



# CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL



# STOP RAPE in war

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## I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2022, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), in which the Council requested me to report annually on the implementation of resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2467 (2019), and to recommend strategic actions.
2. In 2022, militarization and illicit arms proliferation escalated in the wake of a series of unconstitutional changes of government exposing civilians to heightened levels of sexual violence, amid shrinking civic space and weakened rule of law in settings affected by conflict. State and non-State armed groups continued to target civilians with rape, gang rape and abductions. United Nations-designated terrorist groups, other non-State armed groups and transnational criminal networks used sexual violence as a tactic, destabilizing already fragile contexts. In some settings, national authorities were shored up by an array of actors, including militia or private military and security companies and groups, fighting alongside national armed forces. This has complicated attribution for serious crimes, including sexual violence, which has in turn compounded accountability challenges. In a number of countries, civilian demonstrations and protests were met with disproportionate use of force, including the use of rape as an instrument of repression and political intimidation. Activists and advocates working to defend the rights of survivors were subjected to reprisals, including sexual violence and harassment. The targeting of public health facilities in some settings impeded access to services by survivors in a context of rising needs. Amid worsening humanitarian crises and economic shocks, sexual violence hindered women's livelihood activities and girls' access to education, while generating profits for armed and violent extremist groups through conflict-driven trafficking in persons.
3. Across several settings, patterns of sexual violence persisted and deepened, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti and South Sudan. In Ukraine, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (A/77/533) have documented and reported sexual violence as a form of torture and inhumane treatment against civilians and prisoners of war. In May, my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict signed a Framework of Cooperation on behalf of the United Nations system with the Government of Ukraine to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.
4. In most contexts, impunity remained the norm, while emerging threats in the largely ungoverned digital space, and the combination of climate insecurity, State fragility and structural gender inequality, further exposed women and girls to conflict-related sexual violence. Weakened or collapsed rule of law institutions have created a risk of "rule of lawlessness" by eroding what should be the first line of defence against atrocity crimes. Moreover, the emboldening effects of impunity for patterns of conflict-related sexual violence demonstrate the importance of harnessing the preventive power of the rule of law, which is a central tenet of Our Common Agenda (A/75/982). There is no better guarantee of prevention than for States to uphold their human rights responsibilities, as outlined in my Call to Action for Human Rights. For vulnerable populations, this means building individual and institutional resilience against economic, security and climate shocks, including by fostering an enabling environment for the meaningful participation of women, and communities at risk, in political and peacebuilding processes. For survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, States should ensure access to multisectoral services, justice, and reparations.
5. The term "conflict-related sexual violence," as used in the present report, refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. This link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority, or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender

identity; a climate of impunity, which is generally associated with State collapse; cross-border consequences, such as displacement or trafficking; and/or violations of the provisions of a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict.

6. While many communities are affected by the threat, occurrence or legacy of conflict-related sexual violence, the present report is focused on countries for which information verified by the United Nations exists. It should be read in conjunction with the 13 previous reports, which provide a cumulative basis for the listing of 49 parties (see annex). The majority of listed parties are non-State actors, with several having been designated as terrorist groups according to the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011), and 2253 (2015). National military and police forces that are listed are required to adopt specific, time-bound commitments and action plans to address violations and are prohibited from participating in United Nations peace operations. Effective implementation of commitments, including the cessation of violations, is a key consideration for the delisting of parties. Parties to the conflict, including non-State armed groups are also required to implement action plans to address sexual violence in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

7. The deployment of women's protection advisers, who are responsible for convening the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field, has ensured more timely, accurate and reliable information and helped to overcome the dearth of data that is often used as a pretext for inaction. Deepening the evidence base requires sustained political resolve and resources. To date, the Security Council has explicitly called for the deployment of women's protection advisers in the mandate authorizations and renewals of ten peace operations. A total of four peacekeeping missions and four special political missions have established dedicated monitoring arrangements and incorporated the early-warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence into their protection frameworks. While the timely deployment of women's protection advisers is a widely endorsed priority, the level of human and budgetary resources is far from commensurate with the scale of the challenge. To date, women's protection advisers have been deployed to just eight of the more than 20 countries covered in the

# 49 parties

present report. In November, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened its annual meeting with my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and senior women's protection advisers to discuss strategies for advancing implementation of the mandate (S/2022/1005). At this meeting, my Special Representative recommended, inter alia, that these positions be integrated into the regular budgets of United Nations peace operations, particularly during transitional processes, and called for earmarked contributions for the deployment of women's protection advisers to all situations of concern, including to regional hubs in response to cross-border dynamics, and to the offices of United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinators, in line with Security Council resolution 2467 (2019).

8. In 2022, the interagency network, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, continued to unite efforts across more than 20 United Nations system entities to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. This network serves as the primary coordination forum through which my Special Representative promotes efforts to "Deliver as One". The network also provides strategic, country-level support through the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund. Programming through this pooled fund advances the survivor-centred approach set out in Security Council resolution 2467 (2019). Between 2009 and 2022, 54 projects have been supported in 17 conflict-affected countries, as well as a range of regional and global initiatives. In 2022, United Nations Action funded an innovative project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, implemented through local women's cooperatives in 13 conflict-free mining sites. Through this project, hundreds of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, involved in the artisanal mining sector, have been able to access medical, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic reintegration support. To enhance structural and operational prevention, the network launched a Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in September, which articulates a two-track approach that aims to both prevent sexual violence in the first instance by tackling its systemic root causes, and to mitigate the secondary harms to affected individuals and communities, such as stigmatization and reprisals, which arise in its wake. In addition, the network released a White Paper scoping opportunities for private sector engagement in support of efforts to tackle this scourge.



9. In 2022, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in accordance with its mandate under Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), continued to assist national authorities in over a dozen countries in strengthening rule of law institutions to enhance accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. In Guinea, the inauguration of the ad hoc tribunal to prosecute former President Camara and ten other men accused of responsibility for the 28 September 2009 massacre and mass rape was held in September 2022 and was attended by my Special Representative. The Team had supported the accountability process for over a decade by providing sustained technical assistance to the Guinean authorities, including support to a national panel of judges during the investigative phase from 2012 to 2017, and, at the request of the Ministry of Justice in 2022, advising on legislation related to reparations and the protection of victims and witnesses. In Ukraine, the Team supported implementation of the Framework of Cooperation, including on strengthening rule of law and accountability for sexual violence crimes through support to the justice sector, the design of reparations programmes for victims as well as putting in place risk mitigation measures against conflict-related trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation/prostitution; conducted a comprehensive legal review of Ukrainian criminal law provisions concerning conflict-related sexual violence; and contributed to the development of a strategy for a survivor and witness-centred approach to case management, led by the Office of the Prosecutor General. In the Central African Republic, the Team collaborated with other United Nations entities to assist national police and prosecutorial authorities in drafting an investigation plan, which led to the collection of more than 120 testimonies related to sexual violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Team provided technical support on reparations for victims of international crimes, pursuant to the Government's plans to establish a National Fund for the Reparation of Victims of Sexual Violence. In the Sudan, the Team conducted a collaborative technical assessment of the criminal justice response to conflict-related sexual violence, based on which it co-organized six tailored training sessions for the authorities. In addition, it supported the re-establishment of the Northern-Darfur Criminal Justice Forum, which plays a key role in coordinating the response to such crimes in the region. The Team continued to roll out the United Nations Model Legislative Provisions and to disseminate lessons learned with respect to counterterrorism, anti-trafficking, policing, and reparative justice.

10. While acknowledging that conflict-related sexual violence committed by parties to conflict is distinct from incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse that continue to be committed by United Nations staff, related personnel and implementing partners in complex operating environments, I reiterate my commitment to improve the way the Organization prevents and addresses such conduct. In my report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/77/748), I provided information on efforts to strengthen the system-wide response and ensure full implementation of the zero-tolerance policy.



## **II. Sexual violence including as a tactic of war and terrorism: patterns, trends and emerging concerns**

# II. SEXUAL VIOLENCE INCLUDING AS A TACTIC OF WAR AND TERRORISM: PATTERNS, TRENDS AND EMERGING CONCERNS

11. Sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, torture, and terrorism amid deepening political and security crises, compounded by militarization and the illicit proliferation of arms. Civilians have been disproportionately affected in the wake of a series of unconstitutional changes of government since 2021, notably in Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar, and the Sudan, which reversed fragile progress on women's rights. Non-State armed groups continued to use conflict-related sexual violence to consolidate control over territories and lucrative natural resources. In several settings, conflict-related sexual violence was perpetrated as a form of retaliation against individuals and communities for their perceived or actual affiliation with rival armed groups. While national political and peace processes continued to advance in some contexts, at the subnational level intercommunal violence persisted, including abductions and sexual slavery. Globally, the trend of increasing recourse to mercenaries, mercenary-related actors and private military and security companies by parties to conflict has been accompanied by increasing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights (A/HRC/51/25). In Mali, Myanmar, South Sudan, Ukraine and elsewhere, private contractors or militias and self-defence groups were used to reinforce military operations. Four United Nations Special Rapporteurs and two Working Groups of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council publicly [called](#) for an immediate independent investigation into "gross human rights abuses and possible war crimes and crimes against humanity", committed in Mali by Government forces and a "private military contractor" since 2021. The ever-more complex array of actors has complicated attribution and undermined accountability, while humanitarian access constraints continued to hinder the monitoring and documentation of this already underreported crime. In almost all settings covered in this report, longstanding barriers to reporting and accessing services, including stigma and fear of retaliation, were amplified by political instability, economic hardship, institutional collapse, and prevailing insecurity. Attacks on health centres occurred in Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Ukraine, and elsewhere, limiting access to lifesaving services, including sexual and reproductive care. In some contexts, the operating space for service providers virtually vanished, as in Afghanistan, where women have been progressively erased from public life. Despite the myriad of entrenched and emerging challenges, survivors and service providers continued to report sexual violence crimes. The present report is limited to incidents of conflict-related sexual violence that were verified by the United

Nations. While it serves to convey the severity and brutality of recorded cases, it does not purport to convey the full scale and prevalence of these crimes globally.

12. In some settings, disturbing trends of gender-based hate speech and incitement to violence fuelled conflict in which rape and other forms of sexual violence were used to humiliate and destabilize targeted communities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, inflammatory rhetoric targeting the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) resulted in insecurity and narrowed the operating space for United Nations entities to monitor, report, and respond to cases of sexual violence. In settings such as Ethiopia and Myanmar, Internet restrictions impeded the ability of survivors to access information, with frequent telecommunications shutdowns hindering access to helplines and other support services. In Myanmar, South Sudan, the Sudan, and elsewhere, advocates and activists who intervened to assist survivors were harassed and threatened, in some settings online. At the same time, women and girls, who constitute the majority of victims, are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to digital tools and resources, hindering their access to life-saving security and public health information and networks. This illustrates that the gender-based digital divide is nowhere more acute and perilous than in situations of conflict.

