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General Assembly Third Committee Background Guide 2026

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2026 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the General Assembly Third Committee (GA3). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Clara Praschl and Assistant Director Deepak Dinesh (Conference A), and Director Luke Glasspool and Assistant Director Malaika Singh (Conference B). Clara holds a double Bachelor's in History and Political Science from the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich and a Master in International and Development Studies from the Geneva Graduate Institute. Deepak is a senior at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, studying Information Systems and Data Science, and is passionate about marketing and data. Luke is currently studying an MSc in Global Development and has read an MA in Legal and Political Theory, as well as a BA in History, Politics and International Relations. Malaika just wrapped up her graduate certificate program at Humber Polytechnic for international commerce and currently works at a staffing agency as a marketing coordinator. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Vikram Sakia (Conference A) and Nicole Fett (Conference B).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Protecting the Freedom of Religion or Belief
2. Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls in the Aftermath of Conflict

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 PM ET on 1 March 2026 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Clara Praschl, Director
Deepak Dinesh, Assistant Director
Conference A

Luke Glasspool, Director
Malaika Singh, Assistant Director
Conference B



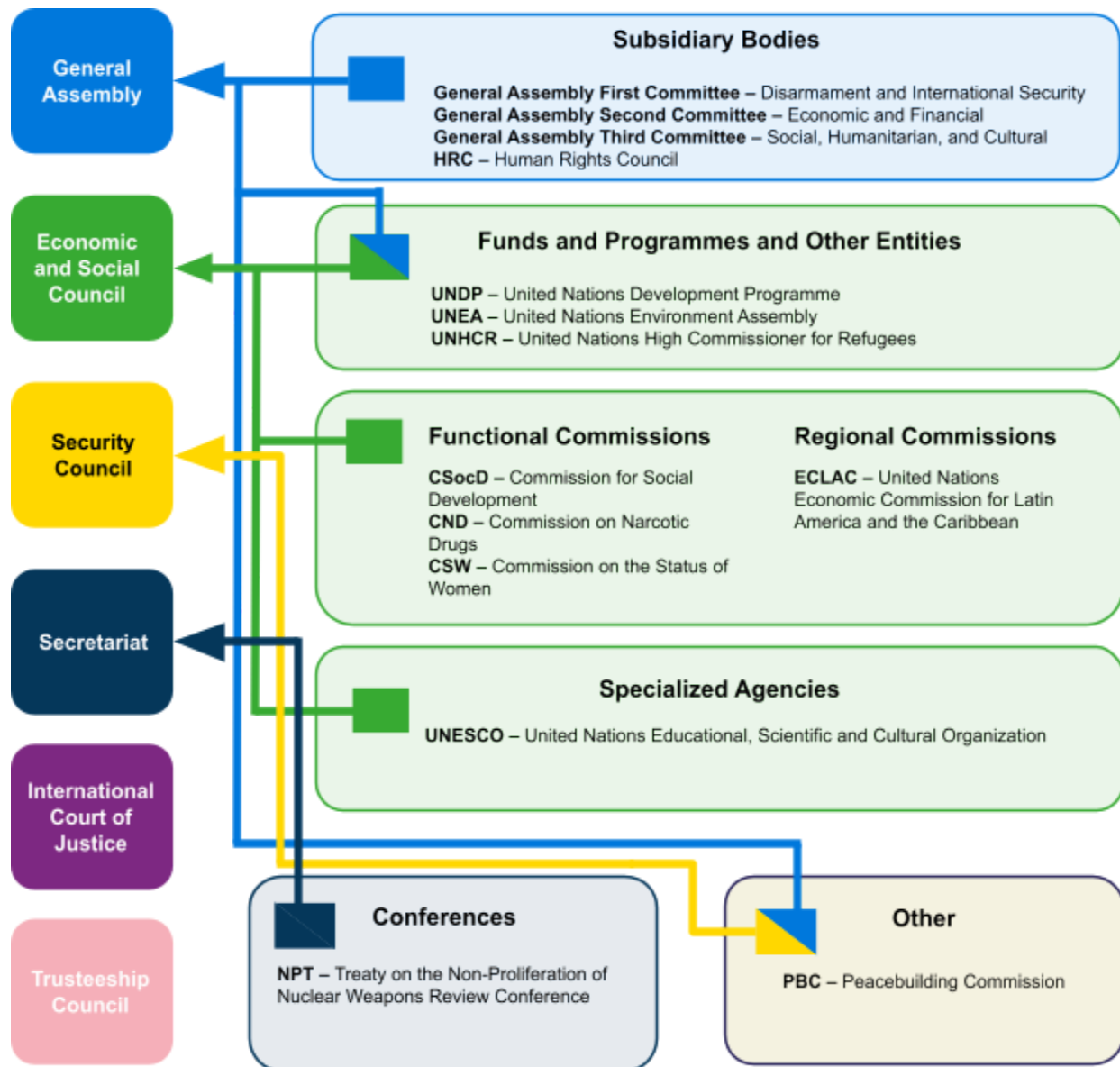
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United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN•NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The General Assembly is the main deliberative and policy-making body in the United Nations system.¹ With its universal membership, the General Assembly makes policy recommendations to actors at all levels, including governments, regional organizations, and other United Nations bodies.² Its work is spread across six Main Committees, each of which discusses topics within a thematic area, adopting resolutions that are then considered by the broader General Assembly Plenary.³

The General Assembly Third Committee is mandated to discuss all matters related to social, humanitarian, and cultural affairs, including human rights issues.⁴ This involves a wide variety of agenda items, including: advancement of women; protection of children; treatment of refugees through the elimination of racism and discrimination; promotion of fundamental freedoms and the right to self-determination; indigenous issues; and a range of social matters such as issues related to youth, family, ageing, persons with disabilities, crime prevention, criminal justice, and international drug control.⁵

Mandate, Function, and Powers

The first article of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945) established that one of the purposes of the United Nations is the achievement of international cooperation in the promotion of human rights.⁶ Its fourth chapter established the composition and capabilities of the General Assembly, and with it the mandate of the Third Committee.⁷ The Third Committee's work is also heavily influenced by the *International Bill of Human Rights* (1966), an overarching framework consisting of three fundamental human rights documents, namely the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.⁸

The General Assembly acts as a forum for dialogue and cooperation, providing general policy recommendations rather than carrying out operative tasks.⁹ Its policy recommendations are non-binding and their implementation is conducted by Member States, the United Nations Secretariat, and other United Nations bodies, each of which independently align their work with General Assembly resolutions.¹⁰ The General Assembly's resolutions are formal documents expressing the agreement and will of the

¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Main Bodies*. N.d.

² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. pp. 1, 52.

³ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *UN General Assembly Documentation*. 2024.

⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Social, Humanitarian & Cultural Issues (Third Committee)*. N.d.

⁵ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 73.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Fact Sheet No. 2 (Rev.1), The International Bill of Human Rights*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

⁹ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 36.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 52.



international community, and the Third Committee adopts the majority of its resolutions by consensus, meaning no vote is taken and no Member States have objections to the content.¹¹ In line with the *Charter of the United Nations*, the mandate of the General Assembly can be summarized as:

- The General Assembly **will generally**: make recommendations to Member States, the Security Council, other United Nations bodies and organs, United Nations specialized agencies, and other international actors; initiate studies and advance efforts to promote international cooperation; consider or request reports from other United Nations bodies and specialized agencies; establish United Nations observance days, create expert groups or commissions, formulate mechanisms for treaty negotiation, or refer an issue to the International Court of Justice.¹²
- The General Assembly **will not generally**: dictate the specific actions required for the implementation of policies it recommends, allowing Member States and other bodies to determine and implement operational details; create new bodies except in those rare instances where ubiquitous international demand requires the consolidation of existing bodies or where a concept and mandate have been fully developed, typically through years of negotiations; make recommendations on situations under consideration by the United Nations Security Council.¹³

The Third Committee tends to focus on high-level policy recommendations, calling for meetings or conferences on specific issues, and the initiation of studies, often relying on bodies with specific expertise.¹⁴ Additionally, the Third Committee examines the reports of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, which are independent human rights experts mandated to report and advise from a thematic or country-specific perspective.¹⁵

Governance, Funding, and Structure

The General Assembly comprises all 193 United Nations Member States, with observer status being granted to intergovernmental organizations and states without full membership.¹⁶ Each Member State receives a single, equal vote; observers may not vote on substantive items and most decisions require a simple majority.¹⁷

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 37, 52.

