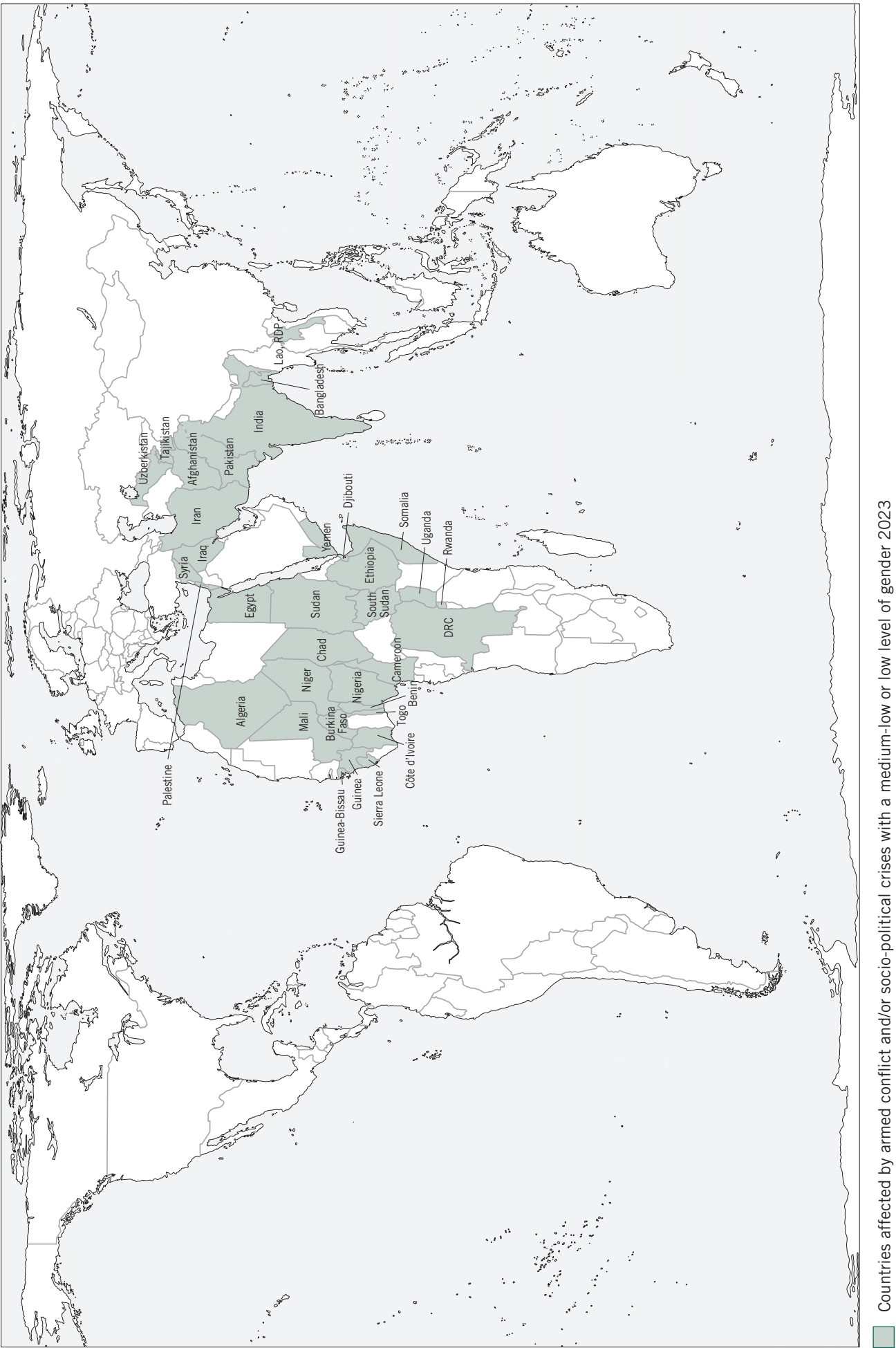


Map 3.1. Gender, peace and security



### 3. Gender, peace and security

- 23 of the 36 armed conflicts in the world in 2023 took place in countries with low levels of gender equality.
- 88% of the high-intensity conflicts occurred in countries with low-or medium-low levels of gender equality.
- The United Nations warned of the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar and Sudan regarding the use of sexual violence in armed conflicts.
- The Central African Republic (CAR) was affected by an escalation of gender-based violence as a result of the conflict and the climate crisis, in what was described as a “protection and gender crisis”.
- In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace opened a macro case on all sexual and gender-based violence committed during the armed conflict between the FARC and the Colombian government.
- The report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran identified a pattern of sexual violence carried out by state agents in detention centres.
- The indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza caused over 30,000 deaths by the end of 2023, 70% of them women and children.
- The UN Secretary-General noted a new setback in women’s participation in peace processes.

The Gender, Peace and Security chapter analyses the gender impacts of armed conflicts and socio-political crises, as well as the inclusion of the gender perspective into various international and local peacebuilding initiatives by international organisations, especially the United Nations, national governments, as well as different organisations and movements from local and international civil society.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a follow-up is made of the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. The gender perspective provides visibility to the distinct impacts of armed conflict on the population as a consequence of gender inequalities and intersections with other lines of inequality, as well as the contributions that women and the LGTBIQ+ population are making to peacebuilding. The chapter is structured into three main sections: the first provides an assessment of the global situation with regard to gender inequalities by analysing the Gender Development Index; the second analyses the gender dimension in armed conflicts and socio-political crises; and the final section is devoted to peacebuilding from a gender perspective. At the beginning of the chapter, a map is attached that shows those countries with serious gender inequalities according to the Gender Development Index. The chapter conducts a specific follow-up of the implementation of the agenda on women, peace and security, established after the adoption by the UN Security Council in 2000 of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

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1. Gender is the analytical category that highlights that inequalities between men and women are a social construct and not a result of nature, underlining their social and cultural construction in order to distinguish them from biological differences of the sexes. Gender aims to give visibility to the social construction of sexual difference and the sexual division of labour and power. The gender perspective seeks to show that the differences between men and women are a social construct, which is a product of unequal power relations that have historically been established in the patriarchal system. Gender as a category of analysis aims to demonstrate the historical and context-based nature of sexual differences. This approach must be accompanied by an intersectional analysis that relates gender to other factors that structure power in a society, such as social class, race, ethnicity, age, or sexuality, among other aspects that generate inequalities, discrimination and privileges.

Table 3.1. Countries affected by armed conflict with a medium-low or low level of gender equality<sup>2</sup>

Low level of equality		
<b>Afghanistan</b>  <b>Burkina Faso</b> Western Sahel Region  <b>Chad</b> Lake Chad Region  <b>DRC (3)</b> DRC (east) DRC (east-ADF) DRC (west)  <b>Egypt</b> Egypt (Sinai)  <b>Iraq</b>	<b>India (2)</b> India (Jammu and Kashmir) India (CPI-M)  <b>Mali (2)</b> Mali Western Sahel Region  <b>Niger (2)</b> Lake Chad Region Western Sahel Region  <b>Nigeria</b> Lake Chad Region	<b>Pakistan (2)</b> Pakistan Pakistan (Balochistan)  <b>Palestine</b> Israel-Palestine  <b>Somalia (2)</b> Somalia Somalia (Somaliland-SCC Khatumo)  <b>Sudan</b>  <b>Syria</b>  <b>Yemen</b>
Medium-low level of equality		
<b>Cameroon (2)</b> Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) Lake Chad Region	<b>Ethiopia (3)</b> Ethiopia (Amhara) Ethiopia (Oromia) Ethiopia (Tigray)	

### 3.1. Gender inequalities

To evaluate the gender inequality situation in countries affected by armed conflicts and/or socio-political crises, the data provided by the UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI) has been used. This index measures disparities in relation to the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>3</sup> between genders. The value of the Gender Development Index is calculated based on the ratio of HDI values for women and men.<sup>4</sup> The GDI divides countries into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values.