13. In 2022, patterns of sexual violence continued to be used as part of the repertoire of political violence to intimidate and punish opponents, their family members, and women human rights defenders. This was evident in the suppression of civilian demonstrations in Myanmar and the Sudan, including through the threat and use of rape and gang rape. In some cases, protestors seeking refuge from violent crowd dispersals were pursued by security forces and subjected to sexual violence. In Syria, such violence continued to be used as a tactic to stifle political dissent, and as a form of torture in detention settings. In Libya, women human rights defenders were targeted with threats of sexual violence and subjected to rape in detention. Similarly, credible reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence used as a tool of political repression emerged in Iran in the context of civic unrest and popular protests. Globally, women's human rights defenders, including those advocating for victims of sexual violence, have been targeted with attacks to stem their activism and participation in public life (S/2022/740), perpetuating a vicious cycle of enforced silence and heightened vulnerability.



## Sexual violence was used to consolidate control of territory



14. Conflict-related sexual violence continued to propel both internal and cross-border displacement, with displaced and refugee women and girls exposed to heightened risk. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Somalia, and the Sudan, women and girls were sexually assaulted by arms bearers in and around displacement sites. Migrant and refugee women and girls in conflict-affected settings, particularly those held in detention facilities, faced heightened risks of sexual violence, notably in Libya and Yemen. Climate-related displacement and insecurity, triggered by flooding in South Sudan and drought in Somalia, exacerbated competition for scarce resources, which increased intercommunal violence, including sexual violence. In Somalia, 50 per cent of the cases of sexual violence documented in 2022 affected women and girls who had been displaced by climate shocks, leading the Minister of Women and Human Rights Development in Galmudug State to establish a dedicated “watch desk” to monitor such risks. In almost all settings covered in this report, women and girls were attacked in the course of livelihood activities, such as farming or collecting water. Girls were also targeted on their way to and from school. In Afghanistan, restrictions on women’s participation in all facets of life coupled with a deepening humanitarian crisis caused many families to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as forced and child marriage, in the face of financial desperation.

15. Sexual violence and exploitation in the context of abduction and trafficking, including by United Nations-designated terrorist groups, continued to be observed in several conflict-affected settings where the rule of law and State authority remained weak. In these contexts, sexual violence was used to consolidate control of territory and/or as part of local illegal economies sustaining armed groups. To gain control of natural resources and mining sites, armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo abducted and sexually assaulted civilians to drive them from contested areas. Migrant and refugee women and girls transiting through Libya have been preyed upon by traffickers for the purposes of sexual exploitation. In Ukraine, the armed conflict triggered a large-scale displacement, which led to increased risks of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in the region. In Haiti, in a context of collapsed rule of law and corruption, gangs have regularly kidnapped women and girls, in some cases filming victims being raped to put pressure on relatives to pay ransoms. In South Sudan, abductions of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation increased in 2022, with rape and gang rape being exploited as a reward for men engaged in the fighting and used as a means of collective punishment against rival ethnic groups, provoking displacement and unravelling the social fabric (A/HRC/49/CRP.4). In Somalia, Al-Shabaab has subjugated areas under its control through the abduction, rape, and forced marriage

of local girls to its fighters when their families were unable to meet extortion demands. In the Central African Republic, the Lord’s Resistance Army continued to abduct women and girls for the purpose of sexual slavery, as a result of which victims and their children, including those born into captivity, suffered devastating physical and psychological repercussions. Similarly, in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, reported violations by non-State armed groups against civilians included rape and abductions of women and children for purposes including sexual slavery. In Libya and Syria, women and children held in captivity due to their perceived affiliation with Da’esh remain in detention or in situations of protracted displacement where they are vulnerable to further sexual and other violence. In several cases, Iraqi Yazidi survivors of abduction and sexual slavery were compelled to leave their children behind in Syria, in some instances placing them in institutional care due to prevailing social stigma.

16. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are not a homogenous group, hence the need for an intersectional analysis and a tailored, survivor-centred approach. The present report documents cases against women, girls, men, boys, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, as well as persons living with disabilities, ranging from four to over 80 years of age,

with the majority coming from socioeconomically marginalized communities. While women and girls continue to constitute the vast majority of victims, men, boys, and gender non-conforming persons are also affected. Male survivors tend to speak about sexual violence in terms of torture, due to patriarchal constructs and social norms around honour and masculine invulnerability. Most of the reported incidents of sexual violence against men and boys occurred in detention settings, and included threats of rape, genital injuries, and being forced to witness the rape of others. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons were at serious risk of sexual violence in conflict-affected and displacement settings, including as a form of persecution. With regard to women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of such sexual violence, the publication of my special report (S/2022/77) resulted in greater attention to the issue, including more tailored responses. For instance, in South Sudan, women and girls released from circumstances of abduction, and children who were born as a result of rape committed during their abduction, received dedicated assistance and care. In Mali, support was provided to women and girls who became pregnant as a result of rape and children born of rape. Drawing attention to the ongoing stigma, insecurity and socioeconomic isolation faced by survivors and

children born of conflict-related rape, the United Kingdom's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative convened a global conference in November 2022, which served to spotlight the multi-faceted impact of sexual violence on survivors in all their diversity.

17. Stigma, rooted in harmful social norms, continued to result in socioeconomic exclusion and impoverishment. In several settings, violations perpetrated in front of family members, including children, unravelled family ties and networks, accentuating the isolation of survivors, and impeding reintegration. In Somalia, the 2018 cabinet-approved Sexual Offences Bill continued to elicit a strong backlash, with some clerics seeking to characterize it as contrary to Sharia law. In Mali, survivors who publicly testified before the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission have experienced further stigmatization. In an encouraging development, the sustained engagement of MINUSMA with the High Islamic Council culminated in the signing of a fatwa in January 2023, which emphasized the prohibition of conflict-related sexual violence, the need to hold perpetrators accountable, and the importance of community-level support and solidarity with survivors and their children, including children born of conflict-related rape. In June 2022, my Special Representative signed a framework of cooperation with Religions for Peace to promote interfaith dialogue on the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence in order to counter harmful social norms and the ensuing stigmatization of survivors.

18. Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence remains the norm, with the vacuum in terms of formal accountability often resulting in recourse to customary justice. The formal justice system is inaccessible for many survivors owing to a lack of legal aid and long distances to competent authorities, with the security risks and costs associated with travel often proving prohibitive. In many settings, victims declined to lodge a complaint due to fear of reprisals and stigma, as noted in Libya and Mali. In addition, judicial officials, including law enforcement personnel, faced reprisals for their efforts to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence, as documented in Haiti. In an encouraging development, in October 2022, the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic delivered its first verdict, convicting a commander of the armed group, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, for rape perpetrated by his subordinates, on the basis of command responsibility. In April 2022, the case of Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, alleged Janjaweed leader accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, including two counts of rape as a crime against humanity and a war crime, proceeded to trial before the International Criminal Court. In December 2022, the International Criminal Court confirmed the conviction and sentencing of Dominic Ongwen, a former member of the Lord's Resistance Army, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, which included charges of sexual and gender-based violence such as forced marriage and forced pregnancy. In terms of reparative justice, in Colombia, the landmark final report of the Truth Commission, issued in June 2022, offered concrete recommendations to State institutions to provide transformative reparations for survivors and to ensure guarantees of non-repetition. In December 2022, the DRC National Parliament adopted a law on protection and reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and established a reparations scheme. A national commission was subsequently created to outline the terms of eligibility for reparations and establish a national fund. In Mali, the transitional authorities promulgated a law in November, which covers both survivors and children born of conflict-related rape and authorizes compensation for damages resulting from serious human rights violations, including coverage of medical costs for the treatment of sexually transmitted infections and sterility, reconstructive surgery, and rehabilitation.

19. Overall, the level of compliance by parties to conflict with applicable international norms remained low despite the robust framework put in place by the Security Council since 2008, including resolutions [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2010\)](#), [2106 \(2013\)](#) and



[2467 \(2019\)](#). Over 70 per cent of the parties listed in the present report are persistent perpetrators, which means they have appeared in the annex for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action. It is critical to enhance coherence between the practice of listing and the designation of parties for the imposition of targeted and graduated measures, in order to leverage behavioural change and open space for protection dialogue. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2653 (2022), which established a sanctions regime on Haiti, including an asset freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo on individuals and entities responsible for or complicit in actions, including acts of sexual violence, that threaten the peace, security, or stability of the country. Parties have also been sanctioned for sexual violence on a bilateral and regional basis. For parties that have made commitments in the form of joint or unilateral communiqués or frameworks of cooperation, the level of implementation remains limited, though some encouraging developments were evident. In Somalia, in September 2022, the Prime Minister launched a National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), developed with the support of the United Nations, which incorporated priorities set out in the 2013 joint communiqué on ending sexual violence in conflict. On 28 June, the President of the Central African Republic validated the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence linked to Conflict, which followed last year's appointment of a dedicated Special Adviser to the President on conflict-related sexual violence.

20. Harnessing the preventive power of the rule of law is essential to deterring sexual violence and ensuring that women's rights to safe and effective participation in public life, as well as in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, are fully realized. Security sector and law enforcement actors are on the frontline of the response. Vetting of the armed and security forces to exclude individuals credibly suspected or convicted of these crimes is therefore critical to fostering public trust in national institutions. Though this aspect of security sector reform is often neglected, there has been some progress, including in South Sudan with the adoption of an action plan that includes provisions on the vetting and exclusion of perpetrators, and in Somalia where police forces have implemented vetting guidelines in recruitment processes. While such measures can enhance both the credibility of national security forces and their effective functioning, challenges persist in strengthening security sector capacity to prevent and address sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict. For instance, the policies and practices of custom border officials are sometimes gender-blind, though they can play a critical role in detecting and deterring conflict-driven trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is also well-established that the participation of women increases the durability and prospects for success of peace processes, including their likelihood of effectively addressing conflict-related sexual violence. In 2022, one ceasefire agreement explicitly included the cessation of sexual violence by the parties, namely the agreement reached in Ethiopia. As compared with the emergency response to crises, the global investment in prevention, resilience building, and strengthening the rule of law remains a relatively neglected area. As we pass the midpoint for implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which link gender equality with strong institutions and inclusive peacebuilding, we must ensure that no one is left behind in benefitting from the dividends of peace and development, including the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

# III. Sexual violence in conflict-affected settings

## Afghanistan



### Recommendation

21. In 2022, Taliban de facto authorities progressively erased women and girls from public life. The Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan received reports that girls were forced to marry members of the Taliban in an effort to ensure safety for families (A/HRC/51/6). Extreme poverty exacerbated harmful coping mechanisms, including forced marriage, as women and girls were deprived of educational and economic opportunities due to discriminatory restrictions on their employment and mobility. Women and girls from ethnic minorities, those living with disabilities, widows, and heads of household were at particular risk. Women were harassed and arbitrarily detained in the context of protests, which were met with disproportionate force. Against this backdrop, data on sexual violence remained difficult to obtain owing to fear of reprisals, pervasive impunity, and entrenched gender inequality, exacerbated since the Taliban's takeover. In 2022, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan verified 30 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 16 girls and 14 boys. The cases included rape, forced marriage, and bacha bazi, a practice involving the sexual abuse of young boys by men in positions of power.
22. National institutions, ranging from special courts for the prosecution of violence against women to shelters, have been dismantled by the de facto authorities. A June 2022 United Nations report noted that none of the over 80 cases of murder, rape, suicide, forced and child marriage, assault, and "honour" killings, documented since August 2021, have been prosecuted by the formal justice system. Women were barred from practicing law or serving in the justice system, and sitting judges have refused to consider women's complaints, with instructions to resolve "family issues" through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Despite these challenges, humanitarian service providers delivered psychosocial support, skills training, and specialized referrals to 47,199 women, girls, and boys who had suffered or were at risk of sexual and gender-based violence and trained some 363 social workers on gender-based violence case management. The decree issued by the de facto authorities in December 2022 banning women from working in non-governmental organizations hampered the provision of humanitarian assistance and support, including gender-based violence services. Sixty-eight per cent of non-governmental organizations were compelled to reduce their operations and 15 per cent to suspend them entirely. Less than half of the safe spaces for women and girls that operated across the country in 2021 remained functional by the end of 2022.

