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A senior official with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) today warned of the enormous humanitarian impact of the ongoing Syria crisis, particularly on civilians who have been displaced and face threats such as gender-based violence.

"This displacement is not only about loss of homes and economic security. It is also, for many, accompanied by gender-based crimes, deliberate victimization of women and children and a frightening array of assaults on human dignity," the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Erika Feller, told the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Reports are revealing that the conflict in Syria is increasingly marked by rape and sexual violence employed as a weapon of war to intimidate parties to the conflict destroying identity, dignity and the social fabrics of families and communities."

Ms. Feller said these crimes are many times perpetrated in public places such as checkpoints, adding to the humiliation and the stress that displaced people are going through.

According to UNHCR, more than 900,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries and 2 million have been internally displaced since the conflict began almost two years ago. In addition, over 4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Ms. Feller said children are also exposed to many risks when they are forced to leave their homes, including early marriage, torture while in detention, and other forms of exploitation in refugee camps and settlements. She also stressed that support for victims is often inadequate, and access to justice is very limited, increasing impunity for perpetrators.

She called on the Council to actively examine these violations and advocate for the protection of women and children among all parties. The Council should also ensure that peace discussions find space for women to be involved and give proper attention to victims and survivors.

Ms. Feller also warned that the refugee population is growing at an unprecedented amount, putting enormous pressure on neighbouring countries to cope with the influx of people.