

# Women, Peace and Security

## February 2020

### Central African Republic

The **situation** in the Central African Republic (CAR) remains of grave concern, with what little data is available suggesting a worsening security and humanitarian situation. The number of displaced persons is currently 1,281,000, the highest since 2013 ([UNOCHA](#)). There has been a notable rise in the reported incidence rate of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and violence against civilians; survivors report having been assaulted in their homes, during door-to-door raids, or as they flee violence. Lack of funding for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and access to justice, including via the protection cluster, has detrimental consequences to survivors/victims of SGBV; only 42% reported they had access to medical follow-up and 33% had access to legal support. The Council must inquire as to the efforts of the peacekeeping mission, in line with its robust WPS mandate, to address this critical gap in services and justice for survivors/victims and also ensure equal and meaningful participation of women in peace and electoral processes, including in the implementation of the peace agreement and in the forthcoming presidential election.

For February, in which Belgium has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on CAR, Haiti, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

### Haiti

Over recent months, Haiti has descended into a deepening political crisis, with repeated demonstrations calling for accountability and structural reform, amidst a massive corruption scandal, as well as the President's resignation. Parliamentary elections set for October 2019 were not held, enabling the president to rule by decree since 13 January 2020. Political instability in Haiti is reinforcing existing vulnerabilities to SGBV against women, girls, and gender non-conforming people ([OutRight Action Intl.](#), [Miami Herald](#)). During its discussion on the **situation** and consideration of any recent **reports**, the Security Council should inquire about the extent to which the mission has maintained WPS-related activities following the transition to the new political mission. Briefings should detail ways in which the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) is addressing critical gaps in accountability for SGBV, including ensuring the provision of gender-sensitive services for SGBV survivors/victims, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN peacekeepers and personnel, establishment of transparent, survivor-centered, readily accessible mechanisms to hear claims for remedies, including claims for child support from UN peacekeepers, and engagement with grassroots women's organizations whom are directly addressing SGBV at the local level. BINUH should monitor compliance with Haitian law and the UN's policies on SEA. The Council should call on BINUH to monitor the implementation of the UN's New Approach to Cholera ([A/71/620](#)) and ensure that the 'material assistance package' is gender-sensitive, fully-funded, and ensures women's participation in its implementation. Finally, the Council should follow-up on the UN findings regarding the November 2018 massacre in La Saline ([UN](#)), particularly in regards to SGBV and Government efforts to protect and assist displaced individuals, including women. According to [local media](#), survivors/victims are still are living in dire conditions without access to food, shelter, health services, or education.

### Iraq

In its discussion of the **situation** in Iraq and the most recent **report** on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the Council should urge UNAMI to continue monitoring the protests and ensure the protection of civic space and the right of individuals to peacefully protest, including women activists. Member States should also support calls of Iraqi CSOs to set up an investigative mechanism that documents, utilizing a gender-sensitive methodology, the violations perpetrated against peaceful demonstrators since 2019, and follow this up with an impartial and transparent mechanism to hold perpetrators accountable. UNAMI should continue to follow-up on progress in ensuring women are fully and substantively participating in all decision-making, particularly regarding the electoral reforms developed in response to protestors' demands and the new electoral law. The Council should also consider the extent to which the mission is mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting issue ([S/RES/2470 \(2019\)](#), OP 2(e), and follow-up on recommendations from previous [Security Council Informal Expert Group \(IEG\) on WPS](#) meetings ([S/2018/475](#)). It is imperative that UNAMI report on their support for the newly launched second NAP on Resolution 1325 (2000), including any support provided in ensuring there are the necessary financial resources for implementation and the establishment of accountability mechanisms to track and measure progress and impact.