23. I call upon the Taliban de facto authorities to respect the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls, including access to education, employment, and participation in all spheres of public and political life. I urge the de facto authorities to ensure that women's rights defenders and humanitarian service providers are able to conduct their critical work safely and effectively, including the delivery of specialized gender-based violence services, and to ensure that human rights violations, including cases of sexual and gender-based violence, are duly monitored.



# Central African Republic

24. While the security situation improved in certain regions following the redeployment of national defence and security forces, armed groups, dispersed by government counter-offensives to remote areas, perpetrated a range of violations, including sexual violence. In the northeast and northwest, armed groups took advantage of the security vacuum to increase their attacks. By December 2022, 515,665 Central Africans had been internally displaced and 738,793 had taken refuge in neighbouring countries. Monitoring sexual violence remained challenging owing to widespread impunity, fear of reprisals, and the paucity of services. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) documented 191 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 83 women, 105 girls and three men. An additional 92 allegations are still under investigation, indicating that the number of violations is likely much higher. Signatories to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic continued to flagrantly use sexual violence as a tactic to terrorize and displace communities, in violation of the terms of the agreement. The *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation*, the *Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC), the *Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique* (UPC), and the *Anti-balaka*, all affiliated with the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement* (CPC), were the main perpetrators among non-State armed groups, targeting primarily women and girls, who were particularly at risk while fleeing attacks, or conducting livelihood activities. Despite being dispersed from its stronghold, the *Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation* group continued to pursue brutal tactics in the area, with some victims reporting being gang-raped by five or more of its members. Moreover, CPC elements reportedly gang-raped a woman who succumbed to the injuries sustained during this attack, after accusing her of having a relationship with a member of the national armed forces. In terms of State actors, members of the national defence and security forces were implicated in 25 cases, the majority of them committed against girls. Other security personnel, either acting alone or jointly with the national forces, were responsible for seven cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, which resulted in pregnancy in at least one recorded instance.

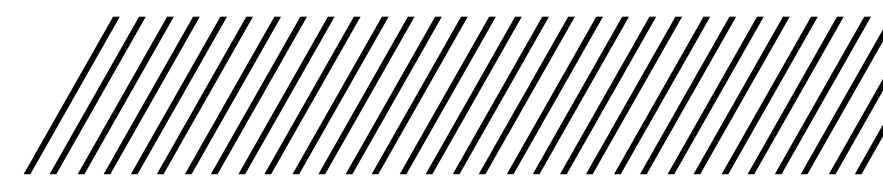
25. In terms of efforts to combat impunity, the extension of State authority to parts of Mbomou Prefecture allowed MINUSCA, and subsequently the justice sector, to investigate patterns of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the FPRC and the UPC between December 2020 and March 2022. In this context, MINUSCA documented 245 violations, including rape, attempted rape, and sexual slavery, affecting 146 women and 99 girls. The investigation established the direct responsibility of Mahamat Salleh, FPRC commander, in cases of rape, along with Abdoulaye Machai, member of the UPC. The joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children carried out an investigation into these events in early 2022, which led to the transmission of 77 cases to the prosecutor in June. Following public outreach regarding the investigation, an additional 400 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence approached the unit to testify. In December 2022, the file was transmitted by the national authorities to the Office of the Prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court. A further 19 cases of sexual violence have been tried in the Bangui and Bouar Courts of Appeal. The Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2021, finalized legal and internal documents and began conducting awareness-raising on the transitional justice process with strategic and operational support from MINUSCA.

26. United Nations entities, in coordination with Government counterparts, continued to deliver survivor-centred services, such as remote case management and psychosocial support, including through a toll-free hotline. Yet chronic gaps persist in terms of sexual and reproductive healthcare, HIV prevention, mental healthcare, access to justice and livelihood support, in particular in rural and remote areas, where access is constrained by limited infrastructure. The Ministry of Justice, with United Nations support, convened a capacity-building workshop for 80 judges and police officers on the effective investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2022, the *État-Major des Armées* committed to engage with MINUSCA and other partners to strengthen accountability within, and oversight of, the national defence and security forces, in line with the 2019 joint communiqué, further to the listing of the national armed forces in the annex of my previous report (S/2022/272).



## Recommendation

27. I reiterate my call for all parties to cease all forms of sexual violence, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and urge them to recommit to the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. I urge the authorities to effectively address conflict-related sexual violence within the national defence and security forces, including through effective vetting and accountability measures.





# Colombia

28. The reporting period saw renewed focus on the consolidation of peace, including the launch of the "total peace" policy outlined by President Petro in August, which led to exploratory dialogues with non-State armed groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN). Despite this important progress, implementation of the gender-related provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) remained uneven, and violence surged in certain areas. Armed groups continued to use sexual violence as a tactic to consolidate territorial control, instil fear, and obtain information. In 2022, the National Victims' Unit recorded 453 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 391 women, 26 men, 20 girls, 12 persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and four boys. One hundred and sixty of the victims were Afro-Colombians and thirty were individuals from indigenous communities. Most of these cases were reported in the departments of Chocó, Cauca, Norte de Santander, and Valle del Cauca. The main perpetrators were criminal and illegal armed groups (209 cases), while in over 180 cases, the perpetrator could not be identified. In 2022, the early warning system from the Office of the Ombudsman issued 20 warnings identifying illegal armed groups and transnational armed groups as the source of threats of conflict-related sexual violence, including human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, particularly targeting refugee and migrant women and girls. Conflict-related sexual violence was reported in border areas, as well as in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. In 2022, the United Nations documented 46 new allegations, affecting 26 girls, 19 women, and one man, which constitutes an increase of 59 per cent compared with the previous reporting period. Victims included indigenous and Afro-descendant women and girls. The violations included rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and forced contraception, and implicated members of the FARC dissident groups, the ELN, and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia. State security forces were also involved. Structural gender inequality, lack of education, and poverty rendered girls vulnerable to recruitment, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. In three cases recorded in 2022, the forced recruitment of girls

resulted in forced pregnancies. LGBTQI persons remained at high risk of sexual violence, especially in rural, conflict-affected areas where illegal armed groups enforce patriarchal social norms through violence.

29. Barriers to reporting and seeking redress persisted, namely death threats by illegal armed groups, stigmatization, the lack of protection measures for victims and witnesses, and the costs of accessing justice. Indigenous women and girls continued to face additional challenges in this regard, as did LGBTQI persons, and persons living with disabilities, particularly in rural and remote areas. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence who migrated from Venezuela faced difficulties in obtaining recognition as victims of armed conflict, which limited their access to assistance. In October, to help address these issues and improve access to justice and services, the Government announced the launch of its inaugural national action plan on Women, Peace and Security, to be developed in close consultation with women's organizations.

30. To combat impunity, in 2022, the Attorney-General's Office initiated 52 criminal proceedings related to conflict-related sexual violence, including one case of forced abortion and 51 cases of rape, of which 34 were committed against women, 12 against children, and five against men. Two individuals have been indicted to date, with investigations ongoing in the remaining cases. Through Order 103 issued in June, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace launched a process to formally open a dedicated case on conflict-related sexual violence. The National Victims' Unit provided reparations to 547 victims, while the Office of the Ombudsman expanded its presence at the local level and provided referrals to counselling and other specialized services to 83 survivors, including LGBTQI individuals. In April 2022, Colombian journalist and survivor, Ms. Jineth Bedoya Lima, was nominated by my Special Representative to serve as a Global Champion for the Fight Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.



## Recommendation

31. I reiterate my call to the authorities to accelerate the full implementation of gender-related provisions of the peace agreement. I commend the work of the transitional justice system in Colombia and welcome the efforts by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace on the opening of a case on conflict-related sexual violence and call for the full implementation of the Truth Commission's recommendations on reparations for victims of sexual violence. I commend the Government on its concrete steps to formulate a national action plan on Women, Peace and Security, and encourage the authorities to include budgeted, operational measures to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.

# Democratic Republic of the Congo



32. The security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo deteriorated significantly owing to persistent attacks by armed groups, including in the context of the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) armed group, continued military operations, against the backdrop of the state of siege, and rising tensions in the region. By the end of 2022, armed hostilities have displaced more than 467,000 civilians in North Kivu province, exacerbating risks of conflict-related sexual violence by both non-State and State actors. Long-standing challenges to reporting and accessing services by survivors, including fear of retaliation, stigma, and limited infrastructure, were exacerbated by emerging challenges. For instance, inflammatory rhetoric against MONUSCO, including violent demonstrations, narrowed the operating space for service delivery and verification of allegations. Accordingly, reported cases likely represent only a fraction of actual violations.

33. In 2022, MONUSCO documented 701 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting 503 women, 187 girls, and 11 men. Of these, 21 reported cases affecting 13 girls and eight women dated back to previous years. Most violations occurred in the context of clashes between armed groups and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), in addition to retaliatory attacks against civilians by both State and non-State actors. The majority (550 cases) were attributed to non-State armed groups. State actors accounted for the remaining 148 cases, including 108 perpetrated by the FARDC, with girls accounting for 50 per cent of the victims; 28 by the Congolese National Police (PNC); and 12 by other State actors. Proximity of arms bearers to civilian population centres increased the risk of sexual violence, with over half of such attacks perpetrated by the FARDC occurring in North Kivu, where units were deployed to counter the threat of the M23. The PNC continued to be implicated in patterns of sexual violence, including against

individuals detained in police custody. In South Kivu, the United Nations documented three cases of sexual violence attributed to the Force de Défense Nationale du Burundi, which participates in joint military operations against armed groups.

