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Impact of conflicts

Kosovo

In late March, the Parliament of Kosovo passed legislation that aims to give recognition and assistance to survivors of sexual violence during the war between Serbia and the armed Albanian group ELK in 1998-1999. The reference to the victims of this type of violence was included in the Law on the Status and Rights of Martyrs, Invalids, Veterans, Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, Sexual Violence Victims During the War, Civilian Victims and their Families (Law no. 04/L-54). Released in April, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's report on Kosovo says that some groups are worried because the approved legislation does not consider survivors of

sexual violence coming from a community other than the majority Albanian one. Composed of more than 60 local organisations, including some for women from minority communities in Kosovo, the NGO Kosova Women's Network (KWN) hailed the ratification of the law as an important step towards restoring dignity to women that suffered sexual violence in war. Finally, female politicians in Kosovo launched a campaign to give visibility to and demand justice for women that were raped. Among other actions, they will ask the UN to create a report on rape during the armed conflict. The campaign focuses on the abuse committed by the Serbian forces.

- Kosova Women's Network, "[New Law Recognizes Persons Who Suffered Sexual Violence](#)", *KWN*, 8 April 2014.
- UNSC, "[Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo](#)", 29 April 2014.
- Balkan Insight, "[Kosovo Women to Petition UN Over Wartime Rape](#)", *Balkan Insight*, 14 May 2014.

Nigeria

In April, the armed Nigerian opposition group Boko Haram kidnapped more than 270 girls attending a secondary school in the city of Chibok and later abducted more. The kidnappings came in retaliation against the Nigerian government policy of punishing the families of members of this group as part of counterinsurgency operations against Boko Haram. More than 100 family members were detained in 2011 and 2012, some of them related to the leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, despite the lack of any clear evidence of their link to the organisation. Boko Haram has kidnapped women and girls in response to

the arrests since 2013, but the abduction in 2014 set off a media and social firestorm in Nigeria and around the world. Human rights organisations showed the links between these kidnappings and international human trafficking networks in Nigeria and denounced the arrest of various activists participating in protests against the abductions. Some organisations lamented that the militarisation of the conflict had made it worse. Following various international governments' offers of support for a military operation to search for the kidnapped girls, other voices warned of the dire consequences of previous international military

interventions in which women's safety was used as justification. Coinciding with the summit to end sexual violence that took place in London in June, a ministerial meeting on security held in the United Kingdom excluded

women's civil society organisations despite their demands to participate. Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court said that the kidnappings could constitute crimes falling within its jurisdiction.

- Fatou Bensouda, *Statement of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, on the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria*, International Criminal Court, 8 May 2014.
- Elizabeth Pearson and Jacob Zenn, "How Nigerian police also detained women and children as weapon of war", *The Guardian*, 6 May 2014.
- WILPF Nigeria, *WILPF Nigeria says #Bring back our girls!*, WILPF, 8 May 2014.

Central African Republic

In recent months, violence and attacks intensified against civilians in the country, especially sexual violence perpetrated by the different parties involved in the conflict, according to statements that the executive director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, made to the UN Security Council. In late May, Mlambo-Ngcuka embarked on a mission to the Central African Republic with Bineta Diop, the AU's special envoy for Women, Peace and Security. During their stay in the country, they noted the extreme gravity of sexual violence being committed during the conflict in the country, from rape to sex slavery and forced marriage. During the briefing meeting on her recent mission, Mlambo-Ngcuka urged the UN Security Council to take measures to help to strengthen the rule of law in the country and to enhance the participation, leadership and protection of women. In this regard, she called on the Security Council to ensure that gender issues were tackled from the start of the recently created UN mission (MISCA) to promote the participation and leadership of women in local reconciliation, transitional justice and the upcoming

elections. Likewise, she said that the information collected during her mission coincides with that appearing in the investigation conducted by the OHCHR in December 2013. The violence took place in house-to-house raids, at unauthorised roadblocks, in military camps and as part of sectarian violence. As a result, there is a great need for medical and psychosocial assistance at camps for displaced people, which lack services for people that have suffered gender violence. Neighbouring countries are also affected. Cameroon is sheltering 100,000 new refugees, of which 84% are women and children. In mid-June, the UNHCR stated that half a million people had been displaced by the violence. Inhabitants of the northern part of the country denounced the international forces' ability to cope with the situation in the face of persisting attacks and insecurity. Mlambo-Ngcuka also highlighted some positive aspects, such as the organisation of civil society, including women, to survive and thrive amidst the conflict. Despite their religious and social differences, female leaders have shown a clear determination to overcome their differences.