According to the GDI, levels of equality between men and women were medium-low or low in 46 countries, mostly located in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The analysis achieved by cross-referencing the data of this index with those of the countries involved in an armed conflict reveal that **23 of the 36 armed conflicts active**

**23 of the 36  
armed conflicts  
active throughout  
2023 took place  
in countries with  
low or medium-low  
levels of gender  
equality**

**throughout 2023 took place in countries with low levels of gender equality** (Mali, the Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the Western Sahel Region,<sup>5</sup> the DRC (east), the DRC (east-ADF), the DRC (west), Somalia, Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo), Sudan, Afghanistan, India (Jammu and Kashmir), India (CPI-M), Pakistan, Pakistan (Balochistan), Egypt (Sinai), Iraq, Israel-Palestine, Syria and Yemen) **and medium-low gender equality** (Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West), Ethiopia (Amhara), Ethiopia (Oromia) and Ethiopia (Tigray). **There are no data** on the CAR and South Sudan, both countries **in which an armed conflict is taking place**. Fifteen of the 17 armed conflicts with **high-intensity** violence in 2023 (88%) took place in countries with low or medium-low levels of gender equality and there were no GDI data for South Sudan. In eight other countries with one or more armed conflicts, levels of discrimination were lower, in some cases with high levels of equality (Libya, Colombia, Thailand, Russia, Ukraine

- Table compiled from the data gathered by the School for a Culture of Peace on armed conflicts and from the data on countries with low and medium-low levels of gender equality according to the UNDP's Gender Development Index, as indicated in the 2023/2024 Human Development Report. The country is highlighted in bold and the armed conflict(s) active in the country in 2023 are listed below the country. In countries where there is more than one armed conflict, the number of conflicts is indicated in brackets.
- The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in three key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life (longevity), being knowledgeable (education) and having a decent standard of living (income per capita). For more information, see the UNDP's *2021/2022 Human Development Report. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World*, UNDP, 2022.
- To establish the different levels of inequality in countries, the classification proposed by UNDP has been used, in which countries are divided into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values. Group 1: countries with a high level of equality in terms of achievements in HDI between women and men (absolute deviation below 2.5%); Group 2: countries with a medium-high level of equality in terms of achievements in HDI between women and men (absolute deviation between 2.5% and 5%); Group 3: countries with a medium level of equality in terms of achievements in HDI between women and men (absolute deviation between 5% and 7.5%); Group 4: countries with a medium-low level of equality in terms of achievements in HDI between women and men (absolute deviation between 7.5% and 10%); and Group 5: countries with a low level of equality in terms of achievements in HDI between women and men (absolute deviation from gender parity exceeding 10%).
- The conflict in the Western Sahel region is counted as one of the 20 armed conflicts in countries with low levels of gender equality. This conflict involves three countries with a low level of equality (Mali, Ivory Coast and Niger) and one country with a medium-low level (Burkina Faso).

Table 3.2. Countries affected by socio-political crises with a medium-low or low level of gender equality<sup>6</sup>

Low level of equality		
<b>Afghanistan</b> Afghanistan - Pakistan  <b>Algeria</b>  <b>Benin</b>  <b>Burkina Faso</b>  <b>Chad</b>  <b>Côte D'Ivoire</b>  <b>Djibouti</b>  <b>DRC (2)</b> DRC DRC – Rwanda  <b>Egypt (2)</b> Egypt Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan  <b>Guinea</b>	<b>Guinea Bissau</b>  <b>India (4)</b> India (Manipur) India (Nagaland) India – China India – Pakistan  <b>Iran (4)</b> Iran Iran (North West) Iran (Sistan and Balochistan) Iran – USA, Israel  <b>Iraq</b> Iraq (Kurdistan)  <b>Mali</b>  <b>Morocco</b> Morocco – Western Sahara  <b>Niger</b>	<b>Nigeria (3)</b> Nigeria Nigeria (Biafra) Nigeria (Niger Delta)  <b>Pakistan (3)</b> Pakistan Afghanistan - Pakistan India – Pakistan  <b>Palestine</b>  <b>Rwanda (3)</b> Rwanda Rwanda – Burundi RDC – Rwanda  <b>Sierra Leone</b>  <b>Sudan – South Sudan</b>  <b>Togo</b>  <b>Uganda</b>
Medium-low level of equality		
<b>Bangladesh</b>  <b>Ethiopia (5)</b> Ethiopia Ethiopia – Egypt – Sudan Ethiopia – Somalia Ethiopia – Sudan Eritrea – Ethiopia	<b>Lao, PDR</b>  <b>Tajikistan (3)</b> Tajikistan Tajikistan (Gorno-Badakhshan) Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan	<b>Uzbekistan (2)</b> Uzbekistan Uzbekistan (Karakalpakstan)

and Israel) or medium levels of equality (Burundi, Mozambique, the Philippines, Myanmar and Türkiye), according to the GDI. **Forty-six of the 108 socio-political crises active during 2023 took place in countries with low or medium-low levels of gender equality.**

## 3.2. The impact of violence and conflicts from a gender perspective

This section addresses the gender dimension in the conflict cycle, especially in reference to violence against women. The gender perspective is a useful tool for the analysis of armed conflicts and socio-political crises and makes it possible to give visibility to aspects generally ignored in this analysis both in terms of causes and consequences.

### 3.2.1. Sexual violence in armed conflicts and socio-political crises

As in previous years, during 2023 sexual violence was present in a large number of active armed conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Its use, which in some cases was part of the deliberate war strategies of the armed actors, was documented in different reports, as well as by local and international media. In July, the UN Security Council held its yearly **open debate on sexual violence in armed conflict** and the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on the issue. The year 2023 marked the 15th anniversary of UNSC Resolution 1820, which marked the beginning of a series of resolutions as part of the women, peace and security agenda especially focused on sexual violence in armed conflicts. In his 2023 report, which covered the period between January and December 2022, the UN Secretary-General warned

6. Table compiled from the data gathered by the School for a Culture of Peace on socio-political crises and from the data on countries with low and medium-low levels of gender equality according to the UNDP's Gender Development Index, as indicated in the 2023/2024 Human Development Report. The country is highlighted in bold and the socio-political crisis or crises active in the country in 2023 are listed below the country. In countries where there is more than one socio-political crisis, the number of crises is indicated in brackets.

7. The UN considers sexual violence related to conflicts to be "incidents or patterns of sexual violence [...], that is, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancies, forced sterilisation or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, boys or girls. These incidents or patterns of behavior occur in situations of conflict or post-conflict or in other situations of concern (for example, during a political confrontation). In addition, they have a direct or indirect relationship with the conflict or political confrontation, that is, a temporal, geographical or causal relationship. Apart from the international nature of the alleged crimes, which depending on the circumstances constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide or other gross violations of human rights, the relationship with the conflict may be evidenced by taking into account the profile and motivations of the perpetrator, the profile of the victim, the climate of impunity or the breakdown of law and order by which the State in question may be affected, the cross-border dimensions or the fact that they violate the provisions of a ceasefire agreement". UN Action Against Sexual Violence In Conflict, *Analytical and conceptual framework of sexual violence in conflicts*, November 2012.

**Table 3.3. Armed actors and sexual violence in conflicts<sup>8</sup>**

The UN Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in conflicts, published in June 2023, included a list of armed actors who are suspected of having committed systematic acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence or of being responsible for them in situations of armed conflict, which are subject to examination by the Security Council.<sup>9</sup>

	STATE ACTORS	NON-STATE ACTORS
<b>CAR</b>	National armed forces	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; Lord's Resistance Army; Ex-Séléka factions; Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain – Abdoulaye Miskine; Révolution et justice
<b>DRC</b>	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Congolese National Police	Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Janvier; Allied Democratic Forces; Coopérative pour le développement du Congo; Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda; Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri; Forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple; Lord's Resistance Army; Nduma défense du Congo; 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; Mai-Mai Kifuafua; Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki; Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale; Mai-Mai Malaika; Mai-Mai Perci Moto; Mai-Mai Yakutumba; Mouvement du 23 mars (M23); Nyatura; Twa militias; Union des patriotes pour la défense des citoyens
<b>Haiti</b>		G9 Family and Allies– Jimmy Cherizier (alias "Barbeque")
<b>Iraq</b>		Da'esh
<b>Mali</b>		Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad; Ansar Eddine; Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin; Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés, part of Plateforme des mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger
<b>Myanmar</b>	Myanmar armed forces (Tatmadaw), including integrated Border Guard	
<b>Nigeria</b>		Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province
<b>Somalia</b>	Somali National Army; Somali Police Force (and allied militia); Puntland forces	Al-Shabaab
<b>South Sudan</b>	South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces; South Sudan National Police Service	Lord's Resistance Army; Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan People's Liberation/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar
<b>Sudan</b>	Sudanese Armed Forces; Rapid Support Forces	Justice and Equality Movement; Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid
<b>Syria</b>	Government forces, including the National Defence Forces, intelligence services and pro-government militias	Da'esh; Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham; Army of Islam; Ahrar al-Sham

of some worrying trends regarding the use of sexual violence in armed conflicts and said that the situation was deteriorating in Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar and Sudan, where violent changes in government and coups d'état have jeopardised previous progress made in recognising women's rights and where women have been seriously affected by sexual violence. The report points to worsening patterns in the use of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Haiti and South Sudan. Sexual violence was used as part of political and repressive violence in different

armed conflicts and socio-political crises and was one of the driving factors in population displacement, which also affected previously displaced populations, given the vulnerability faced by women who must forcibly leave their places of origin, whether as internally displaced persons or refugees.