34. Sexual violence was often perpetrated during raids on villages in retaliation for perceived collaboration with rival armed groups or with State forces. Such attacks in North Kivu were mainly attributed to Nyatura factions, accounting for 19 per cent of the total number of cases documented. Forty-two verified cases were attributed to M23 elements in 2022, though the actual number is likely higher as the lack of access to areas under their control impeded the verification of allegations. In South Kivu, Raia Mutomboki remained active, with one faction abducting and gang-raping 10 women, despite the arrest and conviction of faction leaders. Mai-Mai factions also continued to ambush roads and abduct women and girls. For instance, in Tanganyika, Mai-Mai Perci Moto Moto carried out mass abductions and rape, including the rape of 16 women during an attack on a mining site. In Ituri, despite engagement in a demobilization process, 11 members of the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri tortured and raped seven women. A total of

82 documented violations were attributed to Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) representing an increase in attacks against civilians as compared to the last reporting period.

35. In cases involving conflict-related sexual violence monitored by the United Nations, judicial authorities prosecuted and convicted 22 members of the FARDC, 11 members of the PNC, and 18 civilian men in 2022. The United Nations conducted 10 joint missions to investigate violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, in the provinces of North and South Kivu and supported the organization of six mobile courts. In July, the Prime Minister approved the creation of a task force to accelerate implementation of the 2019 addendum to the joint communiqué on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. In December 2022, the National Parliament adopted a law on protection and reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and established a reparations scheme. MONUSCO continued to engage with the Office of the Special Advisor to the President for Youth and the Fight Against Violence against Women, as well as with the national armed and security forces to provide training to specialized police units and support the creation of a police database on sexual violence cases.

## Recommendation

36. I urge the authorities to accelerate implementation of the addendum to the joint communiqué, including through the action plans to address conflict-related sexual violence by the national armed and security forces. I further call on the Government to ensure that the law on protection and reparations for victims is in line with international standards, to allocate adequate resources to the reparations fund for timely disbursement, and to ensure a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach in its implementation.

# Iraq



37. In a volatile political and security context, despite the limited reach of services, cases of conflict-related sexual violence continued to be reported. In 2022, the United Nations provided services in the Kurdistan Region to survivors of sexual violence committed during the 2014 conflict. Survivors from a range of minority groups have begun to disclose their experiences, with 22 cases affecting Turkmen and Shabak women documented in 2022. There is also emerging evidence that Da'esh committed sexual violence against men. Moreover, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL/Da'esh (UNITAD) has compiled evidence indicating that a number of individuals were raped and killed on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity. As part of the process of return of Iraqi nationals from al-Hawl camp in Syria, 914 families, of which

70 per cent are female-headed households, returned to their places of origin in Iraq, where they often face stigma due to suspected affiliation with Da'esh and structural gender inequality. According to the Directorate of Yazidi Affairs of the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government, of the estimated 6,417 Yazidis who were abducted, 3,561 (1,207 women, 1,059 girls, 956 boys, and 339 men) have been rescued. These figures, however, do not include other affected groups, such as the Turkmen. Among the female Yazidi survivors who returned from Da'esh captivity, more than 430 remain in displacement sites grappling with significant mental health and socioeconomic challenges. Survivors and their children, including children born of rape, are often unable to obtain birth registration and identity documents as Iraqi law requires proof of paternity.

38. The Government approved a budget of 19 million USD to finance reparations pursuant to the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors, with some 2,000 applications submitted since September 2022, including through an online platform established by the General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs. Despite persistent needs, cuts in humanitarian funding have reduced the footprint of gender-based violence service providers and curtailed support for survivors. Despite this challenging context, the United Nations provided gender-based violence services to over 3,750 refugees and 4,000 displaced persons. The General Directorate for Survivors' Affairs has supported the delivery of psychosocial assistance for survivors experiencing severe trauma. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) convened a series of focus groups with over 100 female survivors from Yazidi, Turkmen, and Shabaki communities, who consistently highlighted the need for income-generating opportunities. Ongoing prosecutions and convictions of Da'esh affiliates have yet to include charges of sexual violence.



## Recommendation

39. I welcome the progress made by the Government in implementing the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors and call for its scope to be expanded to include children born of conflict-related rape, and to enact legislation that renders all children eligible for birth registration and documentation. I urge the Government, in line with the joint communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence, to ensure continuity of multisectoral services for survivors, as well as long-term reintegration support.

# Libya



40. Persistent divisions among Libyan political actors, sporadic clashes between armed groups, illicit arms proliferation and weak institutional capacity created an environment conducive to the perpetration of conflict-related sexual violence with impunity. In a context where harmful social norms related to honour and victim-blaming remain entrenched, women human rights defenders in Libya continued to be targeted, including with sexual violence, to silence them and dissuade others from participating in public life. For instance, despite calls by United Nations Special Procedures mandate holders for her release, a prominent advocate and activist, Iftikhar Boudra, remained in detention where she has reportedly suffered prolonged physical, sexual, and psychological abuse (A/HRC/50/63).
41. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) verified 23 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and forced prostitution, perpetrated against 11 women,

of whom six were migrants, as well as five men, and seven girls. Threats and incidents of sexual violence persisted in detention centres to which humanitarian access remained severely restricted. UNSMIL continued to receive reports of violations perpetrated in the Mitiga prison under the control of the Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DACOT), including rape, ill-treatment, and torture. Sixty-four women and their children, who were detained for their alleged affiliation with Da'esh, continued to be held in the Kwefyeh military prison and in the Judaydah prison. The Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Libya continued to receive reports of detainees being threatened with sexual violence, stripped, and/or subjected to intrusive body searches amounting to rape (A/HRC/49/4). Furthermore, the FFM documented instances of sexualized torture and cases of women being arrested and subjected to threats and acts of sexual violence in order to force male relatives to surrender themselves (A/HRC/50/63).

Similarly, a woman was arrested after refusing sex with members of the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID), who subsequently accused her sister of so-called "moral offenses". In most of these cases, survivors declined to lodge an official complaint owing to fear of reprisals and intimidation.

42. Patterns of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and forced prostitution against migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, continued to be perpetrated by traffickers, smugglers, and armed men. State actors were also involved. The "Masked Men" armed group, created in 2013 ostensibly to combat smuggling, and later integrated into the Ministry of Defense, was implicated in the rape of migrant girls. Members from the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration, as well as elements of non-State armed groups, perpetrated sexual violence as a tactic of control and torture, in some cases resulting in the death of the victim. The Panel of Experts on Libya continued to document instances of rape and sexual

slavery, often committed by multiple perpetrators in a secret detention facility in Bani Walid controlled by networks of human traffickers (S/2022/427). Female migrants were routinely held in detention centres without female guards and strip-searched by male guards. They reported a lack of access to gender-based violence services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. In some cases, migrants have been trafficked internally and to third countries. In the Tazerbu camp in eastern Libya, which holds some 200 asylum seekers and migrants, of which over 100 are women and children, female detainees reported being raped by Libyan officials and foreign nationals. Violations perpetrated by Libyan and Sudanese traffickers against women and girls were also reported. To reinforce accountability, United Nations partners provided capacity building support to lawyers and military prosecutors on international criminal justice and fair trial standards, including for cases of conflict-related sexual violence.

## Recommendation

43. I call on the Libyan authorities to grant the United Nations unrestricted humanitarian access to detention facilities. I call on the authorities to adopt anti-trafficking legislation and hold perpetrators accountable. I further call on the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience, women human rights defenders, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who are arbitrarily detained, and to hold all perpetrators of sexual violence accountable and deliver multisectoral assistance to survivors.



# Mali

44. In 2022, the security situation continued to deteriorate, as violent extremist groups attempted to fill the security vacuum, which followed the departure of the international Joint Force and the transitional Government's withdrawal from the G5 Sahel. Attacks on civilians persisted amid fighting between Al-Qaida and Islamic State-affiliated groups in northeast and central Mali. The transitional authorities committed to a two-year transition, while enduring governance challenges and limited State presence in conflict-affected areas exposed women and girls to sexual violence. The illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and intercommunal violence propelled mass displacement, with displaced women and girls exposed to abduction, kidnapping, forced marriage, and trafficking.

45. Despite widespread insecurity, which impeded humanitarian access and reporting, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) verified 98 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 85 women and 13 girls. As part of monitoring grave violations against children, the United Nations also verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 43 girls mostly by unknown perpetrators. Humanitarian service providers registered cases of sexual violence against 392 women and 294 girls. The perpetrators were members of armed groups, including Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad Dawsahak (MSA-D), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et alliés (GATIA), and the Coordination des mouvements et front patriotique de résistance (CMFPR), as well as members of militia and self-defence groups, such as Dan Na Ambassagou and Ganda-Izo. In some cases, the perpetrators were armed elements who could not be identified. Members of the Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF) were also allegedly implicated in reported violations. Of concern is the increased use of sexual violence by militia and self-defence groups, in some instances fighting alongside the national armed forces. The United Nations also documented cases in which foreign security personnel appear to have been allegedly implicated in conflict-related sexual violence during military operations. For instance,

foreign security personnel deployed in central Mali, entered a village from which men had fled owing to fears of violent extremism, and allegedly raped local women and girls in their homes, including two minors. Some victims received medical assistance in Mopti, while others resettled outside the region. No official complaint was filed in connection with this incident, which is indicative of the wider context, in which less than 10 per cent of victims file judicial complaints, primarily due to the proximity of militia groups and the related fear of reprisals.

46. The United Nations continued to support the transitional authorities to implement the action plan developed pursuant to the 2019 joint communiqué. MINUSMA also engaged with non-State armed groups on the implementation of unilateral commitments to tackle sexual violence, in particular the CMA. With the support of the United Nations, five additional one-stop centres were established in existing health facilities in 2022, bringing their total number to 15 in the regional capitals of Bamako, Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou, Gao, Mopti, Timbuktu, and Sikasso Regions. Nonetheless, access to multisectoral services remains severely limited, with survivors from remote areas compelled to traverse vast distances to reach them. According to assessments by service providers, in 2022, 92 per cent of sexual violence survivors were unable to access safe shelters, and 42 per cent were unable to obtain medical support. Moreover, entrenched harmful social norms fuelled discrimination, and in some cases further aggression, against survivors, some of whom sought refuge in distant locations. Four emblematic cases, involving 146 victims of conflict-related sexual violence from northern Mali, have been pending before the courts since 2013. MINUSMA has supported the training and capacity-building of national judicial authorities, with a view to expediting such proceedings, and of police academy students on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. The transitional Government announced the opening of investigations into violations of international humanitarian and human rights law documented since the start of 2022, with the findings yet to be released (S/2023/21).



