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1. Welcome Letters

1. Letter from Secretary General

Dear Attendees,

On behalf of the MISMUN Organizing Team, it is with immense pride and heartfelt gratitude that I welcome you to the inaugural Milestone Model United Nations conference. Today, we stand together at the beginning of an extraordinary journey—a gathering of the next generation of decision-makers



and leaders whose vision, passion, and efforts will shape a brighter future for our world. This conference represents more than just an academic simulation. It is a platform where ideas converge, where diversity thrives, and where meaningful dialogue takes center stage. It is a space for youth to address global challenges, exchange perspectives, and collaborate on solutions that will leave an everlasting impact.

The MISMUN Organizing Team, alongside our dedicated partners, has worked tirelessly over the past months to bring this vision to life. From planning every detail to overcoming obstacles, the effort poured into this event is a testament to our shared commitment to your growth and success. We hope this conference not only meets but exceeds your expectations, creating memories and experiences that you will carry with you forever. At MISMUN, we strive to provide you with a platform to not only discuss and tackle pressing global issues but also to sharpen your linguistic, negotiation, and debating skills. We are confident that the sessions ahead will challenge you to think critically, collaborate effectively, and grow as leaders.

As you step into your roles as delegates, chairs, or part of the organizing team, I urge you to embrace this opportunity wholeheartedly. Let this be a space for learning, for pushing boundaries, and for fostering connections that transcend borders. Your voice matters, and your actions here can serve as a blueprint for a better tomorrow. Once again, welcome to MISMUN. We are honored to have you here and look forward to witnessing the incredible achievements you will bring to this conference. Let us work together to make this a milestone worth remembering.

2. Letter from Under-secretary General

Dear Esteemed Delegates of the UN Women Committee,

As the Under-Secretary-General of this esteemed committee, it is my distinct honor and privilege to welcome you to Mismun'25. I extend my warmest greetings to each of you as we embark on a journey of diplomacy, collaboration, and thoughtful debate. This conference presents a unique opportunity for us to address pressing issues with sincerity, empathy, and resolve.

Our agenda item, "Safeguarding Women's Rights in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: Challenges and Policy Responses," demands a deep understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by women in some of the world's most volatile regions. Conflict and instability often leave women and girls disproportionately vulnerable to violence, displacement, and systemic discrimination. The protection and empowerment of women are not only moral imperatives but also essential for achieving sustainable peace and security.

Throughout the conference, you will have the chance to examine the root causes of these challenges and propose comprehensive solutions that prioritize the safety, dignity, and agency of women. The task before you is formidable, but I am confident that your dedication, research, and passion will lead to impactful and realistic policy responses.

I urge you all to engage in constructive dialogue, advocate for your country's positions, and collaborate to reach meaningful consensus. This experience will test your skills in diplomacy, negotiation, and critical thinking—qualities that are essential for shaping a better future for women in



conflict zones. I hope this conference will not only deepen your understanding of the issues but also strengthen your commitment to gender equality and women's rights.

With sincere admiration and best wishes,

Nilgün Nihal Çalık

Under-Secretary-General

UN Women Committee, MIS MUN'25

2. The Foundation of UNWOMEN and Its Role

UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, serves as a global advocate for women and girls, committed to advancing their rights and opportunities worldwide. Established to accelerate progress in meeting the diverse needs of women and girls, UN Women collaborates closely with UN Member States to set global standards for achieving gender equality. The organization works in partnership with governments and civil society to design and implement laws, policies, programs, and services that ensure these standards are effectively realized, creating tangible benefits for women and girls across the globe. Guided by the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Women champions women's equal participation in all facets of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: ending violence against women and girls, ensuring women's economic empowerment, promoting women's leadership and political participation, and integrating gender equality into national development planning and budgeting processes.

The pursuit of gender equality is not merely a fundamental human right but also a critical driver of sustainable development and economic prosperity. Empowering women has far-reaching socio-economic benefits, stimulating economic growth, productivity, and development. However, gender inequalities remain deeply entrenched in societies worldwide. Women often face barriers to accessing decent work and suffer from occupational segregation and persistent gender wage gaps. Educational and healthcare opportunities remain limited for many women, and violence and discrimination continue to be pervasive challenges. Moreover, women are significantly underrepresented in political and economic decision-making processes, hindering their ability to shape policies and systems that directly impact their lives.



For decades, the United Nations faced considerable challenges in effectively promoting gender equality, including fragmented efforts, inadequate funding, and the absence of a centralized entity to lead initiatives on gender issues. Recognizing the need for a more cohesive and impactful approach, the United Nations General Assembly established UN Women in July 2010. This landmark decision represented a historic step toward advancing the UN's gender equality and women's empowerment agenda. As part of the broader UN reform agenda, UN Women consolidated and built upon the work of four previously distinct UN entities focused on gender equality, creating a more robust and unified body to drive transformative change. With a strong mandate and a comprehensive approach, UN Women continues to advocate for the rights of women and girls, working tirelessly to eliminate the barriers that prevent them from realizing their full potential and contributing meaningfully to their communities and societies.

