



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**

WILPF is pleased to share this brief guide to the May 2017 Secretary-General's Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Please use this as guidance for your advocacy efforts locally, nationally and regionally, to demand a feminist foreign policy that puts commitments into action!

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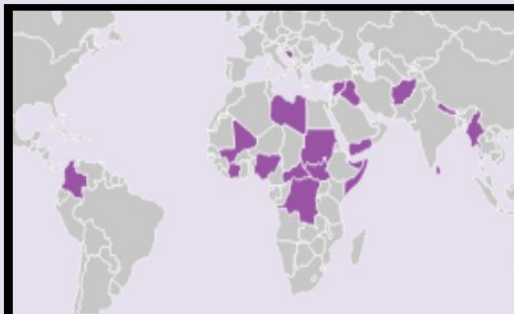
Highlights of the Secretary-General Report: Sexual Violence in Conflict



REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

"The prevention of sexual violence is an integral part of wider conflict prevention and prevention is not merely a priority, but the priority."



19 CONFLICT SITUATIONS

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



Ensure accountability for sexual violence crimes, improve service-delivery, and enhance protection in Nigeria

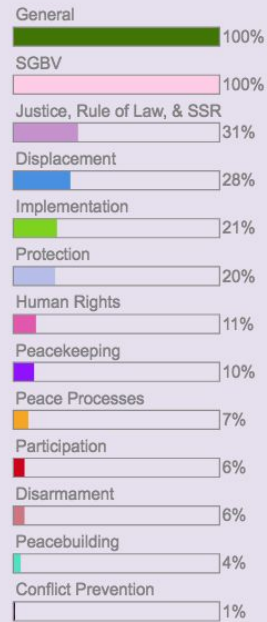


Allow Women's Civil Society Organisations to provide much needed services to survivors of SGBV in Iraq



Establish safe houses and providing material support to households headed by women and girls in Yemen

WPS THEMES



The UN Secretary-General's [2017 Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) tracks developments relevant to the implementation of Resolutions [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1888 \(2009\)](#) and [1960 \(2010\)](#) in 19 conflict-affected and post-conflict states, for the reporting period of January to December 2016. It was compiled through the analysis of data provided by United Nations offices, civil society and regional organisations, as well as Member States.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

The UN Secretary-General outlines the complex and differential forms of victimisation relevant to this topic, noting that far too often women and girls are counted as a form of currency in warfare. Among the year's progresses in combating conflict-related sexual violence, the Secretary-General identified the increased presence of women's protection advisers in peace operations; better integration of early warning systems; improved monitoring, reporting, and information sharing; greater accountability facilitated by capacity building in national institutions and the adoption of initiatives like [UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict \(UN Action\)](#) and the [UN Action Multi-Donor Trust Fund](#). On the other hand, the rise of violent extremism, hybrid criminal networks, mass migration and cultures of impunity were all listed as critical risk factors contributing to this issue.

Notable themes in the report are as follows:

Justice, Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform

The Secretary-General afforded significant attention to the question of accountability and justice mechanisms. The report framed the success of peacebuilding and reconciliation as fundamentally dependent upon transitional justice mechanisms that heal the collective trauma experienced in communities subject to high levels of conflict-related SGBV. To integrate gender sensitivity throughout relevant institutions and fight impunity, the Secretary-General called for the transformation of security sector cultures, legislative and policy reform, zero-tolerance accountability and the provision of victims services and reparations. One best practice highlighted in this context was [the Colombian Peace Process](#), which placed gender-justice at the centre of its peacebuilding efforts.

Displacement

The Secretary-General underscored the nexus between displacement and sexual violence, including sex trafficking, through numerous references aligning these issues. Relevant discussion in the report considered displacement within a protection lens, highlighting the vulnerability of women and girls in transit or displacement camps, particularly in crises such as those in Syria, Yemen and Nigeria. To address this dynamic, the report commended efforts to create women's associations in displacement camps to reduce the risk of exploitation and provide victim-services.

Implementation

The Secretary-General enumerated the multiple legal mechanisms and initiatives presently available to Member States for the prevention, suppression and punishment of sexual violence, and called on all parties to translate their commitments into action. [National Action Plans on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325](#), the [Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security](#), the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), respective communiques, roadmaps, and the [UN Peacebuilding Fund \(PBF\)](#), were all named among the instruments available to help actualise and fund national efforts to combat SGBV.

