

This issue features:

Violence against women committed by Boko Haram in Nigeria

Impacts on gender of the conflict in Ukraine

Violence against LGBTBI people in armed conflict

Participation of women's organisations in peace negotiations in Colombia

Impact of conflicts

ISIS

New reports and accounts collected by the media confirm the serious impact of the sexual violence perpetrated by the armed group Islamic State (ISIS) in its areas of influence in Iraq and Syria. A recent investigation conducted by Amnesty International (AI) concluded that the Yazidi minority women and girls abducted by the organisation in northern Iraq in August have been victims of brutal abuse, including torture, rape and forced marriage. The AI report details that many of them have been subjected to sexual slavery, sold or offered as “gifts” to ISIS combatants and to people supporting the group. It is estimated that hundreds and possibly thousands of people were captured by the group in the region of Sinjar, of which around 300 have managed to escape. In their testimonies, some say that in the midst of despair, many women have attempted suicide in order to escape their situation. Speaking to the BBC, ISIS survivors have indicated that after several attempts, which are usually unsuccessful, some have managed to take their own lives.

They also detailed the dynamics of the slave market set up by ISIS, which even created a pamphlet in question-and-answer format on how to treat them, evidently considering them the “property” of the militants. Amnesty International said that the survivors are doubly affected: in addition to severe trauma as a result of their abuse, they suffer from the loss of relatives killed or kidnapped by ISIS. The Iraqi media and government said in December that the radical group had executed 150 women, some of them pregnant, after refusing to marry its militiamen. The massacre reportedly occurred in Fallujah, in Anbar governorate, and the victims were buried in mass graves. Previously, in Mosul, ISIS publicly executed women's rights activist Samira Salih al-Nuaimi after she criticised the group on social networks. In this context, the German government announced in late December that it is planning to open a support centre for victims of sexual violence perpetrated by jihadists. The institution is expected to receive around 100 women coming from Iraq and Syria.

- Amnesty International, [Escape from hell: torture, sexual slavery in Islamic State captivity in Iraq](#), Amnesty International, 23 December 2014; Le Monde, [“L'EI aurait exécuté 150 femmes qui avaient refusé de se marier avec des djihadistes”](#), Le Monde, 18 December 2014.
- Le Monde, [“L'Allemagne pourrait accueillir des femmes violées par les djihadistes de l'EI”](#), Le Monde, 22 December 2014; Wood, Paul, [“Islamic State: Yazidi women tell of sex-slavery trauma”](#), BCC, 22 December 2014.

Ukraine

The humanitarian situation is worsening for the civilian population, including women, in areas of conflict in eastern Ukraine due to the cumulative impact of devastation and militarisation of the war active since April, as well as the aggravating effect of harsh winter conditions. The armed conflict killed 4,707 people and wounded 10,322 between mid-April and mid-December, according to UN figures not disaggregated by sex, and displaced around one million, including 545,613 refugees and 542,000 people displaced internally. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre indicates that most of the displaced people are women and children and that many men have stayed behind in residential areas to “protect” their property or because the insurgency has prevented them from leaving. The situation for civilians in areas of conflict worsened at the end of the year after the Ukrainian president decreed measures of economic blockade. Adopted in November, these entailed the withdrawal of state funding, including pensions and social benefits, education and sanitation, as well as a prohibition against banks and companies from operating there. The measures force civilians to register in areas under Ukrainian control in order to access benefits and entitlements, making them overcome great obstacles to movement. The report issued in December by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) stated that the measures, the economic collapse and the damage to infrastructure especially affect the most vulnerable parts of the population, including the elderly, children and those who depend on state aid, although it did not break that down by gender. The worsening situation implies that within the most vulnerable groups, women and girls (retired women, older women, women with dependents eligible for state support or women and girls dependent on state aid) may face even greater vulnerability due to previous conditions of discrimination or situations resulting from the conflict (e.g., greater family responsibilities, risks of gender violence) or specific needs (e.g., maternal and infant health). According to media reports, there has been a drastic reduction in cash among the resident population, with resulting difficulties in obtaining the basic means of sustenance. Meanwhile,

