United Nations Security Council

**Topic C: Women, Peace, and Security**

“We will not enjoy security without development, we will not enjoy development without security, and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights.”

—Kofi Annan

The United Nations Security Council is the main body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security; since 2000 it recognizes that gender equality and women’s empowerment is not merely a human rights issue, but critical to the fulfillment of that mandate. In the time since, the Security Council actively promotes women’s full and equal involvement in governance and peace processes, including peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Additionally, there are ongoing efforts to address the adverse impact that conflict and insecurity has on women, including the widening gender gap caused by conflict and the sexual and gender-based violence. There are numerous resolutions passed, platforms created, and partnerships established, including with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to address this topic. However, in many cases the role of women in peace and security remains limited and in some cases it has worsened, increasing the need for international action.

**Background**

The United Nations Charter, Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration

The issue of gender equality continue to be a problem since the creation of the United Nations (UN), with Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations stating that among the purposes of the UN is to “achieve international co-operation in…promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” It was not until the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, however, that the role of women in the maintenance of international peace and security gained momentum. The outcome of the conference, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, specifically states

---

5. Id.
that “local, national, regional and global peace is attainable and is inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels.” The *Beijing Declaration* came as a result of a shift in global outlook on gender equality, the declaration included a variety of international actions aimed at the empowerment of women and the promotion of peace and development.

*Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action*

Five years later, at an experts meeting in Namibia, the *Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action* came into existence; these agreements outline methods for mainstreaming a gender perspective in peace support operations. Both the *Beijing Declaration* and the *Windhoek Declaration* influenced the Security Council when it took up the topic of Women, Peace, and Security in 2000, and both were influential in the drafting of *S/RES/1325*. *S/RES/1325* was groundbreaking in that not only did it call for the empowerment of women, especially in governance processes to promote peace and security, but it also specifically addresses sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. It also establishes several aspirational goals with the aim of achieving equal representation for women in high level government positions, and within the United Nations.

The Security Council continues to follow up and revisit *S/RES/1325* several times and address the topic through several resolutions, many of which deal with issues during armed conflict. Many of them specifically deal with protection of women and children from sexual violence and ensuring that their unique needs are taken into consideration both during and after a conflict, while some, such as *S/RES/1889*, incorporate both. In 2015, the Secretary General published a report on women, peace, and security meant to follow up on the implementation of relevant Security Council Resolutions. While much progress had been made, the report identified many opportunities for improvement.

*UN-Women*

---


10 Id.

11 Id.


15 Id.
Outside of the Security Council, UN-Women is the primary UN agency to address the issue of women, peace, and security. UN-Women is relatively new, created in 2010, but the organization has a relatively broad mandate which operates cross-functionally. Their Strategic Plan 2014-2015 outlines the organization’s activities, which includes a focus on incorporating women into decision-making processes at all levels and promoting gender equality.\textsuperscript{16} UN-Women is directly involved in incorporating women into peace processes and in the past several years continues to develop training materials and methods aimed at improving peace and security through women’s empowerment.\textsuperscript{17}

**Current Issues**

*Women and Participation in Governance*

The international community recognizes that meaningful participation of women in governance generally and in post-conflict situations greatly assists in the promotion of international peace and security. Still, the inclusion of women in peace processes is still challenged in many cases, with women included after high levels of effort by women’s organizations; afterwards, women are often underrepresented and not in positions of authority.\textsuperscript{18} The Secretary General describes this as “further empowering ‘men with guns’ in future cycles of violence and impunity.”\textsuperscript{19} In some cases, such as with Norway as the facilitator of the Colombia peace talks in Havana, third party mediators continue to ensure the inclusion of women.\textsuperscript{20}

In 2014, the UN conducted 12 formal peace negotiations, and all of the UN mediation support teams included at least one woman.\textsuperscript{21} However, the inclusion of a woman is not necessarily indicative of meaningful representation that meets the requirements of S/RES/1325 or adequately promotes long-term peace and security. To fully realize the benefits of women in peace processes, actors at every level must continue to take steps to incorporate women into governance and remove the barriers and attitudes that prevent their involvement in peace processes.

Although the UN takes steps internally to ensure women’s representation, there are high levels of scrutiny aimed at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. For example, peacekeepers


\textsuperscript{17} UN-Women. "Peace and Security”. Available at: \url{http://www2.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20wome n%20briefthematicpsuswebrrev3%20pdf.ashx?v=2&d=20141013T121455} .

\textsuperscript{18} United Nations Secretary General. S/2015/716. Available at: \url{http://undocs.org/s/2015/716} .

\textsuperscript{19} Id.

\textsuperscript{20} Id.