Protection

The Report emphasised the UN system's responsibility to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence, particularly within the scope of Peacekeeping mandates. This theme was framed around women's vulnerability in the absence of protective social structures in times of conflict, and underscored the failure of Member States to criminalise sexual violence or otherwise fulfill women's rights. The primary solutions put forth to mitigate these factors include the utilisation of [Women Protection Advisors \(WPAs\)](#) in peace operations, and the integration of monitoring arrangements and early warning mechanisms in mission mandates. The text also highlighted the Secretary-General's new protection framework within the UN system: [Special Measures for Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, A New Approach](#).

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

The Secretary-General's Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict primarily focuses on country-specific situations, and considers developments in areas currently impacted by conflict, as well as in post-conflict states and other situations of concern. In total 19 situations are addressed, however for the purposes of these highlights, the following extracts pertain to WILPF's focus countries. The report also considers the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and as a strategic target of extremist organisations.

1. Sexual Violence as a Tactic of War and Terrorism: Overview of the Current Trends and Emerging Concerns

The Secretary-General expressed concern regarding [the continued use of SGBV as a tactic of war](#), noting that strategic mass rape has been conducted in numerous conflict situations over the reporting period, particularly targeting members of ethnic, religious, and political minorities. The report affords particular attention to the use of SGBV by extremist organisations, for which sexual violence is not merely an objective, but a tool to incentivise recruitment, displace and terrorise

civilians, generate revenue and expand territorial and ideological control through propagating dogma based on oppressing women and girls.

The report also highlights [the rights violations inflicted upon women and girls by counter-terrorism strategies](#) such as arbitrary detentions, the commodification of victims as intelligence assets, and abuse inflicted to punish or incentive male combatants to turn themselves in. These practices cause further detriment to the impacted communities and encourage the stigmatisation of survivors. The Secretary-General expresses considerable concern for the dual-victimisation of SGBV survivors exacted by stigmatisation, and calls on all relevant actors to challenge harmful societal and gender norms that normalise violence and place blame on the shoulders of victims. Finally, the Secretary-General warns that impunity for the perpetrators of SGBV in times of conflict legitimises rape as a military strategy or inevitable result of war, and furthermore creates a culture of abuse likely to extend into post-conflict settings.

2. Sexual Violence in Conflict-Affected Settings

a. Colombia

The Colombian conflict, though resolved, left a legacy of sexual violence and instability in its wake. As the situation transitions, significant emphasis has been placed on the establishment of transformative justice mechanisms such as truth commissions and special jurisdictions for peace. The Secretary-General notes that the state has undergone legislative reform to improve survivor's access to justice, though merely two percent of documented SGBV cases have been adjudicated as of yet. The Report notes that there is a heightened risk of SGBV as ex-combatants are reintegrated into society and noted that 31 percent of incidents reported in 2016 targeted Afro-Colombian women. More than half of women activist leaders in Colombia are estimated to suffer an increased risk of victimisation in the post-conflict period, for which authorities have implemented risk-mitigation measures. Finally, the Secretary-General called for transitional justice mechanisms to afford particular attention to the situation of women and girls, and to include monitoring for SGBV in ceasefire verifications.

b. Democratic Republic of the Congo

Throughout 2016, a total of 2593 cases of SGBV were reported to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in conflict-affected regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Additionally, 514 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were documented by the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). Non-state armed groups were deemed responsible for 68 percent of reported cases, while the remaining 32 percent of cases were attributed to state security forces. The Secretary-General reported efforts to prevent and address SGBV among military leadership, as well as efforts to ensure justice and provide victim's services

to survivors. However national institutions suffer from limited reach, inadequate health services and have as of yet been unable to execute arrest warrant or fulfil reparation obligations. The Secretary-General urged the government of the DRC to ensure justice, reparations, protection and rehabilitative services for survivors.

c. Iraq

Women and girls inhabiting the conflict-affected regions of Northern Iraq and Kurdistan, particularly those belonging to minority populations, are subject to unprecedented levels of trafficking, sexual slavery, and other forms of gender-based violence at the hands of occupying Da'esh forces. Documenting SGBV is hindered by ongoing military operations and stigmatisation, however the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) estimates that 1,882 Yazidi women remain in Da'esh captivity. The Secretary-General identifies community reconciliation, documentation, accountability, and capacity building to overcome growing challenges related to the status and reintegration of survivors. The Report emphasised the implementation of the UN Joint Communiqué with the Iraqi Government to generate legislative reform; access to justice; reparations; awareness-raising, and mainstreaming gender through coordination with women's groups and local leaders. The Secretary-General called on the Iraqi Government to scale up victim's services, including through the establishment of shelters and safehouses.