## Syria

The Council's recent failure to fully renew the cross-border aid mechanism established in [Resolution 2165 \(2014\)](#) will exacerbate an already dire humanitarian situation, particularly by limiting health supplies in northeast Syria, many of which would help women with their personal hygiene. In addition, increasing hostilities in northwest Syria are placing even more civilians at risk and limiting their access to services and humanitarian assistance. Since 1 December 2019, nearly 390,000 people, 80% of whom are women and children, have been displaced in northwest Syria, bringing the total displaced since May 2019 to almost 500,000 ([OCHA](#), [UNFPA](#)). Millions of civilians remain trapped in the area, the vast majority of whom are also women and children, and remain at continued risk as the bombardment and hostilities escalate. Displacement increases the risk of sexual and gender-based violence and other violations that disproportionately affect women, such as by increasing their dependence due to several factors, including entrenched gender discrimination that makes them dependent on others for safe passage, shelter, and essential services. SGBV, including forced marriage or so-called "honor crimes," is high in camps such as Al Hol ([UNFPA](#)) and other open spaces where women live in informal settings. It is vital that the Council work to see a cessation of hostilities. The Council must call for rights-based, survivor-centered humanitarian action that is gender-responsive and provides immediate and non-discriminatory aid response as well as quality health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, to all affected communities. Furthermore, the Council must urge inquiry into more than 100,000 people forcibly disappeared, detained, abducted or gone missing throughout the past eight years in Syria ([COI on Syria](#)) and demand the immediate and unilateral release of those who have been arbitrarily detained. While the Council approaches the issue as a confidence-building measure between parties, addressing arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture of Syrians is critical to comply with international human rights law and IHL. Any effort to end detention, enforced disappearances, and torture must be carried out with an understanding of the gendered impact of these violations, including the intentional targeting of women for their or their family's activism, and the resulting stigma women face after release. Further, there must be resources and support for anyone released from detention, including women and LGBTIQ+ people, many of whom face challenges in gaining access to essential services, such as vital sexual and reproductive health services and mental health treatment after release. Women's meaningful participation must be supported in all peace and political processes. The Office of the Special Envoy (OSE) should prioritize meaningful participation, dialogue and inclusion of Syrian women activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders. As a means of ensuring accountability, reporting by UN senior officials must include analysis and information on efforts to support women's meaningful participation ([S/RES/2449 \(2018\)](#), OP 12). In the context of the development of a new constitution, international human rights law and humanitarian law norms, such as gender equality, must be firmly enshrined in the new constitution in order to ensure that women's rights are guaranteed in Syria's future and that they are able to participate equally and meaningfully in social and political life. Finally, the outcomes of the February 2020 meeting of the [Security Council IEG on WPS](#) should be reflected throughout all future meetings on Syria.

## Yemen

The Security Council's discussions on the **situation** in Yemen have historically failed to reflect important gender dimensions of the situation, despite multiple meetings of the [Security Council IEG on WPS](#) ([S/2017/627](#), [S/2017/1040](#), [S/2019/253](#)) and [briefings by civil society](#) in 2017, 2018 and 2019. The Security Council should add criteria that allow for the designation of groups or individuals that carry out violations of international law, including against women's human rights and sexual and gender-based violence. Further, the panel of experts should be requested to mainstream gender analysis across their work, including in all reports, and add new gender expertise to enable it to comprehensively address the gendered impacts of all types of violations and not only SGBV. This gender expertise should be assigned to an existing member of the panel of experts who is not already responsible for humanitarian issues or be added as a new expert. Finally, the Sanctions Committee should be mandated to consult with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) on sexual violence in conflict. Given the inextricable link between the security situation, sanctions, and the peace process, Council members should emphasize the importance of women's meaningful participation in any discussion regarding the current peace process, and ensure the 30% quota for women's participation as a matter of urgency. Women's human rights and peacebuilding groups are critical to developing strategic understanding and action on complex issues that move beyond the usual humanitarian efforts. It is critical that women's CSOs, including grassroots organizations, be part of all Track 1, 1.5 and 2 and that Yemeni women's inclusion in the peace process not be confined to the Technical Advisory Group. Council members should request updates on the OSE's engagement with these groups and further hear from women civil society leaders at future country-specific briefings.