the human rights situation in the conflict zones remained grim, according to the OHCHR’s report. The ongoing violence linked to the conflict, despite the ceasefire agreement in September, continued to cause the living conditions of the civilian population to deteriorate, including those of women, with new shelling in residential areas, although large-scale clashes subsided. According to the OHCHR, the legal and security vacuum in the areas in conflict has given rise to incidents of killing, kidnapping, torture, mistreatment, sexual violence, forced labour and extortion, among other practices. The intimidation and persecution of people perceived as supporters of the Ukrainian government is also widespread. Detention conditions in these areas are often degrading, do not include the separation of men and women, provide minimal conditions for personal hygiene and offer hardly any contact with the outside world. Government forces, especially battalions of volunteers, are also accused of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and the mistreatment of people suspected of giving support to rebel forces. Moreover, various organisations have denounced sexual violence carried out by all parties to the conflict, especially in the eastern part of the country and particularly in the Donbas region (which includes the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk) and in Crimea. In addition, a WILPF report in September warned of the risks of reinforcing gender stereotypes (roles of men as defenders and warriors and women without agency and in roles supporting men), the little public space for men to adopt positions of non-violence and of opposition to the war (with the risk of being persecuted and accused of cowardice and treason if they flee the conflict) and the growing divisive narratives, split between “pro-Ukraine” and “pro-Russia” in contrast to what are usually more complex self-definitions regarding identities and belonging. In any case, analysts and media reports indicate that civilians are currently avoiding interaction with the self-proclaimed local authorities and militias as much as possible and are not speaking about political matters, given the intimidating atmosphere and priority of survival.

- IDMC, [Time to act: Internal displacement on the rise in Ukraine](#), IDMC, 22 October 2014.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine](#), OACDH, 15 December 2014.
- WILPF, [Voices from Ukraine: Civil Society as a Driver for Peace. Strengthening the Role and Contribution of Ukrainian Women in Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation](#), WILPF, September 2014.
- International Crisis Group, [Eastern Ukraine: A Dangerous Winter](#), Europe Report no. 235, 18 December 2014.
- Amie Ferris-Rotman “[Evidence mounts in Ukraine that both sides are committing sexualized violence](#)”, Women Under Siege, 29 December de 2014.
-

Boko Haram: armed conflict, kidnappings and violence against women in Nigeria

The continuous pattern of abduction of women and girls by Boko Haram (BH), reconfirmed in recent months by the capture of more than one hundred in various incidents, shows that the group has deliberately targeted them in their actions, with serious consequences. According to a recent report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW), during their captivity, women and children retained by BH are subjected to all kinds of abuse, including physical abuse, psychological abuse, forced conversion to Islam under the threat of death, forced marriage, sexual abuse and rape. The HRW report gathers testimony from people directly affected by this violence in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, most of them Christians. Some girls managed to escape after 276 were kidnapped from a school in Chibok in April 2014, an event that gave more visibility to the phenomenon in 2014 and set off the international campaign "Bring Back Our Girls". According to HRW, Boko Haram has abducted over 500 women since 2009 and the number continues to climb. In the last quarter of 2014 alone, scores of people were reportedly kidnapped by BH, including around 60 women near the Cameroonian border in October and another 172 women and children in late December from the village of Gumsuri, also in northeastern Nigeria.