- UN, "Central African Republic: UN official urges strong action to protect women, girls", *UN News*, 24 June 2014.
- UN, "Central African Republic: UN appeals for safe haven for civilians fleeing violence", *UN News*, 13 June 2014.
- UN Security Council, *Deadly Attacks in Central African Republic Test International Efforts to Restore Calm, Special Representative Tells Security Council*, 24 June 2014.
- Jeune Afrique, "Centrafrique: l'ex-Séléka continue de commettre des exactions", *Jeune Afrique* 3 June 2014.

Colombia

The government of Colombia passed a new law stipulating that sexual violence committed as part of the armed conflict affecting the country receive the consideration of a crime against humanity and increasing criminal categories to cover the different forms of sexual violence. The new

law states that it must be taken into account whether the violence took place in contexts of coercion or via threats or the use of power and provides for full compensation and psychological and medical assistance for victims.

- EFE, "Santos sanciona la Ley contra la Violencia Sexual en Colombia", *El Nacional*, 18 June 2014.

Sexual violence in conflict

The UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, which studied the year 2013. The report documents this form of violence in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudanese region of Darfur, Syria and Yemen. It also identifies specific armed groups in the conflicts in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Mali, South Sudan and Syria as responsible for committing different acts of sexual violence as part of these conflicts. The report also includes different recommendations for preventing

and prosecuting sexual violence, urging the parties responsible to make specific commitments, such as a ban on it through orders following the chain of command and investigations into complaints. In addition to other recommendations, the Secretary-General also called for continued support for assistance for victims and survivors; increased deployment of advisory figures to protect women; guarantees that all ceasefire and peace agreements prohibit sexual violence in their definitions of the ceasefire; and the inclusion of measures to prevent sexual violence when reforming the sectors of justice, security, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration.

- Ban Ki-moon, *Sexual violence in conflict. Report of the Secretary-General, S/2014/181*, UN Security Council, 13 March 2014.

Assessment of the summit to end sexual violence in London

A high-level summit on sexual violence in conflict was hosted by the British government in London in June. This was the first time that a high-level international meeting was held on this subject and it was attended by 123 governments (60 to 70 of them at the ministerial level). After the summit, many civil society organisations, activists and academics involved in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict stressed its importance in giving greater visibility to this form of violence –partly due to the attendance of media figures like actress Angelina Jolie, the co-host of the summit alongside UK Foreign Minister William Hague–, but they also exposed the meeting's significant shortcomings.

First, many voices highlighted the lack of tangible progress and the vague commitment acquired from the participating governments. The single most important achievement of the summit was the “International Protocol for the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict”, a manual that aims to assist in the prosecution of sexual violence as a crime. The United Nations presented a guide on compensation for victims of sexual violence. But aside from approval of these documents, the governments did not commit to any particular scheduled goal or set aside any amount of money for implementing policies of prevention, care for victims and prosecution of those responsible for crimes. Moreover, there were also some notable absences, such as China, Kenya, India, Iran, Russia, Syria and Sri Lanka, which did not attend because they had not signed the 2013 Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Second, one of the most serious critiques levelled by civil society concerned the issue that the government meetings included virtually no civil society representatives, a clear contradiction to the commitments acquired with the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council, and particularly Resolution 2122 of 2013, which points to the need for more emphasis on women's leadership and participation and strives to increase it. The involvement of civil society focused on side events, which was interpreted as the UK government's desire to keep the most critical voices out of the government debates. However, some of the most important initiatives of the summit came from the activity of civil society, like the creation of a network of survivors and activists, Survivors United for Action, aimed at stepping up pressure on governments. Moreover, some of the most important speeches at the summit were given by civil society representatives like Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee, who stressed the need to end armed conflict as the only effective means to ending sexual violence and highlighted the close links between militarisation, the presence of weapons and sexual violence.