¹² Ibid. p. 36.

¹³ United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. *Are UN resolutions binding?* 2024; United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. N.d.; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Welcome to the Human Rights Council*. 2024; United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945.

¹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Functions and Powers of the General Assembly*. N.d.

¹⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council*. 2024.

¹⁶ International Service for Human Rights. *Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly: A Practical Guide for NGOs*. 2017. p. 7.

¹⁷ Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017. p. 13.



The Third Committee adopts approximately two-thirds of its resolutions by consensus and without a recorded vote.¹⁸ Its resolutions are passed on to the General Assembly Plenary for consideration in an annual report.¹⁹ The Third Committee's procedures are managed by a Secretariat and an elected Bureau.²⁰ The Bureau assists with opening and closing each meeting, managing the discussions, pronouncing decisions, assisting with drafts and documents, and ensuring compliance with the rules of procedure.²¹ The United Nations Secretariat also assists General Assembly committees by delivering substantive and logistical support.²² The Third Committee specifically considers reports from and engages in deliberations with the Human Rights Council and most human rights treaty bodies.²³ No subsidiary bodies report to the Third Committee.²⁴ All General Assembly meetings and events are funded through the United Nations regular budget.²⁵

¹⁸ Ibid.; International Service for Human Rights. *Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly: A Practical Guide for NGOs*. 2017. p. 30.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 37-38, 62, 68.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

²¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly (A/520/Rev.19)*. 2021. pp. 30-31.

²² Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. *The GA Handbook: A Practical Guide to the United Nations General Assembly*. 2017.

²³ Ibid. pp. 73-74.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2025-26*. 2025. p. 412.



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United Nations, Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. N.d. Retrieved 7 November 2025 from: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/07/un-women-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women/>



1. Protecting the Freedom of Religion or Belief

Introduction

Violations of freedom of religion or belief remain a persistent challenge in both religious and secular societies.²⁶ While there is no specific data quantifying the number of people worldwide who suffer from religious persecution, reports indicate that the number of Member States where people have been persecuted for their beliefs has risen to 158 in 2022.²⁷ The lack of freedom of religion or belief is also one of the main drivers behind migration, with 280 million people worldwide leaving their homes due to religious persecution in 2020.²⁸ Persecution of religion or belief can manifest in various forms, including the removal of legal rights protecting against harassment and discrimination, segregation, forced displacement, and detention.²⁹ In some contexts, changing one's religion is prohibited, with sanctions including the death penalty in some Member States.³⁰ Similarly, persecution of those without a religion may include harassment, blasphemy charges, or being forced to convert to the dominant religion.³¹ Beyond legal and social persecution, violence based on religion or belief takes many forms, including the destruction of religious sites, physical assaults for wearing religious clothing, and extrajudicial killings.³²

Thus far, the United Nations has not yet adopted a universal definition of religion or belief.³³ However, General Comment No. 22 (1993) of Article 18 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) (1966) highlights the distinction between the inner dimension of holding a belief and the outer dimension of practicing such a belief, and defines instances where it should be restricted in the interest of public safety.³⁴ Furthermore, the European Union (EU) *Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief* (2013) specify what the protection and promotion of freedom of religion or belief entails.³⁵ A key aspect is the Member States' primary responsibility to provide adequate safeguards, such as legal protection and ensuring the toleration of different religions and beliefs.³⁶ Nevertheless, there has not been much progress in distinguishing religion from belief, which could lead to mistakenly using these concepts interchangeably.³⁷ A key distinction lies in the fact that belief is a component of religion, but not all beliefs belong to a religion, as they can be held in areas such as politics, morality, or any other

²⁶ The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. *What is Freedom of Religion or Belief?*. 2018.

²⁷ Pew Research Centre. *Government Restrictions on Religion Stayed at Peak Levels Globally in 2022*. 2024.

²⁸ Pew Research Centre. *The Religious Composition of the World's Migrants*. 2024.

²⁹ Alton. Geopolitical Intelligence Services. *The Global Crisis of Religious Persecution*. 2023.

³⁰ Ghana. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Making Freedom of Religion or Belief a Lived Reality: Threats and Opportunities*. 2023.

³¹ European Union Agency for Asylum. *Individuals Considered to have Committed Blasphemy and/or Apostasy, including Converts and Atheists*. 2025.

³² Alton. Geopolitical Intelligence Services. *The Global Crisis of Religious Persecution*. 2023; Pew Research Centre. *Government Restrictions on Religion Stayed at Peak Levels Globally in 2022*. 2024.

³³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

³⁴ United Nations, Human Rights Committee. *General comment adopted by the Human Rights Committee under article 40, paragraph 4, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4)*. 1993.

³⁵ Council of the European Union. *EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2013.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.



point of subjectivity.³⁸ General Comment No. 22, for instance, describes the moral objection to undertaking military service during a time of conflict as a non-religious belief.³⁹

Member States achieving the least progress towards the protection of freedom of religion or belief are those that are currently experiencing conflict or are not religiously diverse.⁴⁰ Many of the 59 Member States identified as having high levels of government restrictions on religion also appear among the 45 states that currently experience conflict.⁴¹ When a lack of religious diversity exists within a Member State, there is an increased chance that individuals who identify as atheists, follow a different religion, or even belong to a different branch within the same religion face persecution.⁴² During times of conflict, Member States can restrict religious freedoms by detaining or displacing individuals on the grounds of their religion or belief.⁴³ In these instances, a Member State might be too preoccupied with dealing with the conflict or may not have control over the entire territory of the country to be able to ensure the protection of religion and belief.⁴⁴

International and Regional Framework

The freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental and undeniable human right.⁴⁵ It is enshrined in Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), which establishes the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.⁴⁶ Additionally, Article 18 of both ICCPR and General Comment No. 22 emphasizes that this right encompasses the freedom to practice or embrace any religion or theistic, non-theistic, or atheistic belief that one chooses, as well as the freedom to publicly or privately, individually or in groups, express one's religion or belief or not to practice any religion at all.⁴⁷ The only limitations to freely manifest one's religion or beliefs would be those mandated by laws and legislation, and those necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, as well as others' fundamental rights and freedoms.⁴⁸ The *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* (1981) underscores these rights, stating that they shall not be suspended even in times of emergency, crises, or catastrophe.⁴⁹ This framework asserts that discrimination based on religion and religious intolerance are recognized as violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁵⁰ It further outlines the expectations from Member States to enact legislation,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. *What is Freedom of Religion or Belief?*. 2018.

⁴¹ Pew Research Centre. *Government Restrictions on Religion Stayed at Peak Levels Globally in 2022*. 2024.

⁴² Wienclaw. EBSCO. *Religion and Society: Religious Persecution*. 2023.

⁴³ Pew Research Centre. *A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World*. 2019.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. p. 55; United Nations, Human Rights Committee. United Nations, Human Rights Committee. *General comment adopted by the Human Rights Committee under article 40, paragraph 4, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4)*. 1993.

⁴⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966. p. 55.