3. Introduction to the Agenda Item

The protection and promotion of women's rights in conflict zones remain urgent and complex challenges in today's global landscape. Women and girls disproportionately bear the consequences of war and instability, facing heightened risks of gender-based violence, forced displacement, human trafficking, and systemic discrimination. In the Middle East, these challenges are particularly pronounced due to the region's ongoing conflicts, such as the wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories, which have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of women. The prolonged nature of these conflicts, combined with the breakdown of social, political, and legal systems, has made it even more difficult to protect women and girls from violence. Despite international legal frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, many conflict-affected regions, including the Middle East, continue to witness severe violations of women's rights. These violations not only undermine fundamental human rights but also hinder broader efforts toward sustainable peace and development in the region. Women in the Middle East continue to face devastating forms of violence, including sexual violence, trafficking, and forced marriages, which are often used as weapons of war. Furthermore, the collapse of the rule of law in many of these regions has led to widespread impunity for perpetrators, making justice and accountability all the more difficult to achieve.

A key challenge in safeguarding women's rights in conflict zones lies in the enforcement of existing protections. While numerous international agreements and national policies recognize the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution, implementation remains inconsistent due to weak legal systems, lack of political will, and the persistence of patriarchal social structures, especially in the Middle East. In countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, deeply rooted gender inequalities have made it difficult for women to fully benefit from the protections afforded to them under international law. In some cases, local authorities are complicit in or turn a blind eye to violations of women's rights, further perpetuating cycles of violence and discrimination. Women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is often sidelined, despite overwhelming evidence that inclusive peace processes lead to more durable and equitable outcomes. In the Middle East, where political instability and entrenched cultural norms often marginalize



women, their exclusion from peace talks and political processes perpetuates cycles of violence and inequality. Women's voices, often silenced or ignored, are essential to achieving long-lasting peace, as they bring different perspectives to the table, particularly regarding the impact of conflict on communities and families. The lack of female representation in peace negotiations has resulted in peace deals that fail to address women's specific needs, leaving them vulnerable to further exploitation.

Additionally, humanitarian responses frequently fail to adequately address the specific needs of women and girls in conflict zones. The Middle East, being home to a large number of displaced persons and refugees, presents unique challenges in providing essential services such as healthcare, education, and protection against sexual violence. Women and girls in refugee camps and war-torn regions are at heightened risk of exploitation, poverty, and continued violence. In areas such as Northern Syria and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, women face daily threats, including forced marriages and sexual exploitation, with few resources available to support their protection and recovery. The displacement of millions of people due to the Syrian civil war, the conflict in Yemen, and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has left countless women and girls in limbo, without access to basic necessities and protection. The lack of adequate healthcare, particularly reproductive health services, has further compounded their suffering. This absence of gender-specific services in humanitarian responses has deepened the vulnerability of women and girls in conflict zones, preventing them from rebuilding their lives and communities.

This agenda item seeks to critically examine these challenges while exploring effective policy responses at both national and international levels. It will assess the role of governments, international organizations, and civil society in strengthening legal protections, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and ensuring that women's voices are central to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The role of regional organizations, such as the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council, in advancing women's rights in conflict settings will also be explored, as well as the impact of local feminist movements in promoting women's agency in these societies. Regional organizations have a unique opportunity to leverage their influence to advocate for women's rights, but their commitment to gender equality has often been inconsistent, as political and cultural factors have at times overshadowed the issue. By fostering dialogue and sharing best practices, this discussion aims to identify sustainable solutions that not only protect women's rights in conflict zones but also empower them as agents of peace and resilience. Women, particularly in the Middle East, are central to rebuilding war-torn societies, and their inclusion in peacebuilding efforts is crucial to achieving lasting peace and stability. Through comprehensive strategies and multi-stakeholder cooperation, we can work toward a future where gender equality is a fundamental pillar of global peace and security, particularly in the Middle East, where the challenges and opportunities for women's rights are both unique and urgent. Moreover, it is critical to recognize that addressing the specific needs of women in conflict zones is not only a matter of human rights but also of peacebuilding, as empowered women are key drivers of change, stability, and reconciliation in their communities.





4. Historical Background

Sexual violence means any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, human trafficking, or acts otherwise directed against a person's sexuality, using coercion by anyone, regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting.

Gender-based violence is violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, based on gender discrimination, gender role expectations and/or gender stereotypes, or based on the differential power status linked to gender.

Women in conflict-affected regions continue to experience disproportionately high levels of violence, poverty, and social exclusion. While armed conflicts inflict suffering on entire communities, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to the immediate and long-term consequences of war, including gender-based violence, economic marginalization, displacement, and loss of access to education and healthcare. These challenges further entrench cycles of vulnerability and poverty, preventing women from fully participating in society and contributing to post-conflict recovery efforts. Conflict and fragility exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, making it imperative to adopt targeted approaches that safeguard women's rights and dignity while enhancing their resilience and opportunities.



The Women in Conflict Zones initiative, launched with the support of the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), seeks to go beyond traditional humanitarian aid by implementing projects and interventions that empower women even in the most fragile contexts. This initiative recognizes that while women are among the most affected by conflict, they are also key agents of resilience, leadership, and social cohesion. Through targeted humanitarian assistance, economic development programs, and capacity-building efforts, the initiative aims to provide women with the tools they need to lead dignified lives despite the adversities they face. By addressing critical issues such as gender-based violence, access to essential services, and economic empowerment, the initiative ensures that women receive the necessary support to rebuild their lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

A core objective of this initiative is to advocate for the greater protection of women in conflict settings by strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring the enforcement of international humanitarian laws, and integrating gender-sensitive policies into conflict response mechanisms. Women's security must be prioritized at every stage of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, from immediate humanitarian relief efforts to long-term development strategies. Additionally, the initiative underscores the importance of women's inclusion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, recognizing that sustainable peace is only achievable when women are actively involved in negotiations, governance, and decision-making at all levels. Evidence consistently shows that peace agreements are more durable and effective when women play a central role in shaping them.

