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## Conflict-related sexual violence

### Report of the Secretary-General\*

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2023, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council requested me to report annually on the implementation of resolutions [1820 \(2008\)](#), [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2010\)](#) and [2106 \(2013\)](#), and to recommend strategic actions.

2. In 2023, the outbreak and escalation of conflict exposed civilians to heightened levels of conflict-related sexual violence, fuelled by arms proliferation and increased militarization. Weapon bearers from both State and non-State armed groups targeted civilians with rape, gang rape and abductions, amid record levels of internal and cross-border displacement. Sexual violence curtailed women's livelihoods and girls' access to education, while generating profits for armed and violent extremist groups, including through conflict-driven trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Women and girls were disproportionately affected by sexual violence, yet women's voices are still muted or missing from key decision-making forums on matters of peace and security. As underlined in my policy brief on A New Agenda for Peace (A/77/CRP.1/Add.8), transforming the gendered power dynamics around peace and security is essential to eradicating all forms of violence against women, including conflict-related sexual violence. States should ensure women's equal rights and strive for women's equal participation in all spheres, as outlined in my call to action for human rights, while ensuring that peace and security efforts address the gendered dynamics of conflict, through concerted efforts to eradicate this scourge.

3. The term "conflict-related sexual violence", as used in the present report, refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. This link may become evident through the profile of the perpetrator, who may often be affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, including those designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council; through the profile of the victim, who may frequently be an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority, or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; or through other existing circumstances, such as a climate of impunity; cross-border consequences, such as displacement or trafficking; and/or violations of the provisions of a ceasefire

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\* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.



agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of armed conflict.

4. While many communities are affected by the threat, occurrence or legacy of conflict-related sexual violence, the present report is focused on countries for which information verified by the United Nations exists. It should be read in conjunction with the 14 previous reports, which provide a cumulative basis for the listing of 58 parties (see annex). The majority of listed parties are non-State actors, several of which have been designated terrorist groups according to the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. National military and police forces that are listed are required to adopt specific, time-bound commitments and action plans to address conflict-related sexual violence and are prohibited from participating in United Nations peace operations. Effective implementation of commitments, including the cessation of such violence, is a key consideration for the delisting of parties. All parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups, are required to implement action plans to prevent and address sexual violence in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and relevant Security Council resolutions.

5. The deployment of women's protection advisers, who advise on the engagement with parties to conflict and lead the implementation of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in the field, has ensured the availability of more timely, accurate and reliable information. To date, in the mandate authorizations and renewals of 10 peace operations, the Security Council has explicitly called for the deployment of women's protection advisers. Three peacekeeping missions and four special political missions have established dedicated monitoring arrangements and taken effective action to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence, including by integrating early warning indicators of such violence into their protection frameworks. Deepening the base of credible information and evidence requires sustained political resolve and resources at the national and regional levels. In accordance with Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), women's protection advisers were deployed for the first time to a non-mission setting, specifically to Ukraine, to support the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and build the capacity of national structures, in line with the framework of cooperation signed between the United Nations and the Government. At the regional level, the first specialist on conflict-related sexual violence was deployed in 2023 to the United Nations Office to the African Union and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa to engage with the African Union institutions and monitor regional patterns and cross-border dimensions of conflict-related sexual violence. With the accelerated drawdown of peace operations in Mali and the Sudan, United Nations system entities have encountered significant challenges to sustaining the implementation of Security Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict, including the continued function of monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and engagement with parties. It is critical to ensure that transition planning incorporates priorities related to addressing conflict-related sexual violence and that adequate resources are allocated in this regard. In this context, timely deployment of women's protection advisers is a widely endorsed priority, yet the level of human and budgetary resources is far from commensurate with the scale of the challenge. These specialists are deployed in just 8 of the more than 20 countries covered in the present report.

6. In 2023, the inter-agency network, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, continued to unite efforts across its 25 member entities to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. The network serves as the

primary coordination forum through which my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict promotes efforts to deliver as one. The network also provides strategic, country-level support through the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund. Programming through this pooled fund advances the survivor-centred approach set out in Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#). In 2023, United Nations Action continued to fund an innovative project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, enabling hundreds of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence who are involved in the artisanal mining sector to gain access to medical, psychosocial, legal and socioeconomic reintegration support. Six network entities also began implementing a coordinated, multisectoral project in Ukraine to build the capacity of relevant stakeholders to prevent conflict-related sexual violence and empower survivors, in line with all five pillars of the implementation plan of the framework of cooperation between the United Nations and the Government. In Mali, a United Nations Action project directly supported over 6,500 beneficiaries through awareness-raising activities and the provision of multisectoral and socioeconomic reintegration assistance to survivors, children born of rape and their communities. As part of joint advocacy, the network called for immediate action to protect women and girls in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following a dramatic surge in sexual and gender-based violence in and around displacement sites. The network continued to promote knowledge-sharing by holding round-table discussions on links between arms proliferation and conflict-related sexual violence and the survivor-centred approach in the pursuit of transitional justice. The network rolled out the framework for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and a white paper scoping opportunities for private sector engagement in support of efforts to tackle this crime. In order to raise public awareness, the network organised a photographic exhibition at United Nations Headquarters from 20 June to 28 August 2023, attracting an estimated 50,000 visitors.

7. In 2023, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, in accordance with its mandate under Security Council resolution [1888 \(2009\)](#), continued to assist national authorities in over a dozen countries in strengthening rule of law institutions to enhance accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. In the Central African Republic, the Team of Experts and other United Nations partners organized, with the Government and civil society actors, a high-level round table on accountability, which identified priorities to strengthen the judicial response to crimes of sexual violence. The Team of Experts also conducted training, at the request of investigative judges of the Special Criminal Court, on techniques for interviewing victims of conflict-related sexual violence. In Colombia, the Team of Experts engaged with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to determine priorities for future support. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Team deployed a national expert to conduct a mapping of pending cases involving charges of international crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, in order to assess the needs for technical and material support for emblematic cases. In Guinea, the Team of Experts provided technical assistance focused on addressing sexual and gender-based violence, to judicial actors, including magistrates, involved in the prosecution of the former President, Moussa Dadis Camara, and 10 other men accused of responsibility for incidents of massacre and mass rape in Guinea on 28 September 2009. In Mali, the Team of Experts engaged with national authorities responsible for prosecuting terrorism and transnational crimes on four cases, involving 146 victims of conflict-related sexual violence from northern Mali, which have been pending before the courts since 2013 (see [S/2023/413](#)). In Libya, the Team of Experts, in collaboration with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), mapped the national criminal justice response to conflict-related sexual violence and identified support priorities. In Ukraine, in supporting the implementation of the framework of cooperation, the Team of Experts launched capacity-building sessions

to strengthen survivor-centred approaches to investigations and prosecutions for crimes of sexual violence, provided regular advice to the specialized conflict-related sexual violence unit in the Office of the Prosecutor General, and embedded in that unit an international criminal law expert to mentor prosecutors and assist with the preparation of conflict-related sexual violence cases. The Team also prepared and shared with national authorities a legal analysis of proposed amendments to the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, and provided legal advice, including on the draft law on interim reparations for survivors, which was before the Ukrainian Parliament at the time of writing. The Team of Experts supported national law enforcement agencies, including the Ukrainian National Police and the South Sudan National Police Service, in building capacities to prevent, investigate and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. In order to build the evidence base for action, the Team, in coordination with other United Nations entities, continued to disseminate lessons learned on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated in the context of terrorism and conducted research on the nexus with trafficking.

8. While acknowledging that conflict-related sexual violence committed by parties to conflict is distinct from incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse that may be committed by United Nations staff, related personnel and implementing partners in complex operating environments, I reiterate my commitment to improving the way in which the Organization prevents and addresses such conduct. In my report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse ([A/78/774](#)), I provide information on efforts to strengthen the system-wide response and ensure full implementation of the zero-tolerance policy.

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

9. The present report outlines incidents of conflict-related sexual violence that have been verified by the United Nations; while it conveys the severity and brutality of recorded cases, it does not purport to reflect the global scale and prevalence of this crime. Sexual violence continued to be used as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism amid deepening political and security crises. Civilians, particularly displaced, refugee and migrant women and girls, were targeted with rape, gang rape and abductions by State and non-State armed groups acting with impunity, thereby exacerbating situations of armed conflict. Against this backdrop, escalating cycles of violence hindered or cut short the implementation of peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, South Sudan and the Sudan. United Nations-designated terrorist groups, other non-State armed groups and transnational criminal networks used sexual violence as a tactic to incentivize recruitment and gain control over territory and lucrative natural resources. This complex array of actors has complicated the attribution of responsibility, undermining accountability for these crimes. In 2023, humanitarian access was severely constrained in almost all settings covered in the present report. Attacks on health centres in Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, the Sudan and Ukraine, and in the State of Palestine, limited access to life-saving services, including sexual and reproductive health care. Armed actors threatened victims in Libya and health workers in the Sudan, while harassment and reprisals against human rights defenders were reported in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The withdrawal of United Nations peace operations in the Sudan and Mali have affected the security conditions for organizations and networks providing support to survivors in delivering services. At the same time, threats made through the digital sphere, including misogynistic hate speech, gendered disinformation and incitement to violence further hindered women's participation in public life, amid a global pushback against generational gains made in the area of gender equality.

10. In 2023, weapon bearers perpetrated sexual violence crimes, as reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan and the Sudan, demonstrating that the illicit proliferation and widespread availability of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition directly facilitated incidents of sexual violence (see [S/2023/823](#)). By fuelling armed conflict, weapons proliferation contributed to the creation of an environment conducive to the perpetration of sexual violence with impunity. According to United Nations research, where data are available, approximately 70 to 90 per cent of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence involve small arms and light weapons. Moreover, sexual violence played a significant role in the political economy of war, with trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and increasingly, kidnapping, with the threat and use of sexual violence to extort higher ransom, enabling armed groups to generate revenue.