⁴⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/36/55)*. 1981.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



where necessary, to prohibit any such discrimination.⁵¹ The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, addresses the interplay between the freedom of religion or belief and gender equality, and explicitly prohibits invoking culture or religion to justify discrimination.⁵²

The United Nations recognizes the role that religion may play in inciting violence, hostility, and discrimination.⁵³ The adoption of Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 16/18 on “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief,” denounces any support to religious hatred that incites violence, animosity, or discrimination.⁵⁴ The resolution takes active measures to criminalize violence brought by religious discrimination and calls for attention to harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional, and international levels through educational campaigns and awareness-raising.⁵⁵ As part of its follow-up process, known as the “Istanbul Process”, Member States share experiences and good practices on the implementation of the action plan.⁵⁶ Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 66/167 on “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief” recognizes the valuable contributions that people of all religions and beliefs can make towards understanding the values shared by humankind, promoting a culture of tolerance and respect for freedom of religion or belief extensively.⁵⁷ The Rabat Plan of Action on the Prohibition of Advocacy of National, Racial or Religious Hatred that Constitutes Incitement to Discrimination, Hostility or Violence (Rabat Plan of Action) (2012) as the outcome document of expert workshops organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also acts as a framework that provides policy guidance and outlines the balance of freedom of expression with the rights to freedom of religion and belief.⁵⁸

The *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948) defines genocide as acts committed with the intention to destroy an ethnical, racial, or religious group.⁵⁹ The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect has published policy frameworks that aim to mitigate threats to the freedom of religion or belief.⁶⁰ The 2017 Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes carves out three areas of

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

⁵³ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief (A/HRC/RES/16/18)*. 2011.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Article 19 et al. *Istanbul Process 16/18*. N.d.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief (A/RES/66/167)*. 2011.

⁵⁸ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the expert workshops on the prohibition of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred (A/HRC/22/17/Add.4)*. 2012.

⁵⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (A/RES/260 (III))*. 1948. p. 174.

⁶⁰ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. 2017.



priority to prevent incitement: prevention, strengthening, and building.⁶¹ It recommends improving the prevention of incitement of violence, strengthening education, dialogue and collaboration, and building peaceful societies and networks of religious leaders.⁶² The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, launched by the Secretary-General in 2019, is another plan that is committed to stepping up coordinated action to tackle hate speech that may act as a precursor to atrocious crimes, including genocide.⁶³ It proposes 13 commitments for Member States, guided by the principle of promoting more speech and information-sharing rather than silence or suppression, while upholding the freedom of opinion and expression.⁶⁴

Many regional organizations recognize and support the protection of the freedom of religion or belief within their respective regions.⁶⁵ The freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and its protection are underlined by Article 10 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (2000), Article 22 of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) *Human Rights Declaration* (2012), and Article 8 of the *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (2004).⁶⁶ Each of them guarantees every individual the safety to practice their right to freedom of religion or belief and opposes any restrictions of that.⁶⁷ The *EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief* dissects freedom of religion and belief into two components: the choice to have or not have a religion or belief to subscribe to and the freedom to manifest that religion or belief.⁶⁸ These guidelines further address the possible violence or discrimination that may threaten this freedom and identify priority areas of action for protecting the freedom of religion or belief.⁶⁹ These include the promotion of respect for diversity and tolerance amongst civil society and the support and protection of human rights defenders.⁷⁰ In 2024, the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief and the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights issued the *Jakarta Declaration to promote and protect Freedom of Religion or Belief* (2024), calling upon governments to fulfill their international human rights obligations, repealing repressive and discriminatory laws that threaten freedom of religion or belief, and taking decisive action against the perpetrators of religious-based hate crimes in Southeast Asia.⁷¹

⁶¹ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. 2017.

⁶² Ibid. p. 12.

⁶³ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech*. 2020.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Human Rights Without Frontiers. *EU: European Parliament re-establishes Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2024.

⁶⁶ African Union. *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*. 1981; Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration*. 2012; European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. 2012.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Council of the European Union. *EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2013.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Cole et. al. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights. *Defending Freedom of Religion: A Collective Responsibility*. 2024.



Role of the International System

The United Nations General Assembly promotes the protection of freedom of religion or belief and calls upon Member States to address discriminatory laws.⁷² Building on the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, the General Assembly continues to urge Member States to step up their efforts to protect and promote freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief, promoting that any existing legislation is not implemented in a discriminatory manner.⁷³ Recently, the General Assembly adopted resolution 79/316 on “Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech,” recognizing the threats that religious intolerance can cause to peace and security globally.⁷⁴ The General Assembly also takes steps to dedicate certain days of the year to recognize and condemn violence and harassment against minorities, such as the 22nd of August to commemorate the victims of acts of violence based on religion or belief, and the 18th of June as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech.⁷⁵

HRC actively promotes the protection of the freedom of religion or belief.⁷⁶ Expressing serious concern over the persisting incidents of intolerance and discrimination related to religion across the world, the Commission on Human Rights, which was succeeded by HRC, adopted resolution 1986/20 on the “Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,” wherein it appointed a special rapporteur to investigate such incidents, provide recommendations and promote collaborative dialogue between religious communities and Member States.⁷⁷ Since then, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief has spoken on multiple issues surrounding the freedom of religion and its practice and partakes in dialogues on behalf of and with Member States, necessitating collaborative efforts by the international community to protect freedom of religion or belief.⁷⁸

Many regional bodies and civil society organizations (CSOs) undertake initiatives and collaborate across sectors to tackle threats to religious freedom or belief in their respective regions.⁷⁹ The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights has hosted consultations on the implementation of Article 22 of the *ASEAN Human Rights Declaration*.⁸⁰ The first consultations in 2019 highlighted its

⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/73/296)*. 2019.

⁷³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Freedom of religion or belief. (A/RES/78/212)*. 2023.

⁷⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech (A/RES/79/316)*. 2025.

⁷⁵ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief (A/RES/73/296)*. 2019; United Nations, General Assembly. *Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech (A/RES/75/309)*. 2021.

⁷⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2025.

⁷⁷ United Nations Commission on Human Rights. *Implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (E/CN.4/RES/1986/20)*. 1986.

⁷⁸ UK Mission to the WTO, UN and other international organisations (Geneva). *UN Human Right Council 55: Statement on Freedom of Religion and Belief*. 2024.

⁷⁹ African Union. *Faith on the Frontlines: Harnessing Religious Leadership for Sustainable Peace in Africa*. 2025; Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *The 2019 AICHR Consultation on the Implementation of Article 22 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration on Freedom of Religion and Belief*. 2019; Human Rights Without Frontiers. *EU: European Parliament re-establishes Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2024.

⁸⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *The 2019 AICHR Consultation on the Implementation of Article 22 of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration on Freedom of Religion and Belief*. 2019.



concern about the threat of violent extremism, as well as promoted co-existence between groups with different belief systems.⁸¹ Comparably, the European Parliament re-established the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief in 2024, which aims to safeguard the rights of individuals facing persecution for their faith or beliefs by raising awareness and appointing a new EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU.⁸² EU also supports projects on knowledge sharing, such as the Global Exchange on Religion in Society, creating a transnational network from civil society that aims at enhancing faith inclusion in public life.⁸³ The African Union continues to offer collaborative opportunities to address religious conflict, such as the recent event titled “Faith on the Frontlines: Harnessing Religious Leadership for Sustainable Peace in Africa,” co-hosted with Faith for our Planet, sharing best practices for promoting alliances across faiths, as well as training on how to mediate religious conflict.⁸⁴

Preventing and Responding to Violence Based on Religion or Belief

Religion-based hostility is on the rise along with anti-religious sentiments, which lead to the incitement of religion-based violence and the destruction of religious property.⁸⁵ There has been a rise in religious xenophobia and violence, further ignited by social media platform users perpetuating violent ideologies and amplifying the voices of hostile personalities with anti-religious sentiments.⁸⁶ In 2022, religious groups from 192 Member States experienced harassment by governments or non-state actors, including verbal remarks, physical violence, and property damage.⁸⁷ OHCHR specifies that acts of violence are not only committed against people, but can also be committed against property.⁸⁸ This is proven by the number of places of religious worship being destroyed, with 102 Member States reporting such cases in 2020.⁸⁹ Destroying these buildings leaves local communities even more vulnerable, as they serve as a place for refuge and belonging, especially during times of conflict.⁹⁰

Multiple United Nations institutions have suggested different approaches that can prevent religion-based violence.⁹¹ In the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect identifies religious leaders as the key to reducing religion-based violence.⁹² The Plan acknowledges that religious authorities hold significant influence, which can be wielded positively or

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Human Rights Without Frontiers. *EU: European Parliament re-establishes Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2024.

