especially women and young people who continue to be disproportionately impacted by the ongoing insecurity. Despite weaknesses in the implementation of its mandate to protect civilians in Darfur, not least owing to access restrictions imposed by the previous Government, there is support amongst Sudanese civil society for the continued presence of UNAMID with a strong mandate on protection of civilians that prioritizes women and girls, including those living as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Regardless of the structure of the mission, protection of civilians must remain the priority, otherwise any hope of advancing nominal gains in peace in the region will be erased. With the COVID-19 pandemic, root causes of the conflict, including inequality, will be exacerbated. Civilians remain at extreme risk of violence, and although there has been some success with regards to disarmament, those processes remain gender-blind, and the flow of arms fueling the conflict continues unabated, increasing insecurity for women and girls.