11. Displaced, refugee and migrant women and girls continued to face heightened levels of conflict-related sexual violence, notably in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan, all countries in which they were sexually assaulted by weapon bearers. Nevertheless, monitoring focused on country situations has not adequately captured the regional dynamics and ramifications of these sexual violence crimes, as women and girls likely faced multiple displacements and experienced the attendant risks of conflict-related sexual violence as displaced persons, returnees or refugees. In Ukraine, in the context of protracted displacement, the risk of being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation persisted for the women and children who make up the vast majority of the 5 million internally displaced persons and 6 million refugees in third countries. Migrant and refugee women and girls in conflict-affected settings, particularly those held in detention facilities, faced heightened risks of sexual violence, notably in Libya and Yemen. Food insecurity further fuels patterns of conflict-related sexual violence. For instance, in Afghanistan, high levels of displacement, extreme poverty and food insecurity exacerbated harmful coping mechanisms, including forced and child marriage, as the de facto authorities pursued policies that deprive women and girls of education and economic opportunities. Armed hostilities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo propelled displacement and resulted in a dramatic surge in the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence in and around displacement sites, where economic desperation drove displaced women and girls into forced prostitution as a means of survival. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia received confidential information regarding sexual exploitation in exchange for food, as well as continued sexualized enslavement and child labour in Tigray in proximity to compounds or barracks of armed forces, in particular the Eritrean Defence Forces (A/HRC/54/CRP.3). In Libya, displaced, migrant and refugee women and girls were reportedly detained and sexually abused in exchange for food. It is evident that food insecurity increases the risk of exposure to sexual violence and conversely that sexual violence often leads to socioeconomic marginalization, increasing the risks of poverty and food insecurity.

12. Sexual violence and exploitation in the context of abduction and trafficking, including by United Nations-designated terrorist groups, continued to be reported in several conflict-affected settings where the rule of law and State authority remained weak. Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, as a form of sexual violence continued in conflict settings where there is a presence of non-State armed groups and criminal gangs, (see [A/78/172](#)). In Colombia, women and girls were forcibly displaced by sexual violence, and in border areas, which are particularly affected by conflict-driven trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, which is used by armed actors and organized criminal groups to fund their operations. In Mali, armed conflict and persistent attacks by armed groups against civilians propelled mass displacement, exposing women and girls to heightened risks of abduction, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced marriage. In South Sudan,



abduction, sexual slavery and forced marriage are used as part of the collective punishment of rival communities. In the Sudan, reports indicate that women and girls abducted in Khartoum were taken to other parts of the country, notably the Darfur region. In the Central African Republic and Mozambique, women and girls have been abducted, held captive and subjected to sexual slavery by non-State armed groups, sometimes being held captive for several years. Upon release, these women and girls remain at risk of continued long-term health and psychological impacts.

13. The past year saw a discernible increase in gender-based hate speech, gendered disinformation and incitement to violence, in which rape, threats of rape and other forms of sexual violence were used to humiliate and destabilize targeted communities and political opponents. In the Sudan, there are indications that attacks were ethnically or racially motivated, particularly in West Darfur, where non-Arab women were subjected to sexual violence in some cases. In Myanmar, online harassment specifically targeted women associated with the resistance movement and included the release of sexually explicit images, sexualized discriminatory rhetoric aligned with ultranationalist narratives, and incitement to physical violence. In 2023, sexual violence continued to be used as a means of political violence to intimidate and punish opponents, their family members and women human rights defenders. Sexual violence was used as a tactic to silence women in public life, as in Libya and Yemen, thereby impeding their political participation.

14. Survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are not a homogenous group, hence the need for an intersectional analysis and tailored, survivor-centred approaches to address their needs. The present report documents cases against women, girls, men, boys and persons with diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identities, race and ethnicity, as well as persons living with disabilities, ranging in age from 3 to 70 years. Women and girls were attacked in their homes, on roads and/or while undertaking essential livelihood activities in Cameroon, Libya and Mozambique. Extreme physical violence accompanied conflict-related sexual violence, as evidenced by lethal injuries sustained during attacks or the insertion of objects into the bodies of victims. In 2023, reports of summary executions of victims after rape surfaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar, demonstrating the need to build up forensic capacity to strengthen investigations and accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. While women and girls continue to constitute the vast majority of victims, men, boys and persons of diverse gender identities are also affected. Most of the reported incidents against men and boys occurred in detention settings, and included rape, threats of rape and the electrocution or beating of genitals. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons were at acute risk of sexual violence in conflict-affected and displacement settings, including as a form of persecution.

15. Regarding women and girls who become pregnant as a result of rape, the publication of my special report ([S/2022/77](#)) resulted in greater attention to this issue. Patterns of conflict-related sexual violence resulting in pregnancy were often recorded in connection with abduction, recruitment, sexual slavery and forced marriage in situations of captivity. These survivors are often perceived as affiliated with an armed group, and thus are excluded from community networks and are falling into poverty.

16. Stigma experienced by victims of sexual violence continued to result in socioeconomic exclusion. In the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, sexual violence continues to unravel family ties and networks. Victim-blaming occurred in the aftermath of attacks, with survivors rejected by their husbands and family members. In Iraq and Mozambique, social stigma and harmful social norms hindered the reintegration of returning former abductees and their children. In Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic, women who were detained are often presumed to be victims of rape resulting in severe stigma, which may lead to rejection by families and communities. In Mali, in an exemplary

development, the Islamic High Council issued a fatwa prohibiting sexual violence, which constitutes an important step in tackling stigma.

17. Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence remained the norm. The lack of formal accountability often resulted in recourse to customary justice, which is often detrimental to survivors, as seen in Somalia and South Sudan. The formal justice system is inaccessible for many victims due to the owing to a lack of legal aid and long distances to reach competent authorities, with security risks and costs associated with travel and the judicial process often proving prohibitive. Often, victims declined to lodge a complaint owing to fear of reprisals and stigma, as observed in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and Libya. Judicial officials and lawyers also faced reprisals for their efforts to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual violence, as reported in Myanmar. In a global first, the crime of forced pregnancy was successfully prosecuted by a national court in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in the conviction and sentence to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity of a former faction leader of the Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki group in May 2023. In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace formally opened Macro Case 11 in September 2023 to investigate sexual and gender-based violence committed on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in the context of conflict between Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and State actors, both against civilians as well as within the ranks of both parties. In the Central African Republic, the President, Faustin Archange Touadera, promulgated a law extending Special Criminal Court proceedings until 2028, while the Appeals Chamber upheld the 2022 conviction of a commander of the armed group, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, for rape perpetrated by his subordinates, on the basis of command responsibility (see [S/2023/413](#)). In support of reparative justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the President, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, established a reparations fund in line with a law adopted in 2022 for victims of conflict-related sexual violence, mandating that 11 per cent of mining royalties be allocated for the fund. In Iraq, the Government approved the release of \$12 million for the implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors, under which 1,600 applications for compensation were approved for Yazidi women and children, as well as Turkmen, Shabak and Christian women, who were held in captivity by Da'esh. The majority of survivors have begun receiving monthly payments. In Guatemala, in commemoration of the eighth anniversary of the historic ruling in the Sepur Zarco case, awarding transformative reparations to victims of conflict-related sexual violence, the Government declared 26 February a national day for victims of sexual violence, as well as victims of sexual and domestic slavery, and committed to ensuring the implementation of the ruling with the full engagement of survivors.

18. Overall, the level of compliance by parties to conflict with applicable international norms remained low despite the robust framework put in place by the Security Council since 2008, including through its resolutions [1888 \(2009\)](#), [1960 \(2010\)](#), [2106 \(2013\)](#), [2331 \(2016\)](#) and [2467 \(2019\)](#). Over 70 per cent of the parties listed in the present report are persistent perpetrators, which means that they have appeared in the annex for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action. In order to strengthen compliance and prevention, it is critical to enhance coherence between the lists annexed to the annual reports of the Secretary-General and the practice of sanctions committees with respect to the listing and designation of parties for sanctions measures. Significantly, the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2653 \(2022\)](#) concerning Haiti designated four additional individuals in 2023, who are also listed in the annex to the present report, for various activities that threaten the peace, security and stability of Haiti, including rape, murder and kidnapping for ransom. On the other hand, the mandate of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [2374 \(2017\)](#)



concerning Mali ended and the related sanctions regime was terminated, removing a vital entry point for information-gathering and engagement with parties on conflict-related sexual violence. In 2023, following the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan and disturbing reports of sexual violence, my Special Representative continued to engage with parties listed in the present report, notably with the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, regarding urgent measures to prevent and deter sexual violence and to hold perpetrators of such violence accountable. For parties that have made commitments in the form of joint or unilateral communiqués or frameworks of cooperation, the level of implementation remains limited. Some encouraging developments were observed, however; in the Central African Republic, the President extended the national action plan to prevent and respond to gender-based violence linked to conflict, until 2026. In Colombia, preparations continued, with United Nations support, for the launch of the first national action plan on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which incorporated a specific pillar on protection, including from conflict-related sexual violence.

19. Transforming gendered power dynamics in relation to ceasefire and political processes, security sector reform and arms control is essential to deter sexual violence. Sustained focus is especially required in political and diplomatic engagement so as to address sexual violence in conflict in the context of peace negotiations and agreements and to ensure the inclusion of sexual violence as a prohibited act in the definition and monitoring frameworks of ceasefire agreements. In Colombia, while it is encouraging that the ceasefire protocols between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Estado Mayor Central (EMC), a dissident group of the former FARC-EP, include provisions calling for the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law, they do not yet specifically prohibit sexual violence. Gender-responsive and inclusive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, weapons management and community violence reduction programmes hold the potential to address sexual violence. Nevertheless, more must be done to ensure the vetting of ex-combatants before they join national armed and security forces, so as to exclude those individuals who are credibly suspected of, or have been convicted of, sexual violence crimes, since this is critical to fostering public trust and confidence in national institutions. Context-specific approaches are required owing to limited institutional capacity, as illustrated by the law instituting a new reserve force to support the Congolese armed forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While the law bars armed group members convicted of grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law from joining, given the country's low conviction rate, especially of members of non-State armed groups, those implicated in such grave violations remain eligible to join.

20. Arms control and disarmament instruments are critical tools of prevention. Under the Arms Trade Treaty (2013), State parties must, prior to authorizing the export of arms, carry out a comprehensive assessment of the potential risks of exporting the arms, including whether the arms could be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children. In 2023, States committed to consider, in national conventional ammunition transfer control systems, the risk of diverted ammunition being used to commit gender-based violence, through the adoption of the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management (see resolution [78/47](#) and [A/78/111](#)). Taken as a whole, these efforts must be sustained with increased focus during periods of transition so as to ensure the protection of civilians, including from sexual violence, and to prevent the recurrence of these crimes.