⁸³ European Union. *Global Exchange on Religion in Society (GERIS)*. 2023.

⁸⁴ African Union. *Faith on the Frontlines: Harnessing Religious Leadership for Sustainable Peace in Africa*. 2025.

⁸⁵ Ghana. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Making Freedom of Religion or Belief a Lived Reality: Threats and Opportunities*. 2023.

⁸⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Türk calls for measures to address religious hatred*. 2024; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN rights chief urges comprehensive action against religious hatred and discrimination*. 2024.

⁸⁷ Pew Research Centre. *Government Restrictions on Religion Stayed at Peak Levels Globally in 2022*. 2024. p. 26.

⁸⁸ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Experts Warn Islamophobia Rising to ‘Alarming Levels’*. 2024.

⁸⁹ Majumdar. Pew Research Center. *In 2020, properties in 102 countries and territories were targeted in incidents tied to religion*. 2023.

⁹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Experts Warn Islamophobia Rising to ‘Alarming Levels’*. 2024.

⁹¹ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. 2017.

⁹² Ibid.



negatively, and outlines clear, actionable steps to prevent violence and cruelty, especially in areas experiencing rising conflict and religious tensions.⁹³ It aligns closely with the Rabat Plan of Action.⁹⁴ The Fez Process, a series of consultations involving religious leaders, government officials, and civil society on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, led to the 2015 *Fez Declaration*, which calls for reporting hate speech and condemning the destruction of religious heritage and property.⁹⁵ Moreover, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief identifies Member States and their governments as one of the most important factors in mitigating religious violence in their own right, ensuring that their own laws are in line with international standards, and repealing laws that penalize the informal and formal rejection of religious practice.⁹⁶ Combining both approaches, the HRC 2023 report on the *Landscape of Freedom of Religion or Belief* calls for Member States to work together as well as with non-state actors to prevent religious violence.⁹⁷ Also, it reaffirms that Member States must ensure no individual is discriminated against based on religion or belief.⁹⁸

The United Nations System continues to work closely with Member States and CSOs to respond to violence based on religion or belief.⁹⁹ As a response to the rise in antisemitism for the past years, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations published the United Nations Action Plan to Enhance Monitoring and Response to Antisemitism (2025), intending to provide a more coordinated and effective global response to antisemitism.¹⁰⁰ It actively encourages the implementation of legal frameworks and digital platform accountability to counter hatred and discrimination, and supports education on the Holocaust to recognize antisemitic presumptions.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it promotes coordinated emergency responses and humanitarian help to populations impacted by religious violence and property destruction, and provides rebuilding assistance in impacted areas.¹⁰² These measures aim to uphold human rights and prevent the recurrence of violence based on religion or belief.¹⁰³

Freedom of Religion or Belief of Vulnerable Communities

Vulnerable groups may face higher risks of exclusion and bias, discrimination, and violence when exercising their freedom of religion or belief.¹⁰⁴ Regions facing armed conflict abate the ability of women, children, religious minorities, refugees, and other marginalized communities to practice their beliefs safely.¹⁰⁵ Discriminatory laws and practices disproportionately target minorities and vulnerable groups,

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *The Rabat Plan of Action*. 2012.

⁹⁵ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. 2017.

⁹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief*. 2025.

⁹⁷ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Landscape of freedom of Religion or Belief (A/HRC/52/38)*. 2023.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 5.

⁹⁹ United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. *United Nations Action Plan to Enhance Monitoring and Response to Antisemitism*. 2025.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *UN Experts Warn Islamophobia Rising to 'Alarming Levels'*. 2024; United Nations, General Assembly. *Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech (A/RES/79/316)*. 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Ghana. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Making Freedom of Religion or Belief a Lived Reality: Threats and Opportunities*. 2023.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.



leading to social exclusion and, in some cases, threats to their safety.¹⁰⁶ Children are sometimes forced into religious activities or refused religious education because it conflicts with their family's values, demonstrating how frequently children's rights to freedom of religion or belief are disregarded.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the lack of legal recognition and social hostility for refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants may pose additional barriers for them to safely participate in their faith.¹⁰⁸ The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) requires Member States to provide refugees similar treatment as their citizens regarding the freedom to practice religion, but the lack of a proper documentation mechanism impedes these rights from being fully upheld in practice.¹⁰⁹

Women and young girls in particular are marginalized both for their gender and for their religious identity, limiting their participation in education, employment, and community life.¹¹⁰ Religious minority women and children across the globe face ongoing dangers such as abductions, forced religious conversion, sexual assault, and forced marriage carried out without consequences or reprimand.¹¹¹ CEDAW acknowledges and calls for the abolishment of violations against fundamental human rights of women, recognizing the intersectional prejudice that may manifest in multiple ways.¹¹² The idea that freedom of religion or belief and gender equality directly contradict each other can cause serious protection gaps, failing to address the individual needs and wants of women.¹¹³ While the freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental human right, its exercise can sometimes conflict with other rights and societal norms.¹¹⁴ The Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief thus emphasizes the importance of an encompassing viewpoint that all basic human rights are universal, interconnected, and mutually dependent.¹¹⁵

For religious minorities, the threat of hate, violence, and legal restrictions can make the public practice of their faith dangerous or even impossible.¹¹⁶ On a large scale, communities from Member States that have a majority ethnic, cultural, or racial identity are established as the “normal,” while the uniqueness and rights of religious or belief minorities are considered the “other,” contrasted, and measured against.¹¹⁷ This may lead to civic exclusion and the legitimization of discriminatory language, actions, and behaviors.¹¹⁸ The General Assembly resolution 47/135 on the “Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities” addresses the plight of religious minorities across Member States and has multiple calls to action for Member States to promote respect, mutual

¹⁰⁶ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. *2025 Annual Report*. 2025.

¹⁰⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Combating intolerance against persons based on religion or belief*. 2025.

¹⁰⁸ Ghana. United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Making Freedom of Religion or Belief a Lived Reality: Threats and Opportunities*. 2023.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951.

¹¹⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Combating intolerance against persons based on religion or belief*. 2025.

¹¹¹ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. *2023 Annual Report*. 2023. p. 34.

¹¹² United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979. p. 195.

¹¹³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Freedom of religion or belief and gender equality*. 2025.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Hatred on the basis of religion or belief- Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Nazila Ghanea (A/HRC/55/47)*. 2024.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*



understanding, and to implement minority rights.¹¹⁹ However, consistent applications and enforcement remain limited.¹²⁰

Conclusion

As attitudes towards freedom of religion and belief become increasingly divisive and intolerant, protections for them are becoming more relevant.¹²¹ Vulnerable communities such as women, children, and religious minorities continue to suffer disproportionately from attacks on freedom of religion or belief.¹²² The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* has provided some safeguards to those who have been displaced because of their religion or belief, and CEDAW has highlighted the need to protect the fundamental human rights of women.¹²³ However, vulnerable communities are increasingly being deported and displaced in over 50 Member States.¹²⁴ Religious-based violence has also been on the rise, despite the efforts by the international community in targeting the dissemination of hate speech in addition to the destruction of religious property.¹²⁵ Both Member States and non-state actors are required to work together in order to counter the global rise of religious or belief-based violence.¹²⁶ The General Assembly, as well as the wider United Nations system, will continue to shape the international framework for the protection of the freedom of religion and belief.¹²⁷

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What has prevented the United Nations from adopting a universal definition of religion and belief, and how can it be overcome? How can Member States and the wider international community add more layers of protection to those most at risk of being persecuted for their beliefs or religion? What actions can the United Nations General Assembly undertake to further the protection of religion and belief? What policies need to be adopted to protect vulnerable communities' freedom of religion and belief?

¹¹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (A/RES/47/135)*. 1992.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ World Economic Forum. *Religious violence is on the rise. What can faith-based communities do about it?*. 2019.

