

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020 (S/2021/312)



Ethiopia and Cameroon are highlighted in Section II of the report as emerging concerns.

18 COUNTRIES
13 CONFLICT SETTINGS
4 POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS
1 SITUATION OF CONCERN

WOMEN AND GIRLS

account for more than
2,400
of the reported cases
[96%]

52 PARTIES

The annexed list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence in situations on the Council's agenda includes a total of

The vast majority are, as in previous years, non-State actors, including several groups that have been designated as terrorist entities. Listing is based on cumulative evidence documented over the years, and not only on the narrative of the present report. Proposed new listings this cycle include a Mai-Mai militia group, the Forces Patriotiques Populaire, Armées pour le Peuple (FPP/AP), operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

8 CASES

of conflict-related sexual violence against

LGBTQI

individuals were recorded, noting that this is often not captured in the reporting process

THE UNITED NATIONS ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT NETWORK COORDINATES THE WORK OF 19 ENTITIES

In 2020, the CRSV Multi-Partner Trust Fund prioritized a project in Somalia to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of some 400 women who were formerly associated with Al-Shabaab, many of whom are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

SENIOR WOMEN PROTECTION ADVISORS (SWPAs)

are deployed in **7** peace operations / special political missions. The presence of SWPAs reflects enhanced data collection and analysis on CRSV.

More than **2,000 CASES**
[81% OF THE TOTAL]

were reported in the countries where SWPAs are deployed.

2,542 CASES OF CRSV

with the highest number recorded in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,053)**.

While the report conveys the severity and brutality of verified incidents, it does not purport to reflect the global scale or prevalence of this crime. It is also important to acknowledge the constraints resulting from COVID-19 restrictions for monitoring and reporting

More than
58 CASES
[2%]

were reported against
MEN AND BOYS

1,773
In **CASES** the victims
were **CHILDREN**,
GIRLS account for **1,155**
[95%] of the cases

Since the adoption resolution 1960 (2010),
66 PARTIES
(51 NON-STATE ACTORS AND 15 STATE ACTORS)

have been listed across
11 COUNTRIES

The Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict has signed

11
JOINT COMMUNIQUÉS OR FRAMEWORKS OF COOPERATION

with Member States to address CRSV

In 2020, both the mandate authorization for **UNITAMS**, and the mandate renewal for **UNSMIL**, required the deployment of **WPAS**.

8**SANCTIONS REGIMES**

of the Security Council include sexual violence within their designation criteria. To date, only one individual has been designated for sanctions specifically for crimes of sexual violence (S/2021/79).

46 PARTIES

have not assumed commitments to address CRSV. 30 (71%) have been listed for over 5 years

THE TEAM OF EXPERTS ON THE RULE OF LAW AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

engaged in **13** conflict-affected settings, including the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Conakry, Nigeria, among others.

7

STATE ACTORS
(security sector) have assumed formal commitments to address CRSV.

- Sexual violence in conflict-affected settings
- Sexual violence in post-conflict settings
- Other situations of concern

KEY THEMES AND CRITICAL DIMENSIONS

Patterns of conflict-related sexual violence do not occur in a vacuum, and were intertwined this year with intersecting crises of conflict, displacement, and COVID-19. Survivors demonstrated agency and resilience, and despite restricted mobility and access constraints, service providers, civil society organizations, national authorities and the United Nations system, including Women Protection Advisers in the field, adapted and innovated.

Lockdowns exacerbated existing structural, institutional, and sociocultural barriers to reporting sexual violence in conflict and accessing multisectoral services, including those related sexual and reproductive health. The impact of the pandemic also complicated the pursuit of justice, slowing the work of judicial authorities.

The adverse socio-economic impact of the crisis led to an increased recourse to harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage, as armed actors gained ground despite the Secretary-General's 23 March 2020 call for a global ceasefire. Efforts to curb the spread of the disease led to reduced oversight for instance in detention facilities, displacement settings and remote rural areas, where the risk of sexual violence is elevated.

Already chronically underreported, sexual violence in conflict risks being further obscured by the pandemic, as illustrated by settings that saw an increase in reporting of sexual violence upon the easing of movement restrictions for humanitarians and human rights monitors. United Nations actors, including Women Protection Advisers in the field, pivoted to virtual approaches, such as hotlines and remote referral networks, thereby avoiding a data "black-out".

