

Letter from the EB

Dear Delegates,

It is with immense pleasure that we welcome you to this simulation of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) at the AUMUN 2021. It is our honour and privilege to serve as your Executive Board for the duration of this conference. We have compiled this study guide to help you with your research for this council. Bear in mind that the study guide is in no way exhaustive and is only to provide You with enough background information to establish a platform to begin your Research. We would highly recommend that you do a good amount of research Beyond what is covered in this guide. Since this will be an online MUN, many of the delegates might not be familiar with the working procedures. You can be rest assured of the executive board's guidance

Goodluck and Godspeed.

The Executive Board

About the Committee

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is a United Nations body which helps to advance and ensure human rights around the world. The UNHRC has 47 countries/members chosen for staggered three-year terms on a provincial gathering basis. The central station of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland. The UNHRC examines claims of violations of Human rights in United Nations member states, and addresses significant topical human rights Issues, for example, opportunity of affiliation and assembly, opportunity of expression, Opportunity of conviction and religion, LGBT rights, women's rights, and the privileges of ethnic and racial minorities. The UNHRC was built up by the UN General Assembly on 15 March 2006 To supplant the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) that had been firmly scrutinized for Permitting nations with poor human rights records to be members. The UNHRC works Intimately with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and connects With the UN's special procedures.

AGENDA: Addressing violations committed against women and children in conflict zone.

About the agenda

Conflicts and situations of instability exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women and girls, exposing them to heightened risks of violations of their human rights.

Conflict can result in higher levels of violence against women and girls, including arbitrary killings, torture, sexual violence and forced marriage. Women and girls are primarily and increasingly targeted using sexual violence, including as a tactic of war. While women and girls are in general more predominantly subject of sexual violence, men and boys have also been victims of sexual violence, especially in contexts of detention.

Sexual and gender-based violence also spikes in post-conflict societies, due to the general break down of the rule of law, the availability of small arms, the breakdown of social and family structures and the “normalization” of gender-based violence as an additional element of pre-existing discrimination. Trafficking is also exacerbated during and after conflict owing to the breakdown of political, economic, and social structures, high levels of violence and increased militarism.

Access to essential services such as health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, can be disrupted, with women and girls being at a greater risk of unplanned pregnancy, maternal mortality and morbidity, severe sexual and reproductive injuries and contracting sexually transmitted infections, including because of conflict-related sexual violence. Internal displacement has specific gender dimensions. Internally displaced women can be disproportionately affected by the loss of livelihoods during displacement. They may for example not be able to practise their livelihoods due to loss of land and livestock. Loss of housing and land can also affect women disproportionately, due for example to the absence of property titles. Other major human rights concerns include inequitable access to assistance, education, and training. Internally displaced women often have no access to adequate reproductive health care services and responses and can experience violence and abuse, sexual and labour exploitation, trafficking in persons, forced recruitment and abduction. Internally displaced women and girls are also often excluded from decision-making processes.

Increased violence against women during conflict

The general breakdown in law and order which occurs during conflict and displacement leads to an increase in all forms of violence. The tensions of conflict, and the frustration, powerlessness and loss of traditional male roles associated with displacement may be manifested in an increased incidence of domestic violence against women. Alcohol abuse may also become more common and exacerbate the situation. The underlying acceptance of violence against women which exists within many societies becomes more outwardly acceptable in conflict situations. It can, therefore, be seen as a continuum of the violence that women are subjected to in peacetime. The situation is compounded by the polarization of gender roles which frequently occurs during armed conflict. An image of masculinity is sometimes formed which encourages aggressive and misogynist behaviour. On the other hand, women may be idealized as the bearers of a cultural identity and their bodies perceived as 'territory' to be conquered. Troops may also use rape and other forms of violence against women to increase men's subjugation and humiliation.

Who is most vulnerable?