The annual report submitted in 2023 by the UN Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence identified 49 armed groups which were credibly suspected of having committed or having been responsible for rapes

8. This table uses the names of the armed actors as they appear in the Secretary-General's report, so they do not necessarily coincide with the ones used in chapters 1 and 2 of this yearbook.

9. UN Security Council, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. Report of the United Nations Secretary-General*, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023.



or other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict settings on the agenda of the UN Security Council.<sup>10</sup> Most of the actors identified by the United Nations in its annex were non-state armed actors, although some state armed actors were also identified, across a total of 11 settings (CAR, DRC, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Nigeria).

According to the classification system used by Escola de Cultura de Pau, 10 of the 11 contexts analysed in the UN Secretary-General's report were countries with high-intensity armed conflicts during 2022 (Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), the DRC (east), the DRC (east – ADF), Syria, Somalia, Sudan (Darfur) and South Sudan), generally exceeding one thousand fatalities per year and having serious impacts on people and the territory, including sexual violence related to the armed conflict. These 10 conflicts remained active in 2023 at high levels of intensity. In six of them, there was also an escalation of violence during 2023 compared to the previous year (Mali, Myanmar, the DRC (east), Syria, Somalia and Sudan). Most of the armed actors blamed for sexual violence in armed conflicts by the UN Secretary-General were non-state actors, some of which had been included on the United Nations' list of terrorist organisations.

In the Ethiopian region of **Tigray**, even though the 2022 peace agreement included issues related to gender-based violence committed over the course of the conflict and urged the parties to condemn any acts of sexual or gender-based violence, Eritrean forces and the Fano militias continued to carry out acts of sexual violence and atrocities, as detailed by the African Union's International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia, whose mandate was suspended by the Human Rights Council in late 2023.

The **Central African Republic (CAR)** was affected by an escalation of gender-based violence in 2023 as a result of the conflict and the climate crisis. According to the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, the deputy special representative of the UN Secretary-General in the country and humanitarian coordinator of MINUSCA, Mohamed Ag Ayoya, said that the crisis gripping the country should be classified not only as a humanitarian crisis, but as a **“protection and gender crisis”**.<sup>11</sup> Serious human rights violations were reported, including many different forms of gender-based violence, climate change, forced displacement and food insecurity for over half the population. The NGO Working Group said that gender-based violence, including sexual violence, has increased, exacerbated by conflict and the climate crisis, perpetrated not only by armed actors but also by civilians on a massive scale.

*10 of the 11 contexts of conflict-related sexual violence indicated by the UN Secretary-General were countries with high-intensity armed conflicts*

Furthermore, large-scale displacement continued in both the CAR and neighbouring countries. For example, since June 2023, over 37,000 people, mainly women and children, arrived in the prefectures of Ouham and Ouham-Pendé fleeing violence in southeastern Chad, putting them at greater risk of exploitation and violence. Finally, decades of conflict in the CAR have destroyed its ability to provide healthcare, with particularly dire results for sexual and reproductive health.

In the **DRC**, as part of the armed conflict in the eastern part of the country, women and girls have been seriously affected by high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, which continue to rise. In this regard, local and international civil society representatives addressed the UN Security Council in December 2023, arguing that the political negotiating efforts under way (the Luanda and Nairobi processes) need to be more inclusive and led by local peacebuilders and civil society, especially women and youth. Despite the United Nations' zero tolerance policy, during the year MONUSCO reported new complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse in events that took place between 2011 and 2023 that involved members of the military and civilian components of the mission.

The situation in **Somalia** continued to be very serious and there were setbacks in terms of gender-based violence and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, as asserted by the executive director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, at the UN Security Council meeting held in February, where she depicted a devastating situation. The rise in violence and the current drought, which forcibly displaced the population and resulted in food insecurity, exposed the country to a greater risk of famine. The last famine in Somalia, declared in 2011, killed one quarter of a million people and exacerbated gender-based violence. As Sima Bahous<sup>12</sup> noted, rates of sexual violence have risen alarmingly since 2020. They doubled over 2019 and continued to climb as the worst drought in many decades had a devastating impact on all Somalis, with a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Impunity remained widespread and armed groups, especially al-Shabaab, continued to kidnap women and girls, force families to give them their daughters to marry and occupy hospitals and maternity wards. They also silenced and threatened anyone speaking out about the situation, such as by killing Amina Mohamed Abdi, a young MP, and Hibaq Abukar, the prime minister's advisor on women's affairs, as well as other women activists and women working in local and national politics and civil society.

Various actors continued to document and report sexual violence in **Russia's invasion and war against Ukraine**.

10. UN Security Council, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. Report of the United Nations Secretary-General*, S/2023/413, 22 June 2023.

11. NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, *Monthly Action Points. Women, Peace and Security*, November 2023.

12. Bahous, Sima, “Speech: seize the opportunity for decisive action in Somalia”, *UN Women*, 22 February 2023.

Established by the Human Rights Council via Resolution 49/1 of March 2022, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, consisting of three experts in coordination with OHCHR, noted in its October 2023 report that its recent investigations were focused on the provinces of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. In previous reports, it had documented cases in nine provinces of Ukraine and on Russian territory.<sup>13</sup> In this phase, it documented rape and other forms of sexual violence by Russian forces in a district of Kherson province, committed between March and July 2022, mainly during raids by Russian forces on victims' homes.<sup>14</sup> In some cases, sexual violence and threats of sexual violence were documented in Russian-controlled detention facilities. In the cases documented by the international commission, the victims were women between the ages of 19 and 83 and one 16-year-old girl. The commission documented that the sexual violence was committed with the use of force and psychological coercion, that the perpetrators were mostly Russian soldiers and in some cases members of the Donetsk and Luhansk rebel forces, and that additional violence was committed against the victims, including beating, strangulation, choking and shooting near the head. The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) continued to document sexual violence related to the armed conflict in Ukraine. Between 24 February and 30 November, the mission documented 169 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by members of the military forces and Russian agents. Sixty per cent were cases of sexual violence against men, 37% against women, 2% against girls and 1% against boys (101, 63, four and one cases, respectively).<sup>15</sup> Most of the cases (80%) occurred in detention centres against civilians (56, including 37 men, 18 women and one child) and prisoners of war (63 men and 16 women). Between 1 December 2023 and 29 February 2024, the mission documented 66 cases of arbitrary detention of civilians (55 men, 10 women and one child) by Russian forces, some of which could be equivalent to forced disappearance, and reported that most of the victims reported having been subjected to torture, mistreatment or sexual violence.<sup>16</sup> The mission noted that they were violations of Russia's obligations as an occupying power, already identified in previous periods as a documented pattern. Furthermore, 65% of the members a group of Ukrainian prisoners of war (39 of 60) interviewed by

*The report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran identified a pattern of sexual violence perpetrated by state agents in detention centres*

the HRMMU after their release reported having been subjected to sexual violence during their internment, including through attempts or threats of rape and castration, beatings and electric shocks to the genitals and forced stripping. Two of 44 Russian prisoners of war (4.5%) interviewed by the HRMMU reported threats of sexual violence by Ukrainian forces. More of them reported torture or ill-treatment in places of transit: among other data, 13 of them reported beatings, electroshocks or mock executions.

The use of sexual violence by the authorities of **Kazakhstan** against men and women detained as part of the crackdown on the protests of January 2022 was documented and reported in 2023.<sup>17</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, human rights groups documented the use of sexual violence, including rape and the threat of rape, alongside other types of torture and mistreatment such as caning, burning and electroshocks. At least 23 police officers were convicted of torture, but dozens of cases were closed with considerations of unfounded accusations, as HRW warned in its annual report on the human rights situation.<sup>18</sup>

In **Iran**, after a turbulent 2022 due to the protests led by the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement and the regime's harsh crackdown, the year 2023 was characterised by fewer demonstrations and new restrictive measures that especially affected women and girls. During the year, investigations were conducted into the circumstances of the death of Mahsa Amini, the young Kurdish woman whose death triggered popular demonstrations in September 2022, and also into the use of violence in the repression and persecution of dissidents, including sexual violence. The report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran identified a pattern of sexual violence perpetrated by state agents in detention centres.<sup>19</sup> This included rape, torture with electricity to the genitals, forced stripping, fondling and other forms of sexual violence. The mission documented the use of sexual and gender-based violence against women, men and minors who had been detained, including LGBTIQ+ people arrested for their connection to the protests. The report indicates that Iranian security forces also appealed to social and cultural stigmas linked to sexual and gender issues to frighten, humiliate and punish

13. See chapter 3 (Gender, Peace and security) in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2023! Report on conflicts, humans rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

14. Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine*, Human Rights Council, A/78/540, 19 October 2023.