¹²² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Combating intolerance against persons based on religion or belief*. 2025.

¹²³ United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. 1951; United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

¹²⁴ Pew Research Centre. *Government Restrictions on Religion Stayed at Peak Levels Globally in 2022*. 2024. p. 30.

¹²⁵ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect. *Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes*. 2017.

¹²⁶ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Landscape of freedom of Religion or Belief (A/HRC/52/38)*. 2023.

¹²⁷ The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief. *What is Freedom of Religion or Belief?*. 2018.



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2. Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls in the Aftermath of Conflict

Introduction

Conflict affects individuals in gender-specific ways, reflecting deeply rooted social and cultural dynamics.¹²⁸ Conflict often deepens and amplifies existing gender inequalities and gender roles, shifting and exacerbating social power dynamics.¹²⁹ For instance, displacement, enlistment, and/or casualties can transform household dynamics, often increasing the number of female-headed households.¹³⁰ Likewise risks and harms that may be experienced during conflict are gendered.¹³¹ For example, male civilians suspected to be combatants simply because of their gender may be specifically targeted and boys may be more likely recruited as child soldiers.¹³² Women and girls face additional challenges and discrimination in accessing health services and food during conflict due to pre-existing patterns of gender inequality.¹³³ Gender-based violence (GBV), disproportionately affecting women and girls, tends to increase during conflict.¹³⁴ These gendered impacts vary depending on the specific context and conflict.¹³⁵ Gender is not the only factor that determines individual experience of conflict, but rather it intersects with other factors such as age, class, disability, race, religion, and sexual orientation.¹³⁶

In post-conflict settings, women and girls face several challenges with their rights being limited, ignored, or violated.¹³⁷ In post-conflict settings, women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty due to an increased burden of care work and lacking economic opportunities, particularly affecting female-headed households.¹³⁸ Closely linked to the higher risk of poverty and burden of care work, girls'

¹²⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*. 2022. p. 7; Plan International. *Still We Dream: Girls and Young People Living Through Conflict*. 2024. pp. 20-21; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 68-69.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women Working for Recovery: The Impact of Female Employment on Family and Community Welfare after Conflict*. 2012. pp. 1, 9.

¹³¹ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*. 2022. pp. 11-12; Plan International. *Still We Dream: Girls and Young People Living through Conflict*. 2024. p. 28.

¹³² International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*. 2022. p. 12; United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. *The Gender Dimensions of Grave Violations Against Children in Armed Conflict*. 2022. p. 14.

¹³³ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*. 2022. p. 11; Plan International. *Still We Dream: Girls and Young People Living through Conflict*. 2024. p. 44; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 68-69.

¹³⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Facts and Figures - Women, Peace and Security*. 2025.

¹³⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*. 2022. pp. 7, 12.

¹³⁶ Ibid. pp. 7-8.

¹³⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 64-97, 164-189.

¹³⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *1 in every 10 Women in the World Lives in Extreme Poverty*. 2024; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the



right to education is disproportionately at risk.¹³⁹ Girls in conflict-affected settings are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls in more stable settings.¹⁴⁰ In some contexts, shifted gender roles during conflict may be reversed to more traditional gender roles after conflict.¹⁴¹

Post-conflict processes have traditionally neglected the rights of women and girls, and despite increasing awareness, challenges in their implementation and funding remain.¹⁴² In post-conflict settings, peacebuilding, recovery, and reconstruction efforts aim to contribute to sustainable peace and development.¹⁴³ Peacebuilding refers to efforts aimed at reducing a country's risk of relapsing into conflict.¹⁴⁴ Economic recovery and reconstruction refer to efforts to support economic and social development and reconstruction of infrastructure in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁴⁵ However, women and girls are often excluded from these processes that influence the distribution of power and approaches to social development and justice.¹⁴⁶ Transitional justice processes have long ignored the gendered dimensions of conflict.¹⁴⁷ Recent cuts in official development assistance (ODA) may reverse progress in promoting the rights of women and girls in post-conflict situations.¹⁴⁸

In the aftermath of conflict, gender-responsive and transformative approaches to peacebuilding, recovery, and reconstruction can contribute towards sustainable peace and development.¹⁴⁹ These approaches seek to integrate a gender equality perspective in post-conflict settings, addressing the gendered

Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 16; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women Working for Recovery: The Impact of Female Employment on Family and Community Welfare after Conflict*. 2012. p. 1.

¹³⁹ Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. *Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict*. 2021. p. 12.

¹⁴⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *Girls' Education: Gender Equality in Education Benefits Every Child*. 2025.

¹⁴¹ Governance and Social Development Resource Centre. *Gender and Conflict: Topic Guide*. 2015. p.1; International Alert. *Re-assessing Gender Norms After Conflict. Gender in Peacebuilding in Nepal*. 2021. p. 18.

¹⁴² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 181.

¹⁴³ World Bank Group. *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank*. 1998. p. 4; United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Peace and Security*. 2025; United Nations Development Programme. *Post-Conflict Economic Recovery*. 2008. p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Peace and Security*. 2025.

¹⁴⁵ African Union. *Revised African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy*. 2024. p. 4; Ukraine Recovery Conference. *Home*. 2025; World Bank Group. *Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank*. 1998. p. 4; United Nations Development Programme. *Post-Conflict Economic Recovery*. 2008. p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 169.

¹⁴⁷ International Center for Transitional Justice. *ICTJ, Gender, and Transitional Justice*. 2010; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *At A Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide*. 2025. p. 3.

¹⁴⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp.164-189.



dimensions of conflict, while transformative approaches aim to challenge and change harmful gender norms.¹⁵⁰ Besides the fact that gender equality constitutes a human right, it is at the core of advancing sustainable development and peace, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁵¹ According to existing research, inclusive peace processes tend to be more durable.¹⁵² Research suggests that more gender-equal societies tend to be more peaceful and women's economic empowerment positively impacts post-conflict economic recovery.¹⁵³ Specific aspects of gender-responsive and -transformative peacebuilding, recovery, and reconstruction include inclusive access and delivery to services, inclusive economic recovery and economic empowerment, and gender-responsive budgeting and financing.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, addressing GBV and strengthening women's participation are at the core of advancing the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁵⁵

International and Regional Framework

The principles of human rights law establish the foundation of the protection and promotion of women's rights in post-conflict situations, including the right to non-discrimination, dignity, and an adequate standard of living.¹⁵⁶ Article 2 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) (UDHR) states that every person is entitled to rights and freedom without any distinctions, including sex.¹⁵⁷ UDHR also identifies the right not to be subjected to torture or inhuman treatment of any kind.¹⁵⁸ Article 25 recognizes the right to an adequate standard of living, ensuring health and well-being, and special care for motherhood and childhood.¹⁵⁹ Building on these principles, the General Assembly adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1979) (CEDAW), which condemned discrimination against women and girls in all forms and created a legal obligation for States parties to achieve gender equality.¹⁶⁰ As a legally binding framework, CEDAW requires States parties to

¹⁵⁰ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. *Gender Equality and the Employment of All Women and Girls*. 2025. p.3; Merkel. United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. *Thematic Review on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding*. 2021. p. 15.

¹⁵¹ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *What is Goal 5 - Gender Equality*. 2023; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 31.

¹⁵² Council on Foreign Relations. *Women's Participation in Peace Processes*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 169.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 2; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 164-190.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.; United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*. 2000.