### III. Sexual violence in conflict-affected settings

#### Afghanistan

21. In 2023, the Taliban de facto authorities virtually erased women and girls from public life. Psychological and physical torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, continued in detention facilities (see [A/78/338](#)). The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls received credible reports of the beating, arbitrary arrest and detention of women protesters, who were subjected to gender-based violence, including sexual violence, often amounting to torture, by Taliban officers seeking information about demonstration organizers ([A/HRC/53/21](#) and [A/HRC/55/80](#)). Data remained difficult to obtain owing to structural gender inequality and the fear of reprisals, exacerbated by the dismantling in previous years of protection and prevention mechanisms, including special courts for the prosecution of violence against women and shelters. In 2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) verified incidents of sexual violence perpetrated against six women, including rape and attempted rape, all implicating Taliban de facto officials. As part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against six girls and six boys by de facto authorities and unidentified perpetrators. Long-standing barriers to documenting conflict-related sexual violence, which were already significant owing to stigma and fears of retaliation, worsened in the wake of movement restrictions and the exclusion of women from the justice and security sectors. Credible reports indicate that most survivors do not lodge official complaints, while a reliance on traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, which privilege family honour over victims' rights, persisted. Moreover, the decree issued by the de facto authorities to ban forced marriages was ineffective, owing to the prevailing climate of impunity. Severe restrictions on Afghan women working for the United Nations and the ban on women working for non-governmental organizations increased the risk of aid not reaching women, including survivors. The repression of civic space continued, with organizations supporting human rights increasingly targeted, including online, or forcibly closed. In the face of these challenges, the United Nations scaled up the delivery of health and psychosocial support services to vulnerable women and girls.

#### *Recommendation*

22. I call upon the Taliban de facto authorities to respect, protect and fulfil the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls, including their full and equal access to education, employment and participation in all spheres of public and political life. I urge the de facto authorities to ensure that humanitarian service providers are able to conduct their work safely and effectively, including the delivery of services to address gender-based violence.

#### Central African Republic

23. In 2023, attacks against civilians, including sexual violence, persisted in the context of military operations and incursions by armed groups, notably in Haut-Mbomou, Mbomou and Vakaga Prefectures, propelling waves of displacement. Armed groups, including signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (2019), used sexual violence to gain control over territory, natural resources and trade. Transhumance-related violence, including sexual violence, persisted. Some armed groups control lucrative transhumance corridors, putting women and girls working in nearby fields at risk, while herders are heavily armed, thereby exacerbating the risk of sexual violence. In Nana-Mambéré Prefecture, at illegal checkpoints used by armed groups for extortion,

male and female merchants were subjected to forced nudity and intimate body searches. In 2023, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) documented 290 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting 127 women, 160 girls and 3 men, representing a 51 per cent increase as compared with 2022. The incidents included rape, attempted rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage and forced nudity. Retour, réclamation et rehabilitation and Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, both signatories to the Political Agreement, were the main perpetrators. Combatants of Retour, réclamation et rehabilitation were implicated in several cases of conflict-related sexual violence occurring between 2021 and 2023 in areas of Ouham Prefecture to which the Mission was only recently able to gain access to conduct investigations (see [S/2023/769](#)). In Haut-Mbomou, attacks by Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique led to the formation of an armed group, purportedly in defence of the Azande community, namely the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, which in turn perpetrated sexual violence against Fulani and Muslim communities over alleged affiliation with Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique. Other groups affiliated with Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, in particular anti-balaka, were also implicated. Humanitarian service providers further registered 2,179 cases of sexual violence implicating armed groups. Members of the national security forces were presumed to be implicated in 177 cases. Other security personnel were also implicated in some cases.

24. The Government took steps to strengthen the national policy and legislative framework. The President appointed a Deputy Prosecutor for sexual violence in conflict and human trafficking. In 2023, at the Bangui Court of Appeal, for the first time, all cases concerning sexual violence were tried in hearings that were closed or partially closed to the public in accordance with measures to protect the identity of victims and witnesses (see [S/2023/769](#)). Despite these developments, impunity remained widespread. Against that backdrop, in November, my Special Representative visited the Central African Republic to participate in a high-level round table on accountability, which paved the way for a road map to combat impunity and strengthen judicial responses. Furthermore, with the support of the United Nations, the Government committed to establish a specific action plan for the national armed forces on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence in line with the 2019 joint communiqué, further to the listing of the national armed forces in the annex to the present report (see [S/2022/272](#)).

25. Despite concerted efforts by the United Nations in coordination with national authorities, specialized services remained inaccessible, especially in remote or rural areas, particularly as a result of insufficient funding. Long-standing gaps persisted in the provision of legal aid, sexual and reproductive health care, psychological support and post-exposure prophylaxis kits to prevent HIV transmission.

#### *Recommendation*

26. I call upon all parties to cease acts of sexual violence and urge them to recommit to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. I welcome the measures adopted by the Government to address conflict-related sexual violence in line with the 2019 joint communiqué, and urge the authorities to adopt a specific action plan for the national armed forces to address conflict-related sexual violence, with the support of MINUSCA and my Special Representative. I further urge the authorities to provide adequate budgetary resources to the specialized unit comprised, inter alia, of the police and gendarmerie that investigates sexual violence against women and children and to provide quality multisectoral assistance to all survivors.

## Colombia

27. In 2023, as part of its total peace policy, the Government renewed its commitment to fully implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed by the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. National authorities achieved ceasefire agreements through peace talks with ELN and Estado Mayor Central (EMC); the latter was partially suspended in 2024. These agreements contributed to reducing lethal violence between government forces and the respective armed groups. Nonetheless, armed conflict persisted in some areas, due to violence between non-State armed groups, heightening risks of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2023, the National Victims' Unit recorded 668 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting 605 women, 35 men, 21 persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, and 7 girls, occurring mainly in the Departments of Cauca, Chocó and Nariño. Among the victims, 209 were Afro-Colombians, 58 were individuals from Indigenous communities and 42 were persons living with disabilities. In 2023, the early warning system of the Office of the Ombudsman issued 19 warnings identifying armed and criminal groups, including ELN, FARC-EP dissident groups, Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia), Ejército Popular de Liberación, El Tren de Aragua, La Cordillera, Puntilleros and Bloque Meta/Libertadores del Vichada, as the source of threats of sexual violence, forced recruitment and human trafficking in the context of territorial disputes between armed groups. The police and national armed forces were also implicated in cases of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2023, the United Nations documented allegations, including rape, sexual assault, forced nudity, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and forced abortion, affecting 76 women, 62 girls, 9 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons, 4 boys and 3 men, which constitutes a more than threefold increase from the previous reporting period. Among the survivors, 3 per cent were Venezuelan, demonstrating the persistent risks faced by refugee and migrant women and girls, particularly in the Departments of Risaralda and Guainía, as well as the Panama border region. Of particular concern, children made up over 40 per cent of victims, most of whom were girls. Despite progress in strengthening reintegration programmes, reports emerged of sexual violence perpetrated against FARC-EP female ex-combatants and their daughters in former territorial areas for training and reintegration.

28. In support of transitional justice efforts, the Special Representative visited Colombia in May 2023 and underscored the need to open a special investigation into sexual violence crimes, after hearing directly from survivors about their challenges in accessing justice and reparations. In July, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first conclusions for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual and gender-based violence, against former mid-level FARC-EP members and one top commander. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace formally opened Macro Case 11 in September. The Office of the Attorney-General opened 71 new criminal proceedings related to conflict-related sexual violence. The National Victims' Unit provided reparations to 699 victims. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute assisted 22 children who were subjected to conflict-related sexual violence. As of 2023, the implementation of the 2021 landmark ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the kidnapping and sexual violence perpetrated against journalist Jineth Bedoya Lima remained uneven, with a number of provisions outstanding, including the creation of a fund dedicated to protecting journalists. As part of the new policy on security, defence and citizen coexistence adopted in March 2023, the Government committed to prevent sexual and gender-based violence by State forces by strengthening mechanisms to report such violence.

29. Multiple barriers to reporting and accessing services persisted, specifically, limited State presence in rural areas, a lack of trust in the justice system and the fear

of reprisals due to the absence of effective protection mechanisms for survivors, their families and representatives. In rural areas, mental and sexual and reproductive health services were limited, which disproportionately affected Afro-Colombian and Indigenous women and girls. Survivors who migrated from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela continued to face difficulties in obtaining recognition as victims of conflict-related sexual violence, thereby limiting their access to assistance.

#### *Recommendation*

30. I commend the Government of Colombia for its efforts to develop, in coordination with civil society representatives, the first national action plan on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), and urge the authorities to include budgeted, operational measures to address conflict-related sexual violence and to accelerate the implementation of gender-related provisions of the 2016 Peace Agreement. I welcome the formal opening of Macro Case 11 by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, and urge the safe participation of women's organizations, victims' representatives and survivors in all stages of the process. I further call upon the parties to include specific provisions in ceasefire agreements aimed at prohibiting sexual violence and to strictly monitor compliance through monitoring and verification mechanisms.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

31. In 2023, the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo worsened owing to escalating armed conflict, military operations and repeated breaches of the ceasefire between Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, exacerbating risks of sexual violence. In November, the Government and MONUSCO finalized a joint comprehensive disengagement plan for the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO. Transition planning has included support for strengthening the capacity of the Government to address conflict-related sexual violence in the light of persistent patterns of such violence in the eastern part of the country.

32. The operating space for the United Nations to monitor conflict-related sexual violence in the country has progressively narrowed owing to both escalating conflict and long-standing challenges in terms of reporting such violence and gaining access to services, including the fear of retaliation and limited infrastructure. Despite these challenges, MONUSCO, in 2023, documented 733 cases, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage, accompanied by extreme physical violence, affecting 509 women, 205 girls, 18 men and 1 boy. Of that total, 88 reported cases had occurred in previous years. The majority (556 cases) were attributed to non-State armed groups. State actors accounted for the remaining 177 cases, including 153 perpetrated by the Armed Forces, with women accounting for more than 50 per cent of the victims; 19 by the Congolese National Police; and 5 by other State actors. Cases perpetrated by the Armed Forces mainly took place in the context of ongoing military operations in Ituri and North Kivu and included sexual slavery. The National Police continued to be implicated in incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, some of which were took place in detention.

33. Sexual violence was often perpetrated during raids on villages in retaliation for perceived collaboration with rival armed groups or State forces. A total of 71 cases implicated the Allied Democratic Forces, which pursued a well-established practice of sexual slavery, overseen by commanders (see [S/2023/990](#)), wherein women and girls were abducted and forced to marry members of the group, leading to cases of pregnancy as a result of rape. Another 34 cases implicated Nyatura armed group factions, while a further 67 cases were attributed to M23 elements. In Ituri, the bodies of female victims reportedly killed by Coopérative pour le développement du Congo elements showed signs of rape, while members of other armed groups, including the

Zaïre militia and Chini ya Tuna, reportedly raped then executed women and girls. In South Kivu, Ngumino armed group elements mass-raped women, some of whom were then mutilated and killed. Human rights defenders were targeted, including women abducted and raped by Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki fighters. In Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces, Mai-Mai group elements used sexual violence to consolidate control over territory and lucrative natural resources. In Tanganyika, the Twa militia perpetrated the largest number of documented attacks, primarily mass rapes during incursions on villages.