## Recommendation

47. I urge the transitional authorities to expedite implementation of the joint communiqué, to prioritize the cases of conflict-related sexual violence that have been pending before the courts for a decade, and to investigate cases committed by national armed forces, community-based militias and foreign security personnel. I further call on the transitional authorities to ensure that the law on reparations is effectively implemented and that access to services for survivors is guaranteed.

# Myanmar



48. Civic space narrowed in the wake of the 2021 military takeover, with disturbing reports of sexual violence committed against women, girls, men, boys, and LGBTQI persons continuing to emerge, including in the course of military operations in Sagaing and Mandalay. As a result of the military takeover, some 1.8 million people have been displaced, with 370,400 persons remaining in protracted internal displacement. An estimated 49,700 civilians fled to neighbouring countries, while more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees continued to reside in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, after fleeing persecution and military attacks by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) in October 2016 and August 2017 following military "clearance" operations, which included widespread and systematic conflict-related sexual violence.

49. Continued arrests and arbitrary detention by the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) of civil society activists, journalists, and members of the National Unity Government led to widespread insecurity. Members of ethnic armed organizations and people's defence forces have also been targeted. Sexual violence was perpetrated in detention, against women, men, boys and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar reported that since the military takeover, soldiers and police officers have sexually assaulted and harassed girls held in detention. Instances of online gender-based hate speech directed at politically active women have also emerged. Moreover, armed conflict and arbitrary arrests often resulted in the separation of children from their parents, exposing them to higher risks of forced marriage and human trafficking (A/

HRC/50/CRP.1). In the context of ongoing conflict, all parties have been implicated in sexual violence. For instance, armed actors aligned with the military, including members of the Pyu Saw Htee militias, have been accused of committing sexual violence. The United Nations verified incidents committed against girls by ethnic armed organizations. Women who were unable to flee their villages during military attacks were allegedly raped by military personnel. The bodies of women who were reportedly executed extrajudicially by the military have been found with injuries consistent with sexual violence.

50. In the context of a near-total collapse of public healthcare and judicial institutions, existing support services were rendered largely inaccessible owing to movement restrictions, telecommunications monitoring and surveillance. Healthcare and legal professionals have been arbitrarily arrested and safehouses raided by undercover military personnel. Reluctance to report to international mechanisms and a breakdown of trust in national institutions contributed to violations

going unreported and unaddressed, even as humanitarian needs increased. In October 2022, the de facto authorities adopted an amendment to the Organization Registration Law, which placed women human rights defenders at risk of imprisonment for not registering their organizations. In December, the Security Council adopted resolution 2669 (2022) on Myanmar, which urged the de facto authorities to protect the rights of women and children and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

51. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the United Nations continued to provide multisectoral services in the camps, including for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their children. In a context of limited economic opportunities, refugee women and girls are at heightened risk of sexual exploitation by traffickers. In the camps, cases of sexual violence are generally referred to male camp leaders who favour traditional dispute resolution approaches and mechanisms, which include rape survivors being compelled to marry the perpetrators.

## Recommendation

52. I urge the Myanmar military to fully respect and implement Security Council resolution 2669 (2022), and further call on them to immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners. I further call on the military to allow immediate and unconstrained access to United Nations-mandated investigatory and reporting bodies and to humanitarian actors providing support to affected populations, as well as to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

# Somalia

53. Widespread insecurity and the dire humanitarian situation, resulting from climate shocks including drought, fuelled displacement, while competition for resources amplified the risk of local tensions and conflicts. Against this backdrop, displaced women and girls were particularly vulnerable to conflict-related sexual violence owing to protracted conflict, structural gender inequality, and limited access to justice and services. Difficulties in accessing areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, weak rule of law, and clan protection for alleged perpetrators contributed to chronic underreporting. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) verified 19 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape, and attempted rape, perpetrated against 14 women and 5 girls. As part of monitoring grave violations against children, the United Nations verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual

violence affecting 219 girls and two boys. Almost half of the attacks occurred in isolated areas, including village outskirts and farming fields, with 55 girls attacked in or around displacement sites. Most incidents were attributed to unidentified armed perpetrators, Al-Shabaab, and clan militia. Government security and police forces, as well as Jubbaland forces and Puntland forces, and the Liyu Police, were also implicated in cases of sexual violence. Cases of conflict-related sexual violence reported to the Panel of Experts on Somalia in 2022 demonstrate a link between inter-clan conflicts and the exposure of women and girls to sexual violence. Moreover, in drought-affected communities, women and girls were disproportionately exposed to forced marriage, including to members of Al-Shabaab (S/2022/754).

54. In 2022, the climate of impunity persisted, with no prosecutions for conflict-related sexual violence crimes taking place, despite complaints having been lodged. Recourse to customary justice practices, known as *xeer*, often resulted in decisions that shielded perpetrators from criminal responsibility. In Puntland, traditional elders continued to settle sexual violence cases with the knowledge of the authorities, although the 2016 Puntland Sexual Offences Law requires such cases to be adjudicated by the formal justice system. At the federal level, the cabinet-approved 2018 Sexual Offences Bill continued to elicit a strong backlash from religious leaders and clan elders. UNSOM provided training to Somali Police Officers from the Women and Child Protection Units in Mogadishu to strengthen their capacity to investigate sexual violence crimes.



## Recommendation

55. I reiterate my call to the Federal Government to adopt legislative measures that will strengthen the protection of all persons from sexual violence and to enhance access to justice for survivors including by increasing the number of Women and Child police protection units and ensuring survivor-centred referral mechanisms. I further call on the Federal Government to strengthen protection measures for women and girls, including those who have been displaced by drought and exposed to violence, and ensure their needs are integrated into wider humanitarian response plans.

# South Sudan



56. In 2022, the Government extended the transitional period, established under the terms of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, by two years. The first graduation ceremonies of the unified forces were held in August, though the forces lacked logistical support, adequate training, or an established vetting mechanism for human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. Moreover, the security situation deteriorated, as subnational violence surged, owing to clashes between parties to the conflict, affiliated armed militias, and splinter groups, accompanied by the systematic use of sexual violence as tactic to punish and forcibly displace populations. Fighting in southern Unity State, Greater Upper Nile, and Warrap State resulted in attacks against civilians, including sexual violence. From southern Unity State alone, some 44,000 civilians were forcibly displaced. Large-scale abductions of women and children, a tragic feature of the conflict, increased in 2022. Climate-related shocks, such as flooding and drought, aggravated competition over scarce resources. Cattle raiding in greater Jonglei, which expanded to the Equatoria region, was accompanied by worsening intercommunal violence.

57. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) documented incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 221 women and 71 girls. A further seven attacks, which occurred between 2019 and 2021, affecting four women, two girls, and one boy, were also verified in 2022. Perpetrators included non-State actors, such as organized armed groups, civil defence groups, and other armed elements. Government security forces were also implicated, with 38 per cent of reported incidents attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), and 5 per cent to the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS), Wildlife Service, and the National Security Service. In addition, eight per cent of cases were attributed to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO). One case involved a member of the National Salvation Front. Armed youth groups allied to the main parties to the conflict, civil defence groups, community-based militia, and splinter groups accounted for 39 per cent of incidents. The remaining 10 per cent of reported cases were attributed to unidentified armed elements. Most documented incidents took place in southern Unity State, Warrap State, and Greater Upper Nile and were perpetrated against civilians ranging from 10 to 50 years of age.

The reported incidents included rape, attempted rape, gang rape, forced nudity, abduction for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and sexual slavery. Pregnant women and lactating mothers were among the victims, as were internally displaced persons and individuals living with disabilities. Women and girls were particularly vulnerable while carrying out essential livelihood activities, fleeing villages, and travelling to and from school. In some cases, the victims were attacked at gunpoint and sustained severe physical injuries. Women reported advising their daughters on how to react during an attack in order to reduce physical injuries, which is indicative of the prevalence and brutality of sexual violence in South Sudan. Reports of pregnancies resulting from rape were, in several cases, associated with abduction and sexual slavery. An investigation by the United Nations in southern Unity State revealed that sexual slavery, including rape and gang rape, of abducted women and girls was used by the joint Government forces and allied militias as an incentive and reward for combatants. Members of civil society organizations faced intimidation tactics, such as arbitrary detention and having their bank accounts frozen.

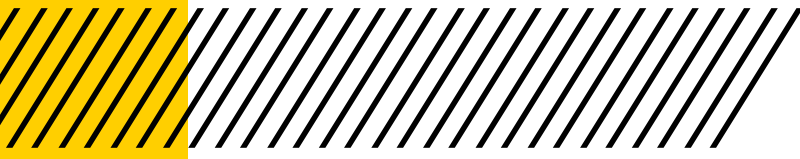
58. My Special Representative visited South Sudan in October 2022 and met with senior Government officials to discuss expediting implementation of the 2014 joint communiqué, including through strengthening the legislative framework and enhancing protection of victims and witnesses, who continue to face reprisals. Judges, defence lawyers and organizations supporting survivors have also been subject to intimidation. In terms of reparative justice, while civilian and military courts award compensation to victims, the inability or unwillingness of the perpetrator to pay reparations often impedes disbursement to survivors. Given the limited reach of the justice system and the lack of access to remote areas, sexual violence is often referred to customary authorities. Nonetheless, 13 individuals were convicted of sexual and gender-based crimes by a joint special mobile court operating in Western Bah-el-Ghazal and Warrap States, as well as a circuit court in Warrap State. Ten Special Protection Units within the SSNPS, established since 2010, continued to operate across the country, though they lack adequate resources. With respect to military justice, eight SSPDF elements, including one former soldier, were convicted in five cases involving sexual violence in the General Court Martial in Yei in Central Equatoria State. In June 2022, a team focused on investigating and prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence was established within the SSPDF. To date, sexual

violence has been examined under the penal code as an ordinary crime and has not yet been tried as a war crime. Overall, the number of trials completed remains negligible relative to the scale of conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan.

59. The lack of laboratories, equipment, and medication, as well as the limited number of qualified health personnel impeded access to services. Moreover, survivors were rarely able to reach service providers before the crucial 72-hour window when post-rape kits, including HIV prevention treatments, are most effective due to the inability to secure transportation from remote areas in a context of limited infrastructure. Safe abortion care for survivors is not available as terminating a pregnancy is only legally permitted if the mother's health is at risk. There is also a lack of safe houses amid reports of survivors being deserted by partners and relatives in the wake of rape, resulting in socioeconomic marginalization and an increased number of suicides.

## Recommendation

60. I call on the Government to expedite implementation of the 2014 joint communiqué, including by adopting legislation on victim and witness protection, domesticating their international obligations related to sexual violence, and expediting implementation of the Action Plan for the Armed Forces including by effectively vetting and removing from duty all members of the armed and security forces credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. I urge the Government to strengthen the delivery of multisectoral services to survivors, especially in areas affected by subnational violence and climate vulnerability, on its concrete steps to formulate a national action plan on Women, Peace and Security, and encourage the authorities to include budgeted, operational measures to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence.