However, the initiative does not solely view women as victims requiring protection. It highlights the strength, resilience, and leadership of women who, despite the challenges of war and instability, play vital roles within their families and communities. Women are often at the forefront of efforts to maintain social cohesion, provide humanitarian support, and rebuild economies in post-conflict societies. They serve as mediators, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and political actors, demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. Recognizing and amplifying these contributions is essential for fostering more inclusive and equitable recovery processes.

Through a comprehensive and multidimensional approach, the Women in Conflict Zones initiative seeks to bridge the gap between emergency response and long-term development, ensuring that women not only receive immediate protection but also gain the skills, resources, and opportunities needed for sustainable empowerment. By combining humanitarian aid with developmental assistance, the initiative reinforces the importance of building resilient communities where women can thrive, even amidst conflict and fragility.

In advocating for women's rights and inclusion in conflict settings, the initiative calls upon the international community, governments, and civil society organizations to commit to gender-sensitive policies, increase funding for women-centered programs, and create spaces for women's voices to be heard in peace and security processes. By working collaboratively to advance these objectives, we can move toward a world where women in conflict zones are not only protected but also recognized as key drivers of peace, stability, and development.



Women in Conflict in the Middle East



The role of women in conflict has always been a vital yet often marginalized aspect of the broader historical narrative in the Middle East. Historically, women in this region have been both directly and indirectly involved in conflicts, though their contributions and experiences have not always been documented or recognized. From early Islamic history through to modern-day conflicts, women have navigated complex societal, cultural, and political landscapes. Their roles have evolved over time, marked by both advancements in their participation and significant challenges to their agency.

Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras: Shifting Roles and Resistance

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Middle East experienced a significant period of colonial domination by European powers. During this time, women's roles in resistance movements became more pronounced. In Egypt, for instance, women like Huda Sha'arawi were influential figures in the nationalist movement against British colonial rule, pushing the boundaries of social norms by engaging in public political activism. These early movements were crucial in shifting the gender norms that had traditionally confined women to private, domestic spaces.

The post-colonial period, particularly following the mid-20th century, saw the rise of nationalist movements and revolutionary conflicts across the Middle East. Women participated in a variety of ways, from serving in militant groups to providing logistical support and participating in protests. In Algeria, for example, women played a crucial role in the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), with figures like Zohra Drif, who became a prominent member of the National Liberation Front (FLN), being emblematic of women's direct involvement in armed struggle. Women's involvement in these movements reflected a broader trend of gendered resistance, where women were seen as symbols of both national and personal liberation.

The Arab-Israeli Conflicts: Women as Combatants and Supporters

The Arab-Israeli conflicts, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, marked another pivotal moment for women in the Middle East. The Palestinian struggle for independence has long



included the active participation of women, both in armed and unarmed capacities. The First Intifada (1987-1993) witnessed a surge in female participation, with women not only engaging in street protests but also becoming increasingly involved in the military wings of Palestinian groups such as Fatah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Prominent women like Leila Khaled, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, gained international attention for their roles in hijackings and armed resistance, marking a shift towards women actively participating in combat.

During the same period, women in Israel also became more involved in military and security roles, as mandatory military service for both men and women was institutionalized. Women in Israel played significant roles in the defense of their state, serving in various military branches, including combat positions. The increased visibility of women in the military served as a symbolic challenge to traditional gender roles, especially in societies where women's participation in combat had been historically limited.

Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 brought about dramatic shifts in the gender dynamics of the region. While the revolution initially sparked hopes of greater gender equality, the subsequent Islamic Republic imposed significant restrictions on women, particularly with regard to dress codes and personal freedoms. However, women's roles in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) demonstrated their resilience and capacity to act as both direct combatants and supporters. Thousands of women volunteered to work as nurses, medical staff, and in logistical support roles. Additionally, some women served as combatants, often fighting alongside men at the frontlines. The revolution and war showcased the complex intersection between political change, state-imposed gender norms, and women's agency in times of conflict.

Modern Conflicts: Women in the Wars of the 21st Century

The 21st century has seen the Middle East embroiled in a series of devastating conflicts, including the wars in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. These conflicts have altered women's roles once again, particularly through the rise of non-state actors and organized militias. In Iraq and Syria, Kurdish women fighters, particularly within the Women's Protection Units (YPJ) in Syria, have gained significant attention for their active combat roles in the fight against ISIS. The YPJ, which primarily consists of Kurdish women from Syria and Turkey, has become a global symbol of resistance, not only against ISIS but also against patriarchal oppression. Their participation in the fight against ISIS has been seen as a dual struggle for both regional autonomy and gender equality, reshaping the perception of women's roles in combat within the region.

Similarly, in Yemen, women have been involved in both the armed resistance and in nonviolent protests against the ongoing civil war. Despite the brutal realities of the conflict, women have become prominent figures in humanitarian efforts, serving as frontline workers in providing aid to displaced populations and advocating for peace. In these modern-day conflicts, women's roles have become more varied and visible than ever before, though their



participation often remains entangled with questions of gender, power, and societal expectations.

POLITICAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Harmonizing National Constitutions with International Legal Commitments to Women's Rights

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and the African Union (AU) Charter on the Rights of Women all outline the fundamental rights of women, as well as affirmative action policies to ensure women can fulfill these rights.

These fundamental rights include political, social and economic rights but also equal civil rights for women. Civil rights can have far-reaching implications for women, for example in terms of demanding equal inheritance.

Increased participation of women can be promoted through specific clauses outlining the use of special temporary measures, such as quotas, to address the structural barriers that prevent women from competing in political processes on an equal footing with men.

Constitutional clauses can also protect women from discriminatory legal measures in key areas such as women's and men's equal access to land, property, education, health care, and work, as well as issues of family law (marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance, marital property, etc.)

Roles and Positions of Women in Armed Conflict

A comprehensive analysis of armed conflict must go beyond traditional gender stereotypes and recognize the complex and diverse roles that women assume in such situations. Conflict and gender studies should not only examine the socially constructed characteristics of women and men but also acknowledge the heterogeneity among women and their varying experiences, motivations, and positions within conflict dynamics. Women are not a monolithic group; they navigate conflict environments differently, influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political factors. While some women are forced into certain roles due to structural constraints, others strategically choose specific roles based on their personal agency, survival strategies, or ideological convictions.

Historically, women have often been portrayed as passive victims of war, subjected to violence, displacement, and deprivation. While it is undeniable that women disproportionately suffer from the devastating impacts of armed conflict—including sexual violence, loss of livelihoods, and forced migration—it is equally important to recognize their roles as active participants in conflict settings. Women serve as combatants, peacebuilders, community leaders, caregivers, mediators, and political actors. Some engage in armed resistance or military structures, either voluntarily or through coercion, while others work to mitigate violence and provide humanitarian assistance. Additionally, conflict situations have, in some cases, created opportunities for women to expand their socio-economic and political roles, challenging pre-existing gender norms. The breakdown of traditional power structures



can lead to greater political participation, economic independence, and leadership roles for women, both during and after conflict.



To better understand these dynamics, the Conflict Research Unit (CRU) has developed an analytical framework that identifies seven major roles women assume before, during, and after armed conflict. These roles, which may overlap or evolve over time, provide insight into the multifaceted nature of women's engagement in conflict situations. Individual women may simultaneously or sequentially occupy multiple roles, further complicating simplistic victim-perpetrator dichotomies. This framework serves as a crucial tool for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners in developing gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Recognizing the diverse roles of women in armed conflict has significant implications for policy and intervention strategies. It underscores the need for tailored approaches that address the specific challenges and opportunities women encounter in conflict settings. Policies must move beyond a protectionist stance and instead focus on empowerment, inclusion, and agency. This requires strengthening legal frameworks that protect women's rights, ensuring their meaningful participation in peace negotiations, and supporting economic and political initiatives that enhance their post-conflict reintegration.

By acknowledging and addressing the multiple roles women assume in armed conflicts, the international community can develop more nuanced and effective responses that not only mitigate harm but also promote gender equality and sustainable peace. Understanding the full spectrum of women's experiences in conflict is essential for crafting policies that reflect their realities and contribute to long-term stability and resilience.



Intervening agencies that aim to address women's roles and positions in armed conflict face numerous challenges. One such challenge, for instance, is to employ more women as civil and military professionals in Multidimensional Peace Operations and also to sensitize these operations' male professionals for gender. Another challenge would be increasingly to adapt external interventions to the needs and interests of local women in armed conflict ('gender-sensitizing' policies). One condition for this is to formulate policies on the basis of a sound gender analysis, clarifying the interrelationship between women and men, the specific conflict situation and the potential differential impact of external interventions of women and men. The starting point for all such policies must be to aim for gender equality. In striving for gender equality in conflict situations, it is of the essence that international agencies develop instruments and methodologies that combine gender and conflict analysis. Another condition is that intervening agencies should already address women's needs and interests in the pre-conflict phase and not just in the post-conflict phase so that women's exposure to insecurity and violence is limited. Agencies must not only aim to reduce women's suffering in the short term, but must also intend supporting women's long-term strategic interests. They should support to the utmost women's changing roles, positions and identities in conflict situations, as long as these have an emancipating effect. There are numerous interventions possible to target women increasingly and explicitly before, during and after armed conflict. For instance, agencies could involve more women in early- warning and response processes in order to protect them from an increased exposure to insecurity and violence. Programmes to restore civilian security, such as security sector reforms, greater representation of women in police forces and judicial processes, de-mining and the non- proliferation of small arms programmes, form a unique opportunity to render the prevailing security actors and systems more gender-sensitive. Trauma counselling during and after the conflict could recognize the different ways in which women and men deal with traumas. Truth Commissions and National Reconciliation Processes should pay more attention to female-based violence and should equally consider women's and men's specific needs and interests in the formulation of reparation and rehabilitation policies. International Tribunals and Courts should continue and perhaps expand their special legal and social support to female witnesses and female victims of sexual violence. Agencies could prevent women from becoming combatants in conflict by for instance providing a safe space for non-war action and creating alternative economic sources to the military. They could make demobilization and reintegration programmes more equally accessible to female and male combatants and may possibly take women's and men's different experiences and interests into account. More intervention, particularly in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phases, could support the strengthening and formation of sustainable women's organizations that play an active and constructive role in the peace process. It is of the essence that interventions increase women's political participation through training, awareness-raising campaigns and quota systems ensuring a minimum participation of female politicians. Intervention might provide more female breadwinners, households with productive assets and legal assistance in the fields of housing, property and labour rights. They could simultaneously address women's needs for employment and income generation in the informal and formal sector, thereby avoiding gender-stereotyped activities. Instead they could preferably facilitate women's employment in 'non-traditional' sectors and skills, for instance through quick-impact but sustainable micro-credit schemes and initiatives