34. In June, my Special Representative met with senior Government officials to revitalize the implementation of the 2013 joint communiqué and its addendum on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. She drew attention to the alarming surge in sexual violence in and around displacement sites, by visiting the Bulengo camp in North Kivu, where humanitarian service providers reported having responded to 1,118 cases of sexual violence in just under three months, and an additional 6,823 cases in and around nearby camps. Ongoing conflict and poverty drove displaced women and girls to forced prostitution as a means of survival, highlighting the nexus between food insecurity and sexual violence. My Special Representative urged the Government to ensure the safety and protection of those fleeing conflict in accordance with its obligations to protect civilians under international law. In 2023, MONUSCO conducted 15 joint missions to investigate human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, and supported the organization of 20 mobile courts. In cases involving conflict-related sexual violence monitored by the United Nations, judicial authorities prosecuted and convicted 36 members of the Armed Forces, 11 members of the National Police, 20 members of armed groups and 48 civilian men.

#### *Recommendation*

35. I urge the authorities to: accelerate the implementation of the addendum to the joint communiqué on addressing conflict-related sexual violence by advancing on the respective action plans of the national armed forces and police; ensure a dedicated budget for the reparations fund; and revise the law instituting a new reserve force to support the Congolese armed forces, so that credibly suspected perpetrators of sexual violence are ineligible to join. I further call upon the authorities to immediately scale up security measures in and around displacement sites so as to enhance protection and access to services.

#### **Iraq**

36. Sporadic attacks by Da'esh continued in a tense political and security context in which over 1 million Iraqis remained internally displaced (see [S/2023/700](#)), while cases of conflict-related sexual violence that took place in previous years continued to emerge. The United Nations verified sexual violence perpetrated by Da'esh against 11 girls, 3 of whom were abducted in 2014 and rescued in 2023. The remaining eight cases had occurred in previous years. As part of the process of return of Iraqi nationals from Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic, 765 households, 70 per cent of which are headed by women, returned to Iraq, where they often face stigma due to suspected affiliation with Da'esh. According to the Directorate of Yazidi Affairs of the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government, of the estimated 6,417 Yazidis who were abducted, 3,570 (2,024 children, 1,207 women, and 339 men) have been rescued, while 2,847 remain missing. These figures, however, do not include other affected groups, such as the Turkmen or Shabak. In 2023, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and human rights organizations reported to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) regarding the protection and shelter needs of up to 40 survivors, including Sunni Arab women and girls, stemming from threats by members of their families and communities owing to their perceived



affiliation with Da'esh, thereby demonstrating the challenges of stigma and rejection that impede socioeconomic reintegration.

37. In June 2023, the Government approved the release of \$12 million for the implementation of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors, under which some 1,600 applications for compensation have been approved for Yazidi women and children, as well as for Turkmen, Shabak and Christian women who were held in captivity by Da'esh. With the support of the United Nations, the General Directorate for Survivors Affairs under the federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs developed a cooperation agreement with Iraqi non-governmental organizations to set up a referral system for survivors, as part of which more than 60 survivors have accessed mental health and psychological support. The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) continued to document Da'esh crimes. An in-depth investigation of sexual violence committed by Da'esh against women and girls in Iraq from 2014 to 2017 found that the sexual enslavement of Yazidi women and girls as young as 9 years old and the systematic killing of men and boys may amount to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Moreover, UNITAD found that sexual slavery and/or forced marriage perpetrated against Christian, Shi'a Turkmen and Sunni women and girls, in addition to the killing of men and boys, may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. In 2023, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNITAD for a period of one year only, raising concerns among civil society organizations as to how the information collected will be used to hold Da'esh accountable for atrocity crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, once the mandate of UNITAD concludes.

#### *Recommendation*

38. I commend the Government on the progress made in implementing the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors and call for the removal of criminal investigation documentation from the evidentiary requirements in the application procedure. I call upon the authorities to enact pending legislation on child protection to ensure access to legal identity for all children, regardless of their status. I further urge the Government to establish a domestic legal framework for the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of international crimes, including for sexual violence.

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>1</sup>**

39. On the morning of 7 October 2023, a coordinated attack by Hamas, joined by other armed groups, and armed and unarmed civilians, breached the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence at multiple points and indiscriminately attacked multiple military and civilian targets, including villages, roads and two music festivals. The attacks often took place over several hours and in some cases, armed elements remained on sites for several days. According to official sources, approximately 1,200 individuals were killed across multiple locations; 253 individuals were abducted from Israel, and as of February 2024, 134 of them remain in captivity in Gaza.

40. My Special Representative led an official visit to Israel, at the invitation of the Government, supported by a team of technical experts, from 29 January to 14 February 2024, to gather, analyse and verify information on conflict-related sexual violence reportedly committed during the terror attacks of 7 October and in their aftermath by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. The mission, not being investigative in nature and given its limited duration, did not draw conclusions on attribution to specific armed groups or determine prevalence of incidents of conflict-

<sup>1</sup> Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status.

related sexual violence during and after the attacks of 7 October. Such a determination would require a fully-fledged investigation.

41. According to the mission report of my Special Representative, based on the information gathered, “there are reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred during the 7 October attacks in multiple locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang rape, in at least three locations”: the Nova music festival site and its surroundings, Road 232 and kibbutz Re’im. “At the Nova music festival and its surroundings, there are reasonable grounds to believe that multiple incidents of sexual violence took place with victims being subjected to rape and/or gang rape and then killed”. “There are further accounts of individuals who witnessed at least two incidents of rape of corpses of women”. “On Road 232, credible information based on witness accounts describe an incident of the rape of two women by armed elements”. The mission report also states that “[i]n kibbutz Re’im, the mission team further verified an incident of the rape of a woman outside of a bomb shelter” and that “[a]cross the various locations of the 7 October attacks, the mission team found that several fully naked or partially naked bodies from the waist down were recovered – mostly women – with hands tied and shot multiple times, often in the head”. In the case of Road 232, a similar pattern was found, which also included the bodies of a few men. “Although circumstantial, such a pattern of undressing and restraining of victims may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence.” Regarding the hostages taken to Gaza, “the mission team received clear and convincing information that sexual violence, including rape, sexualized torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment occurred against some women and children during their time in captivity and has reasonable grounds to believe that this violence may be ongoing” (S/2024/217).

42. With regard to the occupied West Bank, United Nations-verified information also confirmed reports that arrests and the detention of Palestinian women and men by the Israeli security forces following the attacks of 7 October were often accompanied by beatings, ill-treatment and humiliation, including acts of sexual assault, such as kicking genitals, threats of rape, and male detainees being stripped naked or half-naked (see A/HRC/55/28). Further, according to United Nations entities, in Gaza, shortly after the start of ground operations by Israel Defence Forces, reports of alleged mass detention of Palestinian women, men and children, compounded by multiple forms of sexual violence, similar to those verified in the occupied West Bank, have emerged.

### *Recommendations*

43. I call once again for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and call for all ceasefire and political agreements to address conflict-related sexual violence. I urge Hamas to immediately and unconditionally release all hostages and ensure their protection, including from sexual violence. I call upon the Government of Israel to grant, without further delay, access to relevant United Nations bodies to carry out a fully-fledged investigation into all alleged violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, to ensure justice and accountability. I further call upon the Government of Israel to ensure the humane treatment of detainees with full respect of their inherent dignity in line with international norms and standards and to grant independent monitors unrestricted access to detention facilities.

### **Libya**

44. In 2023, sporadic clashes between armed groups, illicit arms proliferation, persistent divisions among Libyan political actors and governance deficits created an environment in which conflict-related sexual violence was perpetrated with impunity. Sexual violence was used by Libyan State and non-state actors as a tactic to silence

journalists, detainees, migrants and women (see [A/HRC/52/83](#)). Several cases of gender-based hate-speech and online threats, including of sexual violence, were recorded in 2023, with one female politician targeted with death threats and sexualized defamation. Human rights defenders expressed concern for their safety, noting continued threats of sexual violence, including online. In some cases, sexual assaults were filmed and posted online, in one instance reportedly following social media posts by the victim denouncing an armed group.

45. Fear of reprisals, stigma and social norms related to honour and shame contributed to severe underreporting. Victims who decided to lodge formal complaints were targeted with harassment and reprisals; in one case, a victim was targeted by prosecutors and members of the police, after which the victim fled the country. In 2023, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) verified five cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against three women and two boys. Threats and incidents of sexual violence persisted in detention centres, to which humanitarian access remained severely restricted. Corrections officials reportedly exploited difficult conditions of detention to coerce sexual acts, including in exchange for food. In Mitiga prison, under the control of the Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism, reports indicate that forced prostitution of detainees is managed by the head of the detention facility. Women and their children who have been detained for alleged affiliation with Da'esh continued to be held in the Kuwayfiah military prison and in the Judaydah prison, where they were exposed to rape and other forms of sexual violence. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons were targeted with sexual violence including in detention (see [A/HRC/53/36/Add.2](#)).

46. Traffickers, smugglers and armed men continued to perpetrate conflict-related sexual violence against migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons. State actors were also implicated. UNSMIL received reports that displaced women and girls were targeted, with forced prostitution while in detention in Misrata and/or sexually abused in exchange for food. Members of the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration, as well as elements of non-State armed groups, perpetrated sexual violence against migrants and refugees as a tactic of control. Most survivors of sexual violence, including those who become pregnant, have very limited, if any, access to services. The legislative framework remains discriminatory, without any protection for victims and witnesses, who are often threatened by armed groups and State actors so as to suppress complaints. Moreover, a draft law on the protection of women against violence has not yet been adopted. In order to bolster accountability, UNSMIL provided support to the Office of the Attorney General in establishing a human rights department and a special training centre for prosecutors.

#### *Recommendation*

47. I call upon the Libyan authorities and non-State actors to grant the United Nations unrestricted humanitarian access to prisons, detention centres and migrant and refugee disembarkation points. I call upon the authorities to adopt legislation on anti-trafficking and on the protection of women and children from violence, and to hold perpetrators accountable.