15. OHCHR, *Report on the human rights situation, 1 August 2023 to 30 November 2023*, OHCHR, 12 December 2023.

16. OHCHR, *Report on the human rights situation, 1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024*, OHCHR, 26 March 2024.

17. See the summary on Kazakhstan in chapter 2 (Socio-political crises) de Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alert 2023! Report on conflicts, humans rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2023.

18. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2024*, HRW, 2024.

19. Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran*, HRC, A/hrc/55/67, 2 February 2024.

people involved in protests against the regime. Sexual and gender-based violence against female protesters was often accompanied by insults questioning their honour and morality and was sometimes justified by the authorities as a result of “the freedom they want”.

### 3.2.2. Response to sexual violence in armed conflicts

Throughout the year there were different initiatives to respond to sexual violence in the context of armed conflicts, as well as to fight against impunity in different judicial bodies. Some of these are described below.

In relation to the **United Nations’ response to sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel serving under its mandate**, the strategy promoted by UN Secretary-General António Guterres since 2017 continued to focus on four areas of action: prioritising the rights and dignity of victims; ending impunity by strengthening reporting; collaborating with states, civil society and associated actors; and improving communications. In his report for 2023, the UN Secretary-General<sup>20</sup> indicated that 100 complaints were filed with peacekeeping missions and special political missions during the year. This was an increase, since 79 complaints were filed in 2022. The complaints identified 143 victims: 115 adults and 28 minors. As in 2022, two peacekeeping missions received 90% of the complaints, the same as the previous year: MONUSCO in the DRC with 66 complaints and MINUSCA in the CAR, with 24 complaints. Additional allegations were related to the missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, Haiti (the former United Nations Stabilisation Mission), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan, which is no longer active. The UN Secretary-General described the challenges hindering the end of sexual exploitation and abuse at the United Nations, especially in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, such as the lack of financing, inconsistencies between operations and programmes, the absence of safe and confidential reporting channels, the need to improve the technical capacity of staff, particularly designated focal points to ensure protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and difficulties related to reporting procedures. There were also delays in investigations, making it difficult to provide victims’ with accountability and adequate support.

**MONUSCO  
and MINUSCA  
peacekeeping  
missions accounted  
again for 90% of  
the allegations of  
sexual exploitation  
and abuse**

The Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court presented a new “Policy on gender-based crimes: crimes involving sexual, reproductive and other gender-based violence”.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of this document is to improve the work of the prosecutor in prosecuting gender-based crimes, clarifying and guiding application of the Rome Statute and contributing to the development of international jurisprudence in that area. The document notes that all crimes committed covered by the Statute (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression) may involve gender-based factors when they are committed and cause gender-specific harm as a result. The term “gender-based crimes” replaces the term “sexual and gender-based crimes” used in 2014. Gender-based crimes include crimes of sexual violence, reproductive violence and other types of gender-based violence and how they interrelate.

In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)<sup>22</sup> opened a macro case called “Gender-based violence, sexual violence, reproductive violence and other crimes of prejudice based on sexual orientation, expression and/or diverse gender identity as part of the Colombian armed conflict”, aimed at addressing all sexual and gender-based violence committed during the armed conflict by the different parties involved. In this way, three subcases were established to address the violence committed by members of the armed group FARC-EP against civilians, by members of the security forces against civilians and by these two actors within each of these organisations. The investigation is not only focused on the armed actors’ crimes and behaviours, but also on their motives and rationales. The JEP indicated that 35,178 victims of gender-based, sexual and reproductive violence had been reported between 1957 and 2016, of which practically 90% were women. The JEP also found that a significant portion of the crimes were committed against the LGBTIQ+ population. The JEP identifies two years in which there was a peak in sexual violence: in 2002 and 2014. The macro case was opened because the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and the now-defunct FARC-EP included sexual violence as a crime that could not be pardoned. Its inclusion was the result of a major civil society advocacy campaign, which after the agreement was signed also called for opening a case as part of the JEP. Civil society organisations involved in the advocacy campaigns hailed the opening of the macro case, describing it as a victory for the victims of sexual violence in the conflict.

20. UN Secretary-General, *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Report of the Secretary-General*. A/78/774, 2024.

21. Office of the Prosecutor, *Policy On Gender-Based Crimes, Crimes involving sexual, reproductive and other gender-based violence*. International Criminal Court, 2023.

22. The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) is the justice component of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition established in the peace agreement between the national government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, signed in 2016.



### 3.2.3. Other gender-based violence in socio-political crises or armed conflict

In addition to sexual violence, armed conflicts and socio-political crisis had other serious gender impacts. Impunity for human rights violations continued to be a recurrent element.

The gender impacts on the **Gaza Strip** were especially noticeable and serious in 2023. Hamas' unprecedented attack on 7 October triggered the start of an Israeli military offensive against the entire Gaza Strip, characterised by enormous destructive power and the indiscriminate and deliberate use of violence against the Palestinian civilian population. By the end of 2023, in less than three months, the Israeli campaign, which was described as collective punishment and increasingly as genocide against the Palestinian people, had caused the death of more than 25,000 Palestinians, while another estimated 8,000 remained buried under the rubble. Seventy per cent of this total were women and minors. As indicated by UN Women, this percentage is especially significant because it reverses the trend observed in the last 15 years, in which most (67%) civilian victims were men.<sup>23</sup> In her report "Anatomy of a Genocide", the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, argued that it could not be assumed that all adult men are Hamas combatants.<sup>24</sup>

She also pointed out that in early December, Israel announced that it had killed "7,000 terrorists" in a stage of the military campaign and hostilities in which only 5,000 adult men had been identified among the dead. As Albanese asserted, this means that the Israeli government assumed that all the Palestinian men killed in the offensive were "terrorists", revealing an intention to attack indiscriminately, assigning them the status of active combatants by default.

The consequences are not only limited to lethality. By the end of 2023, the Israeli air and ground campaign had displaced more than 75% of the population, forced to flee first south and then west while being attacked on routes previously identified as safe by Israel. The destruction of homes, hospitals and all types of civil infrastructure and the intensification of the blockade contributed to a humanitarian crisis of extraordinary proportions that led more than half the Gazan population to famine. In this context, characterised by very serious shortages of water, food, medicine and fuel, overcrowding and constant insecurity due to persistent attacks, Palestinian women tried to sustain life. At the same time, women faced many different effects, such as violations of their right to health care: diseases resulting from overcrowding

and the lack of hygiene, the lack of access to basic menstrual hygiene products, which motivated many of them to take pills to block menstruation, and the lack of medical treatment. Over 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza have been especially affected by the crisis due to their inability to access necessary health care in the pre- and post-partum phase. Thus, thousands of women have been forced to give birth in extreme conditions, some of them subjected to caesarean sections without anaesthesia, while the percentage of premature births increased between 25% and 30%. Due to a lack of basic medical supplies, many young women have had otherwise unnecessary hysterectomies to save their lives, but which leave them unable to procreate in the future. Thousands of Palestinian mothers in Gaza suffered daily from the death or mutilation of their sons and daughters (by the end of the year, more than one thousand had lost one or both legs), the countless forms of deprivation and the inability to offer them security, protection, food or access to their most basic rights, such as education. In this context, many also warned of the impacts on mental health and the collective trauma that will affect generations of Palestinians as a consequence of the genocide.

The issue of sexual violence has also been a factor. In early 2024, the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and executive director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, travelled to Israel to investigate allegations of sexual violence committed by members of Hamas and other Palestinian groups during the 7 October offensive. The United Nations has stressed that the mission, which was limited in duration, was not investigative and therefore could not verify the allegations, determine the prevalence of the incidents or attribute them to any specific group, stressing that to do so would require an independent investigation with the necessary powers.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Special Representative declared that she had received indications of sexual violence in at least three locations (the Nova festival, a road and a kibbutz) and against people held as hostages. Bahous also collected information and evidence on the use of sexual violence against Palestinian women and men detained by Israeli security forces in Gaza and the West Bank following the events of 7 October, including blows to the genitals, threats of rape and forced stripping.

