

Women, Peace and Security

May 2023

Iraq

For May, in which Switzerland has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Iraq, Israel / Palestine, and Sudan.**

In its forthcoming discussion on the situation in Iraq, it is crucial that the Security Council take into account the underlying factors contributing to insecurity, including lack of protection and promotion of human rights. Political violence and hate speech continues to increase, placing diverse women activists, women public figures, journalists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders at risk of [targeted violence](#) and [hate campaigns](#) due to their leadership and participation in public processes, and work in support of vulnerable groups. This increase can be directly linked to impunity for past crimes committed before 2019 and the failure of the justice system to ensure accountability. Violence targeting women, including [lesbian and transgender women](#) and other minorities, in public life is part of a continuum of violence women experience throughout their lives, necessitating robust legal frameworks criminalizing all forms of gender-based violence, addressing widespread [impunity](#) through gender-responsive justice institutions, and ensuring access to multi-sectoral, survivor-centered services. In this context, Council members should emphasize the importance of strengthening protection mechanisms for diverse women by leveraging the momentum surrounding the adoption of the [Yezidi Female Survivor Law](#) to enact the Family Violence Protection Law with a provision that ensures civil society engagement and legally recognizes civil society-run safe homes. Support mechanisms for local and national women's and minority's rights civil society should also be amplified in order to push back against defamation campaigns targeted against them. When renewing the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the Security Council should maintain all existing women, peace and security (WPS) language as well as:

- Strengthen references to core dimensions of the WPS agenda throughout UNAMI's mandate by emphasizing that UNAMI should promote women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation and leadership and require UNAMI to consult with diverse women's civil society groups across all aspects of operations as part of the existing mandate to mainstream gender as a cross-cutting issue.
- Explicitly note that UNAMI's efforts to promote the protection of human rights should include support for the implementation of relevant national laws and strategies, including the Yazidi Survivor's Law, as well as international human rights law, such as CEDAW, and encompass monitoring and reporting on violence targeting diverse women, including violence on the basis of sexual orientation and identity, and on violence targeting diverse women in public life and civic space, including activists, civil society leaders, protestors, politicians, candidates, and individuals promoting women's rights, disability rights, and [LGBTIQ+](#) rights, as well as organizations engaged in humanitarian action, peacebuilding, and [climate justice](#).
- Clarify that a survivor-centered and trauma-informed approach should be the basis of all efforts to address gender-based violence, including its support for the implementation of the Joint Communique on Prevention and Response to Conflict Related Sexual Violence.
- Emphasize that UNAMI's support for efforts to address the [effects of climate change](#) must reflect how [women](#) are particularly affected and as a result, should be guided by age-, disability-, and gender-sensitive risk assessment and analysis and further ensure that [climate change and natural resource](#)-related discussions at all levels are inclusive of women's participation and leadership.
- Underscore that UNAMI's support for delivery of essential civil and social services, including in the context of education, health care, and social protection, should be age-, disability-, and gender-responsive and undertaken in coordination with women's groups and women leaders.

Israel / Palestine

The stalled peace process, ongoing occupation, and increasing economic and governance challenges in the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT) serves as the [backdrop](#) for increased violence targeting civilians in recent months, exacerbating an already untenable situation. The protracted occupation, which encompasses efforts to [limit movement, seize property, control and limit Palestinian natural resources](#), including access to water, and impose barriers to gaining [citizenship or residency status](#), contributes to discrimination against diverse women and girls and directly undermines their safety and security, including by [forcibly displacing](#) women and girls, exacerbating [gender-based violence](#) and preventing [access](#) to life-saving sexual and reproductive health care. In Council discussions on the situation, the rights of Palestinian women, including their right to full, equal, safe and meaningful participation and leadership, must be central to all discussions. Council members must concretely address legitimate barriers to inclusion and violence faced by women living under Israeli occupation. Palestinian women, including activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders, regularly face threats, harassment, and violence, including in online spaces, as well as arrest, intimidation,

restriction on movement and discrimination as a result of Israeli policies that violate international humanitarian and human rights law. Forced displacement continues [unabated](#) throughout the oPT, including in Masafer Yatta, with profoundly negative effects on women and girls. The Council must call for an end to the continued expansion of settlements, settler violence and forcible transfers, house demolitions, residency revocation, movement restrictions, arbitrary detention and targeting of human right defenders. Finally, the Council must support efforts to ensure ongoing efforts to protect and promote human rights, including the work of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, and the UN database of companies operating in Israeli settlements in occupied West Bank & East Jerusalem.

Sudan

In response to the 15 April outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan, the Security Council must condemn the ongoing fighting and demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and [respect](#) for international humanitarian and human rights law, including [protection of civilians](#) and [resumption](#) of delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance as a priority. Further, both parties must end the [indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure](#) by ending the use of [heavy weaponry](#) and explosive weapons in densely populated areas. There are already reports of the near collapse of health services, destruction of water and electrical facilities, and lack of access to food and basic necessities, threatening to turn an already acute humanitarian crisis into an [irreversible humanitarian disaster](#) if it continues unabated.

The outbreak of violence is rapidly exacerbating an already dire situation in which gender-based violence, grounded in [pre-existing](#) inequality and marginalization, is prevalent against diverse women and [girls](#), with [displacement](#), [age](#), disability, and participation in public life compounding the risk of experiencing violence, while access to services, including sexual and reproductive care is often limited or non-existent. [Women](#) involved in ongoing [protests](#) as leaders, organizers, and [activists](#), have been met with gender-specific [violence](#) by security forces, including assault and [rape](#). Women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and women's civil society groups, including those [documenting](#) GBV carried out by armed groups, have been [targeted](#) by security forces in attempts to [intimidate](#), including through interrogation and surveillance.

In its forthcoming renewal of the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the Security Council should maintain all existing WPS provisions, and further:

- Promote all efforts to ensure accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including gender-based violence, as a fundamental requirement future peace and security, and explicitly call on the mission to work with relevant actors to ensure the safety of women active in public life and civic space, including women human rights defenders, peacebuilders activists, protestors, elected officials, civil servants, and civil society leaders by fostering an enabling environment and adopting and implementing legislation that recognizes and protects their rights, safety and participation.
- Emphasize the importance of inclusive ceasefire and peace agreement negotiation processes which ensure women's safe participation and leadership, including in regional and sub-regional processes and negotiations, and require UNITAMS to consult with diverse women's civil society, including groups engaged on disability rights and climate justice.
- Explicitly note that UNITAMS' existing human rights mandate is inclusive of the protection and promotion of the full range of women's human rights, including the ratification of CEDAW and repeal of discriminatory laws, such as the personal status law and provisions of national security and labor laws and call on UNITAMS to monitor and report on violence targeting diverse women in public life and civic spaces, including activists, civil society leaders, protestors, politicians, candidates, peacebuilders, civil servants, and individuals promoting women's rights, disability rights, and LGBTIQ+ rights, as well as organizations engaged in humanitarian action, peacebuilding, and climate justice.
- Emphasize that UNITAMS' work in preventing and addressing [gender-based violence](#) should be undertaken using a trauma-informed, survivor-centered approach that places the rights, needs and wishes of survivors at the heart of the planning, decision-making and response; in its support for the development and implementation of relevant action plans, the mission should seek to ensure the delivery of quality, accessible, and non-discriminatory [healthcare](#) and comprehensive support, including for sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial support, legal services, access to justice, reparations, and support for livelihoods, particularly in areas where there is already a lack of services.
- Recognize the adverse effects of climate change and natural resources has on crisis and conflict in Sudan and note that all relevant efforts to address the [effects of climate change](#) must reflect how [women](#) are [particularly affected](#) and, as a result, should be guided by age-, disability-, and gender-sensitive risk assessment and ensure that efforts to facilitate climate change and natural resources-related dialogue at all levels are inclusive of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership.