

Women, Peace and Security

December 2023

Afghanistan

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

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 and girls and [gender diverse](#) people may amount to [gender persecution](#), a [crime against humanity](#), and further could be characterized as [gender apartheid](#). The Taliban continues to target human rights defenders (HRDs) due not only to their work, but also their gender. An ongoing stream of women HRDs, including current detainees [Neda Parwani](#), [Zholia Parsi](#), [Manizha Sediqi](#), and [Parisa Azada](#) have been [detained](#), sometimes for months, without any charge or access to legal representation and have faced abuses in custody, including [torture](#). During forthcoming meetings, Council members should:

- Ensure that all follow-up discussions regarding the recommendations of the independent assessment mandated by [Resolution 2679 \(2023\)](#) require protection of the full scope of women's human rights, in accordance with Afghanistan's international obligations, swift reversal of any policies and practices that restrict the enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights and fundamental freedoms as per Resolution 2681 (2023); and further, ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of diverse Afghan women and LGBTIQ people, especially human rights defenders and peacebuilders, in all discussions and outcomes by the Security Council, UN or international community about Afghanistan's future, including peace, security, humanitarian or other processes. Further, the creation of any future mechanisms for international engagement on Afghanistan, including a UN Special Envoy, must prioritize women's human rights, and include robust expertise on human rights and gender.
- Call for the immediate reversal of the [ban](#) on Afghan women [working](#) for the United Nations and NGOs, including [humanitarian organizations](#), in violation of the UN Charter and CEDAW and call for all humanitarian actors to ensure safe, principled and non-discriminatory humanitarian delivery to all Afghans in need and the participation of women in humanitarian action.
- Call for the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for all violations of human rights, including gender persecution, including those advocating for the rights of women and girls, marginalized ethnic and religious groups, people with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ people.
- Call for all parties, including the Taliban and other armed groups, to respect international human rights and humanitarian law and immediately stop targeting human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and journalists.
- Call for UNAMA's current mandate to be preserved and fully implemented, particularly: advocating for the protection and promotion of women's rights, including by calling for the Taliban to uphold their obligations under CEDAW; monitoring and reporting on human rights, including violations, abuses, and reprisals against women human rights defenders, and all forms of gender-based violence (GBV); and meaningful engagement with diverse Afghan women's organizations.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to worsen; more than 26 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance; the [crisis](#) has displaced a record number of 6.9 million people, [eroded](#) the healthcare situation, increased [food insecurity](#) and hunger, and contributed to an [increase](#) in [GBV](#). In eastern DRC, [violence](#) and [insecurity](#) is endemic and increasing; the declaration of a "[state of siege](#)," has enabled authorities to infringe upon human rights through the detention of [journalists](#) and [threats](#) and violence against [HRDs](#) and [political activists](#). Council members should urge the DRC authorities to cease all threats, violence and reprisals against women human rights defenders and peacebuilders. In the context of MONUSCO's drawdown, as the transition and disengagement plans are implemented, it is imperative that the benchmarks and indicators regarding protection of civilians are clearly defined so that progress can be monitored and measured. Sustained consultation with diverse women leaders, peacebuilders, and human rights defenders is critical for informing policymaking, as well as progress towards achieving overall benchmarks.

Israel / Palestine

The violence in Gaza since early October has now killed over [15,000](#) Palestinians; women and children comprise [67%](#) of those killed. Out of 2.1 million people in Gaza, [1.7 million](#) people, including 800,000 women are internally displaced, and an estimated [15%](#) have disabilities. The current escalation of violence is a continuation of the ongoing 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. 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 [healthcare](#) system has collapsed due to constant bombardment and the Israeli government's blockade of fuel. With the closure of Al Awda hospital, the only provider of maternity services in northern Gaza, an estimated [50,000](#) pregnant people are left at risk, including particularly the [5,000](#) women due to give birth in the next month. An estimated [180](#) women are currently giving birth daily without medical support, operations being conducted, including c-sections, [without anesthesia](#), and there is no [obstetric](#) or post-natal care for the more than [7,000](#) women who have given birth since mid-October. Freezing of development [funding](#) for Palestinian civil society organizations by many international donors is a considerable [barrier](#) to the delivery of basic services for women and girls and has led to the risk of closure of local [women-led organizations](#). The violence has not been limited to Gaza; over the last six weeks, [216](#) Palestinians have been killed in the [West Bank](#), including in the context of demonstrations; over [3,000](#) people have been arrested, many during the increasing number of search and arrest operations being carried out; and attacks against Palestinians by settlers have [doubled](#). Activists, peacebuilders, and human rights defenders, including diverse women, are [increasingly](#) under [threat](#) of violence and detention for [speaking](#) out, posting on [social media](#), and simply [expressing](#) support for people in Gaza; further [permits](#) for protests in the West Bank are being withheld, in violation of freedom of expression and assembly. The Security Council must:

