



**Commission on the Status of
Women (CSW)
Chair Letter**

DEAR DELEGATES,

Welcome to this year's Commission on the Status of Women session for CNYMUN 2026! We firmly believe that, in discussions over women's rights, it is imperative to not only consider the well documented and visible aspects of women's situations, but also the less talked about aspects. We hope that this committee can help bring delegates to a deeper understanding of women's positions in our modern day world, while furthering their MUN and diplomacy skills.

This all being said, we hope that everyone can take these discussions seriously and put their best foot forward when debating possible solutions for the undermentioned topics. The two chairs of this committee are Becca Hatt and Maggie Vincent.

ABOUT THE CHAIRS:

Becca is a junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. This is her fourth year of CNYMUN, starting back in 8th grade as a page, and is her first time as a chair. Besides MUN, Becca participates in many other school clubs (such as Improv. Club, the Latino and Hispanic Culture Club, DICO, Stage Crew, and more) along with having many hobbies (such as reading, making art, baking, and journaling). When not at school, she can be found at her job, with her pets, or with her nose in a book.

Maggie is a Junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. This is her third year of MUN and her first year as a chair. Outside of MUN, you can find her listening to music and hanging out with friends. On the weekends she volunteers at the Fast Bee's Youth Track program. She also works as a pharmacy technician and babysitter.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

Your topics for the Commission on the Status of Women at CNYMUN 2026 will be:

1. Developing Legal Protections For Women Surrounding Domestic Violence
2. Protecting Women's Rights in Conflict Zones

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a committee within the UN that works to promote women's rights, aims to give voice to the women and girls who cannot speak up, and advance gender equality throughout our world.¹ It was established in

¹ UN Women. "68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women." *UN Women – Headquarters*, 2024,

1946 to monitor, resolve, and document global issues pertaining to women.² The committee has played an important part in many areas, one of its most notable achievements was helping draft and revise the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Overall the committee continues to play an important role today in ensuring women's protections and finding solutions to new challenges as they arise in our rapidly changing world.

Keeping in line with CNYMUN tradition, all committees will follow Harvard style debate, meaning delegates are prohibited from using pre-written clauses and/or resolutions during committee. Doing so will make a delegate ineligible for awards. To be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a Georgetown style position paper for each topic, meaning that each topic should be one page, single spaced. Position papers should outline the stance of your delegation and demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of your topics. The use of AI is prohibited and will result in disqualification from awards.

When deciding on awards, chairs will look favorably upon delegates who have put significant effort into preparation prior to the conference, collaborate with other delegates without being overbearing, remain within the bounds of their nation's policies, and encourage other's voices to be heard. CNYMUN committees are structured using a tiered structure, designating each committee as open, intermediate, or advanced. CSW is designated as an **open** committee. In turn, the Best New Delegate award will be offered to a first-time delegate in this committee.

Please share position papers prior to the start of the conference. The chairs' emails are listed below for you to contact about any research, position paper, or committee inquiries. It is recommended that all delegates share their position papers to both chair's emails, although chairs will ask for any hard copies of position papers at the start of committee session one if necessary. We encourage you to scan our delegate preparation resources and award structure on www.cnymun.org. We wish you the best of luck and can't wait to see what you bring to CNYMUN 2026!

www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women.

² Wikipedia Contributors. "United Nations Commission on the Status of Women." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 26 Oct. 2019, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Commission_on_the_Status_of_Women.

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TOPIC 1: DEVELOPING LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR WOMEN SURROUNDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence has often been considered an invisible pandemic. The sheer number of people that it affects worldwide, most of whom are women, and the general lack of visibility of it are reasons for such a title. Globally, it is estimated that at least 29% of women suffer through physical or sexual intimate partner violence, or domestic violence, during their lifetimes.³ Though the term “domestic violence” (DV), specifically against women, is regularly interchanged with many other phrases, such as “intimate partner violence” (IPV), “wife beating”, or “sexual abuse/assault” (SA), each term has its own definition and use for certain situations. The broadest of these aforementioned terms is domestic violence. The UN defines domestic violence as “a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain, or maintain, power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.”⁴

Despite the UN’s definition of domestic violence, many countries add caveats to alter what is considered to be domestic violence in their country, or simply do not accept a definition for domestic violence at all. For example, in some countries, such as India or Saudi Arabia, where domestic violence is considered illegal, marital rape does not fall under their definition of domestic violence and is therefore not a criminal act.⁵ Countries that don’t accept a domestic violence definition don’t consider the actions that fall under the definition as illegal acts. Throughout the world, there are 49 countries that have no laws to help protect women from domestic violence.⁶ The countries who don’t consider domestic violence to be illegal include, but are certainly not limited to, The Russian Federation, Iraq, Iran, Haiti,

³ Oto, Aytekin, et al. “Making the Invisible Epidemic Visible.” *Brookings*, 16 Aug. 2023, www.brookings.edu/articles/making-the-invisible-epidemic-visible/#:~:text=Domestic%20violence%20is%20sometimes%20called,be%20as%20high%20as%2041%25.