¹⁵⁶ United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-conflict Situations (CEDAW/C/GC/30)*. 2013. p. 2; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 15, 29-30; United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979. p. 194.



submit national reports every four years, highlighting their efforts to comply with CEDAW obligations.¹⁶¹ In 2013, the CEDAW Committee adopted *General Recommendation No. 30*, which reaffirms that CEDAW applies in post-conflict settings and outlines measures that States parties should adopt to implement their obligation under CEDAW in post-conflict situations.¹⁶²

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), initiated by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on “Women and peace and security,” highlighted the importance of integrating a gender perspective into post-conflict processes.¹⁶³ The agenda is based on the four pillars of prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.¹⁶⁴ In post-conflict settings, it aims to ensure the prevention of violence, equal participation in post-conflict processes, protection from GBV, promotion of rights, and response to gender-specific needs in the context of relief and recovery.¹⁶⁵ The WPS agenda expands the practical reach of CEDAW by reinforcing women’s human rights’ obligations in post-conflict settings, including those involving non-state actors or Member States not States parties to CEDAW.¹⁶⁶

The General Assembly has adopted several framework documents and resolutions aimed at the advancement of gender equality, which also include the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁶⁷ The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA) (1995) serves as a comprehensive agenda to remove the barriers to gender equality.¹⁶⁸ It identified “Women and Armed Conflict” as one of its areas of concern, and highlighted women’s participation in decision-making as a necessary action for post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁶⁹ In 2025, in the context of the anniversary of the BPfA, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted *The Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, emphasizing the continued relevance and calls for renewed action on the BPfA and CEDAW.¹⁷⁰ The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) reinforces international commitments to gender equality and peace through SDGs 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).¹⁷¹ Both these goals provide targets that, in the post-conflict

¹⁶¹ United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human Rights Instruments: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* New York, 18 December 1979. 2025.

¹⁶² United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *General Recommendation No. 30 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post-conflict situations* (CEDAW/C/GC/30). 2013. p. 2.

¹⁶³ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security* (S/RES/1325 (2000)). 2000. p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women Peace and Security Agenda*. 2019. p. 5; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How to End Wars: Invest in the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda*. 2025.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations Development Programme. *Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women Peace and Security Agenda*. 2019. p. 5.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Development Fund for Women. *CEDAW and Security Council Resolution 1325: A Quick Guide*. 2006. pp. 8-9.

¹⁶⁷ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1). 1995; United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015; United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future* (A/RES/79/1). 2024.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1). 1995. p. 2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 56-67.

¹⁷⁰ United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Political Declaration on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women* (E/CN.6/2025/L.1). 2025. p. 2.

¹⁷¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1). 2015. pp. 4, 14.



context, would contribute to a more inclusive peace.¹⁷² In 2024, General Assembly resolution 79/1 on “The Pact for the Future” was adopted to reaffirm Member States’ commitments to existing goals and tackle emerging challenges.¹⁷³ Action 8 of the pact recognizes the importance of gender equality, while Action 19 calls for an accelerated implementation of the WPS agenda.¹⁷⁴

Regional instruments promote post-conflict recovery for women and girls by addressing region-specific challenges.¹⁷⁵ The *Maputo Protocol*, adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2003, serves as a landmark regional treaty affirming women’s rights, including increased participation in post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁷⁶ The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women* (1994), adopted by the Organization of American States, addresses all forms of violence against women, including in post-conflict contexts.¹⁷⁷ To integrate the WPS agenda into regional peace and security initiatives, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted the *Regional Plan of Action on WPS* (2022), reflecting the importance of women’s inclusion in peacebuilding processes.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, the European Union (EU) adopted the *EU Action Plan on WPS* (2019) as a tool to support the implementation of the WPS agenda.¹⁷⁹

Role of the International System

Since the introduction of the WPS agenda, the Security Council has issued a series of ten resolutions and scheduled open debates on WPS.¹⁸⁰ Security Council resolution 1889 (2009) on “Women and peace and security” strengthened the focus on the immediate post-conflict period by urging Member States to mainstream gender into all post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery processes.¹⁸¹ It calls for women’s participation in decision-making and for the implementation of strategies to better address the needs of women in post-conflict settings, such as through education, income-generating activities, and access to basic services, in particular sexual and reproductive health services.¹⁸² The most recent WPS resolution, Security Council resolution 2493 (2019) on “Women and peace and security” calls on Member States to promote civil, political, and economic rights of women and for increased funding for programs advancing gender equality in post-conflict situations.¹⁸³

¹⁷² United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015. pp. 18, 25-26; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 32.

¹⁷³ United Nations, General Assembly. *The Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1)*. 2024. p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 8, 15-16.

¹⁷⁵ African Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. 2003; Organization of American States. *The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*. 1994.

¹⁷⁶ African Union. *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. 2003. p. 12.

¹⁷⁷ Organization of American States. *The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*. 1994.

¹⁷⁸ Association of Southeast Asian Nations. *Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security*. 2022. p. i.

¹⁷⁹ European External Action Service. *EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)*. 2019. p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Security Council*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Women, Peace, and Security in the Work of the UN Security Council*. 2025.

¹⁸¹ United Nations, Security Council. *Women, Peace, and Security (S/RES/1889 (2009))*. 2009.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 3.



Complementing the work of the Security Council, several United Nations entities establish policies that guide Member States in addressing the topic in line with their specific mandate.¹⁸⁴ The General Assembly discusses the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict through various lenses in the context of specific agenda items intersecting with the topic.¹⁸⁵ For example, General Assembly resolution 76/140 on “Improving the situation of women and girls in rural areas” urges Member States to ensure the inclusion of rural women and girls in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.¹⁸⁶ The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is mandated to assist post-conflict states through institution-building, recovery planning, and strategies for sustainable peace.¹⁸⁷ Over the last years, in line with its Gender Strategy (2016) and Action Plan (2020), the PBC has included a stronger gender-perspective into PBC meetings and outcome documents.¹⁸⁸ It has held expert- and high-level meetings on the WPS and provided written advice on the topic to the Security Council.¹⁸⁹ CSW serves as the main policy-making body focusing on promoting gender equality.¹⁹⁰ While the annually adopted agreed conclusions focus on different themes, they also often address the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁹¹ The agreed conclusions of the 66th session (2022) of CSW recognize the heightened risk of violence faced by women and girls in post-conflict settings as a result of the impact of climate change.¹⁹² The Human Rights Council (HRC), considering human rights issues and urgent situations year-round, adopted resolution 45/23 on “Promoting and protecting the human rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations” in 2022.¹⁹³ Through this resolution, HRC calls on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to address the rights of women and girls in post-conflict situations in country-specific and thematic work through collaboration with women’s rights organizations (WROs), peacebuilders, and human rights workers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *General Assembly*. 2025; United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) (A/HRC/RES/45/28)*. 2020; United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Peacebuilding Gender Commission’s Gender Strategy*. 2016.

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *General Assembly*. 2025.

¹⁸⁶ United Nations, General Assembly. *Improvement of the Situation of Women and Girls in Rural Areas (A/RES/76/140)*. 2022. p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *United Nations Peacebuilding Commission*. 2025.

¹⁸⁸ Security Council Report. *The Peacebuilding Commission at 20: Progress, Challenges and the Road Ahead*. 2025. p. 10; United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Peacebuilding Gender Commission’s Gender Strategy*. 2016; United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *PBC Gender Strategy Action Plan*. 2020; United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Assessment of the Implementation of the Peacebuilding Commission Gender Strategy - Action Plan. From 1 January to 31 December 2023*. 2024. pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Meetings and Activities of the Peacebuilding Commission*. 2025.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Commission on the Status of Women*. 2025.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² United Nations, Commission on the Status of Women. *Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes (E/CN.6/2022/L.7)*. 2022. p. 9.

¹⁹³ United Nations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Human Rights Council: Home*. 2025.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations, Human Rights Council. *Promoting and Protecting the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) (A/HRC/RES/45/28)*. 2020. p. 2.