#### **Mali**

48. In 2023, attacks by Al-Qaida and Islamic State-affiliated groups continued in northern Mali, while intercommunal violence, including sexual violence, persisted in the central part of the country. The second half of the year saw the accelerated withdrawal of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with increased clashes between armed groups and the Malian Defence and Security Forces. Moreover, in January 2024, the transitional Government

announced the end of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali emanating from the Algiers process.

49. The reporting period was marked by evolving security threats, including direct attacks on health personnel, facilities and equipment by armed group elements, who also blocked community outreach efforts on preventing and eliminating sexual and gender-based violence by threatening civil society representatives, particularly in Timbuktu and Ménaka Regions. Moreover, the accelerated withdrawal of MINUSMA has significantly hampered the capacity to monitor conflict-related sexual violence. Against this backdrop, in 2023, humanitarian service providers registered 158 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting 90 women and 68 girls, of whom 65 per cent were displaced. The majority were incidents of rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery. Twenty-three cases of pregnancy resulting from conflict-related rape were recorded. The perpetrators were members of armed groups, including Mouvement arabe de l’Azawad, the Jama’a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, Mouvement national de libération de l’Azawad and Groupe d’autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés. With respect to State actors, the Panel of Experts established pursuant to Security Council resolution [2374 \(2017\)](#) on Mali observed a trend since 2022 of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated in Mopti by the Malian Defence and Security Forces, foreign security personnel and dozo militias (see [S/2023/578](#)). In April 2023, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report outlining credible allegations that 500 people had been killed and 58 women and girls raped by members of the armed forces during a military operation in Moura, central Mali, in 2022. The transitional Government has yet to release the result of investigations into violations of international humanitarian and human rights law announced in 2022 (see [S/2023/21](#)).

50. Pursuant to the 2019 joint communiqué between the Government of Mali and the United Nations on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, the Ministry of Defence adopted a gender strategy that addresses reform of the security and justice sectors through a comprehensive action plan and dedicated budget. In 2023, the United Nations provided specialized services to 190 victims of trafficking. In addition, the United Nations continued to support the transitional authorities in ensuring access to multisectoral services for survivors through 15 one-stop centres. Nonetheless, several factors hindered access to services, such as the vast distances survivors from remote areas were compelled to traverse, the lack of awareness regarding available services, widespread insecurity and the prohibitive costs associated with legal proceedings. Furthermore, gaps persisted, including in the clinical management of rape and psychological support.

#### *Recommendation*

51. I urge the transitional authorities to expedite implementation of the joint communiqué and to investigate cases committed by national armed forces, community-based militias and foreign security personnel. I further call upon transitional authorities to ensure that the law on reparations is effectively implemented and that access to services for survivors is guaranteed.

#### **Myanmar**

52. In 2023, civic space further narrowed since the 2021 military takeover, as reports emerged of deepening patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women, men, girls, boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons. In some cases, victims were killed, including during military operations, largely perpetrated by the Myanmar armed forces. Fighting between the Myanmar armed forces and multiple armed groups, including ethnic armed organizations and people’s defence forces, escalated starting in October, newly

displacing more than 660,000 people by December 2023. Nationwide, 2.3 million people were forced to flee, heightening risks including in displacement sites, where reports have emerged of sexual violence perpetrated by camp leaders, religious leaders and teachers. An estimated 61,900 civilians had fled to neighbouring countries. More than 900,000 Rohingya refugees continue to reside in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where a worsening security situation, compounded by diminishing humanitarian aid, increased risks of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

53. State Administration Council forces escalated their widespread perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence against civilians (see [A/78/527](#)). Arrests and the arbitrary detention of civilians by the Myanmar armed forces continued. While travelling through checkpoints, women, girls and transgender women faced high risks of sexual violence, including gang rape. As part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified cases of sexual violence against two girls and one boy. During village raids and ground operations, reports continued to emerge of the use of sexual violence, including prior to execution, by the Myanmar armed forces and affiliated militia, particularly in Sagaing and Magway Regions. In March 2023, around 100 soldiers of the Myanmar armed forces entered a village in Sagaing Region and allegedly detained and tortured villagers. Three women were abducted and later found dead with foreign objects lodged in their bodies, sustaining allegations of sexual violence (see [A/HRC/54/59](#)). An increasing number of reports has emerged of sexual violence perpetrated by the people's defence forces and local defence forces, as well as ethnic armed organizations in heavily armed areas. In cases of kidnapping by armed actors, the wives of kidnapped men received calls demanding sexual acts in exchange for their husband's release. Conflict dynamics compounded by economic desperation continued to drive trafficking within, out of and into Myanmar, as part of which victims were raped, gang raped and forced into sexual slavery.

54. Existing health and judicial services were virtually inaccessible amid widespread intimidation by the de facto authorities. There are strong indications that most cases perpetrated by parties to the conflict went unreported in a context in which survivors contended with the absence of effective referral mechanisms, stigma and the fear of reprisals, including against family members. In order to deter survivors from reporting and accessing services, perpetrators allegedly threatened to report them to relevant de facto authorities as being affiliated with the resistance movement. The breakdown of the rule of law resulted in an increased use of informal community-level justice mechanisms, while reports indicate that in some instances there was an unwillingness to take action in cases implicating members of ethnic armed organizations and people's defence forces. Some cases of sexual violence were communicated to the National Unity Government, which reportedly investigated these incidents. Service providers were detained and hesitated to publicly indicate that they work on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence. Safe houses dedicated to victims of sexual violence perpetrated by traffickers linked to the Myanmar armed forces and affiliated groups received threats and struggle to offer adequate shelter and security. Women's rights organizations faced persistent challenges and constraints in establishing or registering organizations and accessing funding. Reports emerged that the military exercised control over the distribution of HIV antiretroviral therapy, denying life-saving treatment to individuals perceived to be affiliated with the resistance movement.

#### *Recommendation*

55. I urge the Myanmar military to fully implement Security Council resolution [2669 \(2022\)](#), immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners and hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable. I further urge the military to allow

immediate and unconstrained access to United Nations-mandated investigative and reporting bodies and to humanitarian actors providing support to affected populations.

## **Somalia**

56. Ongoing hostilities were compounded by a worsening humanitarian situation, resulting from such climate shocks as flooding and drought, and propelled displacement, exposing, in particular, displaced women and girls to conflict-related sexual violence. Difficulties in accessing areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, prevailing insecurity and clan protection for alleged perpetrators contributed to significant underreporting. In 2023, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and attempted rape, perpetrated against 24 women and 6 girls, the majority of whom were displaced. As part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 231 girls. Perpetrators often attacked girls in isolated areas, such as farming and grazing fields outside villages. Sexual violence was perpetrated in the context of abduction of 49 girls. Most incidents were attributed to unidentified armed perpetrators, as well as Al-Shabaab, clan militia and community defence forces. The Somali National Army and Police, as well as the Hirshabelle police and Puntland forces, Jubbaland police and the Liyu Police were also implicated. In connection with the military offensive launched in 2023 against Al-Shabaab, service providers reported increased risks of gender-based violence against girls, female-headed households, widows, divorced women, women living with disabilities and women and girls from minority clans. In the context of inter-clan disputes, members of clan militia perpetrated sexual violence, principally in Galmudug State.

57. Senior government officials, lawmakers, religious leaders and women parliamentarians convened in Mogadishu in October 2023, with the support of the United Nations, and advocated legislation that strengthens the protection of women and girls. In December, the Federal Cabinet approved a new bill, the Offences of Rape and Indecency Bill, which aims to protect all persons from sexual violence. While the bill defines a child as a person under 18 years of age, other provisions, such as those defining rape and indecency crimes, are not in line with international standards and norms. In August, in order to strengthen the protection of children against sexual violence, the Federal Cabinet approved the Child Rights Bill, and the Juvenile Justice Bill, yet to be adopted. Accountability remains limited, with investigations rarely leading to prosecution. In December 2021, a girl was gang raped and murdered and while the alleged perpetrators were detained, no trial date has been set. Cases continued to be handled according to *xeer*, a customary system of resolving disputes that does not take into consideration the needs and rights of the survivor. In 2023, 754,653 individuals accessed gender-based violence response services, almost double the number of beneficiaries reached in 2022, as a result of increased resources being allocated to programming support and enhanced efforts to reach remote locations, thereby demonstrating the importance of investing in delivering comprehensive specialized services to conflict-affected and remote areas. In collaboration with the Government, the United Nations supported “one-stop centres”, providing survivors with emergency medical and psychosocial support, as well as temporary shelter. In 2023, the United Nations provided medical and psychosocial support to 115 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, some of whom had been forced to marry members of Al-Shabaab.

## *Recommendation*

58. I urge the Federal Government to expedite the implementation of and allocate budgetary resources for the 2022 national action plan to implement Security Council



resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which incorporates priorities set out in the 2013 joint communiqué on addressing sexual violence in conflict. I further call upon the authorities to adopt legislation in line with international standards and norms that protects all persons from sexual violence and to strengthen protection measures for women and girls, particularly those displaced owing to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and military operations.

### South Sudan

59. The implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (2018) was marked by delays, with elections expected to be held in December 2024 before the end of the transitional period in February 2025. The Necessary Unified Forces began to deploy, although without an established mechanism for vetting and removing from duty individuals credibly suspected or convicted of sexual violence. Amid a worsening humanitarian crisis, sexual violence was used by all parties to punish and forcibly displace populations. Large-scale abductions, a tragic feature of the conflict, persisted in 2023. Results of an investigation published by the United Nations in 2023 found that between August and December 2022, two splinter groups of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) perpetrated attacks in greater Upper Nile in order to drive out opponents, propelling displacement and killing some 600 civilians, abducting more than 250 civilians and raping 75 women and girls. The proximity of the military to civilians increased the risks of sexual violence, including in Central Equatoria State, where rapes, gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls were reported near barracks of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces barracks, checkpoints and displacement sites (see [S/2023/294](#)). Climate shocks led to increased competition for scarce resources, heightening the risk of intercommunal violence, including sexual violence. As part of cattle-raiding in Central Equatoria State, cattle keepers perpetrated killings and sexual violence against civilians.