⁴ United Nations. “What Is Domestic Abuse? | United Nations.” *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/coronavirus/what-is-domestic-abuse.

⁵ Rajvanshi, Astha. “Marital Rape Isn’t a Crime in India. This Lawyer Is Fighting to Change That.” *TIME*, TIME, 27 Mar. 2022, time.com/6160414/marital-rape-india-karuna-nundy-interview/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

⁶ United Nations. “Background | United Nations.” *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/observances/ending-violence-against-women-day/background.

Estonia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁷ There are many reasons that these countries do not consider domestic violence to be illegal, but more often than not, the reasons have to do with a country's traditional or religious values.⁸ Additionally, many of these countries consider an increase in protections for women to be a loss of their traditional values and cultural identity.

The recorded history of domestic violence is unfortunately much less detailed than other forms of violence, as it has not been illegal for that long, and is often not documented. Domestic violence, or wife beating, has long been legal, socially accepted, and/or encouraged since the times of the Romans and before.⁹ Such societal norms have continued and been perpetuated around the world over time, often through religions and cultural practices. To date, only ⅓ of countries have outlawed domestic violence, and on top of that, 37 countries around the world will exempt rape if they are married to, or will eventually marry, the victim of sexual abuse.¹⁰ Prior to the 1990s, less than 1% of the entire human population lived in countries that had federal laws against domestic violence. The four countries who *did* have laws against domestic violence before the 1990s were Canada, Sweden, Ireland, and Singapore.¹¹ Furthermore, in the past few years, there have been many countries, particularly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, that have been re-legalizing domestic violence. Such countries include The Russian Federation and Kazakhstan.¹²

⁷ "There Is Legislation Specifically Addressing Domestic Violence (1=Yes; 0=No) | World Bank Gender Data Portal." *World Bank Gender Data Portal*, genderdata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/sg-leg-dvaw.

⁸ Amnesty International. "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and 'Traditional Values' – New Report." *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

⁹ "History of Intimate Partner Violence Reform." *Freedom and Citizenship*, freedomandcitizenship.columbia.edu/ipv-history#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20Intimate%20Partner,1972. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

¹⁰ United Nations. "Background | United Nations." *United Nations*, www.un.org/en/observances/ending-violence-against-women-day/background.

¹¹ "Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence Has Only Become Widespread in Recent Years." *Our World in Data*, ourworldindata.org/data-insights/legal-protection-against-domestic-violence-has-only-become-widespread-in-recent-years.

¹² Amnesty International. "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and 'Traditional Values' – New Report." *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

Since the 1990s, despite countries having legalized domestic violence, it is still extremely difficult for women to get legal justice against the perpetrators. Not only do less than 40% of domestic violence victims reach out for help, but less than an estimated 10% of cases are reported to the police. The process for charging someone with domestic violence is a long and often traumatic process, but proving domestic violence is also extremely difficult. An example of this is how in many countries, the victims of domestic violence are forced to prove, often without the help of policemen or prosecutors, the harm they have suffered in order to get a domestic violence case prosecuted. And even more extremely, in Ukraine, a domestic violence case can only be prosecuted if the victim can prove the violence happened multiple times.¹³

Historically, there have been many stereotypes, societal norms, and cultural values in place that stop women from being able to get help in the cases of domestic violence. An example of this is that oftentimes the concept of traditional values and cultural identity are used to excuse cases of domestic violence. In many low and middle income countries, domestic violence against women is justified and highly accepted by society, not just by men but also by other women. For many people in patriarchal societies, including women, wife beating is seen as simply allowing the husband to exercise his right to discipline his wife, rather than a form of violence.¹⁴ Additionally, for many governments the maintenance of the family unit is more important than the protection and rights of women in situations of domestic violence— with the government viewing the prosecution of domestic violence (or even allowing a divorce after domestic violence) as a way to break up a family.¹⁵

[al-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report).

