

Women, Peace and Security

June 2024

Afghanistan

For June, in which the Republic of Korea has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan.**

Since taking power nearly three years ago, the Taliban have systematically violated [women's human rights](#) in both [policy](#) and practice by codifying gender-based discrimination across nearly [every aspect](#) of [public](#) and [private](#) life, including the recent [announcement](#) that the Taliban intend to resume public stoning of women as punishment for adultery. [UN human rights experts](#) continue to stress that the ongoing escalating, systematic, and grave [human rights violations](#) directed at women, girls, LGBTIQ people, and [people of diverse gender identities](#) may [amount to gender persecution](#), a [crime against humanity](#). [International experts](#) have further [warned](#) that the situation could be characterized as [gender apartheid](#), and [called](#) for its [codification](#) as a crime against humanity. Women and girls from minority ethnic and religious groups, like the [Hazara](#), face additional violence and discrimination. The Taliban continue to target activists, [journalists](#), and [human rights defenders](#) (HRDs), including [women protestors](#), who have been [detained](#) without any charge or access to legal representation and have faced [abuses in custody](#), including [torture](#). [UN human rights experts](#) have expressed deep concern over women and girls being [arbitrarily arrested](#), detained, and subject to ill-treatment for wearing “bad hijab” and allegedly violating the Taliban’s dress code. [23.7 million people](#), almost 80% of whom are women and children, require humanitarian aid; [13.3 million](#) people need gender-based violence (GBV) services; and [one-third](#) of Afghans are projected to face emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 or above) in 2024, disproportionately affecting women and girls. To date, only 16.3% of the 2024 Humanitarian Response [Plan](#) request for \$3.06 billion USD has been funded, and challenges to the work of women-led organizations (WLOs), already severely restricted due to the Taliban’s directives, are further exacerbated due to bureaucratic impediments.

During forthcoming meetings, Council members should:

- Demand that the Taliban immediately reverse all policies and practices that restrict the full enjoyment of women’s human rights, in accordance with Afghanistan’s international obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as relevant Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 2681 (2023).
- Ensure that both women’s rights and the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of diverse Afghan women and LGBTIQ people, especially WHRDs and peacebuilders, are included in all discussions and outcomes by the Security Council, UN, or international community about Afghanistan’s future, including any future mechanisms for international engagement on Afghanistan, such as UN-convened meetings of Special Envoys and Special Representatives on Afghanistan in Doha, Qatar and the work of a UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan.
- Ensure that the Special Envoy on Afghanistan, due to be appointed, has a [strong track record](#) on human rights and women’s rights, and senior gender and human rights expertise on their team, and that they regularly and meaningfully engage with diverse Afghan women civil society and HRDs, and ensure that their views inform all aspects of the Envoy’s work.
- Call for the [immediate reversal](#) of the [ban](#) on Afghan women [working](#) for the United Nations and NGOs, which is in violation of the UN Charter and CEDAW, and call for all humanitarian actors and their donors to ensure safe, gender-responsive, principled, and non-discriminatory humanitarian delivery to all Afghans in need. This includes supporting the participation and leadership of women in humanitarian action, ensuring that women aid workers are not replaced by men, and covering costs or taking any additional measures to ensure their full and equal participation. Further, the UN system and international donors should allocate increased flexible and direct funding to local and national civil society and humanitarian organizations, including WLOs; ensure intersectional gender analysis informs the crisis response, and adequately fund protection and GBV programming.
- Call for all parties, including the Taliban and other armed groups, to respect international human rights and humanitarian law, immediately stop targeting HRDs, peacebuilders and [journalists](#), and release all those who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained.
- Call for [accountability](#) for all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and support measures to [investigate](#) and prosecute those responsible for such violations.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to worsen. More than [25 million](#) people, a quarter of the population, are in need of humanitarian assistance, and a record high of [7.2 million](#) people have been displaced. In eastern DRC — particularly in Ituri and North Kivu — violence and [insecurity](#) is [increasing](#), including through attacks on [camps](#) for internally displaced persons (IDPs), [medical facilities](#) and [aid workers](#), [preventing](#) humanitarian access where it is most needed. Recent [flooding](#) has further compounded the humanitarian crisis, and to date the 2024 [Humanitarian Response Plan](#) is only 21% funded, hampering the quality of the response. Women and children make up the majority of the displaced, and face multiple and overlapping protection risks. In addition to exacerbating displacement and [food insecurity](#), the escalating conflict has also led to [record rates](#) of [GBV](#). Limited humanitarian assistance and livelihood opportunities have pushed many women and girls to resort to [survival sex](#), and have also led to increased rates of child marriage, with UN sources estimating that [37%](#) of girls in DRC are forcibly married before age 18. Sexual violence remains [rampant](#), and healthcare services for [survivors](#), including [sexual and reproductive health care](#), GBV referral pathways, safe spaces, and community protection and monitoring mechanisms are severely lacking for [IDP communities](#). Though the government has partially [lifted](#) the “state of siege” that imposed martial law in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, authorities have continued to [infringe upon human rights](#) through the detention of journalists, proposed [reinstatement](#) of the death penalty, and threats and violence against [HRDs](#) and [political activists](#). Council members should urge the DRC authorities and all armed groups

to cease all threats, violence, and reprisals against [civilians](#), including IDPs, WHRDs, and peacebuilders. As the transition and disengagement plans for MONUSCO are implemented, it is [imperative](#) that protection of civilians, [sustained humanitarian access](#), increased humanitarian funding including to WLOs, and respect for international human rights and humanitarian law are prioritized. GBV prevention, protection, and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse must be adequately funded and mainstreamed in all programs and sectors. [Sustained consultation](#) with diverse women leaders, peacebuilders, and human rights defenders is critical for informing policymaking, as well as making progress towards achieving overall benchmarks.