# The Sudan

61. The October 2021 military takeover triggered a multifaceted political, security, and economic crisis marked by protests which, though largely peaceful, were met with disproportionate force, including rape. Intercommunal violence persisted in the Darfur region, as well as Blue Nile, South and West Kordofan States, triggering the displacement of at least 265,273 civilians. Against this backdrop, some key Sudanese military and civilian stakeholders signed a Political Framework Agreement in December calling for an end to impunity for all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. Nonetheless, recent clashes between

the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are deeply concerning. In 2022, the United Nations documented 96 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including abductions, attempted rape, and gang rape, affecting 63 women and 33 girls. The majority of victims were displaced women and girls who were often attacked leaving camps in order to attend school or engage in essential livelihood activities. The perpetrators included armed nomads and other unknown armed men. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces were also implicated. In Darfur and the Two Areas, documented incidents of sexual violence

were perpetrated amid widespread insecurity. The Panel of Experts on Sudan recorded 41 cases of sexual violence and two cases of abduction against women and girls, in a context of underreporting owing to high levels of stigmatization and impunity (S/2023/93). Access to services is challenging across the country where the clinical management of rape, legal assistance and psychosocial support are available in only 39 per cent of localities. In Blue Nile State, amid three waves of violence, which erupted between members of the Hausa community and members of the Funj, Hamaj, and Berta communities in July, September, and October, sexual violence was allegedly perpetrated against dozens of women and girls who were unable to access timely medical treatment.

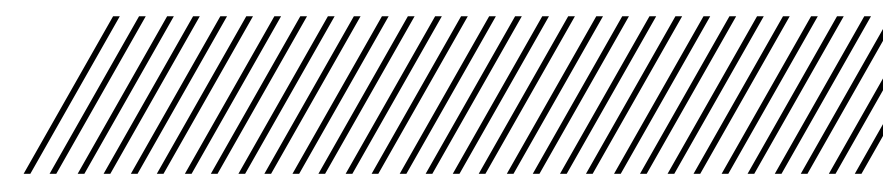
62. Numerous allegations of sexual violence arose in the context of protests against the military takeover. In 2022, the United Nations documented attacks, including gang rape, rape, and attempted rape, against 24 victims, including women, men, and boys, during or after protests. The police including the Central Reserve Police were implicated in six incidents; the others were attributed to members of other security forces (Sudanese Police Force, Sudan Armed Forces, Rapid Support Forces, and General Intelligence Service). In two incidents protesters seeking refuge from a violent crowd dispersal by the security forces were pursued and sexually assaulted. Incidents of sexual violence took place during interrogation by the joint security forces, and in detention settings. Owing to

fears of reprisal and a lack of trust in the justice system, only eight of the victims lodged official complaints. The authorities established a committee, headed by a public prosecutor, to investigate human rights violations committed since the military takeover. Four allegations of rape are currently under investigation, and one has been filed in court. Most victims received medical care, though five were unable to access timely assistance. In one case, hospital staff refused to treat a victim of sexual violence without a standardized medical form serving as evidence of the assault, even though this form is no longer a prerequisite for post-rape care.

63. In 2022, the United Nations provided training on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence to over 1,000 police officers, prosecutors, and community members, of whom more than 700 were women, and supported the onboarding of 50 women to the Sudanese Police Force in Central Darfur and 50 in North Darfur. The United Nations supported the work of women's protection networks in 21 displacement camps to facilitate referrals for gender-based violence services. The United Nations continued to support the implementation of the national plan for the protection of civilians including by training personnel affiliated with the as yet deployed Joint Security-Keeping Force on the protection of women and the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

## Recommendation

64. I call on the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces to commit to a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence, in line with their respective obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. I further call upon the authorities to accelerate implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, particularly the security arrangements, with a view to fostering a protective environment, and to ensure that amnesty is not granted for conflict-related sexual violence. I urge the authorities to revitalize implementation of the Framework of Cooperation signed with my Special Representative, to publicly articulate a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence, to thoroughly investigate such crimes, including those committed during protests, and to ensure the delivery of multisectoral services to survivors, including in remote and rural areas.



# Syrian Arab Republic

65. As a result of 12 years of protracted conflict, some 14 million people have been displaced, and nearly 15.3 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2023. The volatile security situation, marked by ongoing insecurity predominantly in northern Syria, combined with economic hardship, have exposed women and girls to risks of sexual violence, especially in displacement and detention settings. United Nations partners reported cases of sexual harassment by members of the security forces against girls at checkpoints, and instances of arbitrary arrest and sexual violence by armed actors against individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Moreover, young boys were reportedly exposed to sexual violence in detention due to their actual or perceived affiliation with armed groups. Cases of sexual violence perpetrated by Da'esh against Yazidi girls abducted in Iraq in 2014 continued to be reported. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic collected information on patterns of arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, and enforced disappearances by Government and pro-Government forces. In 2022, the Commission released reports that documented a systematic practice of detention in northwest Syria to stifle political dissent by the Security Council-listed terrorist group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, with former detainees reporting torture and sexual violence (A/HRC/49/77). Moreover, in northern Syria, the Commission reported instances of torture and cruel treatment, including sexual violence, committed by the so-called Syrian National Army in makeshift detention facilities, with one woman describing being subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in 2018 during interrogations (A/HRC/51/45).



66. Conflict-related sexual violence remained severely underreported owing to a lack of access by human rights monitoring groups to all parts of Syria, fear of reprisals, and stigma suffered by survivors. The situation at Al-Hol camp, in which some 56,000 people remain, 94 per cent of whom are women and children, continued to deteriorate. In November, the bodies of two girls, who were reportedly killed a few days after being abducted and raped, were found discarded in a sewage ditch of the camp (S/2022/956). Women and adolescent girls were exposed to sexual violence, in some cases resulting in unwanted pregnancies, which they often opted to conceal to avoid being forced to marry the perpetrator. Access to justice remained limited owing to mistrust in the judicial system, as well as its often prohibitive costs. Limited funding for gender-based violence programming has affected the functioning of referral pathways and safe spaces across the country, as well as the availability of trained health workers and post-rape treatment kits.

## Recommendation

67. I reiterate my calls upon all parties to end sexual violence, including in detention settings, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to facilitate humanitarian access throughout the country in order to ensure the provision of multisectoral services.



# Ukraine

68. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, attacks across the country resulted in massive civilian loss of life, and widespread destruction of infrastructure. The frontlines have shifted continuously, with humanitarian access often denied in areas that are or have been under the temporary control of the Russian Federation. The deteriorating humanitarian situation and mass displacement increased risks of sexual violence and trafficking, especially for women and girls who comprise the vast majority of the nearly eight million refugees and seven million internally displaced persons. In 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine documented 125 cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed since 24 February, against civilians and prisoners of war, affecting 80 men, 42 women, and three girls. In most incidents involving adult male victims, sexual violence was used as a method of torture during their captivity by Russian armed forces, Russian-affiliated armed groups, and Russian law enforcement authorities. Violations

included electrocutions, beatings and burns to the genital area, forced stripping and nudity, forcibly conducting a sexual act against another person, unwanted touching, and threats of sexual violence against victims and their relatives. Incidents of rape, including gang rape, were documented against 10 women, one girl, and one man. The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine also investigated sexual violence crimes, reporting that the victims of rape ranged from four to over 80 years of age (A/77/533) and that perpetrators raped women and girls in some cases, in front of family members, while in others, husbands or partners were killed. The Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine referred to twenty-four reported cases of forced stripping, nudity, and threats of sexual violence committed by Ukrainian armed forces, law enforcement personnel, and civilians or members of territorial defence units in the months following the invasion.

69. On 3 May 2022, my Special Representative, on behalf of the United Nations system, signed a Framework of Cooperation on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence with Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. The Government has since taken steps to strengthen national legislation and policies, including by updating the National Action Plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and establishing a comprehensive inter-agency working group to address sexual violence focusing on anti-trafficking measures, the provision of assistance to survivors, access to justice, reparations, and strengthening the security sector. To enhance investigative capacity with respect to sexual violence crimes, the Office of the Prosecutor General has established a specialized unit and deployed mobile groups including police officers, investigators, prosecutors, and psychologists to areas that have been under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation. Some 200 prosecutors are investigating sexual violence crimes with national security and anti-trafficking bodies collecting evidence. In March 2022, following a referral by 43 States Parties, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court confirmed opening an investigation into the situation in Ukraine, encompassing any past and present allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed on the territory of Ukraine by any person since 21 November 2013. On 15 November 2022, the General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/ES-11/5) that recognizes that the Russian Federation must be held to account for any violations of international law in or against Ukraine, including its aggression in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as any violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and that it must bear the legal consequences of all of its internationally wrongful acts, including making reparation for the injury, including any damage, caused by such acts. It recommended the creation by Member States, in cooperation with Ukraine, of an international register of damage.

70. Attacks on hospitals and health clinics hindered the provision of medication, including emergency contraceptives, and constrained access to services related to the clinical management of rape. To enhance referral pathways and services, the Government, with the support of the United Nations, established five centres providing services, an online platform focusing on specialized assistance, as well as a national toll-free hotline for survivors of gender-based violence, and raised awareness on ways to access services. With United Nations support, hospitals in 21 oblasts were equipped with post-rape kits, while safe spaces for women and girls were established, including for internally displaced persons and returnees, in areas close to the front line.

## Recommendation

71. I commend the Government of Ukraine on the adoption of a Framework of Cooperation with the United Nations to address conflict-related sexual violence and encourage its full implementation, including through support from the international donor and diplomatic community, which I urge to allocate adequate and sustained resources to this end. I urge all parties to immediately cease acts of sexual violence, and call on the Russian Federation to make and implement specific time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence, which should include, inter alia, issuance of clear orders through chains of command and development of codes of conduct prohibiting sexual violence and establishment of related enforcement procedures to ensure accountability for breaching these orders, commitments by individual commanders, investigation of all credible allegations including on the basis of information reported by relevant UN entities and accountability for those responsible, unimpeded access for monitoring and provision of services and humanitarian assistance in areas under its control in line with Security Council resolutions 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) 2467 (2019). I commend the authorities in countries in the region for hosting refugees and call upon them to ensure quality multisectoral assistance to survivors, and to adopt measures to mitigate the risk of conflict-driven trafficking.