Discriminatory practices, policies and laws persisted against women in **Afghanistan**, who were exposed to very high levels of violence with no protection from the authorities, further contributing to their exclusion and discrimination against them. For example, during 2023, many divorces approved by the previous government were annulled, exposing many women to

*Seventy per cent of the people who died due to the Israel military campaign in Gaza were women and children*

23. UN Women, *Statement on Gaza by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous*, 19 January 2024.

24. Albanese, Francesca, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, HRC, A/HRC/55/73, 25 March 2024.

25. UNSC, *Report of the secretary general on conflict-related sexual violence*, S/2024/292, 4 April 2024.

gender-based violence as they were forced to return. In fact, the situation of Afghan women was the subject of attention at the UN Security Council, which through the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2679 commissioned an independent assessment of the situation in Afghanistan and recommendations for addressing relations with the country.<sup>26</sup> The assessment indicated that the situation of women and girls there was a serious issue raised by all actors involved in the investigations for preparing the report, confirming how the policies promoted by the Taliban regime involve serious human rights violations and break several different international treaties, including CEDAW. The repeal of discriminatory legislation against women and the protection of the rights of women and girls were noted as steps that the Taliban administration should take for eventual diplomatic normalisation in the future.

In addition to sexual violence, the armed conflict in **Somalia** continued to have other serious impacts on gender. At the UN Security Council meeting in February 2023, the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and executive director of UN Women, Sima Bahous, revealed a devastating situation. Bahous noted that in Somalia, the 30% quota for women in elections and government was not met, women's representation had decreased, sexual violence had increased and Parliament had not yet ratified the sexual crimes bill unanimously adopted by the Council of Ministers five years before.

Instead, opponents of the law pushed for alternative legislation that would legalise child marriage, bypass the age of consent, reduce the types of admissible evidence and eliminate survivors' rights. Bahous said that the Somali women invited to report to the Council of Ministers had warned of this situation, but no appropriate action had been taken.

In **Sudan**, the Ministry of Social Development's Unit for Combating Violence against Women reported an increase in acts of gender violence allegedly perpetrated by the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and combatants in Khartoum, South Darfur and West Darfur. As a result of the armed conflict that began in April 2023, human rights organisations estimated that the number of people who needed gender violence prevention and response services during the year increased by over one million, placing the figure at 4.2 million throughout the country. They also reported that the growth of insecurity and attacks on hospitals drastically reduced the ability to provide services to survivors. Amnesty International reported that dozens of

women and girls, some as young as 12, have suffered sexual violence by the warring factions and that some have even been held in prolonged periods of captivity in conditions of sexual slavery. The Sudanese Group for Victims of Enforced Disappearance reported 96 cases of women who were likely to have suffered rape, sexual slavery or exploitation for domestic work.<sup>27</sup>

**In 2023, 27 of the 36 active armed conflicts occurred in countries where ILGA had documented the enforcement of legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population, exacerbating the impacts of violence in these contexts. 16 of the 17 high-intensity armed conflicts in 2023 (94% of cases) occurred in countries with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population, namely the conflicts in Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest regions), Ethiopia (Amhara), Ethiopia (Oromia), Mali, Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram), Western Sahel Region, DRC (East), DRC (East-ADF), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia-Ukraine, Egypt (Sinai) Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. In the Russian invasion and armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, only Russia was identified as a country with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population, and not Ukraine, according to ILGA data.**

**16 of the 17 high-intensity armed conflicts in 2023 (94% of cases) occurred in countries where ILGA had documented the enforcement of legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population**

In November 2023, the Supreme Court of **Russia** endorsed a ban on the "international LGBTI movement" and its activities and approved classifying it as "extremist" at the request of the Ministry of Justice, a ruling that could mean prison sentences for participants and organisers of activities in defence of LGBTIQ+ rights and that prohibits the use of LGBTIQ+ symbols. The Russian political and judicial authorities took various other forms of action to repress and restrict the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population during the year.<sup>28</sup> **On various occasions, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that the war in Ukraine was also a war for the defence of "traditional values".** Russian feminist activists continued to oppose the war. In December 2022, the Russian Ministry of Justice had included the Russian feminist movement Feminist Anti-War Resistance on the list of "foreign agents". Activists and coordinators of this movement faced harassment from the authorities, such as frequent identification, fines, arrests, home searches and the confiscation of computers. Nevertheless, over 45 feminist groups remained active in different parts of Russia and the movement had activists in 28 countries.<sup>29</sup>

Setbacks in the rights of LGBTIQ+ people continued to occur in **Uganda**. On 21 March, Parliament passed a

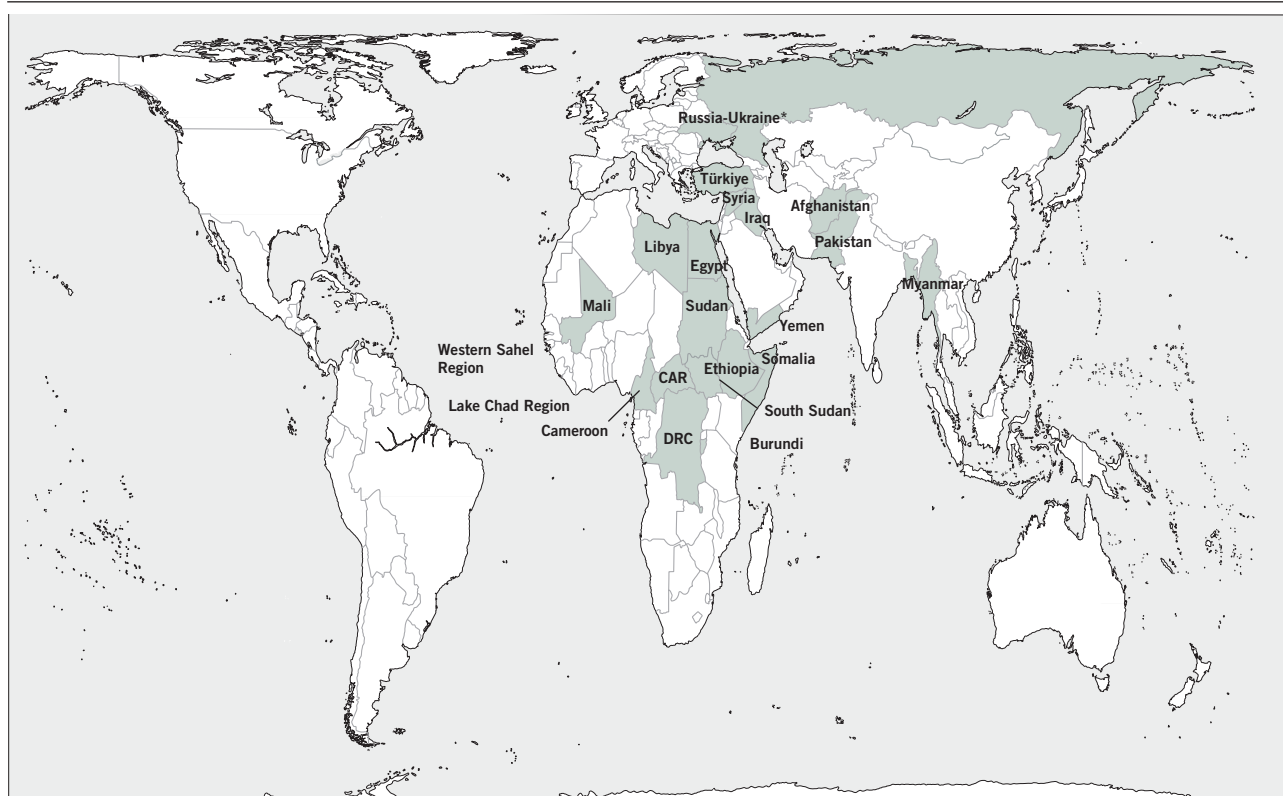
26. Independent Assessment Mandated by Security Council Resolution 2679 (2023).

27. Suleiman, Samar, "Living Through Hell: Sudanese Women Pay the Highest Price of War", *Carnegie*, 26 March 2024.

28. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2024*, 2024.

29. Meridiano 13, "Russian dissident Liliya Vezhevatova: 'Women are the face of protest in Russia'", *Voxeurop*, 4 October 2023.

Map 3.2. Countries in armed conflict with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population



■ Armed conflicts in countries with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population

\* The Russia-Ukraine armed conflict is included in this map because ILGA's report includes Russia as a country with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population.