Intersecting forms of discrimination were compounded. As a structural root cause, intersecting inequality, placed LGBTQI individuals, indigenous women, refugees and migrants, and persons living with disabilities at elevated risk.

Multiple and intersecting stigmas in the wake of sexual violence were documented, including the stigma arising from forced association with violent extremist groups, as noted in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, Somalia and Mali. Mothers and their children born of rape faced stigma often coupled with rejection; a forthcoming special report requested by the Security Council in resolution 2467 (2019) will outline the challenges faced by children born of sexual violence in conflict.

Broader security dynamics drove several trends. The nexus between sexual violence, conflict-driven trafficking in persons and violent extremism requires a regional cross-border response, as illustrated by the on-going Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin. Localized conflicts gave rise to patterns of sexual violence, such as sexual slavery, with inter-communal tensions, including along transhumance corridors in the Central African Republic and Sudan, perpetuating cycles of sexual violence.

The issue of service coverage was acute in the prevailing health crisis particularly in isolated areas. Life-saving services, including sexual and reproductive health care, must be prioritized in the face of security threats, weak State presence, and healthcare infrastructure decimated by conflict. Survivors faced prohibitive distances to access services owing to the scarcity of health structures in rural and remote regions, as in Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali.

PROGRESS

Significant gaps in prevention, accountability, reparations and protection of victims and witnesses persist, despite some positive developments, including prosecutions of armed group leaders and State actors at both the national and international levels. Several cases were paralyzed and investigations stalled due to the pandemic. In counterterrorism trials, while the crime of sexual violence has rarely been prosecuted, it has been widely perpetrated by terrorist groups. Reparations, though awarded in many cases, remain unpaid.

Despite the robust framework put in place by the Security Council over the past decade, the level of compliance by parties to the conflict remains low; over 70 per cent of listed perpetrators have appeared in the annexed list for five or more years without taking remedial action. The practice of listing and the designation of parties for the imposition of sanctions must be further enhanced. Yet some progress was made; Sultan Zabin, the director of the Sana'a-based criminal investigation department in Yemen, was designated for sanctions by the Security Council for his role in a policy of intimidation and sexual violence against politically active women (S/2021/79).

There is heightened awareness of the need to address sexual violence in conflict-resolution processes and to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence do not benefit from de facto or de jure amnesties. In the context of transitions involving peacekeeping missions, the United Nations worked to consolidate monitoring and response capacity including in Sudan where the Government and the United Nations signed a framework of cooperation to address conflict-related sexual violence

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OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure the adoption of a survivor-centered approach to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, recognizing that survivors are unique individuals, prioritizing their rights and needs and paying particular attention to intersecting inequalities.
- Tackle the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including gender inequality, intersecting forms of exclusion and harmful social norms that lead to the stigmatization of survivors, by promoting women's leadership and engaging with traditional and community leaders to foster social change.
- Address the proliferation and trafficking of small arms in line with the Arms Trade Treaty (2014) and other global instruments which drive and exacerbate the commission of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict zones.
- Encourage Member States, donors regional and intergovernmental organizations to provide predictable financial support to the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- Encourage the Security Council to incorporate sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for sanctions, including when used as a tool of reprisals against women in public and political life; and ensure coherence between the parties listed in the present report and the individuals and entities designated by sanctions committees.
- Reflect prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence in mandate authorizations and renewals of peace operations, and support the deployment of women's protection advisers to peace operations and offices of United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinators in all relevant situations of concern.



CONCLUSION

Addressing conflict-related sexual violence has been made more complex by intersecting crises and inequalities, yet the dire effects of sexual violence on human rights, public health and peacebuilding make our collective response more urgent than ever. The needs of sexual violence survivors cannot be put on pause and neither can the response. The pandemic demands a paradigm shift: to silence the guns, amplify the voices of peacebuilders and invest in service-delivery. The current crisis is a test of our resolve to translate commitments into results, through the inclusion of survivors in an intersectional and gender-responsive pandemic recovery.

<http://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/>



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