



COMMITTEE on the Status of Women

Chair Report

Ensuring Women's Security in Conflict
Settings

Chair: Emilie Yeh

Deputy Chair: Victoria Kress

Personal Statements

Chair – Emilie Yeh

Honourable Delegates,

I am currently in 10th grade at ACS International School Hillingdon. I am French, Danish, Taiwanese, and British, and am honoured to be your chair of the Commission on the Status of Women at this forthcoming annual session of MUNISS alongside my lovely deputy chair Victoria Kress. I attended my first conference in grade 9 last year and have since attended 2 other conferences including THIMUN this January. We hope to keep the debates fruitful and keep you all motivated.

I look forward to meeting you all!



Deputy Chair – Victoria Kress

Honourable delegates,

I'm Victoria Kress, I'm 14 years old and in 9th grade at the International School of Stuttgart. I'm British and German. This will be my 4th MUN conference, but my first time as chair. I'm really looking forward to meeting new people at the conferences and being deputy chair to Emilie. I can't wait to listen to some interesting debates and fill up the gossip box with you guys.



Introduction

The security of women in conflict settings is a cause for global concern. Women find themselves disproportionately affected by conflict, facing threats that extend beyond the immediate battleground. Statistics show the reality that women make up a significant portion of displaced populations and are subjected to various forms of sexual and gender-based violence. The international community must take strides in protecting the security of women in conflict settings in order to maintain and promote world peace.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN Women). The commission takes a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Glossary

Violence against women. Any act of gender-based violence that is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women.

Issue Explanation

Many communities suffer from armed conflict, yet women and girls are disproportionately exposed to violence and the effects of conflict worldwide. They are often the primary targets of different warring parties and oppressive regimes. Over 600 million women and girls lived in conflict-affected countries in 2022, a 50% increase since 2017, leaving them vulnerable and insecure (UN Women). Unfortunately, sexual and gender-based violence through forced prostitution, rape, systemic rape, forced pregnancy, and sexual slavery — is still widely used as a weapon of warfare and is experienced by women of all ages, leaving them with physical, sexual, and psychological harm.

“Up to half a million women were raped in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. Some 60,000 women were raped in the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from 1991 to 2001 an estimated 64,000 incidents of war-related sexual violence against women and girls occurred in Sierra Leone.” (Mayanja)

Potential causes of the continued insecurity women face in conflict settings include the historically unequal power dynamics between men and women that have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the disproportional risk of gender-based violence, displacement, and limited access to essential resources in conflict settings today (UN Women). Furthermore, the lack of accountability and consequences also play a leading role in maintaining the effects. When there are no/limited consequences for violence against women during peacetime, there are often little to no consequences during wartime. Therefore, when States fail to prevent these abhorrent crimes committed against women and girls and hold the perpetrators accountable, no change is seen. Additionally, international humanitarian law and human rights are sometimes systematically ignored during times of armed conflict.

Women's security may also be compromised whilst migrating. Whilst sexual violence and gender-related persecution are recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, many women often experience difficulties in being recognized in some countries of asylum due to the nature of their persecution, potentially due to the insufficient international protection procedures that recognize gender-related claims when seeking asylum. It is also empirical to address education disparities as conflict often acts as a barrier to the education of girls in conflict zones, creating long-term consequences on their development socially and economically.

The failure to address these issues not only increases the suffering of women in conflict zones but also poses a threat to global stability, as peace is 'inextricably linked' with equality between women and men and development (UN Women). Unresolved gender-based violence can escalate tensions, contributing to the conflict and decreasing the chances of peaceful resolution. The economic consequences of women's insecurity also create long-term instability, affecting neighboring countries and potentially contributing to new conflicts.

History of the Topic

The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, states women shall be protected against any attack on their honor in particular against humiliation and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution, and other forms of indecent assault. However, there have been many conflicts where women have been disproportionately impacted.

The Bosnian War:

The Bosnian War, which started in 1992 and ended in 1995, was the first time that mass rape was recognized and prosecuted and was done by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The ICTY was "a United Nations court of law that dealt with war crimes that took place during the conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s" (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia). Throughout the conflict, rape was used as a method to scare civilians into leaving their property and prevent them from returning. The exact number of women and girls raped is unknown it is estimated over 20 000 women were raped (Amnesty International). While women from all ethnic groups were affected, the vast majority were Bosnians who were raped by Bosnian Serbs. During the conflict, Serb forces set up rape camps where women were imprisoned, tortured, raped and some murdered. Women were held at these camps until they were pregnant and past the point where abortion was viable.

Rwandan genocide:

April will mark the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide which killed more than 800,000 of the minority Tutsi population during a 100-day period where they were systematically murdered along with any moderate Hutus/others who did not support the killings (Amnesty International). An estimated 100,000-250,000 women were raped during 3 months of genocide (United Nations).

Russo-Ukrainian War:

On the 24th of February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in an escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that started in 2014. During this conflict, women have been targeted with sexual violence. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has called the invasion a crisis for women and girls.

“From heightened trafficking and gender-based violence to the loss of crucial livelihoods and rising poverty levels, women and girls of Ukraine are facing severe impacts. The large-scale destruction of infrastructure has left survivor services, healthcare, and other critical forms of support out of reach for many.” (UN Women)

Access to female reproductive healthcare has faced significant disruption due to the invasion as the International Federation for Human Rights reports that the war "is having a severe impact on women and girl's sexual and reproductive rights", as hospitals/medical facilities have been targets of the invasion, an example being the Mariupol hospital airstrike that targeted a maternity ward in Mariupol. The destruction of critical infrastructure limits access to vital services like prenatal and postnatal care and places to give birth safely which is critical.

Any Previous Attempts

The Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted on the 31st of October 2000.

It was the first resolution that recognized the unique and disproportionate impact of conflict on women. Since then, there have been 10 resolutions adopted for the UN Security Council's Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019)) (UN Women).

WPS commitments ahead of the 20th anniversary of 1325

April 2019: Sixty-four Member States, 8 UN entities, and 3 regional organizations made commitments to Women, Peace, and Security. This included new national action plans, funding pledges, institutional arrangements, and active involvement in global initiatives, and was monitored by UN Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (UN Women).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action:

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a UN resolution adopted on the 15th of September 1995 at the end of the 4th World Conference on Women (UN Women). The resolution promotes a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women and is a current source of guidance to realize gender equality and the human rights of women everywhere.

2023 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Goal 5:

“Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.” (UN Women)

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) General recommendation no.30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations:

“A landmark document giving authoritative guidance to countries that have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on concrete measures to ensure women’s human rights are protected before, during and after conflict” (UN Women)

Media Contribution

Public opinion on ensuring women’s security in conflict zones varies across the globe due to different cultural, social, and political contexts. In the Middle East, while many individuals and organizations recognize the importance of ensuring women's security there are still barriers due to cultural and societal factors that sometimes hamper the freedom of the media. Governments with strict censorship around the world – like China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, etc – may also prevent the media from acknowledging wrong-doings of their own governments, preventing them from advocating for change. In Western countries like the USA and other European countries, there is generally widespread agreement that it is necessary to ensure women’s security in conflict zones – which is reflected in policies and international participation. Thus, the media coverage tends to highlight the danger, threats, and actions women suffer from in these situations to advocate for change (human rights violations are most emphasized in these countries). Overall, there is growing recognition of the urgent need to address the issue of women’s security in conflict zones.

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