In agreement with other analyses, the HRW report emphasises that since mid-2013, BH has adopted a strategy that makes women and girls a specific objective of its actions. Prior to that, it had focused on members of the security forces, politicians, public officials (as symbols of authority) and students (Boko Haram translates loosely as "Western education is a sin"). While some incidents were reported between 2009 and early 2013, including the kidnapping of married women as punishment for not adhering to the group's ideology and of single women and girls for the purpose of marrying them to its members, since mid-2013, when the state of emergency was declared in northeastern Nigeria and violence intensified, BH has increasingly carried out group abductions on a gender basis. The HRW investigation identifies at least three reasons for this new approach: to punish students for attending Western-style schools, to force Christian women and girls to convert to Islam and to exact vengeance against the Nigerian authorities for detaining family members of the group's militiamen, including wives of BH leader Abubakar Shekau.

Some analyses indicate that this final factor, the arrest of family members, has been especially relevant. Zenn and Pearson have pointed out that Shekau complained about the detention of the wives, sons and daughters of the organisation's combatants in nearly every video message in 2012 and 2013, in which he warned about retaliation against the women of the enemy side. These threats later materialised, such as with the kidnapping and subsequent release of women and children from a police station in Borno State in May 2013. According to specialists, the detention of suspects' family members is a common practice in Nigeria and in the case of women and children arrested by the authorities for their alleged ties to BH, there was no evidence of their direct participation in the group's activities. Therefore, women have been targeted by both sides in the conflict for instrumental reasons. Moreover, this violence is embedded in a broader context characterised by the prevalence of discriminatory practices against women in Nigeria.

Additionally, various recent analyses agree that BH is using abducted women and girls for other tactical purposes. Some reports suggest that their capture is being used to demand ransom for their release or to press for the exchange of prisoners and that they are also being forced to participate in military operations. Besides being subjected to forced labour, they are forced to cook and clean their bases, transport ammunition, carry objects looted after attacks and acts as decoys to lure soldiers into ambushes. There have also been reports of the arrest of women allegedly linked to BH that carried weapons, the arrest of women that were presumably trying to recruit other women (mostly widows and young women) and women's participation in bomb attacks (in December 2014, a teenager said that her parents had given her to BH militants, which ordered her on a suicide mission that she did not carry out). BH is therefore adapting its modus operandi by resorting to women for its actions, bearing in mind that they arouse less suspicion and are better able to circumvent security controls. Thus, it is replicating methods used by radical groups in other countries, like in Iraq for example.

Against this background, local and international activists have underscored the need to pay greater international attention to the conflict between BH and Nigerian security forces due to the serious impact it is having on the civilian population (not only regarding abductions), to consider the context that has favoured the rise of the extremist

group and to include women effectively in discussions about security in the country. Despite the many actions of mobilisation and condemnation undertaken by Nigerian women's organisations with regard to the conflict, until October 2014 not one of them had been called to participate in the three regional security meetings focused on discussing formulas to address the problem. Women's groups from Cameroon, a country that has also been affected by the armed conflict, have warned that BH's actions are having an impact whose consequences will have to be observed over the long term, due to the massive displacements of population and the exclusion of boys and girls from school, since their families fear sending them in case of attack or abduction. Meanwhile, attention has been drawn to the need to facilitate complaints of sexual violence, a problematic issue in Nigeria given the widespread impunity and stigmatisation suffered by victims of such abuse, and to provide an appropriate response and support for victims of violence. In this regard, HRW, which has denounced abuses committed by the government as part of its fight against BH in the past, openly criticised the Nigerian government for being incapable of deploying the mechanisms necessary to protect women and children from this abuse and for failing to provide adequate medical and psychological support to victims that have managed to escape from BH's bondage.

- BBC, "[Nigerian girl says parents volunteered her as suicide bomber](#)", *BBC*, December 2014.
- BBC, "[Boko Haram crisis: Nigeria arrests 'female recruiters'](#)", *BBC*, 4 July 2014.
- Human Rights Watch, "['Those Terrible Weeks in Their Camp': Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria](#)," *HRW*, 27 October 2014.
- Princeton University, "[UN Panel Discussion Focuses on Boko Haram, Extremist Violence against Women and Girls](#)", 30 October 2014; Nossiter, Adam, "[Boko Haram Said to Abduct More Women in Nigeria](#)", *New York Times*, 23 October 2014.
- Ola, Lanre, "[Suspected Boko Haram gunmen kidnap 172 women, children in Nigeria](#)", *Reuters*, 18 December 2014.
- Zenn, Jacob and Elizabeth Pearson, "[Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram](#)", *Journal of Terrorism Research*, Volume 5, Issue 1, 2014.

