

# Women, Peace and Security

## September 2023

For September, in which Albania has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Afghanistan**, the **DRC**, **South Sudan**, and **Sudan**.

### Afghanistan

Since taking power two years ago, the Taliban have undermined [women's human rights](#) in both policy and practice by codifying systematic 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 may amount to [gender persecution](#), a [crime against humanity](#), and further could be characterized as [gender apartheid](#), as the Taliban "appear to be governing by systemic discrimination with the intention to subject women and girls to total domination." The Security Council must prioritize the protection of women's human rights and the full, equal, and meaningful participation and leadership of diverse Afghan women, including civil society and women's rights organizations, in all fora, at all levels and at all stages of decision-making throughout all discussions, as well as in any outcomes. During forthcoming meetings, Council members should:

- Reiterate the [indispensable role](#) of Afghan women and state their unequivocal support for the protection and promotion of the full range of women's human rights in accordance with international human rights law; strongly condemn the implementation of regressive policies that violate those rights and call for their immediate reversal; demand the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all peace and political processes, including any meetings facilitated by the UN; and express unwavering support for the work of human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and civil society representatives.
- Condemn and call for the immediate reversal of the [ban](#) on Afghan women [working](#) for the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, including [humanitarian organizations](#), in violation of the UN Charter and CEDAW, and call for all UN agencies and other humanitarian actors to abide by the principles of non-discrimination to ensure principled humanitarian delivery to all Afghans in need, in all parts of the country, and to ensure women's participation and leadership in humanitarian action, free of restrictions or reprisals.
- Call for accountability for all human rights violations and support measures to investigate and prosecute those responsible for all violations of human rights, including gender persecution and attacks on journalists and diverse human rights defenders, 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 end the continued targeting, threats to, and killings of human rights defenders, peacebuilders, journalists, protestors, and all other civil society representatives.
- Call for UNAMA's mandate to be fully implemented, particularly those aspects related to: 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, journalists, and humanitarian workers, and all forms of gender-based violence (GBV); meaningful engagement with diverse Afghan women's organizations and networks; and ensuring the transparent, non-discriminatory and equitable distribution of humanitarian aid.
- Call for the independent assessment on Afghanistan mandated by Resolution 2679 (2023) to be carried out in close consultation with Afghan women and civil society, both inside and outside of the country, and for it to prioritize and explicitly address and call for the protection and promotion of the human rights of diverse Afghan women and girls, as well as the critical importance of their full, equal, and meaningful participation in any decision-making regarding the future of Afghanistan.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to worsen, particularly for the more than 26 million people in need of humanitarian assistance due to the combined impact of conflict, violence, and climate change; the resulting [crisis](#) has displaced a record number of [6.2 million](#) people, [2.8 million](#) of whom have been displaced since the start of 2022, increased [food insecurity](#) and hunger, and contributed to the continued [increase](#) in [GBV](#). Humanitarian challenges are exacerbated by multiple public health crises, including [cholera](#), and damaged infrastructure, making the disbursement of aid increasingly difficult. In eastern DRC, [violence](#) and [insecurity](#) is endemic and increasing; the declaration of a "[state of siege](#)," a [temporary](#) measure that has been continuously renewed since May 2021, has enabled authorities to infringe upon human rights through the detention of [journalists](#) and [threats](#) and violence against [human rights defenders](#) and [political activists](#). Council members should urge the DRC authorities to ensure that the "state of siege" does not further undermine human rights guaranteed under international human rights law, including as it relates to violence and threats against women human rights defenders, peacebuilders, and activists/protestors. The Council should request updates from senior UN leadership on responses to protection concerns facing women human rights defenders and activists, as well as the extent to which there have been consultations with women's civil society organizations in efforts to enact [legal reform](#) in the context of a comprehensive reparations law and the addition of domestic violence, including marital rape, to the penal code. The Council should call for humanitarian responses to be gender-responsive and emphasize the

importance of timely and adequate multi-sectoral assistance for survivors of GBV, including medical, psychosocial, legal, and socioeconomic support that is inclusive and accessible. Relatedly, the Council should urge DRC authorities to address past and recent serious crimes under international law, including those described in the [2010 United Nations Mapping Report](#), which remain unaddressed. The Government should deliver justice and reparations for victims and their families and carry out the long-awaited security sector vetting and reforms. The full, equal, and meaningful participation of diverse women, including young women, must be prioritized and supported at all levels throughout all mediation, prevention, and peace processes. Finally, in the context of discussions related to [MONUSCO's](#) role and status, the Mission must facilitate dialogue with local communities, including women's groups, and incorporate their perspectives in all planning and implementation processes. This is a necessary requirement to prevent a repetition of past challenges between the peacekeeping mission and local communities and will further ensure any plan is fully informed by the perspectives of those most affected.