- Demand an immediate and sustained cessation of hostilities and further demand all parties immediately stop all attacks on civilians and infrastructure and uphold international human rights and humanitarian law, and all relevant Security Council resolutions, including on women, peace and security.
- Demand an immediate end to forcible population transfer in violation of international humanitarian law. Forcibly relocating large numbers of civilians to an even smaller strip of land without adequate services risks exacerbating the current humanitarian catastrophe.
- Demand the lifting of pre-existing blockades and restrictions imposed on 9 October 2023, which are violations of international law and may amount to collective punishment of a civilian population.
- Ensure rapid, safe, [unhindered](#) and sustained humanitarian [access](#) for the provision of essential and life-saving relief assistance, including food, water, fuel, medical supplies and care, safe access of humanitarian personnel into Gaza, and urgent measures to augment the presence of child protection teams in shelters in order to support the increasing number of displaced children who are unaccompanied.
- 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 humanitarian and human rights law, and that Palestinian women are able to fully and equally contribute to, and serve as leaders in any de-escalation, ceasefire or other efforts to negotiate peace.

Sudan

The Security Council must condemn the ongoing fighting in Sudan, and [demand](#) an immediate cessation of hostilities and [respect](#) for international humanitarian and human rights law. Protection of civilians and the expansion of [access](#) for humanitarian assistance must be the highest priority. Civilians continue to be [killed and injured](#) indiscriminately as a result of the use of [heavy weaponry](#) and [explosive weapons](#) in densely populated areas, including Khartoum. Women and girls comprise the majority of the more than 4.5 million people displaced, and face a range of risks, including [sexual violence](#), in transit and in camps, [disruptions](#) to essential camp services, and extortion and abuse at [checkpoints](#). In [Darfur](#), violence targeting civilians increasingly follows a pattern of [ethnically-motivated](#) attacks, [including sexual violence](#), which, if verified, could amount to [war crimes](#), and, if the acts are widespread or systematic, could constitute [crimes against humanity](#). UN experts [warn](#) of the high risk of genocide and related atrocity crimes if mass killings continue. Diverse women and girls, including [activists](#), peacebuilders, and human rights defenders, are being targeted, [abducted, detained, forcibly married](#) and harassed. With the near collapse of health services, survivors have limited access to [health](#) care, and sexual and reproductive care in particular, including [psychosocial and medical support](#), is often limited or non-existent. Already strained services are worsening with the outbreak of [cholera](#), including in Khartoum and South Kordofan. Women human rights defenders and civil society groups, including those [documenting](#) gender-based violence carried out by armed actors, have been [targeted](#) in attempts to [intimidate](#), including through increased violence, interrogation and surveillance. Council members should ensure all discussions are informed by gender-sensitive conflict analysis of the drivers of violence against civilians.

In the context of the [closure](#) of UNITAMS, it is crucial that all existing work related to human rights monitoring, and women, peace and security are fully transferred to the UN Country Team. The UN system must sustain and strengthen its ability monitor, document and report on human rights violations, particularly of women's rights, and the situation of women human rights defenders, given the scale and scope of the violence, including sexual violence, in order to ensure justice and accountability. Finally, the UN must support the participation of diverse women in addressing the current crisis, including the humanitarian response and [crisis de-escalation](#) and resolution efforts.