DR Congo

Congolese Lieutenant Colonel Bedi Mobuli Engangela, also known as "Colonel 106", was convicted of crimes against humanity, rape and sexual slavery and sentenced to life imprisonment by a national court. He is one of five senior officers of the DR Congolese Armed Forces formally charged

with crimes of sexual violence. The sentence was considered exemplary by UN representatives, who said that it sent a clear message to other perpetrators. The ruling follows other previous convictions, on similar terms, of perpetrators of sexual violence committed during the armed conflict.

- UN News Centre, [UN envoys welcome conviction of Congolese army officer for crimes against humanity](#), UN News Centre, 16 December 2014.

Peacekeeping, sexual exploitation and abuse

Various reports emerged about the increase in prostitution and sexual exploitation as a result of the deployment of different UN and AU peacekeeping missions in African countries. One of the latest examples involves the MINUSCA mission in the Central African Republic. Various media

outlets have noted the recent presence of prostitution coming from Cameroon and DR Congo near UN mission bases in the capital, Bangui. There has also been an increase in cases of sexual exploitation and consensual sex in exchange for food or money in camps of people

displaced by the violence. Moreover, in the region of Gao, in Mali, the presence of the UN mission (MINUSMA) has also led to a rise in prostitution, which has caused it to conduct an internal investigation. In March 2014, MINUSMA denied the accusations. However, MINUSMA did determine the existence of sexual abuse and misconduct by individual soldiers in Gao. In September 2014, Human Rights Watch also reported that soldiers of the AU mission in Somalia had sexually abused and exploited women and children in their bases in Mogadishu. It urged the AU, the countries that contribute troops and the donors funding the mission to take immediate steps to stop the abuse, conduct the necessary investigations and prosecute and convict those responsible. Despite the zero tolerance policy for sexual abuse and exploitation established by the UN in 2003, the disciplinary measures established have helped to reduce the abuses committed by UN civilian staff, which depends on the organisation, but have barely involved changes in the military contingents of the UN missions, which make

up the bulk of the peacekeeping force on the ground and depend on the states that send them. The UN does not have the authority to initiate legal proceedings and punish the UN soldiers for misconduct, since it is the responsibility of each government to decide if that is the case and what punishment to impose on its troops.

In this sense, the organisation Women in Black launched a public campaign against impunity for UK peacekeepers in cases of sexual violence and exploitation. The campaign showed that a significant number of reported cases involving UN peacekeepers in situations of sexual violence and exploitation go unpunished. The campaign denounced how the immunity granted to participants in peacekeeping operations is being used to prevent the prosecution of civilian and military personnel involved in sexual exploitation and said that neither Resolution 1325, the UN's zero tolerance policy, the group of experts nor any other mechanism has helped to address this grave problem.

- Jeune Afrique, "[Prostitution : les soldats de la paix sont-ils de bons clients?](#)" Jeune Afrique, 7 October 2014.
- Human Rights Watch "[The Power These Men Have Over Us' Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia](#)" Human Rights Watch, 8 September 2014.
- Women in Black, [End Impunity for "Blue Helmets"](#), 20 November 2014.

