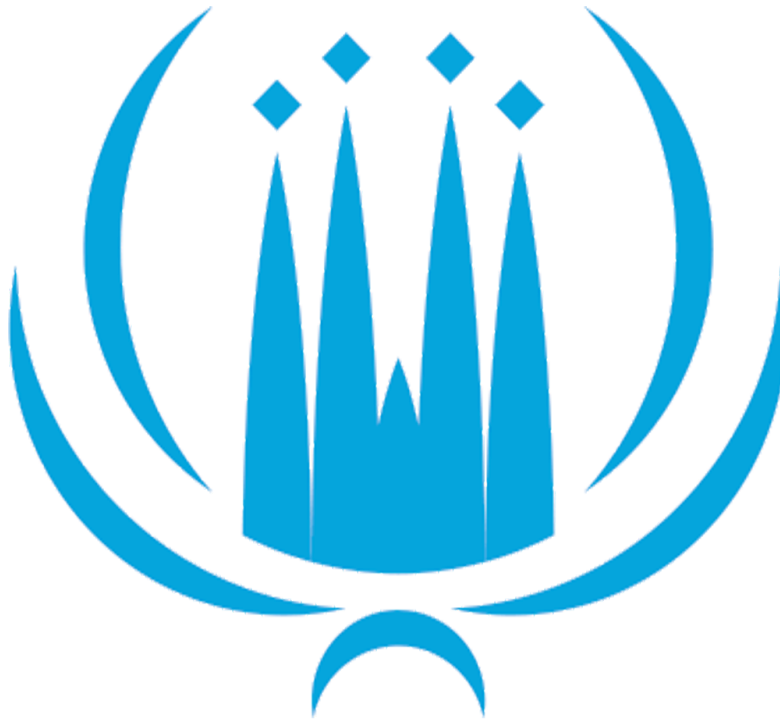




THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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From Crisis to Cooperation:
Navigating Instability in a Globalized World

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Topic: Strengthening accountability for sexual violence against civilians in armed conflicts

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Introduction

Sexual violence refers to sexual acts that are committed against a person without their consent. It can cause serious physical, psychological, social and economic harm to survivors. Although sexual violence can occur in both peaceful and conflict settings, armed conflict can increase the risk and allow it to be used for wider political or military purposes. What makes conflict-related sexual violence different is its direct or indirect connection to an armed conflict, such as through armed groups, displacement, detention or the targeting of particular communities. Conflict-related sexual violence is not simply violence that happens during war. It is often used to terrorize communities, punish opponents, force displacement, control territory or destroy social ties. It can be committed by State forces, armed groups, terrorist organizations, militias, detention authorities and many other actors. Male victims across age groups are also targeted, even though female victims remain as the majority of verified victims. The harm goes long after the attack through problems like trauma, stigma, unwanted pregnancy, displacement, loss of income and exclusion from family or community life.

Therefore, the central problem is not a lack of rules. International criminal law, human rights law, humanitarian law and many Security Council resolutions already try to condemn these acts and create routes that lean more towards investigation, prosecution, sanctions and reparations. The most challenging aspect is trying to turn those commitments into consistent action. Insecurity blocks investigators, survivors fear rejection, institutions lack trained staff, States refuse to cooperate and powerful actors can avoid or escape scrutiny because accountability is applied selectively.

The issue is now becoming more urgent. The United Nations documented more than 4,600 cases in 2024, a 25% increase over 2023, while women and girls represented 92 per cent of the verified cases. The Secretary-General then reported that verified cases increased sharply again in 2025 and became more

brutal. These numbers still remain as a minimum of the actual number of cases because insecurity, restricted humanitarian access and limited services prevent many survivors from reporting at all.

A serious response must involve justice while connecting it to medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance and economic recovery. Otherwise, a legal process can be created but it will only exist on paper while still being unreachable to the people it is supposed to help and serve.

Definition of Key Terms

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)

Sexual violence that happens during or is connected to an armed conflict, including sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and forced marriage.

Listing mechanism

A UN process that works by naming armed forces or groups linked with sexual violence and also calls on them to try to take clear steps to stop it.

Impunity

When perpetrators of crime don't actually face real consequences for their own crimes.

Reparations

Support that is given to survivors to address harm they experience.

Survivor-centered approach

An approach that focuses on putting the safety, dignity, needs and decisions of survivors first.

Background Information

Historical Background Information

For many years, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in war was seen as an unavoidable consequence of conflict or as an offence against family "honour" because survivors were wrongly blamed for bringing some sort of shame upon their families as if it was something to be extremely ashamed of. This way of framing it minimized the actual severity of the crime and separated it from being seen as a

military strategy. The wars in Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda helped force a change to see a legal shift by showing that sexual violence could be organised, widespread and used to achieve political or military objectives.