60. In 2023, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) documented incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced abortion and forced nudity, affecting 118 women, 98 girls, 4 men and 1 boy. A number of earlier attacks that occurred between 2020 and 2022, perpetrated against 56 women and 48 girls, were also verified in 2023. Perpetrators included non-State actors, such as organized armed groups and community-based militia. Government security forces were also implicated, with reported incidents attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (32 per cent), the South Sudan National Police Service (10 per cent), the National Security Service (8 per cent) and to the Necessary Unified Forces (1 per cent). In addition, cases were attributed to SPLA-IO (5 per cent) and to the National Salvation Front (3 per cent). Community-based militia accounted for 34 per cent of incidents. The remaining cases were attributed to unidentified armed elements. Attacks were perpetrated in all states against individuals or groups of civilians, including people living with disabilities and displaced persons, ranging in age from 6 to 49 years old, with the highest number recorded in Central Equatoria, Jonglei and Upper Nile States. Pregnant women who were raped and gang raped suffered miscarriages, and in one instance, died as a result of injuries sustained during the attack. Members of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces abducted women and girls and forced them into sexual slavery, before releasing them. With the outbreak of conflict in April 2023 in the Sudan, some 532,000 people fleeing conflict crossed into South Sudan. South Sudanese returnees reported cases of sexual violence by armed groups, which occurred during their return to South Sudan.

61. In September 2023, my Special Representative visited South Sudan and met with senior Government officials on strengthening the national legislative framework, and with Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees, including survivors, on protection needs. The steering committee on the action plan for the police, extended until 2025, made modest progress but is impeded by limited resources and infrastructure. Moreover, the action plan for the armed forces was extended until 2026. In cases involving conflict-related sexual violence monitored by the United Nations, the General Court Martial in Central Equatoria convicted three South Sudan People's Defence Forces elements. The Malakal mobile court and the Raja circuit court handed down convictions in 5 and 12 rape cases, respectively. While courts also awarded compensation to victims, the inability or unwillingness of perpetrators to pay reparations often impeded disbursement to survivors. With the support of the United Nations, some 50 military justice officials contributed to key messages aimed at ending and preventing sexual violence, after which the military issued legally binding standing orders prohibiting sexual violence and delivered pocket-sized cards to military personnel in Yei, featuring messages that reinforce this prohibition.

62. The limited number of health-care personnel and the lack of medication, including emergency contraceptives, impeded access to services. Survivors were rarely able to reach providers during the crucial 72-hour window when post-rape kits, including HIV prevention treatments, are most effective, owing to the inability to secure transportation from remote areas. In 2023, the influx of refugees and returnees put added pressure on already limited services.

#### *Recommendation*

63. I call upon the Government to expedite the implementation of the 2014 joint communiqué and the respective action plans for the armed forces and the police on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, and to investigate all incidents of sexual violence so as to hold perpetrators accountable regardless of their rank or affiliation. I urge the Government to adopt legislation on victim and witness protection, in line with international standards.

#### **The Sudan**

64. Amid a multifaceted political, security and economic crisis, fighting erupted in Khartoum and Merowe in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, and rapidly expanded across the country, following growing tensions over the political transition (see [S/2023/355](#)). Reports of conflict-related sexual violence in Khartoum and in the Darfur and Kordofan Regions have since emerged. More than 12 million people have been forcibly displaced, 8.1 million of whom have been displaced since April 2023, with women and girls facing increasing risks of sexual violence while fleeing conflict. Extensive shelling and aerial bombardment destroyed civilian infrastructure, notably medical facilities, thereby limiting access to specialized services for survivors. On 1 December 2023, the Security Council decided to terminate the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS).

65. In 2023, the United Nations documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, attempted rape, abduction and trafficking, perpetrated against 98 women, 18 girls, 1 man and 1 boy. The incidents occurred primarily in Khartoum, South Darfur and North Darfur States. Men in uniforms of the Rapid Support Forces were implicated in most cases, followed by members of the Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces, men in unidentified uniforms, and unidentified armed men. Sudanese Armed Forces elements were also implicated. According to reports, only a small fraction of victims lodged a formal complaint, demonstrating a lack of trust in the justice system, which is driven by prevailing and

entrenched impunity and the lack of State presence in remote areas affected by the conflict. In Khartoum, Arab, Ethiopian and South Sudanese women and girls were targeted with sexual violence. The United Nations also received credible information regarding the abductions of over 160 women and girls held in captivity, including reports of women and girls being raped and kept in slave-like conditions. There are reports that women and girls abducted in Khartoum State were taken to other parts of the Sudan, notably the Darfur region, allegedly in chains in the back of trucks. In almost all of these cases, Rapid Support Forces elements or affiliated militia were implicated. Some women and girls may have been subjected to forced prostitution or marriage, while in other cases families paid significant ransom for the return of family members.

66. Since the outbreak of fighting, the humanitarian situation has significantly worsened, while the humanitarian response plan remained underfunded by 80 per cent. There are concerns that the limited operating space for monitoring and delivery of aid secured by UNITAMS will diminish or disappear with the Mission's departure. The United Nations received credible reports that humanitarian service providers supporting victims, including doctors, have faced threats from parties to the conflict for reporting sexual violence. In the face of these challenges, community-based initiatives, driven by women-led and youth-led organizations, provided direct services to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in remote locations through innovative initiatives such as emergency response rooms.

#### *Recommendation*

67. I call for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire and for the establishment of humanitarian corridors to ensure that survivors of sexual violence can access multisectoral services. I call upon the parties to integrate provisions on addressing conflict-related sexual violence in any future truce, ceasefire and peace process, and to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in these processes. I urge all parties to immediately cease all forms of conflict-related sexual violence and to hold perpetrators accountable in line with the framework of cooperation on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. I call upon the parties to accelerate engagement with my Special Representative so as to develop specific time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence, which should include the issuance of clear orders through chains of command, and to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access in order for service providers to deliver specialized services to address gender-based violence.

#### **Syrian Arab Republic**

68. In 2023, as a result of 13 years of protracted conflict, some 15.3 million people, half of whom are women and girls, are in dire need of humanitarian aid. Escalating hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, combined with economic hardship, exposed women and girls to heightened risks of sexual violence, especially in displacement and detention settings. United Nations partners reported cases of rape perpetrated against women and girls in displacement sites but also during detention by security forces, as well as instances of arbitrary arrest and sexual violence by armed actors against individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic collected information on patterns of sexual violence perpetrated against men and boys in Government detention facilities, including reports of guards forcing younger detainees to rape older ones while recording the incident on their phone (see A/HRC/53/CRP.5). In the central part of the Syrian Arab Republic, amid increasing insecurity, civilians, including women and children, were kidnapped by a criminal gang whose leader reportedly benefited from high-ranking support in government agencies. Abductees were tortured and ill-treated, including through the use of sexual

violence to pressure families to pay ransom (see [A/HRC/54/58](#)). In 2023, the Commission released reports that documented a systematic practice of detention to stifle political dissent in the north-west of the country, perpetrated by the Security Council-listed terrorist group, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, with former detainees reporting torture and sexual violence (see [A/HRC/53/CRP.5](#)). Moreover, in the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Commission reported instances of torture and cruel treatment, including gang rape and other forms sexual violence, committed by the so-called opposition Syrian National Army to extract confessions.

69. Sexual and gender-based violence remained severely underreported owing to stigma, the fear of reprisals and the lack of access by service providers and human rights monitors to all parts of the country. Women and girls have limited access to sexual and reproductive health services owing to prevailing insecurity and social norms related to honour, as well as stigmatization of the victims. Moreover, the closure of safe spaces for women and girls, as well as community centres, as a consequence of funding limitations, have further curtailed access to services to address gender-based violence, particularly in remote areas. In detention, access to health care for detainees, both men and women, was severely limited. Former female detainees are often presumed to be victims of sexual violence, resulting in severe stigma that may lead to rejection by their families and communities, and in some serious cases, “honour” killings. The situation in Hawl and Rawj camps, in which some 51,600 people, the majority of whom are women and children, are being held, continued to deteriorate. Young boys in the camp risk being separated from their caregivers and transferred to detention centres, where they are at risk of exposure to heightened risks of sexual abuse and violence (see [A/HRC/53/CRP.5](#)).

#### *Recommendation*

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

#### **Ukraine**

71. Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, in 2022, attacks across the country have continued to result in civilian loss of life and widespread destruction of infrastructure. During the reporting period, the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine documented 85 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against civilians and prisoners of war, affecting 52 men, 31 women, 1 girl and 1 boy. In most documented incidents involving adult male victims, sexual violence was used as a method of torture during their captivity by Russian armed forces and law enforcement authorities. Conflict-related sexual violence included rape, threats of rape against victims and their relatives, electric shocks and beatings to the genitals, electric shocks to the breast, threats of castration, genital mutilation, unwanted touching, forced stripping and nudity. In territories of Ukraine under the control of the Russian Federation, acts of rape were documented against six women. In 2023, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine reported that evidence gathered indicates that Russian authorities have committed sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, threat of rape, sexual slavery and forced nudity against women, men and girls in Ukraine (see [A/HRC/52/CRP.4](#)). In a report published in 2023, the Commission also found evidence of rape and sexual violence or threats thereof committed against female victims between the ages of 16 and 83 during home incursions by Russian authorities in Kherson Province in 2022 (see [A/78/540](#)). Of the cases documented by the human rights monitoring mission, 10 cases, including attempted rape, threats of rape, forced nudity, beatings to the genital area and unwanted touching, were committed by members of the Ukrainian armed

forces and law enforcement authorities against eight men and two women, including civilians and prisoners of war.

72. Following the signature in 2022 of the framework of cooperation on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence with the Government of Ukraine, an implementation plan was developed to translate the objectives of the framework into tangible actions, which were then adjusted to keep pace with evolving challenges. A broad-based working group, including representatives of relevant line ministries and the justice sector, in addition to civil society, survivors' networks, United Nations entities and other international organizations regularly convened to advance the implementation of the plan. In order to hone support for national accountability efforts, in 2023, my Special Representative travelled to Lviv to engage with national authorities, front-line civil society actors and survivors. National authorities continued to investigate cases of conflict-related sexual violence, with the Office of the Prosecutor General committing to a survivor-centred approach and establishing support for victims and witnesses. The United Nations continued to provide training to national law enforcement officers, prosecutors and first responders, including the State emergency services. In October 2023, members of Parliament introduced a draft law on the legal status of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence for deliberation, to provide survivors with urgent interim reparations.

73. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, the United Nations has registered over 1,000 attacks on health care, which has further constrained access to services related to the clinical management of rape. Against this backdrop, the national authorities, with the support of the United Nations, established 11 survivor relief centres, including two mobile centres, and developed an interactive map of services across Ukraine. Furthermore, the United Nations continued to deliver programmes to address gender-based violence across 24 oblasts, including those close to the frontline, and sponsored a psychological support hotline for male survivors. In June, the Government adopted a national multi-year programme to combat human trafficking and the United Nations provided support to a rehabilitation programme for female survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

#### *Recommendation*

74. I commend the Government of Ukraine on significant progress in the implementation of the 2022 framework of cooperation with the United Nations to address conflict-related sexual violence. I urge all parties to immediately cease acts of sexual violence, and call upon the Russian Federation to: adopt and implement specific time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence in line with Security Council resolutions [1960 \(2010\)](#), [2106 \(2013\)](#) and [2467 \(2019\)](#); investigate all credible allegations against its personnel; and establish unimpeded access for monitoring and the provision of services and humanitarian assistance in areas of Ukraine under its control. I further call upon Ukrainian authorities to reinforce the national legislative framework by amending the Criminal Code to include a provision for the prosecution of crimes against humanity, including conflict-related sexual violence. I urge the authorities in countries in the region hosting refugees to ensure quality multisectoral assistance to survivors and to adopt measures to mitigate the risk of conflict-driven trafficking.

#### **Yemen**

75. In 2023, following the formal lapse of a truce brokered by the United Nations, while frontline hostilities were at their lowest level since the onset of the conflict in 2015, the ongoing humanitarian crisis and collapsed rule of law contributed to an environment in which women and girls were exposed to conflict-related sexual violence. Owing to stigma, patriarchal norms related to honour and the fear of

reprisals, sexual violence remains a dramatically underreported crime. Despite these challenges, as part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified instances of sexual violence against 16 girls and 8 boys. The Panel of Experts on Yemen documented cases of sexual violence in detention perpetrated against women, men and children, mostly attributed to the Houthis. Women were detained by the Houthis for various reasons, including for their perceived affiliation with opposing parties to the conflict, their political affiliation, involvement in civil society organizations or human rights activism, or for so-called “indecent acts”, and were sexually assaulted and, in some cases, subjected to virginity tests. Children as young as 13 years old were also detained for “indecent acts”, perceived homosexuality, or for their families’ lack of compliance with Houthi ideology or regulations. Cases of sexual violence perpetrated against young boys in detention facilities or police stations were reported to the Panel of Experts, in particular credible reports that boys held in Al-Shahid Al-Ahmar police station in Sana’a were systematically subjected to rape. Trafficking gangs affiliated with parties to the conflict perpetrate torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including sexual violence, against migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, particularly women and children, some of whom became pregnant as a result of rape (see [S/2023/833](#)).

76. Stricter enforcement by the Houthis of the mahram, which requires women to travel with a male family member or “guardian”, is hindering access of women and girls to services, including reproductive health. Increasing gender-based segregation narrowed the operating space for the provision of support to survivors, as did online gender-based harassment against women activists, particularly by the Houthis, aimed at women currently or previously engaged in politics or civil society organizations.

#### *Recommendation*

77. I call upon all parties to adopt a national ceasefire and to advance towards the resumption of an inclusive political process. I further urge the parties to provide unhindered humanitarian access to detention facilities. I call upon the Government to strengthen protection measures for women, including those who are politically active, and the provision of specialized services to victims.

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

78. In the Western Balkans, protection and reparative justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence remained uneven. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, reparations remain insufficient, with different applicable terms for survivors under the legislation in their place of residence. In a positive development, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a new law in July 2023 on civilian victims of war, which recognizes children born as a result of conflict-related rape as a distinct category of victims, granting them specific rights, notably in relation to education and health. In Republika Srpska, court fees continue to be imposed on victims who lose civil proceedings for compensation, thereby resulting in revictimization and negatively affecting their financial situation, which has a deterrent effect on the pursuit of justice. Moreover, the deadline for lodging an application as a victim of wartime torture set by Republika Srpska expired in October 2023, narrowing options for reparations.

79. In Nepal, rape and certain other forms of sexual violence are expected to be categorized as serious human rights violations, for which amnesty is barred, according to the amendment bill to the Transitional Justice Act ([S/2023/413](#)); however, the requirement to prove the targeted or planned manner of attacks is a high threshold, which may result in the exclusion of victims from truth-seeking. Other provisions provide for the establishment of dedicated units within the Truth and



Reconciliation Commission to investigate serious violations and abuses of human rights and incidents of conflict-related sexual violence and for the removal of statutory limitations on the filing of complaints concerning sexual violence. Following its adoption by the cabinet in 2022, phase II of the national action plan on women and peace and security was formally launched in May 2023.

80. In Sri Lanka, following the Government's withdrawal from the co-sponsorship of Human Rights Council resolution 30/1, and with the aim of developing a domestic approach to reconciliation and accountability, the Government approved the establishment of an interim secretariat for a truth and reconciliation mechanism in May 2023. Concerns remain, however regarding the lack of broad-based consultations and the effectiveness of an additional commission of inquiry without investing in trust-building measures. Separately, in February 2023, the Government adopted its first multi-year national action plan on women and peace and security, which includes a commitment to monitor incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, although it does not address accountability for allegations of past sexual violence crimes.

#### *Recommendation*

81. I call upon the authorities of countries overseeing transitional justice processes to adopt inclusive legal frameworks and swiftly ratify pending legislation consistent with international standards. I urge authorities to develop and adequately fund national reparations programmes to provide survivors and their children, including those born as a result of conflict-related rape, with appropriate compensation and redress, and to engage survivors and their networks, as well as civil society representatives, in the planning and implementation of all transitional justice processes, in accordance with a survivor-centred approach.

## **V. Other situations of concern**

### **Ethiopia**

82. While the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities signed by the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front in 2022 ended fighting in the Tigray region, reports of sexual violence persisted. Other regions of the country were marked by escalating hostilities, such as in Amhara, where the Federal Government declared a state of emergency. Against this backdrop, provisions of the Agreement for Lasting Peace relating to sexual violence, territorial integrity and transitional justice were partially implemented or remained outstanding. All parties to the conflict, including members of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Eritrean Defence Forces, the Amhara Special Forces and militia, and the Tigrayan forces, have reportedly been implicated in acts of conflict-related sexual violence. Highlighting the scale and scope of the violations, the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia concluded that in Tigray alone, between November 2020 and June 2023, some 10,000 survivors of sexual violence had sought health care in one-stop centres. Moreover, the Commission underscored that rape and other forms of sexual violence, in particular against women and girls in Tigray, had continued after the signing of the Agreement for Lasting Peace in 2022 (see A/HRC/54/CRP.3). However, the Commission's mandate was discontinued in October. Similarly, the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, established to investigate violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Tigray region, ended in May 2023, without the issuance of a report. Diminished regional and international monitoring of such violations is a cause for concern in a context characterized by identity-based tensions fuelled by hate speech.

83. In 2023, the United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, affecting 795 women, 36 girls, 3 men and 1 boy. Of that total, 454 cases took place in 2022. In addition, humanitarian service providers registered cases affecting 370 women and 192 girls, the majority of which took place in 2022. Survivors faced unwanted pregnancy and HIV infections resulting from rape, amid reports of an increase in suicidal ideation. Members of non-State armed groups, such as the Oromo Liberation Army/Oromo Liberation Front-Shene, Tigrayan forces, and the Fano/Amhara militia in the Afar, Amhara and Oromia regions were implicated. A number of cases were attributed to the Eritrean Defence Forces. The Ethiopian National Defence Forces were also implicated, in addition to the Amhara regional police and the Oromia Special Forces. The National Rehabilitation Commission reported that some 1,500 female ex-combatants were victims of sexual violence, 41 of whom experienced uterine or vaginal prolapse and were provided access to corrective surgery. Access to reporting and services was curtailed owing to humanitarian access constraints, and a collapsed health system in Tigray. In Amhara region, some one-stop centres were either closed or operating below capacity owing to limited access to essential supplies, such as post-rape kits. Female health workers were allegedly subjected to sexual assault, while women human rights defenders were threatened, including online.

84. With respect to the transitional justice policy outlined in the Agreement for Lasting Peace in 2022, the Government issued an options paper in January 2023 and undertook consultations, including with survivors. In addition, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights held consultations on transitional justice with survivors, traditional and religious leaders and representatives of civil society in conflict-affected regions. Participants emphasized the need to hold perpetrators of sexual violence accountable, abstain from amnesty, reform judicial and law enforcement institutions, deliver services to survivors and engage in outreach at the community level in order to tackle stigma.

#### *Recommendation*

85. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all acts of sexual violence. I urge the Government to implement an inclusive and survivor-centred transitional justice policy that guarantees the victims' rights to truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence, to hold perpetrators accountable and publicly communicate these actions, as well as to ensure safe and non-discriminatory access to multisectoral services by all survivors.

#### **Haiti**

86. In 2023, amid unprecedented levels of insecurity and political instability, armed gangs continued to consolidate control over territory through the deliberate use of killings, kidnapping and sexual violence, facilitated by ready access to military-grade weapons and ammunition trafficked from abroad. Gangs have taken over most of the capital and control access to essential resources, such as water, food, fuel and medical services. Brutal patterns of gang-related violence, including mass rape, previously concentrated in the capital, spread rapidly in 2023 to other departments, notably Artibonite and North-West. Members of a vigilante movement known as Bwa Kale have killed gang members, or alleged gang members, further fuelling insecurity. Some 200,000 people, including women and girls, were forcibly displaced, with many seeking shelter in ad hoc locations, such as churches, schools and stadiums, where they lack basic services and remain at risk of further attacks, including sexual violence. As part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified cases of sexual violence against 41 girls. Furthermore, humanitarian service providers registered a total of 3,056 reports of rape from January to October 2023.

87. Women and girls living in areas controlled by rival armed groups were subjected to collective rapes in their homes or in the street as they attempted to flee. A joint United Nations report, published in February 2023, underscored that in only five days, between 8 and 13 July 2022, at least 57 women and girls were collectively raped by members of the gang “G-9 Family and Allies”. In 2023, the Panel of Experts on Haiti reported that a further 49 women were victims of collective rapes by gang members in the commune of Cité Soleil (see [S/2023/674](#)). Gangs also perpetrated sexual violence as a tactic to subjugate women and girls in neighbourhoods under their control. Some victims were sexually assaulted for refusing to enter into relationships with gang members. Sexual violence was also used in the context of kidnapping in order to extort higher ransom from family members. Overall, the Panel of Experts observed that the use of sexual and gender-based violence is a pervasive tactic among most gangs in Haiti and not merely the result of isolated incidents by rogue members.