The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) take an important advocacy role to promote the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁹⁵ UN Women supports post-conflict recovery by promoting women's economic empowerment initiatives, facilitating participation in peacebuilding, and assisting in building gender-responsive institutions.¹⁹⁶ In 2015, UN Women released a global study on the implementation of the WPS agenda, which provides best practices, highlights challenges, and offers recommendations for action on building inclusive societies in the aftermath of conflict.¹⁹⁷ UN Women is also responsible for the annual report of the Secretary-General on WPS.¹⁹⁸ The United Nations system works through OSRSG-SVC and UN Action, advocating to combat conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).¹⁹⁹

Multiple United Nations entities finance or implement programs that promote the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.²⁰⁰ The Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is a financing instrument for peacebuilding.²⁰¹ In 2022, almost half of its funding was invested in supporting gender equality in post-conflict situations.²⁰² For example, PBF has funded the Women Lead the Way Towards Peace and Security in Bosnia and Herzegovina initiative, which aims to increase the participation of women in decision-making and peacebuilding.²⁰³ As of 2025, the initiative's progress includes partnerships with media platforms, enhancing healthcare capacity for survivors of conflict, and local community interventions.²⁰⁴ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) plays a critical role in safeguarding the reproductive health and rights of women and girls in conflict-affected areas.²⁰⁵ In Nigeria, UNFPA supported women and girls rescued from Boko Haram by providing psychosocial support and

¹⁹⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How to End Wars: Invest in the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *What We Do*. 2025; United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *About the Office*. 2025; United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict*. 2025.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How to End Wars: Invest in the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *In Brief: Peace and Security*. 2016. p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. pp. 4, 164-190.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *In Brief: Peace and Security*. 2016. p. 3.

¹⁹⁹ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict*. 2025; United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *About the Office*. 2025.

²⁰⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF Gender Equality Action Plan, 2026–2029*. 2025. p. 5; United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Financing for Peacebuilding Branch*. N.d; United Nations Population Fund. *UNFPA's Role in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*. 2020.

²⁰¹ United Nations, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. *Financing for Peacebuilding Branch*. 2025.

²⁰² United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Women, Peace and Security*. N.d.

²⁰³ United Nations, Peacebuilding Fund et al. *Women Lead the Way Towards Peace and Security in Bosnia and Herzegovina (WPS)*. 2025.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ United Nations Population Fund. *UNFPA's Role in Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace*. 2020.



medical care.²⁰⁶ In South Sudan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has implemented a gender-responsive social protection programme aiming at improving the livelihoods and health of young children and mothers.²⁰⁷

Regional organizations complement the United Nations by developing legal frameworks, strategies, and programs that promote the rights and participation of women and girls in post-conflict settings.²⁰⁸ The AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (2024) includes several objectives on gender.²⁰⁹ The AU has also committed to developing a gender equality policy for mediation processes.²¹⁰ The EU has committed to implementing the WPS agenda and advancing the rights of women and girls.²¹¹ In Ukraine, the EU has funded the Ukrainian CRSV Integrated Support Mechanism, which works to support survivors and strengthen prevention.²¹² The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation Programme on Women in Peace Processes focuses on women's engagement in peace processes and documents experiences and examples of women contributing to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts across Southeast Asia, particularly within local and community contexts.²¹³

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play an important role in advancing the rights of women in the aftermath of conflict at the local and international level.²¹⁴ The NGO Working Group on WPS is a coalition of 18 international organizations that bridges grassroots women's rights activists with United Nations decision-making.²¹⁵ It provides Monthly Action Plans to the Security Council that contain recommendations to Member States and United Nations leadership on the integration of WPS agenda.²¹⁶ CSOs involved in the topic include the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Global Fund for Women, Plan International or the Global Survivors Fund.²¹⁷ Their work is complemented by various CSOs and WROs at the national and local level.²¹⁸

²⁰⁶ United Nations Population Fund, East and Southern Africa. *UNFPA Nigeria Supports Women and Girls Rescued from Boko Haram*. 2015.

²⁰⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. *From Labour Hunt to Entrepreneurship: UNICEF's Cash Plus Transforms Lives: UNICEF's Nutrition Programme not only Treats Malnutrition but also Empowers Mothers to Provide for their Families*. 2025.

²⁰⁸ African Union. *Revised African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy*. 2024; European Commission. *Gender Action Plan III*. 2020. pp. 1-2; European External Action Service. *Gender Action Plan III & its Key Areas of EU Engagement*. 2025.

²⁰⁹ African Union. *Revised African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy*. 2024. p. 35-39.

²¹⁰ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 12.

²¹¹ European Commission. *Gender Action Plan III*. 2020. pp. 1-2; European External Action Service. *Gender Action Plan III & its Key Areas of EU Engagement*. 2025.

²¹² European Commission. *We Work to Eliminate War-related Sexual Violence around the World*. 2023.

²¹³ ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation. *Women in Peace Processes*. 2025.

²¹⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Unravelling the Gap between Global Commitments and Funding for Women's Organizations in Conflict-Affected Contexts*. 2025. p. 5.

²¹⁵ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. *About*. 2025.

²¹⁶ NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. *Our Work*. 2025.

²¹⁷ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. *Our Work*. 2025; Plan International. *How We Work*. 2025; Global Fund for Women. *Our Vision and Mission*. 2025; Global Survivors Fund. *Why We Exist*. 2025.

²¹⁸ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 4.



Addressing and Redressing Gender-Based Violence in Post-Conflict Settings

GBV is a widespread issue in conflict and post-conflict settings, and access to essential services and accountability remains low.²¹⁹ Research suggests that intimate partner violence increases and child marriage is more prevalent in conflict-affected settings.²²⁰ Further, CRSV is a widespread phenomenon in conflict.²²¹ Post-conflict environments often see a rise in GBV driven by the breakdown of justice institutions, widespread availability of small arms, the collapse of social and familial structures, and the gradual acceptance of GBV as part of broader patterns of discrimination.²²² Survivors of GBV often face severe stigma, compounded by a lack of supportive response from society and state, resulting in repeated trauma.²²³ Accountability for GBV remains rare, as impunity continues to prevail in most post-conflict contexts.²²⁴ An additional vulnerable group is displaced or stateless women and girls, with over 60 million at heightened risk of GBV.²²⁵ Recent funding cuts have put women and girls at greater risk, disrupting both the treatment and prevention of GBV.²²⁶

At the international level, there has been an increasing focus on GBV in conflict settings since the establishment of the WPS agenda.²²⁷ GBV constitutes a serious human rights violation.²²⁸ In the context of conflict, the Geneva Conventions recognize sexual violence as a violation of humanitarian law.²²⁹ The *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* (1998) further classifies acts like rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and gender persecution as war crimes and, if committed systematically against the civilian population, as crimes against humanity.²³⁰ Security Council resolution 2467 (2019) on “Sexual violence in armed conflict” calls for an end to all forms of GBV in post-conflict settings and for the adoption of a survivor-centered approach guaranteeing access to medical care and justice.²³¹ It affirms survivors’ right to an effective remedy, highlighting the right to adequate reparation for the harms suffered.²³²

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 5.

²²⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Facts and Figures - Women, Peace and Security*. 2025.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Women’s human rights and Gender-related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Instability*. 2025.

²²³ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Current Trends and Emerging Concerns*. 2020.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *Millions of Women and Girls Forced to Flee Face High Risk of Gender-based Violence: UNHCR*. 2025.

²²⁶ United Nations, Department of Global Communications. *UN’s Lifesaving Programmes under Threat as Budget Crisis Hits Hard*. 2025.

²²⁷ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*. 2000. p.3; United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1889 (2009))*. 2009.

²²⁸ United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. *General Recommendation No. 35 on Gender-based Violence against Women (CEDAW/C/GC/35)*. 2017. p. 4.

²²⁹ *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War*. 1949. Art. 27.

²³⁰ United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*. 1998. Art. 7,8.

²³¹ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security: Sexual violence in Conflict (S/RES/2467 (2019))*. 2019. p. 3-4.

²³² Ibid. p. 7.