Third, many exposed the simplification of the phenomenon of sexual violence in official discourse. The summit basically covered rape in conflict, but it did not contextualise sexual violence in the continuum of violence that women suffer all over the world and failed to demonstrate that not all forms of sexual violence that take place as part of war are weapons of war. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on sexual violence as a security threat could once again strengthen the view of women as victims that must be protected by “protective” military forces consisting mostly of men. Experts on the study of sexual violence in conflict stressed the importance of addressing the phenomenon by recognising its complexity and placing emphasis on prevention, rather than on punishing the perpetrators as the only effective measure.

In brief, although many agreed on how important it was to give the subject greater public and political attention, the need to promote specific comprehensive measures was made clear, based on the broad experience of civil society involved in the struggle against this form of violence and in helping survivors.

- Amelia Hoover Green, “[Ignoring the evidence at the End Sexual Violence in Conflict Summit](#)”, *Women Under Siege Blog*, 17 June 2014.
- Anne Marie Goetz, “[Stopping sexual violence in conflict: gender politics in foreign policy](#)”, *openDemocracy 50.50 inclusive democracy*, 20 June 2014.
- The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict, “[Global Summit falls short on concrete commitments to end sexual violence](#)”, *The International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict*, 13 June 2014.
- Jody Williams, “[UK summit on sexualized violence: ‘A time warp in the wrong direction’](#)” *Women Under Siege Blog*, 15 June 2014.

Libya

Prominent human rights activist Salwa Bugaighis was killed during parliamentary elections in Libya, the second elections held since the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The renowned lawyer was shot in her home in the eastern city of Benghazi by armed men that also abducted her husband, who was been missing since. Bugaighis’ murder sent shockwaves throughout Libya and was condemned by the United Nations and the European Union, which highlighted the activist’s role in the revolution against the Gaddafi regime and especially in the first peaceful anti-government protests. Some local voices also stressed her commitment to promoting dialogue as a solution to the serious conflicts devastating the country. Considered one of the most charismatic figures in the Libyan women’s movement, Bugaighis

participated in the National Transition Council set up in the country after the fall of Gaddafi, but resigned to protest the marginalisation of women. The lawyer played an important role in the campaign to demand a quota of women in Parliament, publicly opposed initiatives to make it mandatory to wear the hijab (veil that covers that head and neck), which brought her problems with Islamist groups, and protested the arrest of sub-Saharan Africans accused without evidence of being mercenaries for Gaddafi. Bugaighis recently participated in initiatives against corruption and the lack of transparency in Libyan politics, as well as in a committee focused on finding solutions to the growing division and factionalism in the country. Lately she and her family had received various death threats from jihadist groups.

- Lindsey Hilsum, “[Desolation and despair: the murder of Salwa Bugaighis](#)”, *openDemocracy*, 3 July 2014.
- Chris Stephen, “[Libya in shock after murder of human rights activist Salwa Bugaighis](#)”, *The Guardian*, 26 June 2014.

Egypt

Days before the inauguration of the new Egyptian president, General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, who led the

military coup d’état against the Islamist government in 2013, the authorities adopted a decree that criminalises

sexual harassment (which until then had not been categorised as a crime) as punishable by six months to five years in prison and fines. The law was passed in a context of rising alarm due to the increase in sexual aggression in the country in recent years, including various episodes during demonstrations staged in Tahrir Square after the revolt began in 2011. Although the legislation responds to pressure from women's groups and human rights organisations to punish sexual aggression, various organisations cited the limits of the new legal framework. Representatives of the "I Saw Harassment" campaign, which documents episodes of sexual harassment in Egypt, questioned whether judges have the power to decide between the imposition of fines and imprisonment. After

new episodes of sexual aggression in Tahrir Square during al-Sisi's inauguration, and particularly after a video was spread showing the rape of a woman by a group of men, various women's and feminist organisations said that the legislation was insufficient to dissuade and punish these actions and demanded the implementation of a broad national strategy to eradicate this form of violence. Local organisations have documented up to 500 cases of serious aggression between 2011 and January 2014, including gang rape, on top of thousands of cases of harassment. According to a UN study published in 2013, nine out of every ten Egyptian women have experienced some kind of sexual violence, ranging from harassment to rape.

- Association for Women's Rights In Development, "[Joint Statement Concerning Recent Sexual Assaults and Gang Rapes in Tahrir Square](#)", *AWID*, 11 June 2014.
- BBC, "[Egypt's new president Sisi vows to end sexual assaults](#)", *BBC*, 10 June 2014.
- BBC, "[Egypt brings in new sexual harassment laws](#)", *BBC*, 5 June 2014.

Côte d'Ivoire

The impunity related to sexual and gender violence committed during the armed conflict and its aftermath in Côte d'Ivoire continues to prevail, according to some NGOs and the United Nations. The UN Secretary-General's report in May counted 171 cases of rape reported in the period from late December to early May, including 19 gang rapes. In May and June, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security urged the UN Security Council to guarantee that the necessary information be provided on the impunity surrounding sexual violence in the country, as well as data on obstacles to women's full

participation in processes of justice and reconciliation, as required by various Security Council resolutions. This group of NGOs also told the Security Council that discussion about the renewal of the mandate of the UN mission in the country, the ONUCI, must consider the evolution of women's participation in DDR processes in Côte d'Ivoire. The Secretary-General's report in May warned of the low rates of indictment for perpetrators and of the barriers facing women in the complaint process, including the cost of medical certificates, stigmatisation by their own communities and the reclassification of rape as "indecent aggression".

- Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, [Monthly Action Points on Women, Peace & Security for June 2014](#), June 2014.
- UN Security Council, [Thirty-fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire](#), 15 May 2014.

Forced displacement

During the quarter, a number of reports came out on worldwide forced displacement resulting from armed conflict, violence and persecution. The data confirm that the phenomenon is tending to grow and now tops 50 million people, the worst levels since the Second World War, with a heavy impact on women. According to the UNHCR's annual report, in late 2013, 51.2 million people had been forcibly displaced, including refugees, internally displaced

persons and asylum seekers (compared to 45.2 million in 2012), of which 49% were women and girls. Notably, one out of every two refugees was a minor, the highest proportion in a decade. This is especially important from a gender perspective, since childcare is mostly performed by women. The UNHCR has emphasised that women and girls face specific risks in displacement situations and are especially exposed to situations of sexual violence,

gender violence and discrimination. Reports issued by the UNHCR and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) mentioned Syria, the Central African Republic

and South Sudan as the countries with the greatest new displacements in 2013, all of them armed conflicts in which women were exposed to sexual and gender violence.

- UNHCR, *War's Human Cost: UNHCR Global Trends 2013*, 20 June 2014
- UNHCR, *Women: Particular Challenges and Risks*, June 2014.
- IDMC, *Global Overview: People internally displaced by conflict and violence*, May 2014.

Peacebuilding

Colombia

As part of the peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC guerrillas taking place in Havana, the parties agreed to establish a subcommittee on gender composed of representatives of the negotiating delegations with support from Colombian and international experts. The aim of this subcommittee is to review and ensure that both the partial and final agreements include a gender perspective. Women's organisations welcomed the announcement, which they interpreted as a sign that the participants in the peace negotiations had paid attention

to the demands that the women had been making since the peace process began. Also of note, the ambassadors of Cuba and Norway (guarantor nations in the peace negotiations) received the proposals created during the regional meetings of women victims of the armed conflict, "Voices of Women for Peace", sponsored by the Colombian Congress Peace Commission and the inter-parliamentary Legal Committee for Gender Equality. Nigeria Rentería, a member of the government's negotiating delegation, was also present when the proposals were delivered.

- National government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, *Comunicado Conjunto*, Havana, 7 June 2014.

