

Women, Peace and Security

May 2024

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

Iraq

In Iraq, political violence and hate speech have placed diverse women human rights defenders and [women's groups](#) at risk of [targeted violence](#) and hate campaigns due to their work, including over the past year by a rapidly growing anti-gender movement. The NGO Directorate is continuing to target civil society organizations that work on women's rights and gender issues, and continues to enforce the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) [directive](#) banning the use of the term "gender" and ordering all media outlets to replace the term "homosexuality" with "sexual deviance". Council members should express strong support for civil society in order to push back against defamation campaigns targeting them and urge the reversal of the CMC directive. Council members must call for robust legal frameworks criminalizing all forms of [gender-based violence](#), including against [lesbian and transgender women](#) and other minorities; the establishment of gender-responsive justice institutions; access to multi-sectoral, survivor-centered services in order to address widespread [impunity](#); and for the Government of Iraq to enact the Family Violence Protection Law with a provision that ensures civil society engagement and legally recognizes civil society-run safe homes. Council members should further [call](#) on the General Directorate for Survivors Affairs (GDSA), which, as of February 2024, has issued reparations payments to [1,651 survivors](#) covered by the Yazidi Survivors Law, to [lift](#) the requirement that a criminal suit be filed in order to be eligible for reparations, and expand coverage to include children born in captivity to Yazidi parents. Council members should also condemn the recent [passage](#) of the "Law on Combating Prostitution and Homosexuality" that [criminalizes](#) consensual same-sex intimacy and gender nonconformity, with sentences including a maximum of 15 years in prison. In response to [concerns](#) raised by civil society, the Security Council should establish [benchmarks](#) that must be reached before the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) completes its mandate in September 2024, in order to ensure that the Government of Iraq is able to pursue accountability for ISIL crimes in accordance with international standards. In renewing the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Council members must continue to monitor and reiterate the importance of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in all political, [electoral](#), and peace and security processes through specific and targeted [measures](#), including quotas.

Israel/Palestine

The current escalation of violence and deepening humanitarian crisis in Gaza comes in the context of over half a century of occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem). The hostilities in Gaza since October 2023 have now killed over [34,000](#) Palestinians, approximately [70%](#) of whom are women and children, and displaced nearly [1 million](#) women. Further fighting in [Rafah](#), where an estimated 1.5 million people are sheltering in dire conditions, risks a [humanitarian disaster](#) that must be [averted](#). The constant [bombardment](#) of hospitals, combined with the Israeli government's restrictions on fuel, water, and aid, has led to the collapse of the healthcare system, putting mothers and their [newborns](#) at risk of significant [physical](#) and [mental](#) harm and violating women's [sexual and reproductive health and rights](#). More than [155,000](#) pregnant and lactating women are unable to access essential services. Nearly [1.1 million](#) people are experiencing catastrophic food insecurity, with [famine](#) an [imminent concern](#) in northern Gaza, exposing women and marginalized groups to additional immediate and long-term health [consequences](#) as a result of the hostilities. Since 7 October, [480](#) Palestinians have also been killed in the [West Bank](#), where attacks by settlers have displaced people from [at least 20 communities](#). Arrests of Palestinians, including [women and girls](#), have surged, and there are concerning and [credible reports](#) of Palestinian women and girls facing sexual violence in detention. UN experts have further expressed [alarm](#) regarding reports of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killing, inhuman and degrading treatment, and targeting of Palestinian women, including peacebuilders, women human rights defenders, [journalists](#), and humanitarian workers, which could amount to grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and serious crimes under international criminal law. The Security Council must:

- Following the adoption of UN Security Council [Resolution 2728](#) (2024), demand compliance with an immediate and sustained ceasefire and further demand all parties stop all unlawful attacks on civilians, civilian infrastructure, and humanitarian actors, including by refraining from a full-scale military operation in Rafah, which would have [devastating consequences](#) for civilians. Call on all actors to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law, and all relevant Security Council resolutions, including on women, peace and security, and work towards a long-term and peaceful resolution to the conflict.
- Ensure immediate, safe, [unhindered](#), and expanded humanitarian [access](#) for the provision of basic services and life-saving relief assistance, including [food](#), water, fuel, medical supplies and care, electricity, and internet access, and safe access of humanitarian and medical personnel into Gaza, as required by [Resolution 2728](#) and [Resolution 2720](#) (2023).
- Demand an [immediate halt](#) to the transfer of weapons, parts, and ammunition to Israel and to Palestinian armed groups while there is risk that they are used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law.