¹³ Amnesty International. "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and 'Traditional Values' – New Report." *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

¹⁴ Sardinha, LynnMarie, and Héctor E. Nájera Catalán. "Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence in 49 Low- and Middle-income Countries: A Gendered Analysis of Prevalence and Country-level Correlates." *PLoS ONE*, vol. 13, no. 10, Oct. 2018, p. e0206101, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0206101.

¹⁵ Amnesty International. "Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and 'Traditional Values' – New Report." *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

In our current world, there are many factors that play into the legal protections for women surrounding domestic violence, along with general information that can help frame the perspectives of different countries. It is important to understand which countries have the highest or lowest concentration of domestic violence, or reported domestic violence cases, to allow for proper evaluation of the trends of legal protections provided in those countries and the rest of the world. As previously mentioned, more than 1 in 4 women (around 29%) have experienced domestic violence in their lifetimes. As of 2018, the 14 countries with the highest domestic violence rates in the world are: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Equatorial Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Ethiopia, Liberia, South Sudan, Uganda, Angola, and Kiribati. The levels of domestic violence occurrences vary widely across different regions around the world, however there is a common trend that there is a higher domestic violence occurrence rate in lower income countries than higher income countries. Among the nations that were listed, all have either high or medium levels of poverty within their populations. Additionally, another trend is that countries with low female literacy rates, there tends to be higher levels of acceptance by women for domestic violence.¹⁶

Concentrating more on the legal protections and prosecutions of domestic violence, it is essential to note that not only is the prosecution of domestic violence difficult to track across different nations and legal systems, but the prosecution of domestic violence cases is already difficult to come by due to the, oftentimes, little evidence and therefore need of victim testimony. Due to the criminalization of domestic violence in many countries being a relatively new thing, many of the legal frameworks for the prosecution of domestic violence have been based largely around UN policy rather than unique systems. Globally, the prosecution of domestic violence varies widely, with some systems criminalizing domestic violence and others using civil remedies, and some using both.¹⁷ In most countries, the punishments for domestic violence

vary by severity, and can range from a fine to many years in prison.

On top of the already tenuous frameworks of many legal systems in reference to the prosecution of domestic violence, many countries simply lack the proper support for victims of domestic violence. In reference to Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Amnesty International states that “the region lacks effective protection and support mechanisms for survivors of domestic violence as existing laws and policies remain inadequate.”¹⁸ Some common types of support mechanisms, both government and non-government run, for the victims of domestic violence are various shelters, clinics, and support staff that have access to different types of care. An example of this is when, in 2007, the UN enacted the “UN Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse” that provides assistance, such as medical care, mental health support, legal assistance, and basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing, to victims of domestic violence.¹⁹ Another example is in South Africa, where the government utilizes “Thuthuzela Care Centres” that provide medical and legal assistance for domestic violence and sexual assault cases.²⁰ Lastly, an example is in Singapore where an NGO called AWARE / SACC helps with the legal issues and counseling needs that a domestic violence or sexual assault victim may need, along with providing some shelters for them.²¹ Despite all of the support that some countries *do* provide for the victims of domestic violence, there are, unfortunately, various measures taken by countries that can greatly harm or silence the victims. An example of this is how, in many countries, officials refuse their obligations to adequately provide shelters to survivors and victims of domestic violence.²² Another

al-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

¹⁶Sardinha, LynnMarie, and Héctor E. Nájera Catalán. “Attitudes Towards Domestic Violence in 49 Low- and Middle-income Countries: A Gendered Analysis of Prevalence and Country-level Correlates.” *PLoS ONE*, vol. 13, no. 10, Oct. 2018, p. e0206101, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0206101.

¹⁷SVAW - Domestic Violence: Law and Policy. hrlibrary.umn.edu/svaw/domestic/laws/index.htm.

¹⁸Amnesty International. “Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and ‘Traditional Values’ – New Report.” *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

¹⁹Victim Assistance | Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/victim-assistance.

²⁰Thuthuzela Care Centres | South African Government. www.gov.za/TCC.

²¹“Home - Sexual Assault Care Centre.” *Sexual Assault Care Centre*, 19 Sept. 2022, sacc.aware.org.sg.