to create women-friendly employment conditions. The steps and interventions mentioned here to address women's roles and positions in armed conflict must not only be undertaken in the post-conflict phase, which many international agencies tend to do, but also in the pre-conflict and actual conflict phase. The practical challenge now is to translate these steps and interventions into concrete guidelines and procedures, and to stimulate intervening agencies to act in the field accordingly.

Organizations and Women in Armed Conflict

Organizations working in conflict zones play a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid, supporting peacebuilding initiatives, and facilitating post-conflict recovery. However, many of these organizations do not adequately address the specific needs and experiences of women in armed conflict. While some organizations operate in conflict settings without a particular focus on gender, others prioritize women's issues but fail to incorporate a strategic approach to addressing the complexities of armed conflict. Furthermore, organizations that explicitly focus on women in crisis situations often emphasize specific gender-related challenges—such as gender-based violence—without adopting a holistic perspective on women's diverse roles in conflict settings.



A key observation is that organizations that explicitly integrate the issue of women in armed conflict into their policies and activities are more likely to effectively address it. However, the absence of clear, articulated policies on women in conflict situations can lead to gender



blindness, where the unique challenges and contributions of women in these contexts are overlooked. This lack of focus is particularly evident in multilateral organizations, where the division of responsibilities between the organization and its member states is often unclear. Without a designated entity accountable for integrating gender perspectives into conflict response efforts, critical gaps persist in addressing the gendered impact of war and ensuring women's inclusion in peace and security processes.

Even within organizations that acknowledge the importance of gender considerations, internal inconsistencies can hinder progress. Gender specialists and gender units within organizations often possess a more comprehensive understanding of women's roles in armed conflict compared to other departments. However, if gender expertise is not effectively mainstreamed throughout the organization, these perspectives remain isolated rather than integrated into broader conflict response strategies. The result is fragmented efforts where gender issues are addressed in isolation rather than being woven into the organization's overall conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach.

Another major challenge is that most organizations fail to address the full spectrum of women's roles and experiences throughout all phases of conflict. Women's experiences in conflict are not monolithic—they may be victims, combatants, peacebuilders, political actors, or economic contributors. However, many organizations focus only on a limited set of roles, particularly in the post-conflict phase, when efforts are directed toward rehabilitation and development. This approach overlooks the importance of addressing women's needs and agency before and during conflicts, which is essential for creating sustainable solutions and preventing further cycles of violence and marginalization.

Moreover, organizations often struggle to link women's immediate needs in conflict settings with their long-term strategic interests. Humanitarian responses frequently prioritize short-term relief—such as food, shelter, and medical aid—without incorporating long-term empowerment strategies that address women's political participation, economic independence, and leadership in peace processes. Few organizations successfully integrate relief, rehabilitation, and development efforts into a cohesive framework that supports women's resilience throughout all conflict phases. This results in missed opportunities to ensure that women are not only protected during crises but are also positioned as active participants in shaping post-conflict societies.



The tendency to focus predominantly on the post-conflict phase also means that preventative measures and early interventions are often neglected. Women's roles in peace negotiations,



conflict prevention, and community resilience-building are frequently undervalued, despite evidence that women's participation in peace processes leads to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes. By failing to incorporate women's voices early in the conflict cycle, organizations risk reinforcing gendered power imbalances and limiting the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts.

In conclusion, while many organizations are involved in conflict response and gender advocacy, significant gaps remain in addressing women's specific roles and challenges in armed conflict. The lack of explicit gender integration, weak internal coordination, and a predominant focus on post-conflict recovery all contribute to the insufficient inclusion of women in conflict-related policies and interventions. To bridge these gaps, organizations must adopt a comprehensive and intersectional approach that recognizes women's diverse roles in conflict, ensures gender mainstreaming across all levels of operations, and links short-term humanitarian aid with long-term empowerment strategies. Strengthening institutional accountability, promoting inclusive policy frameworks, and ensuring that women are recognized as key actors in peace and security processes are essential steps toward a more effective and gender-responsive approach to conflict resolution and post-war reconstruction.

5. Coordinations between Local, Regional and International Actors

Addressing the challenges faced by women in the Middle East requires a collaborative approach that integrates the efforts of local, regional, and international stakeholders. This multifaceted coordination is essential to effectively tackle the unique adversities encountered by women in the region and to foster sustainable peace and security.

Local Actors:

Grassroots organizations and community leaders play a pivotal role in advocating for women's rights within their cultural and societal contexts. Their deep understanding of local issues enables them to design interventions that resonate with community values and address pressing needs. For instance, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has demonstrated unwavering commitment to supporting feminist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region for over five decades. Their initiatives champion peace, equality, justice, and demilitarized security, striving to create a world free from violence and armed conflict.