## South Sudan

The Security Council's forthcoming discussion on South Sudan should be informed by gender-sensitive analysis of the drivers of the conflict and chronic communal violence, 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, [militarization](#) of cattle raiding, the erosion of institutions, [impunity](#), and the [impacts of climate change](#). The resulting situation is characterized by violations and abuses of international humanitarian and human rights law, displacement, and food insecurity, putting humanitarian needs at the [highest level](#) since 2011. Violence against [civilians](#), including [GBV](#), continues to increase; conflict-related sexual violence, for example, increased by [96%](#) in 2022, and continues to be enabled by conflict, in addition to broader structural violence and gender-based [discrimination](#) within society. More than [90%](#) of civilian deaths can be attributed to community-based militias and self-defense groups, many of which [formed](#) in response to raids on cattle herds and benefit from widespread proliferation of [weapons](#). Since fighting in Sudan broke out on 15 April 2023, [thousands of civilians](#) have [fled](#) Sudan into South Sudan, with [92%](#) of those being South Sudanese [returnees](#), many of whom have been displaced multiple times, increasing the need for already strained resources. [Access](#) to humanitarian assistance has been severely curtailed for the more than 500,000 women, many also caring for children, in Jonglei and Pibor due to [attacks](#) on [humanitarian](#) workers, bureaucratic barriers, and operational interference. The work of civil society organizations, who often provide critical services in local communities, is further impacted by increasing [restrictions](#) against civil society leaders, human rights defenders, and journalists. The shrinking of civic space and threats and reprisals against women human rights defenders and peacebuilders should be particularly highlighted in Council discussions as an indicator of the continued backsliding of the country into violence.

This all occurs against the backdrop of limited to no progress in implementing crucial provisions of the [R-ARCSS](#). As civil society briefers ([March 2022](#), [September 2021](#), [June 2021](#), [April 2021](#), [March 2021](#), [September 2020](#), [June 2019](#), [March 2019](#), [September 2018](#), [May 2018](#)) have emphasized, key aspects of the agreement remain [incomplete](#) or barely initiated, such as drafting of a permanent constitution; election-planning; establishing transitional justice mechanisms, such as the [Hybrid Court](#), along with truth-telling and compensation mechanisms initially [announced](#) in January 2021; completing security arrangements; and conducting a census. Increased efforts must be made to ensure the inclusion of diverse women in the peace process, and their representation in the government and national ministries and as state governors. Women's involvement in these institutions continues to fall short of the 35% quota required in the [R-ARCSS](#). Further, in planning for the forthcoming elections, gender should be mainstreamed throughout the discussion, and women must be able to meaningfully and safely participate in all planning processes, as well as in roles at all levels, including as candidates, poll workers, and voters. Finally, the recent [ratification](#) of the Maputo Protocol is positive after five years of delay; 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 strengthen accountability.

## 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. Protection of civilians and the continued expansion of [access](#) for humanitarian assistance beyond Darfur to all hard-to-reach areas 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. In [West 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](#). Diverse women and girls, including [activists](#), peacebuilders, and human rights defenders, are being targeted in the midst of widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, forced [eviction](#), and [displacement](#). With the near collapse of health services, survivors have limited access to [health](#) care, and sexual and reproductive care in particular is often limited or non-existent. 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. Council members should ensure all discussions are informed by gender-sensitive conflict analysis of the drivers of violence against civilians, including GBV. Finally, all efforts must be made to support the participation of diverse women in [crisis de-escalation](#) and resolution efforts at the local level, including mediation and negotiation, and all parties should seek to meet the minimum quota for women's participation in any transitional processes.