Violence against LGTBI people in armed conflicts

During the quarter, some situations of violence against LGTBI (lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual or intersex) people were visible in different contexts of armed conflict. This type of violence normally goes completely unnoticed. In Iraq, a country where homosexuality is punishable by death, various organisations such as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), MADRE and Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq denounced the serious situation facing LGTBI people. The current advance made by Islamic State is increasing the risk and vulnerability of LGTBI people, as it persecutes them amidst total neglect and violation of their rights. Other militias like 'Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and Jaish al-Mahdi have also attacked people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, or perceptions about them, which sometimes ended in death. Organisations that reported these human rights abuses state that LGTBI people are the group with the least

social protection in the country. After the United States' invasion in 2003, LGTBI people acquired a certain public visibility that was accompanied by an increase in violent attacks, since certain extremists linked their enhanced visibility to the military invasion of the country. LGTBI people have been subjected to violent aggression by Islamist militants and self-defence groups, as well as by their own families and communities. Meanwhile, Peruvian journalist Amanda Meza published an investigation into violence against the LGTBI community during the armed conflict in Peru from 1980 to 2000, detailing the murders of different people because of their sexual identity and orientation, as well as the practice of expelling homosexual individuals from cities under threat. Although the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation reported nine cases in its report on the armed conflict, the evidence suggests that hundreds of LGTBI people may have been killed.

- Jamie J. Hagen, "[The missing group of victims in conflict-related violence](#)", Women Under Siege, 11 December 2014.
- Amanda Meza, "[Testigos del horror: Las víctimas LGBTI del conflicto armado en Perú](#)", Sin Etiquetas, 7 November 2014.
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, [Exposing Persecution of LGBT Individuals in Iraq](#) 19 November 2014.

Peacebuilding

North Africa

Over a dozen women's organisations and human rights NGOs from Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Egypt met in Tunisia in December to reflect on the progress of the transitions in their respective countries and share good practices in the struggle to prevent violence against women. Expectations of change and progress were raised during the meeting, in addition to concern about threats and particularly the impact of reactionary and conservative movements that manipulate religion to limit the rights of women. The various organisations stressed the need to consider all forms of violence against women, whether in the public or private sphere, in conflict or post-conflict situations, as discriminatory acts and violations of their fundamental rights. The organisations called on the states of the region to adopt a series of measures such

as the ratification of various international instruments, including the Rome Statute, which defines various forms of violence against women as war crimes and crimes against humanity; the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, Istanbul Convention and CEDAW protocols; the review of school curricula to eliminate stereotypes and propagate a culture that recognises the rights of women; and recognition of methods and actions used by women's and human rights organisations to end violence against women. The NGOs participating in the meeting in Tunisia recognised the need to strengthen cooperation between feminist and human rights associations and supported the creation of a regional observatory and a document containing 100 measures to combat violence against women, among other initiatives.

- FIDH, [“General Statement on the elimination of violence against women in North Africa and the Middle East”](#), International Federation for Human Rights, 18 December 2014.

Serbia – Kosovo

The fourth meeting of women of Serbia and Kosovo took place in December as part of the Budva process facilitated by the OSCE since 2012 to promote direct dialogue between women in both countries. Fourteen women from the academy, Parliament, civil society and the media participated in the meeting, which was held in Belgrade for the first time. They discussed issues related to women's participation in politics and political empowerment. During the final quarter of the year, data was revealed indicating that Kosovar women held a minority of key posts in the independent institutions of Kosovo. This was the finding of a study carried out by the OSCE mission in Kosovo

in July and presented in October, which analysed 25 independent institutions accountable to and funded by the Kosovar Parliament. Overall women composed only 41% of those institutions and accounted for just 18% of the seats of councils and boards. Moreover, thirteen institutions had no woman at those levels. The obstacles identified include the lack of political will, political partisanship in selection processes, responsibilities for family care that fall upon women and the difficulties they face in combining professional roles with family care, the lack of anti-sexual harassment policies in institutions and the absence of mandatory quotas at independent institutions, among others.

- OSCE, [Prominent women from Belgrade and Prishtinë/Priština hold fourth meeting](#), 18 December 2014.
- KWN, [OSCE Launches Paper on Women's Leadership in Independent Institutions](#), 1 November 2014.
- OSCE Mission in Kosovo, [Women's Representation in Senior Decision-making Positions of Independent Institutions in Kosovo](#), Discussion Paper, July 2014, Prishtinë/Pristina.