²²Amnesty International. “Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of Protection Against Domestic Violence Exacerbated by Crises and ‘Traditional Values’ – New Report.” *Amnesty International*, 15 Aug. 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report.

example is how in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, there is the societal standard and cultural norm that women are expected to obey their husbands by law, which makes getting help and prosecuting the offenders very difficult for victims.²³

There are already plans developed and set in place to help better the legal protections of women in the situation of domestic violence internationally. The UN Global Database on Violence against Women and Girls states that “In December 2006, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a comprehensive resolution calling for intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and requesting the Secretary-General to establish a coordinated database on the extent, nature and consequences of all forms of violence against women.”²⁴ The UN Sustainable Development Goal 5.2 calls to “Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,” and the Sustainable Development Goal 5.2.1 specifically discusses domestic and intimate partner violence.²⁵ Additionally, the Istanbul Convention, which was held by the Council of Europe, focused on the development of legislation that would prevent and combat violence (both general and domestic) against women.²⁶ Despite these plans, domestic violence continues to prevail as a major issue affecting women internationally. Furthermore, it is arguable that many countries, if not all countries, have a great deal of work left to do in order to truly provide women the legal protections they need in cases of domestic violence.

²³ Amnesty International. “Saudi Arabia: Personal Status Law Codifies Discrimination Against Women.” *Amnesty International*, 7 Mar. 2024, [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/saudi-arabia-personal-status-law-codifies-discrimination-against-women/?utm](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/saudi-arabia-personal-status-law-codifies-discrimination-against-women/?utm_source=about-the-database%20UN%20Women%20Data%20Hub&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=about-the-database%20UN%20Women%20Data%20Hub).

²⁴ “About the Database | UN Women Data Hub.” *UN Women Data Hub*, 2 July 2025, data.unwomen.org/global-database-on-violence-against-women/about.

²⁵ Goal 5 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs. sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#targets_and_indicators.

²⁶ “Istanbul Convention Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.” *Council of Europe*, www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/about-the-convention. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1) What values might your country have that stops victims from getting the support/justice/protection they may need in the cases of domestic violence?
- 2) How is domestic violence prosecuted in your country and what are the punishments (if any) for it?
- 3) What governmental or NGO run programs are there in your country that help victims of domestic abuse? What programs done around the world (that are functional) can be implemented into your country?
- 4) What legal protections/prosecution measures are already provided to help protect women who are victims of domestic violence? Are they functional? What can be done to make them better?
- 5) What external factors (such as poverty, education, etc) play into the domestic violence rates of your country? How can changing those affect the domestic violence rates?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

“Making the invisible epidemic visible”

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/making-the-invisible-epidemic-visible/#:~:text=Domestic%20violence%20is%20sometimes%20called,be%20as%20high%20as%2041%25>.

“Examining Domestic Violence Across the World: The Cost of Doing Nothing”

<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/examining-domestic-violence-around-world-cost-doing-nothing>

“Domestic Violence: Law and Policy”

<https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/svaw/domestic/laws/index.htm>

“Attitudes towards domestic violence in 49 low- and middle-income countries: A gendered analysis of prevalence and country-level correlates”

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6209205/>

Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Lack of protection against domestic violence exacerbated by crises and ‘traditional values’

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/12/eastern-europe-and-central-asia-lack-of-protection-against-domestic-violence-exacerbated-by-crises-and-traditional-values-new-report/>

“Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”

<https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>

TOPIC 2: PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN CONFLICT ZONES

Throughout history, women's rights have often been an afterthought when it comes to armed conflict. Women and girls are not only subjected to direct violence but a increased risk of sexual violence, poverty, displacement, and inadequate medical assistance. These interlinking human rights violations place women at a severe socioeconomic disadvantage, during and after conflict. Many women are stripped of their rights and futures, especially in post-war societies. This pattern has been observed throughout history, and it continues to persist in modern-day society. It seems to be particularly severe in developing nations, where gender inequality runs rampant and weak justice systems are detrimental to women's development.²⁷ The UN Women Executive Director, Sima Bahous, states that, “The deliberate targeting of women’s rights is not unique to conflict-affected countries but is even more lethal in those settings. We are witnessing the weaponization of gender equality on many fronts. If we do not stand up and demand change, the consequences will be felt for decades, and peace will remain elusive.”²⁸

This topic calls for delegates to examine both the short-term impacts, and long term consequences regarding the lack of protections and legal inequalities that women face. It is important to take into account the legal standing of women in certain countries as well as the societal and cultural barriers that prevent women from seeking justice. In many cases, survivors of assault will not come forward due to social stigma, or a lack of awareness that what happened to them was a violation of their rights.²⁹

