

**Forum:** SOCHUM

**Issue:** Gender based violence as a weapon of war

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## Overview

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The General Assembly allocates to the Third Committee, agenda items relating to a range of social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues that affect people all over the world. The topics discussed in the committee included the advancement of women, the protection of children, indigenous issues, the treatment of refugees, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination, etc.

The use of gender-based violence as war weapon jeopardizes the basic human rights of the victims. Gender-based violence is especially problematic in the context of complex armed conflicts and civil wars, where civilian women and children are often targeted for abuse and are the most vulnerable to exploitation simply because of their gender, age, and status in society. Gender-based violence is a violation of universal human rights protected by international human rights conventions, including the right to security of person; the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment; and the right to life.

Basically, there are five forms of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence or harassment, human trafficking, female genital mutilation, and child marriage. The most prevalent forms that exist in conflict zones include sexual violence and female genital mutilation. [3]

Sexual violation of women erodes the fabric of a community in a way that few weapons can. Rape's damage can be devastating because of the strong communal reaction to the violation and pain stamped on entire families. The harm inflicted in such cases on a woman by a rapist is an attack on her family and culture, as in many societies, women are viewed as repositories of a community's cultural and spiritual values. From conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Peru to Rwanda, girls and women have been singled out for rape, imprisonment, torture and execution. [4]

## Key Terms

### Gender Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is the general term used to capture violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society. Although the victims of GBV includes both men and women, it has been widely acknowledged that the majority of persons affected by GBV are women and girls. [5] GBV exists in many forms, such as behaviour and verbal. However, in the context of war, GBV as a weapon is more associated with sexual violence and psychological violence.

### Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is one of the most prevalent forms of GBV as it is the one most commonly used as a weapon of war—most recently, strategic rapes and mass rapes have been used against targets from opposing ethnic and racial groups, mirroring the fault lines of a larger crisis. In conflict regions, rape and sexual torture are frequently used. Women are sometimes forced into “temporary marriages” with enemy soldiers. Women who are incarcerated may be subjected to sexual violence by prison guards and police officers. Other forms of sexual violence include, but are not limited to: sexual slavery, human trafficking for sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation, etc.

### Conflict Zones

Conflict zones are areas marked by extreme violence. In conflict zones, the resources and safety guaranteed are limited. Thus, human rights are more prone to abuse. GBV is widely used as weapons in conflict zones such as Bosnia, Rwanda, Mozambique.

## Background Information

Sexual violence is very prevalent in conflict zones because it occurs most in societies where the perpetrator knows that not only will the action traumatize their victim, but also ostracize them from their society, and in a larger prospective, destabilize communities as a whole. Methods for combating GBV in conflict zones should not only include the empowerment and equality promotion of women but also need to focus on the elimination of the stigma and stereotype which considering sexual violence survivors as guilty, unpure and taboo.

United Nations and its member states have done some efforts to alleviate the condition of GBV. At least 140 countries have passed laws on domestic violence, and 144 have laws on sexual harassment. However, even when laws exist, this does not mean they are always compliant with international standards and recommendations or implemented. Still, 37 countries exempt rape perpetrators from prosecution when they are married to or subsequently marry the victim.

One of the problems of addressing GBV is that most victims fail to report. It may be because they feel shame and see it as a disgrace. However, the availability of data on violence against women has increased significantly in recent years. Since 1995, more than 100 countries have conducted at least one survey addressing the issue. More than 40 countries conducted at least two surveys in the period between 1995 and 2014, which means that, depending on the comparability of the surveys, changes over time could be analyzed. In addressing sexual violence, one must take at the two-prong approach to both limit its effectiveness and stop perpetrators.

## Important Events/Timelines

Date	Event
1985	The first working group on refugee women is convened to advocate for the needs of women affected by conflict. The working group's lobbying activities result in the 1989 appointment of a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women to UNHCR.
1990	UNHCR adopts the first-ever policy on refugee women's protection, from which evolved UNHCR's 1991 <u>Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women</u> . By highlighting the general protection needs of women affected by conflict (as distinct from men), the guidelines set the stage for standardizing programming that specifically target women.
1995	UNHCR publishes <u>Sexual Violence Against Refugees: Guidelines on Protection and Response</u> , which highlights some of the major legal, medical and psychosocial components of prevention and response to sexual violence. Also in 1995, UNHCR and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) form an Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) of expert international reproductive health organizations.
2000	UN SCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is adopted. It is the first SCR to link women to the peace and security agenda. It recognizes that women are disproportionately affected by conflict and calls for their active participation at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace processes, post-conflict peace-building and governance. It has been followed by additional SCRs on Women, Peace and Security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013) (For more information on SCRs, see Section II.)