Post 2015 Development Agenda

Application of the Millennium Development Goals will be reviewed in 2015 and a new development agenda will begin. Throughout 2014, the United Nations and many civil society organisations have been exerting great efforts to prepare for the new agenda. Some of the most important aspects of this work have focused on putting gender equality and peacebuilding on the agenda much more clearly. Some significant related initiatives were carried out during the quarter, based on the proposals appearing in the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which will be used as a basis for defining the new development agenda.

goals through targets and indicators. This was one of the main complaints of women's organisations, which was reflected in the high-level panel report and stood out in the tough negotiations that took place during the session of the commission, where it faced opposition from some conservative governments to include basic women's rights issues. The organisations also stressed the importance of including firm language regarding violence against women and girls. However, no further recognition was given to the very negative impact that the international financial crisis is having on development and specifically on women.

First, the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) managed to include an appeal in the agreed document of conclusions for gender equity, women's empowerment and human rights for women and children to be included in the new development agenda as a goal in itself and to appear in the other

It should also be noted that efforts are being made for the new development agenda to include the women, peace and security agenda, with some calls for it to be established as a goal in itself in peaceful societies, and to embrace all UN-approved instruments on women, peace and security. The high-level group's report included the goal "ensure stable and peaceful societies", but did not contain aspects

of the women, peace and security agenda or crucial issues such as disarmament and demilitarisation, among others.

It also asked that the women, peace and security agenda be incorporated into the goal of gender equity.

- Association for Women's Rights In Development, "CSW58 Round Up 4 – Friday 28 March 2014, CSW58 Agreed Conclusions", *AWID*, 28 March 2014.
- Various authors, *Feminist Reflections: UN High Level Panel Report on Post-2015 Development Agenda*, June 2013.
- *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development: Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, May 2013.

1325

Manipur

The Manipur Women Alliance on UNSCR 1325 was created for the purpose of promoting women's participation in decision-making in the Indian state of Manipur. The alliance was created as part of the meeting put together by the women's and civil society organisations Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network (MWGSN) and North East India Women Initiative for Peace (NEIWIP) in collaboration with the Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI). Different aspects related to the impact of the armed conflict Manipur

on women were addressed, as was the role that women have played in the various peacebuilding initiatives in the region and the things that Resolution 1325 has done to promote women's participation and to recognise their contributions to peace processes. In addition to establishing the network, a 21-point agenda was created with future strategies for involving women in peace and development decision-making.

- Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network, "Women Leaders of Manipur forms Alliance on Women, Peace and Security", *E-Pao*, 8 May 2014

Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia)

The Georgian Deputy State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Ketevan Tsikhelashvili, stressed the importance of women in peace processes and women's empowerment, especially in communities affected by conflicts and between ethnic minority representatives. She made these statements during the presentation of a project aimed at women of the Women's Information Centre. Regarding women's participation in formal peace processes in Georgia, Tsikhelashvili said that the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, which is in charge of peace negotiations in Geneva with South Ossetia and Abkhazia and responsible for the

government's peacebuilding initiatives, has one woman in the Incident Prevention Response Mechanism between Georgia and South Ossetia. The other participating woman is Tsikhelashvili herself, who chairs one of the working groups of the Geneva peace talks. This low participation stands in contrast to the commitment acquired from Georgia in its National Action Plan on 1325 to promote women's participation in peacebuilding. Tsikhelashvili has shown that her government recognises the value of parallel diplomacy and contact between women's organisations in Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia over the last two decades.

- State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, *Mrs. Ketevan Tsikhelashvili Spoke about the Importance of Women Engagement into Peace Process*, 29 April 2014.
- Heather Yundt, *Georgia: Women Take Lead in Informal Peace-Building*, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 30 April 2014.

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Escola de Cultura de Pau

Edifici MRA (Mòdul Recerca A)

Campus de la UAB - 08193 Bellaterra

(Cerdanyola del Vallès) Barcelona, Spain

Tel.: +34 93 586 88 48 / Fax: +34 93 581 32 94

pr.conflict.escolapau@uab.cat

<http://escolapau.uab.cat>

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