The issue of women’s rights in conflict zones was first formally addressed at the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and then again at their Additional Protocols of 1977.³⁰ It was created so that

²⁷United Nations. “As Rights of Women and Girls Plunge to Lower than Previous Depths, Third Committee Urges Nations to Tackle Violence, Address Poverty, Bolster Rural Development | UN Press.” *Press.un.org*, 4 Oct. 2023, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4376.doc.htm>

²⁸ “Women Still Suffering in War Zones, Special Representative Tells Security Council, Highlighting Unmet Global Commitments to Victims of Sexual Violence” *Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*. 14 Apr. 2021, <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14493.doc.htm>

²⁹Okeke, Sylvester Reuben, et al. “Collateral Damage: The Overlooked Reproductive Health Crisis in Conflict Zones.” *Reproductive Health*, vol. 21, no. 1, Dec. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-024-01941-8>.

³⁰“Protected Persons: Women.” *International Committee of the Red Cross*, 30 Apr. 2025, www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/protected-persons-women#:~:text=In%20general%2C%20IHL%20requires%20humane,well%20by%20customary%20humanitarian%20law.

women's rights during conflict would be protected under International Humanitarian Law (IHL). This includes but is not limited to; protections against sexual and gender based violence (GBV), mandatory separate female detention centers, and protections and care for pregnant women/young children. Although these laws exist, they are continuously violated and unenforced. One example of these international laws being violated is the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 . This large scale human rights violation occurred over the span of 100 days more than 30 years ago, and yet the effects are still felt to this day. An estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women were subjected to sexual violence.³¹ This atrocity is a prime example of useless laws that look plausible on paper, but without proper support and enforcement are abandoned when it comes to actual conflict. The failure to enforce the IHL's laws falls on many, including the international community (UN/world powers). This is evident in the Rwanda Genocide, as international bodies didn't appropriately respond or intervene in the crisis.

Women's rights in warzones have been brought up in UN Women and at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) multiple times in recent years. Sessions tend to focus on topics surrounding women's bodily autonomy and gender based violence. Sexual Violence has been used in almost every major conflict in the past century. It was first officially deemed as a 'tactic of war' in Resolution 1820 (UN).

Unfortunately, the number of victims of sexual assault is probably on a much bigger scale than what is currently being reported, due to the lack of women speaking up and the disregard for SA claims. Resolutions 1888 and 1960 were created to prevent sexual violence, and improve the monitoring of it in warzones. Resolution 2467 was created to take a 'survivor-centered approach' to sexual violence, providing reparations and justice for victims of sexual violence in conflict zones.³² Despite these resolutions and the IHL protections, sexual violence is still an extensive problem across war zones.

The sexual assault in war zones also causes medical problems. Unplanned pregnancy is a big issue due to

the lack of contraceptives. Pregnancy during conflict without resources can cause the death of the fetus and/or the mother. The other issue is STDs, which cannot be treated without the proper medication. There are *more* deaths of women due to untreated medical conditions and the lack of healthcare than from active violence. This begs the question, should relief efforts be gender specific, so organizations can provide women with the medical assistance they need?

It is hard to ensure women's rights in these conflict zones because of displacement, which usually leads to overcrowding and 'lawless' areas. Refugees are often discriminated against. Women are placed in extremely vulnerable situations when they are displaced. Unfamiliar languages, money, violence, and new laws/customs can all be barriers for people who've had to relocate.³³ The mental strain alone can cause many problems, especially for pregnant women. However, the main issue for these women is the lack of access to safe medical care.

Women also need more legal protections that help assure access to medical care. This is technically 'assured' for women and girls through the IHL. Yet in times of conflict these protections for women often get lost in the commotion. In conflict zones medical assistance is often placed on men. Many injured, sick, and pregnant women are often turned away. For example, South Sudan, which is currently at war, has one of the highest birth mortality rates in the world due to the lack of doctors and medical assistance (1 in every 28 women).³⁴ More than half of the world maternal mortality rate currently comes from conflict zones.³⁵

The trauma that women endure in warzones carries over to postwar societies. Many women are left with psychological damage and weakened bodies. Even after the conflict has been resolved women are left with fewer rights and are often rejected by their communities. Others are stuck in situations such as slavery and marriages that were forced upon them during the conflict. Women who have been subject to sexual violence are often seen as impure and forced

³¹ UNIFEM. *Conflict and Post Conflict Sexual Violence During and After Conflict*. 2008, www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Media/Publications/UNIFEM/EVAWkit_06_Factsheet_ConflictAndPostConflict_en.pdf.