**2003** A working group on ‘Women and Children in an Insecure World’ is established within the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) in order to examine the issues of systematic violence within the context of security sector reform and raise awareness among security actors.

**2005** Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings are issued in 2005 by a task force of the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). These Guidelines provide detailed recommendations for the minimum response required to address sexual violence in emergencies and hold all humanitarian actors responsible for tackling the issue in their respective areas of operation.

**2007** United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) is launched as a network of UN entities working together to end sexual violence occurring during and in the aftermath of armed conflict. UN Action embodies the UN system’s response to Security Council Resolutions 1820 (June 2008) and 1888 (September 2009), which frame conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security. (For more information about UN Action, see Section II.)

**2008-2013** The UN Security Council adopts four resolutions framing conflict-related sexual violence as a threat to international peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), and 2106 (2013). This includes the appointment of a Special Representative to the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict.

## **Major Nations/Organizations**

### **Equality Now (An NGO)**

Equality Now, founded in 1992, is an organization which advocates for the respect and promotion of women and girls' rights. Equality Now has documented the violence and gender discrimination women have faced across different countries and continents to spread the message of action worldwide. For effective results in local areas, Equality Now creates partnerships and coalitions with women's rights groups in local communities to advocate for local, provincial, and national policy changes.

### **UN Women**

UN Women was created by the United Nations General Assembly in July of 2010, this agency has as main objective to empower women and promote gender equality. It gathers past UN initiatives towards one same agency, such as the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Now a day, this UN agency has one of the biggest presence on fighting against women discrimination and fostering gender equality, because of the high number of programs that it brings together.

### **United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)**

As part of these efforts, UNDP works closely with UN Women, UNFPA and UNICEF and is a key partner in the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women.

## Important Documents/Passed Solutions

One major resolution that related to the issue is the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The resolution acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during a conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Other related resolutions include:

- Resolution 1820 (2008), which condemns sexual violence as a weapon of war and declares rape and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes.
- Resolution 1888 (2009), which mandates that peacekeeping missions prevent and respond to sexual violence and which led to the creation of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict.
- Resolution 1889 (2009) on increasing women's participation in peace processes. This requests that the Secretary-General develop indicators to track the implementation of 1325, and establishes Women Protection Advisors to be deployed with peacekeeping missions.
- Resolution 1960 (2010) focuses on ending impunity for sexual violence in armed conflict by calling on the Secretary-General to "name and shame" armed groups that perpetrate sexual violence and for sanctions to deter conflict-related sexual violence.
- Resolution 2106 (2013) to address impunity on sexual violence in armed conflict and operationalize past resolutions. It also recognizes that sexual violence in conflict can also affect men and boys, as well as the community-wide trauma that sexual violence can inflict.
- Resolution 2122 (2013) reaffirms the Council's commitment to combating sexual violence in armed conflict and the full implementation of Resolution 1325 and other resolutions on women, peace, and security.

## Possible Solutions

As it has demonstrated, GBV in the conflict zone is an issue that not only related to regional security but also gender equality. By this means, applicable solutions are needed to be directed, not just the ones that remain on political speech. It is mandatory for every country to found and propose the best way to reduce gender inequality and to give gender perspectives to their different programs.

On this matter, the solutions may be considered based on but not limited to the following principles:

- One of the most important solutions is to improve gender equality so that women can no longer be placed in a vulnerable position. Noted that gender equality is not only a women's issue, it is a humans' issue. Therefore, proposals should not forget the responsibility of men on gender inequality and enhance both genders to work together on this goal.
- Every single possible actor has to be involved in this goal: enterprises (private sector), governments (public sector) and civil society.
- The United Nations offers different platforms for countries to build consensus between the best ways to achieve gender equality. On this point, proposals have to avoid repetitive with already existing instances and initiatives on the subject.

For a comprehensive resolution, it should provide a complete and well-rounded solution. For example, the resolution may include specific solutions regarding preventing, combating and rehabilitating respectively. There are also some novel and creative ideas such as providing report electronic devices to women who live in dangerous areas.



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[5] Strengthening Health System Responses to Gender-based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. “Defining Gender Based Violence.” 05 Jan 2017.

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