In recent years, the United Nations has strengthened its response to GBV in post-conflict settings through coordinated actions.²³³ UN Action developed its *Strategic Framework 2020-25*, focusing on support and protection of survivors, knowledge and capacity building, and improved data management.²³⁴ The OSRSG-SVC and its Team of Experts are mandated to strengthen post-conflict legal systems by supporting investigations, advancing legislative reform, and ensuring the protection of victims and witnesses of sexual violence.²³⁵ The OSRSG-SVC has supported Member States such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Côte d'Ivoire in implementing national action plans to address CRSV, strengthen survivor access to justice and reparations, and expand medical and psychosocial services.²³⁶ Through a partnership between the United Nations, EU, and the World Bank, the Spotlight Initiative has enabled around 3 million women to access GBV-services through partnerships with CSOs and WROs.²³⁷

Strengthening WROs, promoting access to justice and reparations processes, and establishing livelihood programs offer opportunities to advance the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.²³⁸ Despite receiving only 0.3% of ODA in conflict-affected settings between 2021 and 2022, WROs are often the first to respond in crisis and conflict settings, delivering essential services and offering legal and medical support, making them key actors in addressing GBV.²³⁹ Providing access to justice and reparation for survivors of GBV constitutes a central avenue to redress GBV and promote the rights of women and girls.²⁴⁰ For example, in Colombia, an administrative reparation programme and Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which has been investigating GBV against civilians, has been set up in the aftermath of conflict.²⁴¹ Economic security is closely linked to physical security and protection from GBV, highlighting the need for economic livelihood programs.²⁴² For example, a UNICEF cash-transfer program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has supported families in meeting basic needs and pursuing income-generating activities.²⁴³

²³³ United Nations, UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Strategic Framework (2020-25)*. 2020; United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Current Trends and Emerging Concerns*. 2020; Spotlight Initiative. *Unprecedented: A Pathway for Ending Violence against Women and Girls - Spotlight Initiative Impact Report 2017-2023*. 2024.

²³⁴ UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Strategic Framework (2020-25)*. 2020.

²³⁵ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *About the Office*. 2025.

²³⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Conflict-related Sexual Violence: Report of the Secretary General (S/2021/312)*. 2021. p. 23.

²³⁷ Spotlight Initiative. *Unprecedented: A Pathway for Ending Violence against Women and Girls - Spotlight Initiative Impact Report 2017-2023*. 2024. p. 3; Spotlight Initiative. *Where We Work*. 2025.

²³⁸ United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Women's human rights and Gender-related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Instability*. 2025; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 34-36.

²³⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Unravelling the Gap between Global Commitments and Funding for Women's Organizations in Conflict-Affected Contexts*. 2024. p. 5; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 4.

²⁴⁰ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security: Sexual Violence in Conflict (S/RES/2467 (2019))*. 2019. pp. 6-7.

²⁴¹ Moffett et al. *Reparations in Colombia: Where to? Mapping the Colombian Landscape of Victims in Internal Armed Conflict*. 2019. pp. 38-47; International Center for Transitional Justice. *More Than 35,000 Victims of Sexual Violence in Colombia's Conflict, Tribunal Says*. 2023.

²⁴² United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Current Trends and Emerging Concerns*. 2020.

²⁴³ United Nations Children's Fund. *UNICEF's Humanitarian Cash Transfers to Families in Eastern DR Congo Reach 14,000 Children*. 2025.



Strengthening Women's Political Participation and Leadership in Post-Conflict Governance

Despite the importance of women's participation and inclusion in post-conflict processes, they are underrepresented in post-conflict governance.²⁴⁴ Women account for only 5% of negotiators, 9% of mediators, and 19% of those signing peace and ceasefire agreements.²⁴⁵ In conflict-affected countries, only 21% of national parliamentarians are women.²⁴⁶ In 2023, only 26% of peace agreements included a gender provision, addressing gender inequality directly.²⁴⁷ The lack of numeric representation of women and girls is accompanied by a lack of substantive representation of priorities and interests of women and girls in post-conflict governance.²⁴⁸ Policy makers in post-conflict settings often neglect recommendations of women civil society actors.²⁴⁹ Failing to advance women's participation and inclusion and thus to protect the rights of women in post-conflict settings undermines recovery efforts and poses a threat to governance and community stability.²⁵⁰

In recent years, Member States as well as regional and international organizations have committed to intensifying their efforts to advance women's political participation in post-conflict governance.²⁵¹ Article 7 of CEDAW recognizes the right to equal participation of women in policymaking at all levels of government.²⁵² The WPS agenda calls on Member States to promote the inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace processes.²⁵³ Since its adoption, references to women or gender equality in peace agreements have significantly increased.²⁵⁴ Quota-based systems have proven effective in increasing women's participation in governance.²⁵⁵ In conflict-affected countries with legislated gender quotas the percentage of female parliamentarians lies at an average of 25%, compared to only 15% in countries without quotas.²⁵⁶ UN Women has supported WROs and women mediators in

²⁴⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Facts and figures: Women, Peace, and Security*. 2024.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 2.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 10.

²⁵⁰ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 2.

²⁵¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 44; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 9.

²⁵² United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

²⁵³ United Nations, Security Council. *Women and Peace and Security (S/RES/1325 (2000))*. 2000. p. 2.

²⁵⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 44.

²⁵⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding (S/2010/466)*. 2010. p. 14; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 22.

²⁵⁶ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 22.



post-conflict settings.²⁵⁷ In the Central African Republic, the United Nations peacekeeping mission helped raise women's participation in local peace committees to 35% by 2023 and facilitated the creation of 12 Circles of Peace, where 300 trained women now lead community efforts in peacebuilding and the reconciliation process.²⁵⁸

Current policies supporting women's participation in post-conflict processes remain inadequate, with limited funding, structural barriers, and a disconnect between commitments and implementation.²⁵⁹ Women and girls face economic hardship, increased burden of care, and harmful gender norms that limit their ability to participate in post-conflict processes.²⁶⁰ While women have long contributed to peace efforts at the community level, their roles have largely remained informal and unacknowledged.²⁶¹ WROs are often underfunded and lack the institutional support needed to engage in shaping post-conflict governance.²⁶² Despite strong gender language in planning documents in post-conflict contexts, the allocated budget tends to be minimal for the implementation.²⁶³ Especially in light of this background, gender-responsive and -transformative post-governance reforms could contribute to reducing these structural barriers.²⁶⁴

Conclusion

While there has been an increased attention to addressing the gendered dimensions of conflict and its consequences in the last two decades, several challenges remain to address the rights of women and girls in the aftermath of conflict.²⁶⁵ Challenges remain in sustainably implementing and funding existing

²⁵⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Conflict Prevention and Resolution*. 2025.

²⁵⁸ United Nations, Peacekeeping. *Women's Participation in Peace Processes is Not Only a Right, it's the Way to Lasting Peace*. 2024.

²⁵⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 1-2, 34-36.

²⁶⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. The Gender Snapshot*. 2025. pp. 2-3; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 3; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 2.

²⁶¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 40.

²⁶² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. p. 3; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 3-4.

²⁶³ United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. p. 5; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Research Paper: Financing Gender-Inclusive Peace: Gaps in Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*. 2021. p. 2.

²⁶⁴ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Gender and Post-Conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*. 2012. pp. 2-3; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 169; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 34-36.

²⁶⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 181.



efforts and policies, and in removing structural barriers and norms.²⁶⁶ While there has been an increased attention to increasing women's participation and addressing GBV in the aftermath of conflict at an international policy-making level over the past 25 years, implementation remains challenging, whereby structural barriers and harmful social norms persist.²⁶⁷ As the main policy-making organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly has a pivotal role to play in complementing and streamlining existing approaches to advancing girls' and women's rights in the aftermath of conflict.²⁶⁸

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: How can the rights of women and girls be effectively promoted in the aftermath of conflict? How can intersectional and transformative approaches be implemented? How can the General Assembly specifically address the topic and complement the work of other bodies? How can GBV be prevented and effectively addressed in post-conflict settings? How can the participation of women and girls in post-conflict situations be advanced, and how can structural problems and barriers to post-conflict participation be addressed? How can the socio-economic rights of women and girls be addressed in post-conflict settings? How can gender-responsive service-delivery and financing, and budgeting be ensured?

²⁶⁶ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 181; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 34-36.

²⁶⁷ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *How to End Wars: Invest in the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda*. 2025; United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. 2015. p. 181; United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2024/671)*. 2024. pp. 34-36.

²⁶⁸ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. *General Assembly*. 2025.



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