d. Libya

Secretary-General's Report highlighted the situation of Libyan women displaced by persisting violence and instability, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and other rights abuses at the hands of combatants, criminal networks and extremist organisations like Da'esh. Victims of Da'esh captivity are routinely considered as enemy agents and detained in inhumane conditions, while women's human rights defenders face increasing threats of SGBV and other violence. The Secretary-General urged Libyan authorities to integrate protection mechanisms in migration policies, ensure accountability and provide victim's services for survivors.

e. Syria

Parties in the Syrian crisis routinely employ sexual violence as a strategic tool in war and terrorism. In this environment women and girls are increasingly subject to sexual violence, trafficking, detention, displacement, socio-economic impairment and other violations. The reintegration of survivors is fundamentally inhibited by the absence of victim's services, cultures of impunity, and social fear, stigma, and retaliation. Financial resources in states hosting Syrian refugees further precipitate harmful practices including exploitative labour, early marriage, and the withdrawal of social services. The Secretary-General highlighted the progress of the [Syrian Women's Advisory Board](#) in giving Syrian women a voice in peace processes, and noted the

adoption of General Assembly resolution A/RES/71/248 as an essential step towards establishing an international tribunal to address the crimes of this conflict. Finally, the Report called on parties to the conflict to consider SGBV in all peace processes and negotiations, and urged states hosting refugees to ensure to the protection needs of survivors.

f. Yemen

Protracted insecurity and militarisation in Yemen, alongside weak rule of law and widespread displacement has posed significant detriment to the safety and security of Yemeni women. Though documentation is limited, SGBV has risen significantly throughout this crisis, including through trafficking, child marriage, forced prostitution and conflict-related violence at the hands of armed groups. The report places particular emphasis on the plight of displaced women and expresses concern for the risk of stigmatisation, tribal solutions, and honour crimes against survivors. The Secretary General urged Yemeni authorities to establish safe houses for survivors, provide reparations and support to women heads of household and address SGBV within its borders.

3. Sexual Violence in Post-Conflict Settings

a. Bosnia

Despite progress, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence continue to experience stigmatisation, marginalisation, and limited access to justice and reparations. Mechanisms including the [Joint Program on Seeking Care, Support and Justice for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), the Law on Victims of Torture in Republika Srpska and the Decision on Civilian Victims of War of Breko District all offer victims a step forward in securing their rights to services and redress. During the reporting period, increases in beneficiaries of economic empowerment programmes and free legal aid for survivors, though many entitlements remain unimplemented. Furthermore, greater protection mechanisms for witnesses and survivors providing testimony in legal proceedings are needed to prevent re-victimisation. The Secretary-General called on Bosnian authorities to build the capacity of national institutions, including through legislative reform, to ensure the access and delivery of justice and reparations for survivors.

4. Other Situations of Concern

a. Nigeria

Women living in Boko Haram-affected areas of Nigeria face significant risks of sexual violence and other rights violations including sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, detention and discrimination. Amidst widespread displacement, it is estimated that 90 per cent of women in NorthEast Nigeria lack access to essential services such as food. The humanitarian crisis contributes to instances of harmful practices such as prostitution and child marriage. Furthermore, women and girls risk

victimisation from security forces including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Lack of trust in formal justice systems, stigmatisation, ostracism, and cultures of impunity prevent women from accessing justice and healthcare services. Among progresses, the Secretary-General reported an increased acceptance of survivors among religious and traditional leaders and the deployment of women police officers to displacement camps to ensure service-delivery. Finally, the Report called on Nigerian authorities to improve service-delivery and reintegration support for survivors, enhance protection measures in refuge communities, and ensure accountability for perpetrators of SGBV.

5. Recommendations

Among other recommendations, the Secretary-General urged the UN Security Council to:

- Include sexual violence among designation criteria for sanctions,;
- Support engagement between parties to relevant conflicts;
- Refer parties perpetrating sexual violence incidences to the International Criminal Court (ICC);
- Consider early-warning risk factors of sexual violence when monitoring conflict situations;
- Mainstream gender throughout field missions; and
- Ensure the deployment of WPAs to implement relevant resolutions on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Secretary-General further recommended that UN Member States:

- Undertake legislative reform to ensure survivors access to justice and redress;
- Build the capacity of state institutions to address the needs of survivors and prevent the recurrence of conflict-related sexual violence through psychosocial support, socio-economic reintegration, healthcare, legal aid, reparations, and other relevant measures;
- Recognise conflict-related sexual violence as grounds for refugee and asylum status;
- Ensure ceasefires and peace agreements are gender sensitive and prohibit sexual violence within the definition of ceasefires;
- Include gender capacities in monitoring and verification teams, including through the participation of women observers;
- Enhance cooperation between regional entities to improve information-sharing and documentation;
- Include gender sensitivity training in pre-deployment training for peacekeeping forces;
- Fund UN Action.