Regional Actors:

Regional entities play a crucial role in harmonizing efforts across national boundaries, ensuring that women's issues receive the attention they deserve. The League of Arab States, for example, has been instrumental in advancing women's rights by facilitating dialogues among member states and fostering collaborations with civil society organizations. This concerted coordination has led to significant milestones, such as the establishment of regional frameworks aimed at enhancing women's political participation and combating gender-based violence. Additionally, regional initiatives have focused on economic empowerment and educational opportunities for women, acknowledging that women's economic independence is vital for achieving broader societal development objectives.



International Actors:

The international community, encompassing global organizations and foreign governments, provides indispensable support through funding, capacity-building, and policy advocacy. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for instance, underscores that investments in gender equality, starting from early childhood and extending throughout adolescence, are integral to fostering positive lifelong outcomes for children and their communities. Moreover, international legal frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), establish global standards for women's rights. However, the efficacy of these frameworks is contingent upon their implementation at the national level. While numerous Middle Eastern countries have ratified CEDAW, challenges persist in translating these commitments into tangible improvements in women's lives. This disparity underscores the necessity for robust mechanisms to hold states accountable for their obligations.

Synergistic Efforts:

The convergence of endeavors from local, regional, and international actors creates a synergistic effect that amplifies the impact of interventions. For example, the collaboration between grassroots organizations and international bodies has led to the development of culturally sensitive educational programs that address the specific needs of women in conflict-affected areas. These programs not only impart practical skills but also empower women to take active roles in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts. Furthermore, the establishment of networks connecting women's organizations across borders facilitates the exchange of best practices and resources. These networks serve as platforms for advocacy, enabling women to collectively voice their concerns and influence policy changes at both regional and international levels. Such solidarity is crucial in challenging patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality.

Challenges and Recommendations:

Despite notable progress, several obstacles hinder the full realization of women's rights in the Middle East. These include deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, limited access to education and healthcare, and underrepresentation in political and economic spheres. To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed:

Enhanced Legal Reforms: Strengthening legal frameworks to protect women's rights and ensuring their enforcement is essential. This involves revising discriminatory laws and closing legal loopholes that perpetuate gender inequality.

Comprehensive Education Programs	Economic Empowerment Initiatives	Political
Participation Support	Regional Cooperation	

The advancement of women's rights in the Middle East is a complex endeavor that requires the concerted efforts of local, regional, and international actors. By recognizing and leveraging the unique strengths of each level, a comprehensive and sustainable approach can be developed. This collaborative model not only addresses the immediate needs of women but also lays the foundation for a more equitable and peaceful society. Continued commitment, innovative strategies, and inclusive policies are essential to overcome existing challenges and to promote the full realization of women's rights in the region.





6. International law and conventions

The protection and promotion of women's rights in conflict zones remain urgent and complex challenges in today's global landscape. Women and girls disproportionately bear the consequences of war and instability, facing heightened risks of gender-based violence, forced displacement, human trafficking, and systemic discrimination. Despite international legal frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, many conflict-affected regions, particularly in the Middle East, continue to witness severe violations of women's rights. These violations not only undermine fundamental human rights but also hinder broader efforts toward sustainable peace and development.

A key challenge in safeguarding women's rights in conflict zones lies in the enforcement of existing protections. While numerous international agreements and national policies recognize the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to conflict resolution, implementation remains inconsistent due to weak legal systems, lack of political will, and the persistence of patriarchal social structures. In the Middle East, despite the ratification of international conventions, many countries have reservations or fail to fully implement these commitments. For example, in several Middle Eastern nations, personal status laws require women to obtain permission from male guardians for various activities, reflecting deep-seated gender inequalities.

Women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts is often sidelined, despite overwhelming evidence that inclusive peace processes lead to more durable and equitable outcomes. In the Middle East, women's exclusion from formal peace talks has resulted in agreements that fail to address their specific needs and contributions. Moreover, the enforcement of international laws protecting women during armed conflicts has been inconsistent, with perpetrators often facing impunity. This lack of accountability perpetuates cycles of violence and undermines the effectiveness of international legal frameworks.

Additionally, humanitarian responses frequently fail to adequately address the specific needs of women and girls, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, poverty, and continued violence. In conflict-affected Middle Eastern countries, the absence of comprehensive legal frameworks to protect women from violence has led to widespread abuses, including sexual



violence and trafficking. The lack of legal protections and support systems forces many women into precarious situations, exacerbating their vulnerability.

This agenda item seeks to critically examine these challenges while exploring effective policy responses at both national and international levels. It will assess the role of governments, international organizations, and civil society in strengthening legal protections, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and ensuring that women's voices are central to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. By fostering dialogue and sharing best practices, this discussion aims to identify sustainable solutions that not only protect women's rights in conflict zones but also empower them as agents of peace and resilience. Through comprehensive strategies and multi-stakeholder cooperation, we can work toward a future where gender equality is a fundamental pillar of global peace and security.