Table 3.4. Armed conflicts in countries with criminalising legislation or policies against the LGBTIQ+ population<sup>30</sup>

AFRICA	ASIA	MIDDLE EAST	EUROPE
Burundi Cameroon (Ambazonia/North West and South West) Central African Republic DRC (East) DRC (East-ADF) DRC (West) Ethiopia (Amhara) Ethiopia (Tigray) Ethiopia (Oromia) Lake Chad Region (Boko Haram) Libya Mali Somalia Somalia (Somaliland-SSC Khatumo) South Sudan Sudan Western Sahel Region	Afghanistan Myanmar Pakistan Pakistan (Balochistan)	Egypt (Sinai) Iraq Syria Yemen	Türkiye (south-east) Russia – Ukraine*

\* The Russia-Ukraine armed conflict is included in this table because ILGA's report includes Russia as a country with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population.

Source: Prepared internally with data from Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Alerta 2024! Report on conflicts, human rights and peacebuilding*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024; and Kellyn Botha, *Our identities under arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions*, ILGA World, 2023.

30. This table includes armed conflicts in 2023 in countries with legislation or policies criminalising the LGBTIQ+ population.

bill strengthening the criminalisation of sexual relations between people of the same sex. The draft bill aims to expand the Sexual Offences Bill passed by Parliament in 2021, which penalises “any sexual act between people of the same gender”, as well as anal sex between people of any gender, with up to 10 years in prison. In late May, the text was ratified and signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni, provoking widespread international condemnation. Ugandan activists challenged the law in court because, among other issues, it provides for the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality”, defined as cases of homosexual relations between a minor and other categories of vulnerable people, or when the perpetrator is infected with HIV. The US blasted the legislation as a “tragic violation” of human rights, announcing visa restrictions on people who “undermine the democratic process” and excluding the country from the African trade initiative for human rights violations. The World Bank also suspended loans to the country and announced a freeze on new loans to Uganda, causing the Ugandan shilling to fall to its lowest level against the US dollar in almost eight years.

Over the last year, there was an intense controversy in **Iraq** around the use of the concept of gender. Greater hostility towards LGBTIQ+ people was observed and an initiative seeking to criminalise homosexuality also raised alarm. The UN Secretary-General expressed concern about the increase in misinformation and attempts by government institutions to prohibit the use of the term “gender”. Amidst questions and criticism on social media about the use of the term “gender” on the grounds that the concept promotes values that conflict with the social and religious traditions of Iraq, several ministries issued instructions with their own definitions of gender or that provided for the elimination of the concept. Given these developments, in July the secretariat of the Council of Ministers issued a circular clarifying the term and ordered it be followed in parentheses by the phrase “men and women” in all official documents. At the same time, the authority regulating the media in Iraq issued instructions in August to prohibit the use of the term “gender” and to replace the word “homosexuality” with “sexual deviation”. This came as the Council of Representatives completed the first review of a proposal that seeks to reform the Anti-Prostitution Law to rename it the Anti-Prostitution and Homosexuality Law and to criminalise same-sex relationships. According to the proposal, people convicted of homosexual conduct could face life imprisonment and the death penalty. Previously, in June, after a man burned a copy of the Quran outside a mosque in Stockholm, demonstrations were reported in front of the Swedish embassy in Baghdad. Rainbow flags, a symbol of the LGBTIQ+ community, were burned during these protests. According to media reports, the Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr may have encouraged his followers to do the same.<sup>31</sup> In May, the Kurdistan

Regional Government also ordered the closure of the NGO Razan Organization, citing its “activities in the field of homosexuality”. In 2022, Kurdish MPs had also presented a proposal to punish individual and collective activism that tried to defend the rights of the LGBTIQ+ population.<sup>32</sup>

During 2023, terminological debates in Iraq also focused on the concept of “women’s empowerment”. Thus, during his visit to the country, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said that the concepts of “gender” and “women’s empowerment” do not contradict any culture, religion or tradition and stressed the need to involve more women in decision-making and in ways to address violence against women. Despite these calls, in November the secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers again issued instructions to replace the term “gender” with the phrase “justice between women and men”. Some Iraqi NGOs and human rights activists, especially those connected to women’s organisations, expressed concern about the controversy and these instructions. They fear that the political climate around this issue will affect their programmes and advocacy work. The UN also warned that these changes compromise gender equality and lead to intimidation and harassment of women’s rights activists.

### 3.3. Peacebuilding from a gender perspective

In this section some of the most notable initiatives are analysed to incorporate the gender perspective into the various aspects of peacebuilding.

#### 3.3.1. Resolution 1325 and the agenda on women, peace and security

A new session of the open discussion on women, peace and security was held in October and the UN Secretary-General presented his annual report on the issue.<sup>33</sup> The main theme of the 2023 session was women’s participation in international peace and security, in a discussion in which they warned about the international setbacks in women’s political participation and the advance of authoritarianism, with misogyny being a central part of the discourse and policies of many authoritarian governments, as described by the UN Secretary-General in his annual report on women, peace and security. The Secretary General also said that in 2022, the year to which the data collected for the report issued in 2023 refers, 614 million women and girls lived in contexts affected by armed conflict. The report indicated that women participated as negotiators

31. Saad, Ahmed, “Koran burning in Sweden sparks protest in Baghdad”, *Reuters*, 29 June 2023.

32. Human Rights Watch, “Iraq”, *World Report 2024*, *Human Rights Watch*. 11 January 2024.

33. UN Secretary-General, *Women and peace and security. Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2023/725, 28 September 2023.



**Table 3.5. Countries with 1325 National Action Plans participating in peace negotiations and processes**

Cameroon (2017)	Philippines (2009)
CAR (2014)	Armenia (2019)
Chad (2023)	Azerbaijan (2020)
DRC (2010)	Cyprus (2020)
Mali (2012)	Georgia (2018)
Morocco (2022)	Moldova (2018)
Mozambique (2019)	Serbia (2017)
Senegal (2011)	Kosovo (2014)
Somalia (2021)	Ukraine (2016)
South Sudan (2015)	Palestine (2015)
Sudan (2020)	Yemen (2019)
Korea (2014)	

\*In parentheses, the year that the National Action Plan was approved

or delegates representing the parties in conflict in four of the five UN-facilitated peace processes in 2022. All these peace processes had space for consultation with women's civil society organisations and expert advice on gender was available. However, despite this representation in peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations, there was a decline in participation for the second year in a row, tumbling from 23% in 2020 to 19% in 2021 and 18% in 2022. This setback once again revealed the deterioration in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and the lack of commitment of the governments and actors in conflict. The report also noted that 33% of the peace agreements signed in 2022 (six of the 18 agreements reached that year) included clauses referring to women, girls or gender. Thus, the report's assessment of women's involvement in peace processes and the inclusion of gender issues in the different peace agreements reached was not at all positive, since in addition to the setback identified in 2022, the data pointed to a regressive trend in an international context of fierce armed conflict and increased violence.

***The UN-Secretary General's report noted a regressive trend in women's involvement in peace negotiations***

In 2023, 23 countries involved in peace negotiations had a National Action Plan in place to promote the participation of women in these processes. Eleven of these countries were in Africa (Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, CAR, DRC, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan); two in Asia (South Korea and the Philippines); eight in Europe (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, Kosovo, and Ukraine); and two in the Middle East (Palestine and Yemen). Neither of the countries in the Americas with ongoing negotiations had a National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Thus, in 27 of the 45 active negotiations during 2023, at least one of the negotiating government actors had a plan of action that

was supposed to guide its activity in terms of inclusion of the gender perspective and women's participation. The 27 negotiations and peace processes took place in Cameroon (Ambazonia/Northwest and Southwest), Chad, Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan, Mali, Morocco–Western Sahara, Mozambique, CAR, DRC, Senegal (Casamance), South Sudan, Sudan, Sudan-South Sudan, Korea (Republic of Korea - DPRK, the Philippines (MILF), the Philippines (NDF), Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), Cyprus, Georgia (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), Moldova (Transnistria), Serbia-Kosovo, Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Palestine and Yemen. However, even if they had this tool, most peace negotiations continued to exclude women and did not include the gender perspective into their dynamics, calling into question the effectiveness of action plans as inclusive peacebuilding tools.

At the beginning of the year, the government of **Chad** unveiled its National Action Plan for the period 2023-2027 to promote the women, peace and security agenda, prepared with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Swiss cooperation and Spanish cooperation. The process was based on proposals made by more than 200 women leaders who participated in training sessions on women, peace and security and on preventing violent extremism. Over the course of several years, the plan was drafted and validated by various ministries and stakeholders, who also received training on Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda.