Women, Peace and Security

- Demand the immediate and unconditional [release](#) of all hostages, and humane treatment of all those captured, in accordance with international humanitarian law, as required by [Resolution 2728](#), and the release of all individuals forcibly detained and imprisoned without charge.
- Call on the Government of Israel to immediately and fully comply with all [provisional measures](#) ordered by the International Court of Justice to protect Palestinians in Gaza from acts of genocide, including by refraining from acts prohibited under [Article II](#) of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. All Member States must uphold their obligation to prevent genocide, which is a *jus cogens* norm of international law.
- Demand an immediate end to the forcible transfer of civilians in violation of international humanitarian law and an immediate end to all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of Palestinian territory, in line with [Resolution 2334](#) (2016).
- Demand an end to the total blockade of Gaza, which is a violation of international law and amounts to collective punishment of a civilian population.
- Call on donors to fully fund the updated and extended [Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#) and to scale up sustainable, direct, and flexible funding for national NGOs, particularly local women-led civil society organizations. Further, donors should urgently [reverse](#) decisions to withhold funds from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and [support](#) its continued and vital operations without interruption.
- Urge all parties to cooperate with independent, impartial, investigative mechanisms, including the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel](#), to monitor, collect, and verify evidence, and report on human rights violations and abuses, including all forms of gender-based violence, committed by all parties on and since 7 October; further, ensure that all justice and accountability efforts are human rights-based, survivor-centered, and non-discriminatory, and designed and implemented in partnership with survivors.
- Demand that the rights of diverse Palestinian women, including women human rights defenders, peace activists, and journalists, are upheld in line with international law, and that they are able to fully contribute to any de-escalation, ceasefire, or other efforts to negotiate peace.

South Sudan

The Security Council's forthcoming discussion on South Sudan should be informed by gender-sensitive analysis of the drivers of the conflict, including widespread inequality, the exclusionary nature of peace and political efforts, lack of [implementation](#) of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), the widespread availability of [weapons](#), continued [impunity](#), and the [impacts](#) of [climate change](#). The resulting situation is characterized by violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, forced displacement, and food insecurity. Of the 9 million people estimated to be in critical need in 2024, [24%](#) are women. South Sudan is one of the countries of highest concern for [starvation](#), with associated risks for groups such as children, people with disabilities, and those who are pregnant and lactating. Continued food insecurity also presents other protection risks, including gender-based violence and [early, child, and forced marriage](#). Approximately [588,000 people](#) have entered the country from Sudan since that conflict began in April 2023, compounding existing humanitarian needs. [Access](#) to humanitarian assistance has been severely curtailed due to [attacks](#) on [humanitarian workers](#), [restrictions](#) on the work of civil society organizations, bureaucratic barriers, and operational interference. Prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, risk mitigation, and [scale-up of response services](#) must be a priority. The unprecedented [shrinking](#) of civic and political space, and threats and reprisals against [women human rights defenders and peacebuilders](#), are a concerning indicator of backsliding into violence.

There has been limited to no progress in implementing crucial provisions of the R-ARCSS. Key aspects of the agreement remain [incomplete](#) or barely initiated. Increased efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of diverse women in the peace process and their representation in the government, national ministries, and as state governors, which currently [falls short](#) of the 35% quota [required](#) in the R-ARCSS. Both [UN officials](#) and [civil society](#) have expressed concern about the increased human rights violations that continue to undermine preparation for elections. Ahead of the elections scheduled for December 2024, civic space must be protected, and women must be able to meaningfully and safely participate as candidates, poll workers, and voters. Planning for regional humanitarian needs is critical in case of displacement due to potential election-motivated violence, alongside the continued [impacts](#) of the regional crisis in neighboring Sudan. Momentum should be leveraged to [finalize](#) the proposed [Anti Gender-Based Violence Bill](#), which has been pending since 2020, in order to address impunity and protect the human rights of women and girls. Recent fighting in [Abyei](#) and Greater Pibor Administrative Areas, as well as in [Jonglei](#), [Warrap](#), Upper Nile, Western Equatoria, and Central Equatoria States, has led to a rise in human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. Given the above context, the current sanctions regime, including an arms embargo, asset freezes, and travel bans, should be renewed and fully implemented.