

Women, Peace and Security

June 2020

Afghanistan

As of the end of May 2020, more than 30,000 COVID-19 tests have been conducted throughout the country, resulting in 10,000 confirmed positive cases and more than 200 deaths (OCHA). The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating a situation which continues to see horrific violence against civilians in violation of international humanitarian law, including the recent attack on a hospital (HRW, MSF). Further, there is an increase in domestic violence (UNAMA, The Guardian) and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), such as forced marriage (OCHA), as negative coping strategies (Madre, et. al.). The response to the pandemic must be inclusive, and both gender and disability-responsive (UN, Devex, HI, HRW, Women Enabled Intl.). Basic rights and freedoms are being eroded in the short-term, which, if continued, can rollback hard-won gains for women (Oxfam). Further, given that roughly 80% of adults in Afghanistan have some form of disability (Asia Foundation), and women face systematic challenges in accessing services (HRW), an intersectional and inclusive approach is necessary. In the forthcoming report on the implementation of the mandate for the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the level of detail and analysis provided on WPS should be improved upon, in line with the mission's mandate (S/RES/2489 (2019)). The Council should inquire about the mission's progress in providing technical expertise and supporting the establishment of clear procedures to engage Afghan women and young women from diverse backgrounds in peace negotiations and conflict resolution efforts, including as negotiators, developed in consultation with women members of the High Peace Council and State Ministry of Peace (CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/1-2). There should be follow-up on the extent to which powerbrokers leading the peace process are taking concrete action to ensure women's meaningful participation and are also ensuring the planning, process, and outcome(s) reflect Afghan women's expertise and priorities. The Council should also request an update on UNAMA's support to the Government and civil society organizations in providing support to communicate with the local leaders, communities, partners and media about the increased risk of violence against women and girls due to COVID-19 and its impact on Afghan Peace Process. It is crucial to note that the conflict has exacerbated the vulnerability to marginalization, poverty, discrimination, and violence, especially among local and rural women. The Council should seek an update on UNAMA's support to the Government in providing basic gender-responsive services for survivors/victims of attacks, which are at the highest levels recorded since 2009 (UNAMA). There should also be information on measures taken to ensure the security and protection of women officials and leaders, women's rights activists, women human rights defenders, and journalists (CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/1-2), as well as women healthcare providers. Finally, senior officials should provide detailed updates regarding UNAMA's support to, and progress on, implementing its National Action Plan (NAP) on Resolution 1325 (2000), including in the development of accountability structures, and finalization of the financial mechanism to ensure implementation (S/RES/2242 (2015)).

For June, in which France has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on Afghanistan, DRC, Haiti and Mali.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

In addition to COVID-19, the population of DRC is facing multiple public health challenges alongside ongoing violence in eastern DRC (OHCHR, UNHCR), and widespread displacement. In 2019, 1.7 million people fled violence in DRC, with 5 million people overall internally displaced; the highest numbers in Africa and second only to Syria globally (IDMC). This context puts women migrants and women who work in the informal sector particularly at risk. Further, the prisons in DRC, which are, in some cities, at 600% capacity, must urgently release detainees who have not been convicted of any crime or are awaiting trial, and further ensure food, medical care, and basic sanitation is improved to avoid a potential outbreak (HRW). As the Security Council discusses the recent report of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), issues related to women's meaningful participation should be discussed alongside critical protection concerns, including the extent to which protection efforts are gender-responsive. There has been a noted increase in GBV perpetrated by armed groups, as well as State forces, and women continue to face barriers to accessing justice, reparations, and victim support services (CEDAW/C/COD/CO/8). The protection of women and girls is not taken into account by MONUSCO and since its Gender Office has moved from Kinshasa to Goma, actions concerning gender and the protection of women and girls have been nearly nonexistent. A draft law on reparations for victims of GBV lapsed and women's CSOs have not been consulted on any further legislative efforts to address the gaps in victim reparations (Madre). In 2019, the UN SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict visited centers in DRC that provide medical and psychological care to survivors of GBV (MONUSCO). Civil society organizations reported to her that "sexual violence continues to be systematically planned to destroy women" and "victims in remote areas lack access to services" (SRSG on SVC). There is an urgent need to address the lack of timely

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and adequate multi-sectoral assistance for survivors of GBV, including medical and psychosocial assistance, and legal support. The Council should request updates from senior leadership on MONUSCO's efforts to address GBV, including on providing services to survivors and including specifically the extent to which the mission has consulted with, or plans to consult with, women's CSOs in supporting the Government to pass a comprehensive reparations law that eliminates barriers to reparations for survivors/victims of GBV, ensuring full compliance with court-ordered reparations and assisting the Government to add domestic violence and marital rape into its penal code. Further, the Council should request updates on MONUSCO's support to local women's groups in providing services to address GBV and domestic violence that has been increasing due to COVID-19 containment measures, including comprehensive medical, psychosocial, legal, and socioeconomic assistance that is inclusive of persons with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people (CEDAW/C/COD/CO/8). DRC is surrounded by nine contiguous countries with porous borders enabling the proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), which exacerbates insecurity and GBV. Despite the existing sanctions regime, SALW continue to move across borders; the Council must ensure SALW is a priority in its discussions of the current situation.

Haiti

The COVID-19 pandemic is progressing in Haiti, with a total of 596 cases over the past two months. A recent rapid increase in cases has led to a renewed month-long state of health emergency (Nouvelliste). The pandemic has had a particularly devastating effect on women agricultural producers and small agro-entrepreneurs living in rural areas who care for individuals who lack the means to buy protection equipment (Haiti Libre). 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 GBV 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 GBV, including ensuring the provision of gender-sensitive services for GBV survivors/victims, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN peacekeepers and personnel, the 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 who are directly addressing GBV at the local level. BINUH should monitor compliance with Haitian law and the UN's policies on SEA, particularly in light of the UN's Victims' Rights Advocate February report calling for further accountability. 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. A meaningful response to cholera should encompass a renewed sense of urgency in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the Council should follow-up on the UN findings regarding the November 2018 massacre in La Saline (UN) and the November 2019 massacre in Bel Air, particularly in regards to GBV and Government efforts to protect and assist displaced individuals, including women. According to local media, survivors/victims are still living in dire conditions without access to food, shelter, health services, or education.

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 (S/RES/2480 (2019), OPs 28(a)(ii), (c)(iii), (d)(iv), (e)(ii), 56)). Further, the Council should continue to call upon the Government to ensure women's participation in processes and institutions that support the implementation of the Agreement, including in the Cabinet and the territorial administrative positions. Although recent deliberations by the Comité de suivi de l'Accord indicated progress in advancing women's inclusion, these efforts must be moved forward expeditiously, and considered critical as part of efforts to ensure implementation continues in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Language calling on the Government to support the reintegration of survivors of GBV and gender and religion-based persecutions, and to make efforts to address stigma at the national and local levels should be maintained and strengthened with language calling for increased access to justice and advancement of current judicial proceedings to ensure crimes are fairly adjudicated in a timely manner (CEDAW/C/MLI/CO/6-7, S/RES/2364 (2017), OP 11, ICC Case Information Sheet, Coalition for the International Criminal Court).