88. Humanitarian access remains a serious challenge in gang-controlled areas. Most women and girls do not seek medical attention or report violence owing to prevailing insecurity, the prohibitive costs of transportation, stigma and the fear of reprisals. Multiple hospitals were attacked near Cité Soleil, while emergency shelters for survivors are lacking. Amid these challenges, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) continued to work with other United Nations entities and Haitian civil society organizations to refer survivors of sexual violence to available medical, psychological and socioeconomic services, despite these being largely insufficient in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and severely limited in other departments, especially in Artibonite, where gang violence is rampant.

#### *Recommendation*

89. I urgently call upon the international community to increase its support for the humanitarian and development responses in Haiti, focusing on the immediate protection needs of the most vulnerable, including women and girls who have been displaced by gang violence, while also investing in measures to address the structural root causes of instability. I urge the international community to support the authorities in providing multisectoral assistance to all survivors and to monitor and investigate sexual violence perpetrated by gangs, so as to ensure accountability and redress.

#### **Nigeria**

90. Conflict-related sexual violence continued to be a major protection concern for women and girls in north-east Nigeria in a context of protracted conflict and gender inequality. As part of the monitoring of grave violations against children, the United Nations verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against 359 girls and 7 boys. In 2023, humanitarian service providers further registered cases of sexual violence, including sexual slavery, against 296 women, 211 girls and 4 boys. Victims include survivors living with disabilities. Non-State armed groups continued to abduct women and girls, subjecting them to rape and sexual slavery, as a reward for fighters and an incentive for new recruits, while some families resorted to agreeing to forced marriage as a coping mechanism to avoid abductions. In Borno State, former armed group members reportedly targeted female-headed households or single women and subjected them to rape at the periphery of displacement sites. The United Nations continued to provide services to survivors through one-stop centres in the north-east. Nonetheless, gaps persisted in terms of specialized services, notably the lack of shelters, and with respect to forensic investigative capacity. The National Human Rights Commission established a panel to investigate allegations of systematic and forced abortions by the national armed forces, and the panel held closed-door sessions. To date, the panel has yet to publish the results of its investigation.

*Recommendation*

91. I call upon the Government to ensure accountability and reparations for sexual violence crimes, including in counter-terrorism cases, and urge the Government to conduct an effective and transparent investigation of the allegations of forced abortions by the armed forces.

## VI. Recommendations

92. The following recommendations focus on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, with an emphasis on gender-sensitive and inclusive ceasefire and political processes, security sector reform and arms control, and should be read in conjunction with those presented in my previous reports.

93. **I recommend that the Security Council:**

(a) **Call upon all parties to conflict to immediately cease all forms of conflict-related sexual violence in compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions and provide the United Nations with unhindered access to conflict areas and detention centres;**

(b) **Support the accelerated deployment of women's protection advisers to peace operations and offices of United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinators in all relevant situations of concern, in line with Security Council resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#);**

(c) **Encourage all State and non-State parties to conflict to adopt time-bound commitments to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence, and monitor their compliance, including through sanctions committees of the Security Council and the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security;**

(d) **Request, in mandate authorizations and renewals of peace operations, including those undergoing transitions and phased drawdowns, dedicated operational provisions on addressing conflict-related sexual violence, including the retention of specialized capacities, namely women's protection advisers; and ensure that mandate authorizations and renewals include gender-responsive and gender-inclusive security and justice sector reform and arms control and disarmament measures in order to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence;**

(e) **Ensure adequate consultations with women-led organizations to capture the pressing gendered security and protection concerns faced by women and girls in conflict-affected settings, and enhance measures to protect women briefers to the Security Council, including through the adoption of dedicated protocols or guidelines to prevent and address reprisals;**

(f) **Give due consideration to dedicated thematic visits on conflict-related sexual violence to situations on the agenda of the Security Council, in particular to relevant contexts characterized by early warning indicators of sexual violence, including contexts of rising militarization, unconstitutional changes of government, terrorism, online and offline gender-based hate speech, conflict-driven trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, electoral violence, political instability, intercommunal tensions and mass displacement;**

(g) **Ensure that sexual violence is systematically monitored and incorporated as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted sanctions to**

deter the commission of such violence by all parties; ensure that sanctions committees have expertise on conflict-related sexual violence; and consider applying sanctions to persistent perpetrators who have appeared in the list annexed to the present report for five or more years without taking remedial or corrective action;

(h) Consider referring to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court situations in which crimes of sexual violence, as defined in its Statute, appear to have been committed;

(i) Give due consideration to examining the links between conflict-related sexual violence and issues related to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and ammunition, in particular the links between organized crime, the illicit trade in weapons and the perpetration of conflict-related sexual violence; and solicit further relevant information on the linkages between arms proliferation and conflict-related sexual violence from the Office of my Special Representative, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and other relevant United Nations entities, in order to deepen the evidence-base for action.

94. I encourage Member States:

(a) To adopt a survivor-centred approach to preventing and addressing conflict-related sexual violence that seeks to empower survivors by prioritizing their specific needs, perspectives and aspirations, and considers intersecting inequalities based on sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, disabilities, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as HIV or any other status, among other factors; to ensure that survivors' rights are fully respected and that their capacity to make informed decisions and to influence prevention and response policies and measures is promoted;

(b) To ensure an enabling environment for survivors to seek support on a non-discriminatory basis, including through scaled-up funding for services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, such as HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive care, access to emergency contraception and timely abortion care, psychosocial and legal services, and to ensure that all efforts, including data management, are guided by the principles of security, confidentiality and informed consent;

(c) To implement the recommendations pertaining to women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of such violence, as outlined in my special report ([S/2022/77](#));

(d) To foster a gender- and age-responsive security sector through the development of effective oversight and accountability mechanisms, including the establishment of vetting and screening processes or mechanisms, to prevent credibly suspected perpetrators from being recruited, retained or promoted within the security or reserve armed forces; build the capacity of the security sector to anticipate, detect and respond to instances of conflict-driven trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation; and consider establishing specialized units to address sexual violence;

(e) To adopt national legislation on arms control and ammunition management and implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, the Arms Trade Treaty and other relevant instruments, to bolster prevention of conflict-related sexual violence; and to share existing national practices on the development of gender-responsive small arms and light weapons-related legislation and policies and build on existing pre-transfer risk assessment

practices that would assess and mitigate the risk that transferred weapons can be used to commit or facilitate conflict-related sexual violence, including in the context of Arms Trade Treaty obligations;

(f) To strengthen accountability by adopting legislation drawing on the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, enhancing protection, investigation and prosecution, through the training of justice personnel, prosecuting conflict-related sexual violence through appropriate judicial mechanisms, regardless of the rank or affiliation of the perpetrator and promoting transformative, gender-responsive reparations; and to strengthen investigations by developing forensic capacity;

(g) To design, fund and implement national and local action plans on women and peace and security, as well as implement related regional action plans, which include dedicated, budgeted operational provisions to address conflict-related sexual violence.

95. I encourage all stakeholders, including Member States, donors and regional and intergovernmental organizations:

(a) To ensure that expertise on prohibiting and addressing conflict-related sexual violence informs the design and implementation of peace, ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and/or subsequent agreements, in line with the 2022 Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires; promote the full and meaningful participation of women and survivors in political and peacebuilding processes; and ensure the exclusion of such crimes from amnesties and statutes of limitations;

(b) To create an enabling environment for women active in public life, including women human rights defenders, journalists and peacebuilders and those working directly on conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure the right to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies, as well as the establishment of urgent response mechanisms to address reprisals, including reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations; and to establish protection measures and timely responses for civilians at imminent risk of conflict-related sexual violence, including those in detention, displacement or migration settings;

(c) To mitigate the risks of sexual violence associated with livelihood activities, including those impacted by climate-related security risks, by building community resilience and ensuring that women and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence have safe access to employment and socioeconomic reintegration, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; and to address the nexus between food insecurity, poverty and sexual violence by investing in services to meet the basic needs of women and girls; and to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in humanitarian, recovery, peace and development processes;

(d) To tackle the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including structural gender inequality and harmful social norms that lead to the stigmatization of survivors, by promoting women's meaningful participation and leadership in political, security and rule of law institutions, as well as by engaging with faith-based, traditional and community leaders to promote attitudinal and social change;

(e) To support the provision of training for relevant personnel in United Nations peacekeeping operations, special political missions, offices of special envoys and of resident coordinators, and other United Nations entities, as needed, on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence and early warning preparedness;



(f) To address chronic funding shortfalls by providing predictable financial support to the conflict-related sexual violence multi-partner trust fund for the work of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network; and to draw on the expertise of the United Nations system in the areas of justice and the rule of law by supporting the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

## Annex

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

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

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

##### *1. Non-State actors*

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

##### *2. State actors*

National armed forces.\*

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

##### *1. Non-State actors*

- (a) Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Janvier;
- (b) Allied Democratic Forces;
- (c) Chini ya Tuna;
- (d) Coopérative pour le développement du Congo;
- (e) Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda;
- (f) Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri;
- (g) Forces patriotiques populaires-Armée du peuple;
- (h) Lord's Resistance Army;
- (i) Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale;
- (j) Mai-Mai Kifuafua;
- (k) Mai-Mai Malaika;

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

- (l) Mai-Mai Perci Moto;
- (m) Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki;
- (n) Mai-Mai Yakutumba;
- (o) Mouvement du 23 mars (M23);
- (p) Nduma défense du Congo;
- (q) Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové faction led by “General” Guidon Shimiray Mwissa and faction led by Commander Gilbert Bwira Shuo and Deputy Commander Fidel Malik Mapenzi;
- (r) Ngumino;
- (s) Nyatura;
- (t) Twa militias;
- (u) Twirwaneho;
- (v) Union des patriotes pour la défense des citoyens;
- (w) Zaïre militia.

2. *State actors*

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

**Parties in Iraq**

*Non-State actors*

Da’esh.

**Parties in Mali**

*Non-State actors*

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

**Parties in Myanmar**

*State actors*

Myanmar armed forces, including the integrated Border Guard.\*

**Parties in Somalia**

1. *Non-State actors*

Al-Shabaab.

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

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

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

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

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

Sudanese Armed Forces.

#### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

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

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces, intelligence services and pro-government militias.

#### **Other parties of concern on the agenda of the Security Council**

##### **Parties in Haiti**

##### *Non-State actors*

- (a) G9 Family and Allies – Jimmy Cherizier (alias “Barbeque”);
- (b) 5 Segond gang – Johnson Andre (aka “Izo”);
- (c) Grand Ravine gang – Renel Destina;
- (d) Kraze Barye gang – Vitelhomme Innocent;
- (e) 400 Mawozo gang – Wilson Joseph.

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

- (a) Islamic State West Africa Province;
  - (b) Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram).
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