

Women, Peace and Security

June 2021

For June, in which Estonia has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Afghanistan, DRC, Israel/Palestine and Mali**.

Afghanistan

In the forthcoming report on the situation in Afghanistan, information on women, peace and security (WPS), and gender-sensitive conflict analysis should be mainstreamed across the entire report ([S/RES/2543 \(2020\)](#)). The Security Council should inquire about the progress of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in providing technical expertise and supporting the establishment of clear procedures to engage with and ensure the [leadership of diverse women](#), including [women with disabilities](#), [young women](#) and displaced women, in all stages of peace negotiations; and structures established to facilitate or foster the peace process, conflict resolution efforts, ceasefires, and implementation and monitoring of any agreements ([CEDAW/AFG/CO/1-2](#), [Oxfam](#), [WEI](#)). There should be follow-up on the extent to which powerbrokers leading the peace process are taking concrete action to ensure the planning, process and outcome(s) reflect the expertise and priorities of diverse Afghan women, including preserving all constitutional protections for women's rights as a priority. To create an environment conducive to the intra-Afghan dialogue, the Council should support the call of Afghan civil society for an immediate nationwide ceasefire. The Council should also request an update on UNAMA's support to the government and civil society organizations (CSOs) in communicating with local leaders, communities, partners and media about the increased risk of [domestic violence](#), particularly targeting women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities ([WEI](#)), resulting from the measures taken to address the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). The Council must urgently address the [continued attacks](#) perpetrated against women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, journalists, intellectuals and media workers ([HRW](#)). In 2020 alone, 19 activists were killed (18 in targeted attacks) and three family members of human rights defenders (HRDs) were killed. These violent attacks seek to undermine HRDs' tireless work for peace and human rights in Afghanistan and contribute to a climate of fear that undermines the peace process. They are occurring against a rapidly deteriorating security situation and stalled peace negotiations. Despite President Ghani's [authorization](#) to create the Joint Commission for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in December 2020, this commission is not operational, and the situation remains dire. The Council must focus on deterring further violence and ensuring an investigation of and accountability for violence, acting in full collaboration with HRDs and CSOs.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The DRC faces heightened inter-communal violence and attacks against civilians and [humanitarian personnel](#) by armed groups in the Irumu, Mambasa, and Beni territories. In the South Kivu provinces, many conflicts have been declared in Minembwe, Itombwe, Uvira and Fizi, with large population displacement. Armed conflicts and natural disasters continue to cause substantial population movements in the East, as well as numerous and serious protection incidents. The country has [5.2 million internally displaced people, some 1.4 million returnees, and 527,000 refugees and asylum seekers](#) from neighboring countries. Internal displacement has mainly been caused by armed attacks or clashes and land and inter-communal conflicts (98% of the causes of displacement). The recent eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano in Goma has resulted in the displacement of an additional 400,000 people, creating even more humanitarian challenges, especially with the presence of COVID-19 and the endemic presence of cholera in North Kivu. Over [2,000](#) civilians were killed in 2020, with violence often targeting displaced populations. Women and girls face ongoing insecurity due in part to the current crisis, which has undermined access to livelihoods, food and water, and the containment measures enacted in response to COVID-19 and the ensuing [spike in domestic violence](#). Early in May 2021, President Felix Tshisekedi declared a "state of si ge" in North Kivu and Ituri, placing the administrative architecture of both provinces under the command of the military hierarchy with a specific mandate to launch military operations against armed groups to reestablish state authority, stability and peace. Council members should urge the DRC authorities to ensure that the "state of si ge" does not further undermine human rights guaranteed under international human rights law, and call for humanitarian responses to be gender-responsive and emphasize the importance of timely and adequate multi-sectoral assistance for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), including medical, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic support that is inclusive and accessible. Gender-sensitive conflict analysis of the drivers of conflict should inform all Council discussions, including as it relates to the flow of weapons and the [repression](#) of HRDs, journalists, activists and civil society actors. The Council should request updates from senior UN leadership on

responses to protection concerns facing women HRDs and activists, as well as the extent to which there have been consultations with women's CSOs in efforts to enact legal reform in the context of a comprehensive reparations law and the addition of domestic violence, including marital rape, to the penal code. Finally, the Council should urge Congolese authorities to address past and recent serious crimes under international law, including those described in the [2010 United Nations Mapping Report](#). The Government should deliver justice and reparations for victims and their families, and carry out the long-awaited security sector vetting and reforms.

Israel/Palestine

As the Security Council considers the situation in Israel/Palestine, issues related to women's rights and meaningful participation must be made central to all discussions. The Council's discussions on Israel/Palestine provide a stark example of how the Council [instrumentalizes women's rights and experiences](#) in order to make broader peace and security points while simultaneously failing to concretely address legitimate barriers to inclusion and violence faced by women living under Israeli occupation. Palestinian women, including activists, peacebuilders and HRDs, regularly face violence, threats, arrest, intimidation, restriction on movement and discrimination as a result of Israeli policies that violate international humanitarian and human rights law. Further, due to the humanitarian crisis exacerbated by the Israeli occupation, women in Gaza are at a higher risk of GBV, including domestic violence. However, GBV support services in Gaza, including the two existing safe houses, were closed in the midst of the recent violence with survivors sent back to their homes, leaving women with no recourse should they face violence from family members. The use of explosive weapons in populated areas has both long- and short-term gendered impacts which must be addressed, including undermining [access to medical services](#), including sexual and reproductive health care. For example, significant damage was sustained by [nine hospitals and 19 primary healthcare centers in Gaza](#), which will have a grave impact on the estimated 16,500 women who will be giving birth over the next three months, 2,500 of whom will face complications requiring additional medical support. Finally, forced displacement continues [unabated](#) throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Council must call for an end to the continued expansion of settlements, settler violence and forcible transfers.

Mali

In its renewal of the mandate for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the Council should ensure all existing WPS-related provisions are maintained. The Council should also reflect and address the failure of eight years of MINUSMA's political mandate, made strikingly visible by the ongoing political crisis in Mali since May 2020 and the double military coup, by rebalancing its priorities with a focus on central Mali – currently the area most affected by violence – and preventing the ongoing spread of the conflict to southern Mali. In this context, it is critical that MINUSMA actively support the inclusion of diverse women in peace dialogues throughout Mali in order to prevent cases such as the agreement signed in April in Niono, where the [final agreement](#) led to a clear regression of women's rights. Further, the Council should ensure the following are addressed:

- Inclusion of language calling on MINUSMA to ensure all activities are “gender-responsive;”
- Alignment of existing WPS language in MINUSMA's mandate with good practice norms;
- Requiring MINUSMA to monitor threats and violence targeting women leaders, peacebuilders and HRDs; and
- Mandating that MINUSMA address the drivers of conflict in a gender-responsive manner, including using gender-sensitive conflict analysis.