In conclusion, while international legal frameworks provide a foundation for protecting women's rights, their effectiveness in conflict zones, particularly in the Middle East, is contingent upon robust enforcement and genuine political commitment. Addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women in these regions requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society, ensuring that legal protections translate into tangible improvements in women's lives

7. Remarkable Countries



Palestine

Palestinian women in Gaza face severe human rights violations amid ongoing conflict. A UN report accuses Israel of using sexual and gender-based violence as a strategy of oppression, including sexual harassment, forced strip searches, and targeting women's healthcare facilities. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu dismissed these claims as biased. This highlights



the urgent need for accountability and international efforts to ensure justice for the affected individuals.

Physical and Emotional Abuse

- **Violence in war zones:** Women in conflict regions are at constant risk of violence, including airstrikes, forced displacements, and encounters with armed forces that threaten their safety.
- **Abduction and intimidation:** Women face heightened vulnerability to kidnapping, detainment, and other forms of abuse at checkpoints, where personal security is compromised.
- **Sexual violence:** Conflict exacerbates the risk of sexual assault, but due to cultural taboos and fear of retribution, incidents often go unreported.

Economic Struggles

- **Unemployment and financial insecurity:** In many areas of conflict, women face staggering unemployment rates, resulting in extreme poverty and limited access to job opportunities.
- **Blocked trade and economic opportunities:** Economic sanctions, trade restrictions, and limited access to markets prevent women from gaining economic independence, leaving them vulnerable.
- **Dependence on others:** Widows, displaced women, and those separated from male family members often lack financial means, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence.

Access to Basic Services

- **Educational disruptions:** Armed conflicts often result in school closures, attacks on educational infrastructure, and a lack of safe spaces, leading to a significant number of girls being forced out of education.
- **Healthcare challenges:** Conflict areas often experience healthcare shortages, with pregnant women and those requiring specialized medical care facing severe barriers to treatment.

Social and Cultural Constraints

- **Traditional gender roles:** Patriarchal norms often restrict women's participation in public decision-making, particularly in highly traditional or militarized societies.
- **Early marriages:** Economic pressure and instability have led to a rise in child marriages, as families marry off daughters in the hopes of financial relief.
- **Political marginalization:** Women are frequently excluded from political processes, with limited representation in leadership roles. Even when they push for their rights, they often face backlash and persecution.

Life in Refugee and Displacement Camps

- **Living conditions in camps:** Women in refugee camps often experience overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, and the added burden of caring for their families while trying to survive in difficult conditions.
- **Leadership in humanitarian efforts:** Despite facing enormous obstacles, women in these communities frequently take on leadership roles in organizing aid efforts and advocating for their families, even if their efforts go unrecognized.



Iraq

1. Access to Healthcare

- **Limited Healthcare Services:** Iraq's healthcare system has been severely strained by years of conflict. Women face significant challenges in accessing maternal and reproductive healthcare, leading to increased maternal and infant mortality rates.
- **Mental Health Issues:** The trauma from violence, displacement, and loss has led to high rates of mental health issues among women and girls, yet mental health services are scarce.

2. Educational Barriers

- **School Closures and Displacement:** Ongoing conflict has led to the closure of many schools, disrupting education for girls. Displacement has further hindered girls' ability to attend school, deepening the cycle of poverty and gender inequality.
- **Cultural Barriers to Education:** In some areas, cultural norms and security concerns prevent girls from pursuing education, further limiting their future prospects and opportunities for empowerment.

3. Political and Legal Exclusion

1. **Underrepresentation in Politics:** Women remain underrepresented in Iraq's political landscape. Despite efforts for greater inclusion, women's voices are still marginalized in political decision-making and peace negotiations.
2. **Legal Rights and Protection:** Legal protections for women are weak and often ignored. Many women face discrimination in the legal system, particularly in cases of violence, inheritance, and marriage.

Syria

1. Gender-Based Violence

- **Sexual Violence and Exploitation:** Women and girls in Syria, particularly in conflict zones, are at risk of sexual violence, including rape, trafficking, and forced marriage. Armed groups and militia factions often use sexual violence as a weapon of war, with limited legal accountability.
- **Domestic Violence:** As social and legal structures break down in the conflict, many women suffer from domestic violence. The stress of war, combined with limited resources and support, leads to an increase in intimate partner violence.

2. Displacement and Refugee Status

- **Internal Displacement:** The conflict has displaced millions of Syrians, with women and children being particularly vulnerable. Refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps often lack sufficient security, and women face higher risks of exploitation, including sexual violence.
- **Limited Access to Services:** Women in refugee camps experience inadequate access to healthcare, education, and sanitation. The overcrowded conditions and lack of infrastructure increase their vulnerability to both physical and psychological harm.



3. Economic Hardship and Unemployment

- **High Unemployment:** The Syrian economy has been devastated by years of conflict, with high unemployment rates affecting both men and women. Women, however, face greater barriers to employment due to cultural norms and security concerns.
- **Poverty and Economic Dependency:** Many women have lost their livelihoods and are forced to rely on humanitarian aid or male family members. The lack of financial independence exacerbates gender inequalities, leaving women dependent and marginalized.

4. Healthcare Access

- **Strain on Healthcare Services:** The war has crippled Syria's healthcare system, leaving women without essential health services. Maternal healthcare is particularly affected, leading to an increase in preventable maternal and child deaths.
- **Reproductive Health:** Access to reproductive health services, including contraception and safe childbirth, is extremely limited in many areas. Women also face a lack of mental health care, with trauma-related disorders on the rise due to the violence and loss experienced during the conflict.