Sudan

The conflict that began in Sudan on April 15, 2023, has devastated the country and led to widespread abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law. Belligerents have used [rape](#) and other forms of sexual violence as a [weapon of war](#) since the [beginning](#) of the conflict. UN and international experts warn that current abuses could amount to [war crimes](#) and [crimes against humanity](#); further, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has [repeatedly warned](#) of the [escalating risk of genocide](#) since the conflict began. Sudan is the world's worst humanitarian displacement crisis and the world's largest hunger crisis, with [24.8 million](#) people in need, including [18 million](#) people facing [famine](#), and more than [8.8 million](#) displaced, [over half](#) of whom are women and girls. Protection of civilians, the expansion of unhindered [access](#) for humanitarian assistance, and immediate measures from all conflict parties to stop the weaponization of food access must be the highest priority. Of acute concern is the escalation of conflict in and around [El Fasher](#), the capital of North Darfur that has become a refuge for hundreds of thousands of IDPs. Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has caused [increased civilian casualties](#), damaged medical facilities, and has [isolated the city](#) from much-needed humanitarian assistance. International experts have [determined](#) that earlier attacks in Darfur by the RSF and its allies constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing; and both [UN officials](#) and [international NGOs](#) have expressed [deep concern](#) at the risk of further violations against civilians should similar attacks occur in El Fasher.

Women are experiencing the impact of the current conflict [most acutely](#) and face a range of [risks](#), including widespread and escalating [conflict-related sexual violence](#), including kidnapping, rape, and sexual exploitation, and the targeting of women and girls due to their ethnicity. Women and girls are being [abducted, detained, forcibly married](#) and harassed. Women activists, peacebuilders, and [human rights defenders](#), including those documenting GBV carried out by armed actors, have been [targeted and intimidated](#). Further, Sudan's [maternal mortality rate](#), already one of the highest in the world, has risen as a result of the conflict. Nearly [230,000](#) pregnant women, new mothers, and children are at risk of dying due to hunger in the coming months. Scarcity of resources has associated [risks](#) for [GBV](#) and sexual exploitation and abuse for women, girls, and marginalized groups, particularly those who have been displaced, including adoption of harmful coping strategies such as reducing quality and quantity of food intake, selling or exchanging sex, or entering into early, child, and forced marriage. GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation needs are urgent, but with the [near collapse of health services](#) and continued [attacks on providers and medical facilities](#) in violation of international humanitarian law, survivors have limited access to [health care](#), including [sexual and reproductive care](#) and psychosocial support. The continued [telecommunications blackout](#) has also had severe negative consequences for emergency services and [hindered](#) civilians' ability to share and receive critical information. Emergency response rooms (ERRs) and local organizations, including WLOs, play a pivotal role in delivering assistance to those unreachable by international actors and must be included in humanitarian coordination mechanisms and decision-making fora.

The Security Council must demand an [immediate cessation of hostilities](#) in Sudan, continue to [condemn](#) the ongoing fighting, call on [external actors](#) to refrain from interfering in the conflict, and call on all parties to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. Council members should ensure all discussions are informed by gender-responsive conflict analysis and that the UN Country Team's capacity to monitor, document, and report on human rights violations, particularly against women and HRDs, is sustained and strengthened. Further, the Security Council should:

- Demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and call on all parties to respect international human rights and humanitarian law, including by immediately ceasing all acts of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Call for accountability of all parties for any acts of sexual violence, and strengthen the [existing sanctions regime](#) to include sexual and gender-based violence as a stand-alone designation criterion.
- Demand the full, equal, and meaningful participation of diverse women, human rights defenders, and civil society in all efforts to build peace.
- Call on all parties to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access in line with international law. Urgently fund the [Humanitarian Response Plan](#), the Sudan Famine Prevention Plan, the [Regional Refugee Response Plan for Sudan](#), and neighboring countries and host communities also enduring humanitarian crises. The pledges announced at the [Paris conference](#) must be urgently disbursed.
- Provide increased, flexible, and direct funding to local civil society and humanitarian organizations, including WLOs, who provide life-saving assistance across the country.
- Ensure that intersectional gender analysis; data disaggregated by gender, sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability; and GBV risk mitigation assessment inform the crisis response. Support and strengthen the capacity of local actors to identify and respond to the needs of survivors with case management, medical assistance, psychosocial support, and referral services.
- Prioritize the creation of a new, well-equipped, and stronger UN presence on the ground for assuring civilian protection and humanitarian operations across Sudan and documenting violations of international law.