In March 2023, the government of **Moldova** approved its second National Action Plan on women, peace and security (2023-2027). Two of the plan's five "general objectives" were devoted to the security and defence sector, though no "general objective" was related to conflict prevention or resolution or to peacebuilding.<sup>34</sup>

34. Government of Moldova, *Action Plan implementing the National Programme on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security for 2023-2027*, 2023.



The general objectives of the new action plan were to: 1) boost women's participation and representation in the security and defence sector; 2) prevent inequalities, violence and harassment in the security and defence sector by reducing the risks and eliminating the consequences of discrimination; 3) providing protection through good governance and capacity-building; 4) rehabilitating the affected population through effective, sustainable and intelligent measures; 5) providing humanitarian support for women and girls in conflict and post-conflict areas; and 6) promoting communication and accountability. As part of "specific objective 1" of "general objective 1", the plan included action aimed at building professional capacities through training and the transfer of knowledge and experiences for women and female mediators, women and men in mixed teams and multidisciplinary teams working on conflict resolution. The scope of this action was measured in an indicator referring to the establishment of a training course in which at least 50 women are trained and involved in conflict resolution. The plan includes actions aimed at promoting women's rights in times of peace and conflict and respecting the rights of women, girls and women with children in conflict and post-conflict situations. The Moldovan Ministry of the Interior noted that the new National Action Plan included actions to be implemented jointly with local authorities for the first time. The estimated cost of the action plan, according to the Ministry of the Interior, was 23.6 million lei, to be financed by state budgets and assistance from development actors.

The thematic report on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, led by MP and rapporteur Teona Akubardia, was submitted to the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of **Georgia** in 2023. According to the Georgian Parliament, the report's recommendations included facilitating women's effective involvement in the Geneva International Discussions (GIDs, the name of the peace negotiating process involving Georgia, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Russia, as well as the UN, EU and US as co-facilitators) and in the incident prevention and response mechanisms (IPRMs).<sup>35</sup> It also recommended addressing women's participation in decision-making in the security and defence sector; the integration of the gender perspective in human security, including in relation to the internally displaced population; the development of a conflict-related sexual harassment prevention policy; and guarantees of parliamentary supervision of compliance with the recommendations and the involvement of civil society in that process.

In March, under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, **South Sudan**

approved the second National Action Plan on the women, peace and security agenda (2023-2027). The new action plan calls on the government to fund its implementation rather than relying on donors and foresees its development at the state and local levels, so its activities focus more on the situations of local communities. It also ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (known as the Maputo Protocol).<sup>36</sup> Ratification mandates a commitment to gender equality and urges the country's authorities to adopt effective policies and strategies to ensure that the protocol makes a difference in people's lives.

In mid-December, in the **Philippines**, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPRARU), the Philippine Commission on Women, UN Women and several national and international women's rights organisations publicly announced the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for the period from 2023 to 2033. This plan is the fourth since the first was approved in 2010. The OPRARU highlighted that the national plan also addressed emerging realities such as climate action and cyber and maritime security and called on civil society organisations to support its implementation. According to some analysts, the new action plan pays special attention to the creation of spaces and mechanisms to mitigate sexual and gender-based violence to strengthen and encourage the active participation of women with diverse and intersectional identities in conflict prevention, resolution and transformation, and also in establishing peace. Several of the authorities who participated in the plan's launch event said that the Philippines was one of the pioneering countries in Asia to have an instrument of this type and to address the women, peace and security agenda.

In **Haiti**, according to the report of the UN Secretary-General on the BINUH released in October, efforts were made in 2023 to launch a National Action Plan to implement Resolution 1325 (2000) with the establishment of peace and mediation committees in the departments of Ouest, Centre and Artibonite. BINUH and UN Women engaged women's organisations and networks to enhance peacebuilding and mediation efforts and improve participation in public policy development to reduce community violence. In July, UN Women held 12 consultative meetings on reducing community violence in the departments of Ouest, Centre and Artibonite that were attended by political leaders and members of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Rights and women's organisations. During the meetings, it was agreed to establish three networks of women mediators and peacebuilders.

35. Parliament of Georgia, "Presentation by the Gender Equality Council of the report on 'Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Georgia'", 27 September 2023.

36. Tut Pur, Nyagoah, "South Sudan Ratifies Crucial African Women's Rights Treaty", *Human Rights Watch*, 8 June 2023.

### 3.3.2. Gender in peace negotiations

Several peace processes were relevant from a gender point of view during the year 2023.<sup>37</sup> Women's organisations demanded greater participation in different negotiations around the world as well as the inclusion of gender agendas. However, in most of the negotiating processes, significant changes were not implemented to include the participation of women in a significant way.

In late 2022, international contacts and initiatives promoted by Türkiye and Norway were relaunched to address the dispute between **Somalia and Somaliland**, which had been at an impasse for three decades. After many different initiatives to bring the parties closer, these efforts culminated in a meeting in December 2023 between the presidents of both administrations in Djibouti. Special Representative Heidi Johansen participated in the Norwegian delegation. The government of Somaliland designated the former Minister of Health and of Foreign Affairs, Edna Adan, a nationally and internationally recognised figure, as its envoy to the process, which gave it a boost. Edna Adan is considered a symbol in the fight for women's rights in Somalia and has been the president of the UNPO, the organisation of stateless nations in the world, since 2022. Edna Adan has received many awards, including the Templeton Prize in June 2023 for her work in peacebuilding and her fight against female genital mutilation in the Horn of Africa from the hospital that bears her name in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. This award highlighted the traditional role of Somali women's organisations in promoting peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives with the aim of trying to overcome the divisions surrounding the conflict in Somalia. Exploratory contacts in late 2022 and during 2023 culminated in a meeting between the presidents of Somalia and Somaliland in Djibouti on 28 and 29 December 2023, producing an optimistic atmosphere. However, this historic meeting was overshadowed by Ethiopia and Somaliland's announcement on 1 January 2024 that they had signed a memorandum of understanding, triggering a serious diplomatic crisis between them and Somalia.<sup>38</sup>

Although the gender-related provisions on the peace agreement in **South Sudan** (R-ARCSS)<sup>39</sup> include a quota of 35% female participation in all institutions and executive and transition processes, it remained unfulfilled in most of the commissions created to implement the peace agreement, as well as the current government and Parliament. In the bodies created during 2023, the agreed quota of women's representation was

only met in the Council of Political Parties (40%), but not in the National Constitutional Review Commission (32%) or in the National Electoral Commission (22%). This was also not true in the election of state governors, where only one of South Sudan's 10 governors is a woman.

As part of the intra-Haitian dialogue process to try to resolve the political crisis gripping **Haiti**, a national political forum on electoral and constitutional reform, democratic governance and the socio-economic and security situation was held in Port-au-Prince in late May. Community leaders from every department in the country and more than 350 representatives (including about 130 women) from political and social organisations in Haiti participated in the conference. In her attempts to facilitate the political dialogue, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative María Isabel Salvador met with some of these women. In early June, she informed the Security Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security of the progress made in the dialogue process and the results of the national political forum held in May. During this forum, the prime minister at the time, Ariel Henry, and the president of the High Council for the Transition, Mirlande Manigat, stressed the need to continue the national dialogue led by Haiti to create the political and security conditions necessary to allow elections to be held. Senator Mirlande Manigat had been appointed at the beginning of the year as president of the High Council for the Transition, an organisation whose objectives include the promotion of national dialogue in the search for consensus on the main lines of action for the transition period, particularly in matters of public security, the Constitution, elections, economic reform, justice, the rule of law, social and food security.

In September 2023, the UN Secretary-General's personal envoy for **Western Sahara**, Staffan de Misura, was finally able to visit the Moroccan-controlled territory and meet with women's organisations. Rabat had previously objected to the diplomatic representative's meetings with Saharawi civil society activists, prompting De Mistura to refuse to travel there as a way to emphasise the need to remain consistent with the principles of the UN and particularly with commitments to women's involvement in the promotion of peace and security.

The situation of women in **Libya** continued to be influenced by the institutional division and deadlock that, for yet another year, prevented elections from being held in the context of the negotiations to seek a political solution for the country. Moreover, these

37. For more exhaustive information on the incorporation of a gender perspective in currently active peace processes, see the yearbook of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2023. Report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

38. See the summary on Somalia-Somaliland in Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus 2023. Report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria, 2024.