³² "As Rights of Women and Girls Plunge to Lower than Previous Depths, Third Committee Urges Nations to Tackle Violence, Address Poverty, Bolster Rural Development | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, press.un.org/en/2023/gashc4376.doc.htm. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

³³ Okeke, Sylvester Reuben, et al. "Collateral Damage: The Overlooked Reproductive Health Crisis in Conflict Zones." *Reproductive Health*, vol. 21, no. 1, Dec. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-024-01941-8>.

³⁴ Okeke, Sylvester Reuben, et al. "Collateral Damage: The Overlooked Reproductive Health Crisis in Conflict Zones." *Reproductive Health*, vol. 21, no. 1, Dec. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-024-01941-8>.

³⁵ World Health Organization: WHO. *Maternal Mortality*. 7 Apr. 2025, www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/maternal-mortality.

to marry their abuser to maintain purity standards. To avoid this fate, many do not come forward about the abuse they've faced. Due to a lack of education in many countries, many girls aren't aware that they even have legal rights, or that they are protected under international laws. In many ways, post-conflict societies can be worse for women than the actual conflict.

The topic of legal protections for women is quite complex, especially when it comes to countries' strength, cultural norms, and experience with conflict. Countries such as Pakistan, Ethiopia and The Democratic Republic of Congo who have experienced conflict in recent years, have had the choice to follow the guidelines and legal protections for women on paper. Although these countries supported women's protections on paper, these international laws were rarely enforced. In Ethiopia, Ethiopian women do have laws that are *supposed* to protect them from gender-based violence (GBV) especially during times of war, like the Maputa Protocol,³⁶ but these laws and legal protections have gaps and are not taken very seriously. This goes for many of the developing nations within the committee, as barriers such as limited resources, gender inequality, and weak legal institutions make responding to GBV and discrimination close to impossible, especially during active-conflicts.

Other countries, such as the United States, Japan, and the Netherlands all support countries through official development assistance (ODA).³⁷ This means that these countries send aid to countries, which can be used for a plethora of issues, which often includes promoting gender equality and making sure GBV doesn't occur in warzones. A specific example would be Japan giving 1.5 million through the UN to help women and girls in Afghanistan, where the post-conflict society has led to limited access to many necessities.³⁸ These countries are generally viewed as progressive and have an important role in helping the less developed countries through things such as funding, humanitarian aid, and military support.

³⁶ "Ethiopia Conflicts Trigger Surge in Rape and Violence Against Women." The New Humanitarian, 7 Aug. 2024, www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/08/07/ethiopia-conflicts-trigger-surge-rape-and-violence-against-women.

³⁷ OECD. *Development Finance for Gender Equality 2024*. OECD Publishing, 29 Nov. 2024, doi:10.1787/e340afbf-en. Accessed 22 Aug. 2025.

³⁸ "Japan Contributes New \$1.5 Million to UNFPA to Support Maternal, Child and Youth Health in Afghanistan." *UNFPA Afghanistan*, afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/news/japan-contributes-new-15-million-unfpa-support-maternal-child-and-youth-health-afghanistan.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How can international laws protecting women in conflict zones be enforced during active conflict?
2. Should humanitarian aid be targeted towards specific genders?
3. What steps need to be taken to end Gender Based Violence (GBV) in warzones and the stigma around it?
4. In what ways can we educate girls on their legal protections?
5. How can we increase women's participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict societies?

HELPFUL SOURCES:

"Facts and Figure: Women, Peace, and Security"
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security>

"Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Armed Conflicts"
<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/9/524088.pdf>

"Eight Actions to Advance Women's Role in Peace and Security"
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/8-actions-to-advance-womens-role-in-peace-and-security>

"Conflicts to Watch in 2025: Women, Peace, and Security in a More Volatile World"
<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/conflicts-to-watch-in-2025-women-peace-and-security-in-a-more-volatile-world/#:~:text=Women's%20rights%20are%20increasingly%20their%20reproductive%20violence%E2%80%94amidst%20multiple%20conflicts.>

"Protected Persons: Women"
<https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/protected-persons-women#:~:text=This%20includes%20rape%20forced%20prostitution,account%20for%20people%20reported%20missing.>