# Yemen

72. The humanitarian crisis and breakdown of the rule of law in Yemen have exposed women and girls to heightened risks of conflict-related sexual violence. Following a United Nations-brokered truce, which was in effect between April and October, there has not been a return to full-scale conflict, though reports of sporadic frontline hostilities persist.
73. Between April and June 2022, the United Nations recorded allegations of the killing of at least 19 civilians and 20 incidents of conflict-related violence. Sexual violence, however, remains dramatically underreported due to entrenched harmful social norms, stigma, and fear of reprisals. The United Nations continued to document patterns of sexual violence in detention settings, including the case of a woman subjected to sexual violence while held for over a year in a prison controlled by the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah). Experts mandated by the Human Rights Council continued to express concerns over the systematic violation of the rights of women and girls in areas controlled by the Houthis, reflected in the mahram, which requires women to travel with a male family member or "guardian". Movement restrictions have also been imposed on female Yemeni staff of humanitarian organizations, which hindered the provision of humanitarian aid. Gender-based violence programming is subjected to particular scrutiny in Houthi-controlled areas in which the use of terminology related to gender or rape is discouraged, undermining accountability. Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare has also been severely limited by the Houthis. Health centres have been instructed to only provide contraceptives to women in the presence of, and with the consent of, their husbands, ostensibly to preserve Islamic "religious identity".

## Recommendation

74. I urge all parties to protect civilians in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by integrating provisions on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence in any future truce, ceasefire, and peace agreement, and ensuring the full and meaningful participation of women in these processes. I reiterate my calls to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the country, in order to make specialized gender-based violence services available, and to provide the United Nations with unrestricted access to detention facilities.



# IV. Addressing crimes of sexual violence in post-conflict settings

75. In the Western Balkans, protection and reparative justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence remained uneven. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, reparations for survivors remain insufficient and inadequate. The Government is yet to implement a 2019 decision of the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT/C/67/D/854/2017) requiring the State to ensure prompt, fair and adequate compensation, and other forms of reparation are provided to a survivor of conflict-related sexual violence. In July 2022, in a positive development, the Brčko District adopted a Law on civilian victims of war, drawing on the Model Legislative Provisions on Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, which recognized a wide-range of victims, including children born of conflict-related rape. In the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), in April 2022, in Kosovo, the authorities extended the mandate of the reparations commission, enabling it to continue verifying claims of conflict-related sexual violence until 2026. As of March 2023, 1,450 survivors have received reparations in the form of a monthly stipend, following the work of this commission.

76. In Nepal, 17 years after the signing of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence continue to face challenges in accessing services, justice, and reparations. The second phase of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in September 2022, has integrated the priorities of sexual violence survivors and those born of conflict-related rape, including increased access to civil registration. To inform the forthcoming amendment of the Transitional Justice Act, the Government initiated a consultation process in 2022 with civil society organizations, including a dedicated, confidential session with sexual violence survivors.

77. In Sri Lanka, following the 2020 withdrawal of the Government's co-sponsorship of Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1, with the intention to pursue a domestically-driven approach to reconciliation and accountability, there has been no substantive progress in the investigation of conflict-related sexual violence cases. A second interim report submitted by the Commission of Inquiry in February 2022 outlined a new proposal to establish a truth and reconciliation commission to advance transitional justice efforts (A/HRC/51/5).



## Recommendation

78. I call upon the authorities overseeing transitional justice processes to adopt comprehensive legal frameworks aligned with international norms and standards; to develop national reparation programmes with adequate funding to provide survivors and their children, including children born of conflict-related rape, with compensation and redress; and to consult survivors and their civil society representatives in the design and delivery of all transitional justice processes, in line with the survivor-centred approach.

# V. Other situations of concern

79. After two years of fighting, formal peace talks mediated by the African Union led to the signing on 2 November 2022 of an Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities by the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). This agreement specifically called on the parties to condemn any act of sexual and gender-based violence and included a commitment by the Government to implement a comprehensive transitional justice policy to advance accountability, deliver redress for victims, and support reconciliation. All parties, including members of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Eritrean Defence Forces, the Amhara Special Forces and militia, and the Tigrayan forces, were reportedly implicated in acts of conflict-related sexual violence. Such attacks were perpetrated in the context of the conflict in the Tigray region, which expanded to neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions in July 2021. Sexual violence against women and girls in Tigray, Amhara and Afar reportedly included abductions, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence in captivity. Internally displaced and refugee women and girls were at particular risk of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation by armed forces and groups. National and international investigative reports issued in 2022 focused on the Afar and Amhara regions, documenting incidents of conflict-related sexual violence by the parties since the beginning of hostilities in 2020. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Inter-Ministerial Task Force, established by the Government to follow up on the recommendations of the joint investigation conducted by the United Nations and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (S/2022/272), concluded that Tigrayan forces perpetrated widespread and systematic sexual and gender-based violence in these regions. Regarding the Tigray and Amhara regions, the report of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the ENDF, the EDF, and Fano committed widespread acts of sexual violence against Tigrayan women and

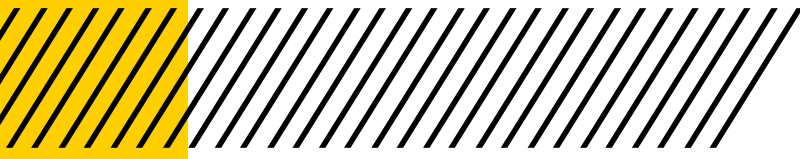
girls and that the Tigrayan forces also committed acts of sexual violence, "albeit on a smaller scale" (A/HRC/51/46).

80. In 2022, humanitarian access constraints and communications restrictions, particularly in the Tigray region, and the reported presence of armed forces and groups in the vicinity of health facilities in the northern regions, hindered access to reporting and services. Where specialized desks and courts were established for women and children, these were not always functional due to the destruction of public infrastructure and absence of personnel. Despite these challenges, the United Nations documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray regions, affecting 72 women and 5 girls. An additional 908 cases affecting 842 women and 66 girls were reported by service providers. These cases included instances of rape committed in front of family members and the gang rape of women and girls associated with fighters of parties to the conflict, internally displaced persons, women in detention, older women, women with disabilities, men and boys, and Eritrean refugees. The United Nations also reported incidents occurring in Afar and Amhara regions between July and November 2021, allegedly perpetrated by members of the Tigrayan forces and the Oromo Liberation Army. Across Tigray, Amhara, and Afar, nine safe houses and 13 one-stop centres were established, providing temporary shelter for survivors. In January 2022, the Government issued a decree tasking the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs to support the establishment of centres providing specialized services for women and children who are victims of violence. As of August 2022, the Military Court delivered 25 convictions of which 13 concerned sexual violence. A further 16 cases of sexual violence are pending. A transitional justice mechanism is under discussion, to which the authorities plan to refer additional cases.

# Ethiopia

## Recommendation

81. I welcome the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and call upon the parties to fully implement its provisions on condemning sexual violence. I call on the Government to implement the transitional justice policy outlined in the Agreement and to deliver reparations and redress to survivors. I further urge the Government to strengthen prevention measures and scale up efforts to provide services to survivors including by granting unhindered humanitarian access and cooperating with my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.



# Haiti

82. Insecurity due to gang-related violence reached unprecedented levels in Haiti in 2022, as armed gangs sought to expand their influence and territorial control within and beyond the capital, through the deliberate use of killings, kidnappings, and sexual violence. This strategy was reinforced by ready access to military-grade weapons and ammunition trafficked from abroad, in addition to the support of alleged political and economic sponsors who use gangs to influence the electoral process and national politics (S/2022/747). In July, the Security Council adopted resolution 2645 (2022) expressing concern over widespread gang violence,

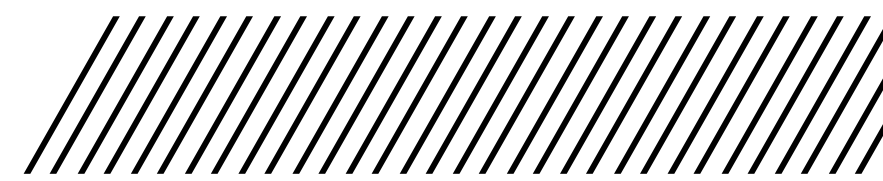
including sexual and gender-based violence, and calling for the deployment of women's protection advisers. Furthermore, in October, the Council adopted resolution 2653 (2022), establishing a Sanctions Committee and a Panel of Experts on Haiti to monitor implementation of targeted measures. Sanctions were declared against Jimmy Chérizier (alias "Barbecue") for his direct involvement, as the leader of the alliance of gangs known as the "G9 Family and Allies", in acts including the rape of seven women during the November 2018 attack on the neighbourhood known as La Saline in Port-au-Prince.

83. A United Nations joint report, published in October 2022, found that sexual violence perpetrated by gangs constituted a deliberate strategy to instil fear, subjugate local populations, and expand areas of influence and control. As recounted by several victims and eyewitnesses, the brutality with which gang members committed these acts points to a clear intention to punish those considered supportive of rival groups. During clashes, gang members raped women and girls, often from impoverished and marginalized neighbourhoods, as well as, to a lesser extent, men, boys and LGBTQI persons. In some instances, victims were raped in front of their children, after having witnessed the execution of their husbands. Gangs targeted women and girls entering neighbourhoods under the control of rival gangs to undertake livelihood activities or attend school. Many victims were forced out of vehicles at gunpoint, robbed, and subjected to collective rape in broad daylight. Testimonies from victims and witnesses indicated that kidnapping victims were sometimes raped several times by multiple armed captors in abandoned houses where they were held for weeks. Moreover, gang members have coerced young women, girls and sometimes men, into becoming their "sexual partners", in exchange for food, water, and "protection" from other potential abusers for the victims and their families. In November 2022, in response to the joint report, the Haitian Prime Minister sent an open letter to my Special Representative and Head of BINUH committing to address sexual violence and identify remedial measures and solutions. Moreover, in an effort to fight one of the main drivers of gang violence, in August 2022, the Government of Haiti finalized a National Action Plan under the framework of the Caribbean Firearms Roadmap to address the illicit flow of arms and ammunition into the country.

84. Logistical and resource constraints hamper the effectiveness of national rule of law institutions to investigate and address sexual violence, with police officers often fearing reprisals by armed gangs. The lack of protection for victims and witnesses dissuades formal complaints. Throughout 2021 and 2022, several healthcare facilities and hospitals, as well as medical personnel, were attacked or compelled to suspend their activities due to threats or violence from gangs. Women's rights organizations reported rapes, physical assault, and threats aimed at their staff. Checkpoints were erected by gangs to restrict movement, and changes in gang leadership, along with shifting alliances, has complicated access to certain neighbourhoods. While most functional clinics and hospitals in Port-au-Prince are equipped with post-exposure prophylaxis kits to prevent HIV transmission, and provide emergency contraception, victims are rarely able to access these treatments within the crucial 72-hour window after a sexual assault owing to prevailing insecurity. Several victims indicated having been infected with HIV, and/or becoming pregnant as a result of rape by gang members. Many victims experience acute trauma, depression, and suicidal ideation, yet there are very few mental health specialists in Haiti. Severe physical injuries from collective rapes have, in some cases, required surgical interventions, which can only be conducted in the capital by a limited number of doctors. Few shelters are available to provide survivors with safe housing or reintegration support.