Some groups of women and girls are particularly vulnerable in conflict and displacement situations. These include targeted ethnic groups, where there is an official or unofficial policy of using rape as a weapon of genocide. Unaccompanied women or children, children in foster care arrangements, and lone female heads of households are all frequent targets. Elderly women and those with physical or mental disabilities are also vulnerable, as are those women who are held in detention and in detention-like situations including concentration camps.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a severe human rights violation that 'happens in a *place*, and involves *violent acts, perpetrators, victims, survivors* and *impacts* ranging from health to a broad array of social consequences. Sexual violence is also a *tool or strategy* of war that encompasses the *pre-conflict, conflict escalation* and *post-conflict phases*. It *breaks taboos*, thereby violating rules and crossing thresholds that society sets on acceptable.

Sexual violence has long been known to occur during war, yet only since the world was exposed en masse to the atrocities committed during the Rwandan genocide and the dissolution of Yugoslavia—the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina has sexual violence in armed conflict started to receive international attention. The 1990's subsequently saw an explosive expansion of the number of humanitarian policies dealing with sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected populations including United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions that acknowledged not only gendered experiences of war but also the importance of addressing sexual violence in armed conflict.

Child marriage is used as a weapon of war

In war zones and countries with high levels of violence, children may be forcibly recruited by non-state armed groups. Girls and women are at particular risk of sexual violence and trafficking – including forced prostitution and slavery – and child marriage can be used as a cover for this. Parents may marry their daughters to try and protect them.

Trafficking into and out of armed conflicts

In conflict areas, trafficking in persons for sexual slavery, recruitment of children into armed groups, forced labour and abduction of women and girls for forced marriages are the most commonly reported forms of trafficking.

Armed groups use trafficking as part of their strategy to increase their military power and economic resources, but also to project a violent image of themselves and instil fear in local populations. Armed groups also use sexual violence and sexual slavery as part of their operations. In some conflicts, for example, the prospect of receiving 'sex slaves' as a reward for joining the group is part of the armed groups' strategies to recruit new fighters.

Trafficking in persons related to armed conflict also occurs outside specific conflict areas. This is typically linked to higher levels of vulnerability experienced by people living on the margins of conflict, such as internally displaced persons, refugees and others living in nearby areas affected by armed conflict. In these situations, victims are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriages or for multiple forms of exploitation. People using migrant smugglers to flee conflicts may end up as victims of trafficking, coerced into forced labour or sexual exploitation to pay off the smuggler fees.

Sexual abuse of children

Child sexual abuse is an abuse of power that encompasses many forms of sexual activity between a child or adolescent (most often a girl) and an older person, most often a man or older boy known to the victim. The activity may be physically forced or accomplished through coercive tactics such as offers of money for school fees or threats of exposure. At times, it may take the form of breach of trust in which an individual, such as a religious leader, teacher, or doctor, who has the confidence of the child, uses that trust to secure sexual favours. Studies have shown that between 36% and 62% of all sexual assault victims are aged 15 or less (see table in Rape and sexual assault information sheet). Research suggests that the sexual abuse of children is commonplace. Incest, sexual abuse occurring within the family, although most often perpetrated by a father, stepfather, grandfather, uncle, brother, or other male in a position of family trust, may also come from a female relative. As with sexual abuse, incest is accomplished by physical force or by coercion. Incest takes on the added psychological dimension of betrayal by a family member who is supposed to care for and protect the child.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Today, the number of girls and women who have been subjected to FGM is estimated at more than 130 million individuals worldwide, and a further two million girls are at risk of this practice.⁴ FGM, a form of violence against the girl child that affects her life as an adult woman, is a traditional cultural practice. In those societies where it is practised, it is believed that FGM is necessary to ensure the self-respect of the girl and her family and increases her marriage opportunities. FGM constitutes all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or any other nontherapeutic reasons. FGM is discussed extensively in the WHO document, Female Genital Mutilation

What is expected from the committee?

We have given an insight with respect to the prevalent problems present. We require the council to have fruitful discussions and come up solutions targeting these problems.

Additional references:

<https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/child-marriage-armed-conflict>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women/2014/conflict>