Then, International tribunals developed important earlier judgements. The tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda recognized rape as a crime against humanity. In 1998, the Akayesu judgment found that rape and sexual violence could lead to genocide and in 2001 the Yugoslavia tribunal expanded the understanding of enslavement to include sexual slavery. The 1998 Rome Statute later recognized several forms of sexual violence and gender persecution within the International Criminal Court (ICC) framework.

The Security Council progressively started treating CRSV as a peace and security issue rather than an inevitable side effect of war. Resolution 1325 set women, peace and security as a priority and placed them on the Council's agenda. Then, Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960, 2106 and 2467 developed a system that involved annual reporting, specialized leadership, listing of perpetrators, monitoring, commitments by parties and survivor-centred responses. Today, the normative framework is really extensive, but its implementation remains inconsistent, needing this issue to be more addressed than ever.

Current Situation in the World

The latest evidence shows a pattern that is worsening. The 2026 Secretary-General's report describes sexual violence used as a strategy of war, torture, terrorism and political repression. Many civilians faced rape, gang rape, abduction, forced marriage, trafficking and sexual slavery. In several conflicts, these crimes were connected to territorial control, displacement, detention, natural resources and the punishment of perceived opponents.

The protection system is also under pressure. In more than the twenty settings covered by the 2026 report, women's protection advisers were present only in nine. The requests for technical assistance from the UN Team of Experts exceeded its capacity and budget. Necessary cuts closed safe spaces and reduced health, psychosocial and legal services, making it harder to both support survivors and preserve evidence for future cases.

Children require particular attention. More than 95 per cent of children detained in armed-conflict settings are boys and sexual violence against boys is now more often reported in detention than in many other contexts. It may be used as torture, punishment, interrogation or a way to try and assert authority. Although, stigma and the assumption that boys are perpetrators rather than victims leave many cases invisible or ignored. The risk is also increased by secret detention, the mixing of children and adults, lack of lawyers and weak judicial oversight. From the political view, Council members agree with the principle of protecting civilians but still remain really divided over enforcement. The Security Council Report

points more towards geopolitical selectivity, declining protection-of-civilians language in Council decisions and disagreement over sovereignty and international action. This weakens confidence that the same standards will be applied to allies and opponents.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Sexual violence in the DRC is linked to armed groups, displacement and territorial control. In 2025, specialized police units submitted 57 cases for prosecution, although conflict still continued being an obstacle for investigation. Ongoing fighting makes it especially difficult for authorities to investigate cases and reach survivors.

International Criminal Court

The ICC can prosecute sexual violence as a war crime, crime against humanity or act of genocide. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on countries' cooperation with investigators and arrests.

Colombia

Colombia stands out for its Special Jurisdiction for Peace to investigate CRSV committed during its internal conflict.

Guinea

In Guinea, prosecutions and reparations followed the 2009 massacre and mass rape, with 185 victims receiving compensation. It is an example of national accountability.

Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The UN report mentions both Hamas and Israeli armed and security forces. There are many allegations involving hostages, civilians and Palestinian detainees that require independent investigations and equal application of international law.

Ukraine

The UN report also mentions Russian armed and security forces. Many Ukrainian investigators and prosecutors have received international support to try to document cases and use survivor-centered methods.

Sudan

Both State forces and armed groups have been accused of sexual violence in Sudan. Attacks on healthcare facilities have also limited survivors' access to treatment and justice.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1992-1995	Bosnian War: During the war in the former Yugoslavia, rape and sexual violence were systematically used against civilians. These crimes helped bring more international attention to sexual violence as a weapon of war.
2003-Present	Conflict in Darfur and Sudan: Women and girls have faced sexual violence during attacks on communities, displacement and the current situation in Sudan. Attacks on healthcare facilities have also limited access to essential services.
2014-2015	Major ICC cases collapse: Charges against Uhuru Kenyatta were withdrawn after the Kenyan Government failed to cooperate. Simone Gbagbo was not transferred to the ICC and later received amnesty, denying survivors an international trial.
2019	Security Council Resolution 2467: The Resolution strengthened the survivor-centered approach to justice, protection and support.

However, implementations remained inconsistent across conflicts.

2022-Present

War in Ukraine: The UN has documented conflict-related sexual violence connected to the war and lists Russian armed security forces in its 2026 report. International support has helped Ukrainian authorities investigate these crimes.

2024

Documented cases rise sharply: The UN documented more than 4,600 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, representing a 25% increase from 2023. Women and girls made up 92% of verified victims.