Yemen

Yemen's civil war, which began in 2014, has led to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Women and girls are among the most affected, enduring violence, displacement, and extreme poverty. The ongoing conflict exacerbates gender inequality and leaves these vulnerable groups with few opportunities for safety, education, and empowerment.

1. Violence and Abuse

- **Sexual and Physical Violence:** Women and girls in conflict zones face heightened risks of sexual violence, including rape and trafficking. Armed groups exploit women, using them for forced labor or sexual slavery, while domestic violence has surged due to the instability.
- **Kidnapping and Exploitation:** Women are increasingly targeted for abduction, often for ransom or forced sexual exploitation.

2. Displacement and Refugee Crisis

- **Forced Displacement:** The conflict has displaced millions, with women and children particularly vulnerable in overcrowded refugee camps. In these camps, women face inadequate healthcare, lack of sanitation, and increased exposure to violence.
- **Limited Resettlement Options:** The lack of resources and infrastructure in refugee areas prevents women from accessing vital services like maternal care, leaving them at risk of death and injury.

3. Economic Hardship

- **Loss of Livelihoods:** Yemen's war has destroyed much of the economy, leaving women with few opportunities for employment. Many are forced into informal work or rely on humanitarian aid, but disruptions in aid distribution make survival difficult.



- **Increased Child Marriage:** Economic instability has led to a rise in child marriages as families seek financial relief, further perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender inequality.

4. Healthcare and Education

- **Healthcare Crisis:** The war has devastated Yemen's healthcare system, making it difficult for women to access maternal care, reproductive health services, or treatment for gender-based violence.
- **Disrupted Education:** The destruction of schools and the displacement of families have forced many girls to drop out of school, depriving them of education and future opportunities.

5. Cultural and Political Exclusion

3. **Marginalization in Politics:** Women in Yemen remain largely excluded from political and peacebuilding processes, despite their critical roles in society. Patriarchal norms continue to restrict their participation in public life.
4. **Resilience in Crisis:** Despite these challenges, Yemeni women have demonstrated incredible resilience, often leading humanitarian efforts and advocating for peace in their communities.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's ongoing conflict has severely affected women and girls, deepening violence, poverty, and restrictions on their rights. These challenges have been worsened by political instability and the return of the Taliban, which has curtailed women's freedoms and opportunities.

1. Limited Access to Justice and Legal Rights

- **Weak Legal Protections:** Women face significant barriers to accessing justice. The legal system is often inaccessible, and many women struggle to seek protection against violence and exploitation.
- **Return of Authoritarian Rule:** The Taliban's resurgence has rolled back women's legal rights, restricting their freedom of movement, employment, and public participation.

2. Reproductive Health Crisis

- **Limited Maternal Health Services:** The collapse of Afghanistan's healthcare system has left women with little access to maternal care, leading to preventable deaths.
- **Increased Malnutrition:** Economic instability has caused widespread malnutrition, affecting pregnant women and children the most.

3. Educational Barriers

- **Denied Education:** The return of the Taliban has led to widespread school closures, preventing girls from accessing education and further entrenching gender inequality.
- **Lack of Female Teachers:** Even when schools are open, there is a shortage of female teachers and safe spaces for girls to learn.

4. Economic Dependency and Unemployment



- **High Unemployment:** Women face severe unemployment, with few opportunities outside of unpaid or informal work.
- **Barriers to Financial Independence:** Women are often unable to own property or access financial services, which keeps them dependent and economically marginalized.

8. Previous Actions Taken by UN

The United Nations has consistently prioritized the issue of violence against women, recognizing it as a pervasive and critical global challenge. In 1993, the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, providing a clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women and a strong commitment from states and the international community to eradicate all forms of such violence. This declaration underscored the responsibilities of states to protect women's rights and prevent gender-based violence, setting a foundational framework for international efforts in this regard.

In 2017, the European Union and the United Nations launched the Spotlight Initiative, a global, multi-year initiative dedicated to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. This initiative focuses on addressing root causes, strengthening laws and policies, and providing support to survivors, with a specific emphasis on high-prevalence countries, including those in the Middle East.

The Situation of Women's Rights in the Middle East

Women in conflict zones across the Middle East face unique and severe challenges due to prolonged and complex conflicts. The United Nations Department of Peace Operations, through the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, has aimed to enhance the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. This agenda emphasizes the importance of women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction to achieve sustainable peace. In conflict-affected areas such as Gaza, women and girls encounter significant humanitarian crises, including displacement, gender-based violence, and restricted access to essential services.

To address these challenges, UN Women has established women-led protection and response committees in shelters and host communities, ensuring that humanitarian assistance meets the specific needs of women and girls. Moreover, psychosocial support and health services are provided to mitigate the trauma experienced by women and girls in these conflict settings. However, effective protection measures require stronger enforcement mechanisms and sustained international commitment.

International Awareness Days

The United Nations observes several international days dedicated to raising awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment, including:

25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women



8 March: International Women's Day, first recognized in the early 20th century to celebrate women's achievements regardless of national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political differences.

6 February: International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

11 February: International Day of Women and Girls in Science

19 June: International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

23 June: International Women in Engineering Day

11 October: International Day of the Girl Child

15 October: International Day of Rural Women

These observances aim to draw global attention to the ongoing challenges faced by women and to inspire action toward achieving gender equality.

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