## Recommendation

85. I urge the authorities to monitor and investigate sexual violence perpetrated by gangs with a view to ensuring accountability and redress. I call on the authorities to provide multisectoral assistance to all survivors of sexual violence, with the financial support of international partners.



# Nigeria



87. In February 2023, the Nigerian National Human Rights Commission established a panel to investigate allegations of systemic and coerced abortions by the national armed forces affecting thousands of women and girls, many of whom had been held captive and subjected to conflict-related sexual violence by members of Boko Haram. The objectives of the panel are to determine the responsibility of individuals and institutions, identify damages and compensation, and refer human rights violations to the Attorney General of the Federation or State. In addition, the panel will make recommendations on integrating human rights principles and practices into military and counter-insurgency operations.

## Recommendation

86. Conflict-related sexual violence continued to be a major protection concern for women and girls in north-east Nigeria in a context of insecurity, civilian displacement, entrenched gender inequality, and limited access to justice. In 2022, the United Nations verified 73 cases of sexual violence against girls by non-State armed groups. In terms of ongoing judicial processes, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict co-sponsored trainings on conflict-related sexual violence for the Complex Case Group of the Department of Public Prosecutions and the Serious Crimes Response Team within the Nigerian armed forces. For the first time, prosecutors have charged members of Boko Haram with inflicting serious bodily harm as an act of terrorism for alleged acts of sexual violence.

88. I call upon the authorities to prioritize the effective prosecution of crimes of sexual violence, including in counter-terrorism cases, and to fully investigate allegations of forced abortions by the armed forces, with a view to delivering accountability and compensation.

# VI. Recommendations

89. The following recommendations focus on harnessing the preventive power of the rule of law by increasing investment in prevention, accountability, and institutional reform. They should be read in conjunction with those presented in my previous reports.

## 90. I RECOMMEND THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL:

- (a) Call upon all parties to conflict to immediately cease all forms of conflict-related sexual violence in compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions and provide the United Nations with unhindered access to conflict areas and detention centres;
- (b) Support the accelerated deployment of women's protection advisers to peace operations and offices of United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinators in all relevant situations of concern in line with Security Council resolution 2467 (2019);
- (c) Include in mandate authorizations and renewals of peace operations, as well as in transition plans, dedicated operational provisions on gender-responsive security and justice sector reform to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence;
- (d) Encourage all State and non-State parties to conflict to adopt time-bound commitments to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, and monitor their compliance, including through the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security;
- (e) Ensure adequate consultations with women-led organizations to capture the most pressing peace, security and protection concerns faced by women and girls and enhance measures to protect women briefers to the Security Council from reprisals;
- (f) Give due consideration to dedicated thematic visits on conflict-related sexual violence to situations on the agenda of the Security Council and ensure conflict-related sexual violence concerns are raised during visits to relevant contexts characterized by early warning indicators of sexual violence, including contexts of rising militarization, unconstitutional changes of government, terrorism, gender-based hate speech, technology-facilitated sexual violence and online harassment, electoral violence, political instability, intercommunal tensions, and mass displacement;
- (g) Ensure that sexual violence is systematically monitored and incorporated as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted sanctions to deter the commission of such violence by all parties, including mercenaries, and private military and security companies; ensure that sanctions committees have expertise on conflict-related sexual violence and that my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict continues to be invited to provide briefings and share relevant information; and consider applying sanctions to persistent perpetrators who have appeared in the list annexed to the present report for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action;
- (h) Consider referring to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court situations in which crimes of sexual violence, as defined in its Statute, appear to have been committed;
- (i) Give due consideration to examining the impact of climate-related security risks as factors which can exacerbate conflict and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including conflict-related sexual violence and solicit further relevant information on the linkages on climate change and conflict-related sexual violence from the Office of my Special Representative and relevant UN entities in order to deepen the evidence-base for action.

# 91. I ENCOURAGE MEMBER STATES:

- (a) To adopt a survivor-centred approach to preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence that seeks to empower survivors by prioritizing their specific needs, perspectives and aspirations, and considers intersecting inequalities based on sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, disabilities, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as HIV status, among other factors; to ensure that survivors' rights are respected and that their capacity to make informed decisions and to influence prevention and response policies and measures is promoted;
- (b) To strengthen accountability, by adopting legislation drawing on the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence; enhancing protection, investigation and prosecution, through the training of justice personnel; prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence through appropriate judicial mechanisms, regardless of the rank or affiliation of the perpetrator; and promoting transformative, gender-responsive reparations;
- (c) To foster a gender-responsive security sector, through the development of effective oversight and accountability mechanisms including the establishment of vetting and screening to prevent credibly suspected perpetrators from being recruited, retained or promoted within the security forces; build the capacity of the security sector, to anticipate, detect and respond to instances of conflict-driven trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation; and consider establishing specialized units to address sexual violence;
- (d) To design, fund and implement national and local action plans on women and peace and security, as well as implement related regional action plans, which include dedicated budgeted operational provisions to address conflict-related sexual violence;
- (e) To adopt national legislation regulating the activities of private military and security companies and investigate, prosecute, and sanction violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including sexual violence; to adhere to the principles outlined in the "Montreux Document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict", including the use of superior/command responsibility for failing to prevent or put an end to crimes committed by subordinates;
- (f) To adopt national legislation on arms and ammunition control and implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Arms Trade Treaty, and other relevant instruments.

# 92. I ENCOURAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING MEMBER STATES, DONORS, REGIONAL AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS:

- (a) To adopt a survivor-centred approach to preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence and foster an enabling environment for survivors to seek support, provide accessible and quality multisectoral assistance, including HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive care, access to emergency contraception, safe and timely abortion care, as well as psychosocial and legal services ensuring that all efforts are guided by the principles of security, confidentiality, and informed consent;
- (b) To implement the platform of recommendations pertaining to women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of such violence, as outlined in my special report (S/2022/77);
- (c) To mitigate risks of sexual violence associated with livelihood activities, by building community resilience and ensuring that women and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have safe access to employment and socioeconomic reintegration, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; and ensure women's full and meaningful participation in humanitarian, recovery, peace and development processes;
- (d) To ensure that expertise on prohibiting and addressing conflict-related sexual violence informs the design and implementation of peace, ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and/or subsequent agreements, in line with the 2022 Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires; promote the full and meaningful participation of women and survivors in political and peacebuilding processes; and ensure the exclusion of such crimes from amnesties and statutes of limitations;
- (e) To create an enabling environment for women active in public life, including women human rights defenders, journalists, peacebuilders, and those working directly on conflict-related sexual violence; to protect politically active women from any form of reprisals and ensure risks, including those stemming from digital platforms, are duly addressed and perpetrators prosecuted; and establish protection measures and timely responses for civilians at imminent risk of conflict-related sexual violence, including those in detention, displacement, or migration settings;
- (f) To tackle the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including structural gender inequality and harmful social norms that lead to the stigmatization of survivors, by promoting women's meaningful participation and leadership in political, security, and rule of law institutions, as well as by engaging with faith-based, traditional and community leaders, to promote attitudinal and social change;
- (g) To address chronic funding shortfalls by providing predictable financial support to the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund for the work of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network; and to draw on the expertise of the United Nations system in the areas of justice and the rule of law by supporting the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

# List of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council

The following list does not purport to be comprehensive, but rather includes parties in relation to which credible information is available. It should be noted that the names of countries appear only to indicate the locations where parties are suspected of committing violations.

## Parties in the Central African Republic

### 1. Non-State actors:

- (a) Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) – former President François Bozizé; Retour, réclamation et rehabilitation – Ramadhan Bobbo; Anti-balaka Mokom-Maxime Mokom; Anti-balaka Ngaïssona-Dieudonné Ndomate; Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique – Noureddine Adam and Zone Commander Mahamat Salleh; Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique – Mahamat Al-Khatim; Union pour la paix en Centrafrique-Ali Darrassa.
- (b) Lord's Resistance Army;
- (c) Ex-Séléka factions;
- (d) Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain – Abdoulaye Miskine;
- (e) Révolution et justice;

### 2. State Actors:

National armed forces\*



\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence



## Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



### 1. Non-State actors:

- (a) Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Janvier;
- (b) Allied Democratic Forces;
- (c) Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda;
- (d) Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri;
- (e) Lord's Resistance Army;
- (f) Nduma défense du Congo;
- (g) Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové faction led by "General" Guidon Shimiray Mwisso and faction led by Commander Gilbert Bwira Shuo and Deputy Commander Fidel Malik Mapenzi;
- (h) Mai-Mai Kifuafua;
- (i) Nyatura;
- (j) Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki;
- (k) Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale;
- (l) Mai-Mai Malaika;
- (m) Mai-Mai Perci Moto Moto ;
- (n) Mai-Mai Yakutumba;
- (o) Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)
- (p) Nyatura;
- (q) Coopérative pour le développement du Congo;
- (r) Twa militias;
- (s) Union des patriotes pour la défense des citoyens ;
- (t) Forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple;

### 2. State actors:

- (a) Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;\*
- (b) Congolese National Police.\*

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence

## Parties in Iraq



### Non-State actors:

Da'esh.

## Parties in Mali



### Non-State actors:

- (a) Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad;\*
- (b) Ansar Eddine;
- (c) Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al Muslimin;
- (d) Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés, part of Plateforme des mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger.\*

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence



## Parties in Myanmar



State actors:  
Tatmadaw, including integrated Border Guard.\*

## Parties in Somalia



1. Non-State actors:  
Al-Shabaab.
2. State actors:
  - (a) Somali National Army;\*
  - (b) Somali Police Force\* (and allied militia);
  - (c) Puntland forces.

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence

## Parties in South Sudan



1. Non-State actors:
  - (a) Lord's Resistance Army;
  - (b) Justice and Equality Movement;
  - (c) Sudan People's Liberation/Army in Opposition-pro-Machar\*
2. State actors:
  - (a) South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces;\*
  - (b) South Sudan National Police Service.\*

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence

## Parties in Sudan



1. Non-State actors:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement;
  - (b) Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid.
2. State actors:
  - (a) Sudanese Armed Forces;
  - (b) Rapid Support Forces.

## Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic



1. Non-State actors:
  - (a) Da'esh;
  - (b) Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham;
  - (c) Army of Islam;
  - (d) Ahrar al-Sham.
2. State actors:
 

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces, Intelligence services and pro government militias;

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence

“  
Other parties of concern on the agenda of the Security Council

## Parties in Nigeria



Non-State actors:  
Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province

## Parties in Haiti



Non-State Actors:  
Gg Family and Allies– Jimmy Chérizier

\*Indicates that the party has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence



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