2025-2026

Violence increases while services decline: Verified cases rose sharply again in 2025 as conflicts intensified. At the same time, funding cuts reduced healthcare, safe spaces, legal assistance and UN monitoring capacity.

Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

Rome Statue of the International Criminal Criminal Court (1998)

Recognizes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and comparable sexual violence as crimes within the ICC's jurisdiction when these legal elements are met.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

Requires protection from sexual abuse, makes the best interests of the child a primary consideration and limits detention as a last resort for the shortest appropriate time.

Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

Created the broader Women, Peace and Security agenda, including participation, protection, prevention and recovery.

Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008)

Recognized sexual violence as a threat to peace and security and rejected the idea that it is an inevitable by-product of war.

Security Council Resolution 1888 (2009)

Strengthened institutional leadership and the rule-of-law response, including the architecture supporting the Special Representative and Team of Experts.

Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010)

Established the listing approach and strengthened monitoring, analysis, reporting, and commitments by parties to conflict.

Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013)

Focused on implementation, accountability, and the need for consistent investigation and prosecution.

Security Council Resolution 2467 (2019)

Reinforced survivor-centred and trauma-informed responses and forms the reporting basis for the Secretary-General's latest annual report.

Security Council Resolution 2730 (2024)

Addresses protection of humanitarian and UN personnel, relevant because attacks on front-line responders restrict access to survivors and weaken documentation.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The UN has developed monitoring and listing systems to identify parties suspected of conflict-related sexual violence. One example of this is the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA), which collects and verifies a lot of the information that is used in the Secretary-General's annual report on CRSV. This report includes a list of parties that are suspected of committing any kind of these crimes, creating international pressure for them. However, the ongoing limited access to these conflict zones and lack of funding make collecting evidence really difficult.

International courts have established that sexual violence can be prosecuted as a war crime, crime against humanity or act of genocide. This can be seen through the Bosco Ntaganda case at the ICC. In 2019, Ntaganda was convicted of 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including rape, sexual slavery and other crimes, and was sentenced to 30 years in prison. This demonstrates that international courts can hold people responsible, although the ICC cases are still limited by very weak investigations and many governments refusing to cooperate.

National courts and survivor-support programmes have also produced some progress. Colombia and Guinea strengthened investigations and reparations, while international programmes provided healthcare, legal aid and psychological support. For example, Guinea prosecuted crimes that had any connection to the 2009 stadium massacre and mass rape, and around 185 victims of sexual violence then received a compensation. However, efforts remain inconsistent and underfunded.

Possible Solutions

A workable strategy should connect evidence, consequences, and repair. Delegates should avoid proposing another broad declaration without an implementation route. The following measures build on mechanisms already described in the supplied sources and focus on closing the gap between law and practice.

First, there should be clearer consequences for groups and individuals connected to CRSV. The UN Security Council should use verified cases to impose consequences such as travel bans and asset freezes on individuals or groups that repeatedly commit sexual violence. Countries should also try to stop military or financial support to security forces that refuse investigations or protect suspected perpetrators. These measures can create more pressure to cooperate and prevent other further violations.

Prevention should also be a really major part of the response. The UN and national governments should strengthen early-warning systems that are able to identify certain areas where civilians are in danger or at high-risk of sexual violence before crimes even occur. There are many warning signs such as increased displacement, rising insecurity or reports of abuse that could incentivise faster measures for protection.

Countries must also improve their own justice systems. Their laws should cover all forms of CRSV and allow senior leaders to be held responsible when they order crimes or fail to prevent them. Special teams of police officers, prosecutors, doctors and survivor-support workers could investigate cases together. If a country cannot or will not carry out a fair investigation, international courts may need to become involved.

Supporting survivors should be a central part of justice. Medical treatment, psychological care, legal care and financial support should be free and accessible. Survivors should receive this support independently of criminal proceedings, which means they should not be asked to report the crime or testify in court just only to receive help. Reparations could also have compensations and rehabilitation without requiring survivors to wait for a criminal declaration

Finally, responses must remember that children, men and boys can also be victims. Professionals should be trained to support them without forcing them to speak about their experiences. Children should only be detained when absolutely necessary and should never be held with adults. Those connected to armed groups should be treated mainly as victims and given long-term support to return safely to their communities

The most realistic outcome for the committee would be a resolution that combines these measures with clear responsibilities, timelines, reporting requirements, and funding. Accountability becomes credible when survivors can safely report, investigators can preserve evidence, authorities face consequences for obstruction, and justice includes material repair. Without those links, the international community will continue to document the same violations each year while impunity remains largely unchanged.

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