\textsuperscript{21} Id.
themselves have perpetrated acts of violence against women. Against the backdrop where sexual and gender-based violence is increasingly used as a weapon of war, this is a major concern for the international community.

Peacekeeping

Accusations of sexual violence by UN Peacekeepers is not a new concept, but in the past, little action resulted when complaints were filed. It is only in the modern context that the United Nations recognizes the importance of more action needed to address this issue. Investigations and reports are regularly undertaken now, but many would argue that more needs to be done as sexual assault has major implications for the victim both mentally and physically, with many victims developing post-traumatic stress disorder, flashbacks, plagued by sexually transmitted infections, depression, self-harm, and other issues.

The criminal accountability of peacekeepers in these situations is not always clear, and typically the UN leaves disciplinary action up to the Member State from which the peacekeeper originated. Unfortunately, neither legal regimes aimed at requiring reporting of sexual assault by peacekeepers and experts on mission are not consistent nor are Member States’ willingness to prosecute. Part of addressing sexual and gender-based violence in peacekeeping is advancing the role of women in peacekeeping operations, especially in leadership.

The role that women have in peacekeeping has increased, but there is still major room for improvement. Currently, five women act as Special Representatives to the Secretary General in peacekeeping operations, and between civilian and uniformed personnel, the number of women in peacekeeping operations increased to over 5,000. Still, the Secretary General recommends that having thematic specialists with an expertise in women, peace, and security in all mission components would massively improve peacekeeping operations as well as have a dramatic impact on sexual misconduct by peacekeepers.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Conflict

Peacekeeping operations are steadily playing a crucial role in preventing sexual and gender-based violence, which is on the rise in recent years. Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and other sexual violence

---


23 Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. “Effects of Sexual Assault”. Available at: https://rainn.org/get-information/effects-of-sexual-assault.


disproportionately affects women and is increasingly common in areas of conflict where the state is on the verge of collapse. In regions where peacekeeping operations are underway, the UN seeks to increase the number of Women’s Protection Advisors, which not only increased reporting of sexual violence, but also helped to decrease it from parties to conflicts. Unfortunately, peacekeeping operations generally cannot be conducted in areas of live conflict and generally protective services are unavailable. This is an ongoing issue in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic. In some cases, sexual and gender based violence is perpetrated by State actors in a conflict, but the emergence of transnational non-State actors is of increasing concern.

In many cases, non-State actors are pursuing extremist ideologies that sometimes incorporate the systemic acceptance of violence against women. Unfortunately, it is often incredibly difficult for governments to address this sexual violence, not only because of how some actors operate, but also due to their transnational nature. At a 2014 forum, methods to provide reparations for victims of sexual violence and increased use of the International Criminal Court were discussed, but little action is still ongoing. In many cases, non-State actors continue to use sexual and gender-based violence to instill fear and terror.

On April 15, 2014 the world got word that gunmen had abducted approximately 100 girls in the Borno State of Nigeria. Even two years later, the UN and regional Member States are still looking for the girls and while some have been released many of them are still missing. It is clear, however, that these girls are the subject of indoctrination and victims of horrendous sexual violence. There are rising fears that the girls are being used as suicide bombers in order to attack Boko Haram’s targets. In developing regions that are more susceptible to these kinds of attacks, resources are limited and it is oftentimes very difficult for the Nigerian government to find and rescue these girls, much less bring the members of Boko Haram to justice. The incident persists as a reminder for girls being sent to school in Nigeria, as parents are wary of a similar incident happening again.

**Future Outlook**

Increasing the role of women in peace processes is seen as positive globally, yet implementation of S/RES/1325 continues to be relatively slow. Although women are steadily taking on more leadership roles at the international level, many Member States struggle to break down the

---

27 Id.
28 Id.
29 Id.
30 Id.
barriers to women’s empowerment and others still struggle to even prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Women, peace, and security remains a critical topic for the Secretary-General, and although the UN is undergoing a leadership change, it is likely to remain active on the international agenda.\textsuperscript{32} The issue of women, peace, and security is a complex and ever evolving topic, but the Security Council can help fulfill its mandate of maintaining international peace and security by ensuring that women are involved in peace processes, both within the UN and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, within regional bodies, and at the national level. Non-State actors remain major perpetrators of gender-based violence, and represent perhaps the greatest challenge for the international community.

\textsuperscript{32}UN News Centre. \textit{UN.org}, 15 December 2015. 29 April 2016
Focus Questions

1. What declarations, treaties or agreements has your state signed or ratified to address this issue?
2. To what extent has your state and region empowered women in governance and peace processes?
3. What non-State actors inhabit your state if any?
4. What actions has your state taken to decrease the amount of sexual violence towards women?
5. How can the sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by non-State actors be addressed?
Works Cited