39. UN Women, "Members of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security visit South Sudan", *UN Women*, 15 December 2023.

elections should have taken place in December 2021. Libyan women continued to demand guarantees of greater participation in the electoral political process. The high-level election panel organised a conference in Tripoli in May on strengthening women's participation in elections that was attended by representatives from 12 Arab countries. The need to guarantee the inclusion of women in all stages of the electoral process was emphasised during the conference. Women's groups met with various political representatives to underscore their demand that electoral rules allow for women's meaningful representation in the future Parliament. However, the laws approved in the second half of the year set a minimum quota of only six of the 60 seats in the Senate for women, much lower than the 20% that had been established after the electoral reform.

In **Syria**, as in Libya, the possibilities of women's involvement in forums of political dialogue on the future of the country were determined by the persistent impasse in the negotiations, particularly the UN-promoted track known as the Geneva process. The Constitutional Committee established as part of this process, in which women make up 29% of the represented delegations, continued without meeting since its discussions were called off in June 2022. During 2023, the UN special envoy for Syria continued meeting with women delegates to the Constitutional Committee and those who make up the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB). The WAB continued to receive criticism due to its level of representativeness. After eight years of work by the WAB, the special envoy's office launched a call to renew its members. In 2023, UN Women also emphasised the importance of supporting the role of Syrian women in track 2 and 3 diplomatic initiatives, in community mediation and local dialogue.

Activists in **Yemen** continued to complain of women's exclusion from formal negotiations. Together with other marginalised groups, they voiced concern about the ongoing negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis without the participation of other constituent parts of Yemeni society. In this context, several representatives held a meeting in Jordan with the UN special envoy for Yemen and insisted that their demand for inclusion in the deliberations on the future of Yemen is not a privilege, but a right and a guarantee for sustainable peace. The priorities they identified for a future political agreement for the country included a ceasefire, the reopening of roads and payment of the salaries of public sector workers. They also stressed the need for confidence-building measures such as the release of all prisoners, maps that facilitate demining and a promise not to make new arbitrary arrests. Some analysts highlighted the crucial peacebuilding work that

Yemeni women have continued to do despite the many obstacles and impacts of the armed conflict, such as by supporting programmes for reintegrating child soldiers, opening humanitarian corridors and mediating in tribal disputes.

### 3.3.3. Civil society initiatives

Different peacebuilding initiatives led and carried out by women's civil society organisations took place in 2023. This section reviews some of the most relevant ones.

Since the beginning of armed clashes in **Sudan** in April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary group Rapid Support Forces (RSF), different dialogue initiatives promoted by women have emerged, calling for a ceasefire, stressing humanitarian needs and condemning the sexual violence related to the conflict. These initiatives also demanded women's participation in negotiations to end the violence, as well as in any future political process, blasting the failures to include them in both. In late October, UN Women organised a conference with Sudanese women peacebuilders in Kampala (Uganda) in partnership with the IGAD, the African Union and the International Women's Centre for Peace. Attended by over 400 women from 14 Sudanese states, the conference aimed to build bridges between women in Sudan and countries in the region and highlighted the leadership role that Sudanese women and girls are playing in the peace movement.<sup>40</sup>

In early December, around 300 people from all over **Haiti**, mostly women, participated in the "National Conference on Preventing and Managing Electoral and Political Violence against Women in Haiti", which enjoyed the participation and collaboration of UN Women. The main objective of the conference was to help to structure the inter-Haitian national dialogue around the issue of gender sensitivity in the national democratic process. One of the aspects addressed at the conference was the action taken and mechanisms set up to reduce violence against women in electoral processes and analyse their impact on women's political participation and dynamics of development in Haiti.

The networking efforts of peacebuilders from **Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia** increased in 2023 against a background of deterioration in recent years, including situations of tension and conflict in those regions. Dozens of women activists participated in a two-day interregional and intergenerational conference in Istanbul (Türkiye) in June organised by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) with the support of the OSCE.<sup>41</sup> It included participants

40. UN Women, "Sudanese women advocate for peace at conference in Uganda", *UN Women*, 22 December 2023.

41. Kostava, Natia and Sophia Farion, "GNWP Reports from Istanbul, Türkiye: 'Women's Networks WIN Together' Regional Conference on Networks across Women Peacebuilders and Mediators in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia", *GNWP*, 24 August 2023; OSCE, "OSCE brings together women peacebuilders and mediators from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia to discuss common priorities and advocacy strategies", *OSCE*, 12 February 2024.

from Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting was aimed at strengthening networks active in the women, peace and security agenda and gender equality in these regions. The conference met for a second time in February 2024 in Vienna (Austria), where the participants explored strategies to enhance networking. Among other recommendations, they stressed the importance of flexible, long-term financial support for women peacebuilders and mediators. Women from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan also jointly participated in a project led by Kyrgyzstan's Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), a member of the international network Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), to promote dialogue between them and empower them to try to influence the peace negotiations and political decision-making processes in the region. The networking included trauma-sensitive dialogue facilitation methodologies.<sup>42</sup>

The Network of Women Mediators of **South Caucasus** (NWMSC) was still involved in transforming the conflicts in the region and in promoting women's participation in peacebuilding in the area. In 2023, they published a study that included an analysis of the current situation of the various conflicts in the region and recommendations based on individual and group interviews with civil society actors involved in peacebuilding from different sectors. These actors identified a profound lack of trust, the reactivation of trauma in different populations as a result of the war in Ukraine and concerns about human security, resource degradation, reintegration (including of ex-combatants), violence against women and children, the impacts of militarisation and economic issues. They also made recommendations about the need for direct dialogue between the parties in conflict and public diplomacy.<sup>43</sup>

In **Russia and Ukraine**, female relatives of soldiers staged protests demanding their demobilisation and return. The demand gained more visibility in Russia in November when around 30 women in a march led by the Communist Party in Moscow openly demanded the return of their family members mobilised for the war, though they specified that they were not opposed

to it. According to the media, hundreds of women organised around this demand after the event.<sup>44</sup> In December, the Telegram channel *Put Domoy* ("The way home") had 35,000 members. It had been created in September. According to analysts, the Russian authorities did not harass or imprison the participants because many of them took positions defending the Kremlin.<sup>45</sup> Some participants said that it was a mixed movement, with different views on the war, but that the Kremlin's lack of response to their requests may have turned opinion against it.<sup>46</sup> The families of soldiers linked to *Put Domoy* took various actions, such as sending letters, placing stickers and engaging in some street protests. In September 2022, Russia issued a mobilisation decree affecting tens of thousands of men (up to 300,000, according to some media outlets). The authorities are not allowing for their demobilisation and have not established any rotation system, forcing the mobilised men to remain on the war front. The Russian authorities refused to issue permits to organise protests, allegedly citing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in some cases. To counter *Put Domoy*, the Russian government is promoting two pro-war and pro-regime women's movements, *Katyusha* and *Zhenskoe Dvizhenie*.<sup>47</sup> There were also some protests by female relatives of military personnel in Ukraine, demanding that they be relieved and return home.

In June 2023, the United Nations General Assembly approved the creation of a specific body charged with clarifying the fate of thousands of people who have disappeared in **Syria** since the armed conflict started in 2011. The Independent Institution on Missing Persons was established by Resolution 301/77 via the initiative of many Syrian civil society organisations such as Families for Freedom, the Caesar Families Association and Syrian Campaign. Women are greatly involved in activism and advocacy work for these organisations, given that the vast majority of the missing people are men. It is estimated that more than 155,000 people have disappeared during the Syrian armed conflict between March 2011 and August 2023. Most of the missing are attributed to Bashar Assad's regime (more than 135,000, including 8,500 women), while armed groups may be responsible for the rest.

42. GPPAC, "Beyond borders in Central Asia: Why is women's involvement in regional peacebuilding crucial?", GPPAC, 4 March 2024; GPPAC, "Women Leading Peace. Raising women's voices in peace processes in Central Asia", GPPAC, 2023.

43. Network of Women Mediators of South Caucasus, *Is there a key to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus?*, NWMSC, 2023.

44. Vitkine, Benoît, "Russian women's groups protest against 'endless mobilization' of soldiers", *Le Monde*, 23 November 2023.

45. Sauer, Pjotr, "'We're tired of being good girls': Russia's military wives and mothers protest against Putin", *The Guardian*, 25 December 2023.

46. Ibid.

47. The Moscow Times, "Authorities Fund Kremlin-Loyal Women's Movements to Foil Protesting Families of Mobilized Soldiers – Holod", *The Moscow Times*, 26 December 2023.