Colombia

The first meeting of the gender subcommittee in the peace negotiations in Havana (between Colombian government and FARC-EP representatives) took place with Colombian women's organisations in December. The gender subcommittee, which has the mandate to

integrate the voices of women and a gender perspective into all partial and possibly final agreements reached at the negotiating table, plans to hold three meetings with different women's organisations in the country. The delegation consisted of representatives of the main

women's organisations working for peace in Colombia: Mujeres por la Paz, Ruta Pacifica, Corporación Colombiana de Teatro, Red nacional de Artistas, Asociación de Mujeres por la paz y los derechos de la Mujer (ASODEMUC), Sisma Mujer and Casa de la Mujer. Also participating were three international experts on gender representing Cuba, Norway and UN Women. The women's organisations called on the parties to decree a bilateral ceasefire for Christmas and the New Year. They also presented several demands about the peace process, including guarantees of women's participation at all stages and mechanism of the peace process; recognition of diversity and of the Afro-Colombian, indigenous, peasant, rural, urban, young female and LGTBI populations; the equitable distribution

of goods, services, resources and wealth between men and women; guarantees of truth, justice, reparations and non-recurrence for female victims of the conflict; and a deescalation of violence while ensuring that the parties stay at the negotiating table until a peace agreement is achieved. The women of the delegation hailed the event as "historic" and hoped that it would translate into concrete commitments to ensure the full participation of women in a potential peace agreement. Moreover, during a visit to Havana to meet with delegations of the government and the FARC-EP, one of the victims delegations proposed treating sexual violence committed as part of the armed conflict as a crime against humanity and giving social and psychological support to victims of this violence, which are mostly women, as well as access to justice.

- Virginia Bouvier, "[Gender Experts Arrive in Havana](#)", Colombia Calls Blog, 16 December 2014.
- FARC-EP [Saludo de las FARC a la audiencia de género](#), 15 December 2014.
- EFE, "[Colectivo de mujeres pide a Gobierno y Farc tregua bilateral en Navidad](#)" El Espectador, 15 December 2014.

1325

Security Council debate on women, peace and security

In October, the UN Security Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security, focused this year on the situation of displaced women and girls and with particular emphasis on their capacity for leadership and survival. At a time when global figures for refugees have reached levels not seen since the Second World War, the subject was of special importance. The discussion covered many challenges facing displaced women and girls, including their serious lack of protection and the severe impact of gender violence, sexual violence and other human rights violations, access to basic education

and health services and difficulties in participating in decision-making. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security urged the representatives of the countries participating in the discussion to report in detail on efforts under way to support the leadership and participation of displaced women, debate protection efforts and humanitarian responses from a gender perspective and explain efforts to protect female human rights activists, among other issues. They also provided some recommendations for the high-level review of the implementation of Resolution 1325 scheduled in 2015.

- NGO Working Group on Women, [Peace and Security, Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the UN: Recommendations on the Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security](#), 16 October 2014.
- PeaceWomen, [Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security-Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors](#), 29 October 2014.
- UN Secretary-General, [Report on women and peace and security](#), S/2014/693, 23 September 2014.

Gender and Peace is a quarterly publication of the Escola de Cultura de Pau with information and analysis on conflict and peace-building from a gender perspective.

The School for a Culture of Peace is a peace research academic institution that was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through its research activities, parallel diplomacy, training and sensitization. Its main areas of work include conflict analysis, peace processes, gender, human rights and transitional justice and peace education.

To receive this publication and other information on gender and peace you can subscribe [here](#).

You can read our publications at: <http://escolapau.uab.cat>

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

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.conflictes.escolapau@uab.cat

<http://escolapau.uab.cat>

This publication has received the support of:



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS