

Excerpted text. See below for link to full document.

E. Women and armed conflict

15. *Achievements.* There is a wider recognition that armed conflict has different destructive impacts on women and men and that a gender-sensitive approach to the application of international human rights law and international humanitarian law is important. Steps have been taken at the national and international levels to address abuses against women, including increased attention to ending impunity for crimes against women in situations of armed conflict. The work of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda has been an important contribution to address violence against women in the context of armed conflict.

Also of historical significance is the adoption of the Crime Statute of the International Criminal Court,⁹ which provides that rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence are war crimes when committed in the context of armed conflict and also under defined circumstances, crimes against humanity. Womens contribution in the areas of peace-building, peacemaking and conflict resolution is being increasingly recognized. Education and training on non-violent conflict resolution have been introduced. Progress has been made on the dissemination and implementation of the guidelines for the protection of refugee women, and on addressing the needs of displaced women. Gender-based persecution has been accepted as a basis for refugee status in some countries. There is recognition by Governments, the international community and organizations, in particular the United Nations, that women and men experience humanitarian emergencies differently, and there is a need for a more holistic support for refugee and displaced women, including those who have suffered all forms of abuse, including gender-specific abuse, to ensure equal access to appropriate and adequate food and nutrition, clean water, safe sanitation, shelter, education, social and health services, including reproductive health care and maternity care. There is greater recognition of the need to integrate a gender perspective in the planning, design and implementation of humanitarian assistance and to provide adequate resources. Humanitarian relief agencies and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, have played an increasingly important role in the provision of humanitarian assistance, as well as in the design, where appropriate, and implementation of programmes to address the needs of women and girls, including refugee and displaced women and girls in humanitarian emergencies, and in conflict and post-conflict situations.

16. *Obstacles.* Peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men and development. Armed and other types of conflicts, wars of aggression, foreign occupation, colonial or other alien domination, as well as terrorism, continue to cause serious obstacles to the advancement of women. The targeting of civilians, including women and children, the displacement of people, and the recruitment of child soldiers in violation of national or international law, by State and/or non-State actors, which occur in armed conflicts, have had a particularly adverse impact on gender equality and women's human rights. Armed conflict creates or exacerbates the high level of female-headed households, which in many cases are living in poverty. The underrepresentation, at all levels, of women in decision-making positions, such as special envoys or special representatives of the Secretary-General, in peacekeeping, peace-building, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction, as well as lack of gender

awareness in these areas, presents serious obstacles. There has been a failure to provide sufficient resources, to adequately distribute those resources and to address the needs of increasing numbers of refugees, who are mostly women and children, particularly to developing countries hosting large numbers of refugees; international assistance has not kept pace with the increasing number of refugees. The growing number of internally displaced persons and the provision of their needs, in particular women and children, continue to represent a double burden to the affected countries and their financial resources. Inadequate training of personnel dealing with the needs of women in situations of armed conflict or as refugees, such as a shortage of specific programmes that address the healing of women from trauma and skills training, remains a problem.

17. Excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production, taking into consideration national security requirements, direct the possible allocation of funds away from social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women. In several countries, economic sanctions have had social and humanitarian impacts on the civilian population, in particular women and children.

18. In some countries, advancement of women is adversely affected by unilateral measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that create obstacles to trade relations among States, impede the full realization of social and economic development and hinder the well-being of the population in the affected countries, with particular consequences for women and children.

19. In situations of armed conflict, there are continued violations of human rights of women, which are violations of fundamental principles of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. There has been an increase in all forms of violence against women, including sexual slavery, rape, systematic rape, sexual abuse and forced pregnancies, in situations of armed conflict. Displacement compounded by loss of home and property, poverty, family disintegration and separation and other consequences of armed conflict are severely affecting the populations, especially women and children. Girls are also abducted or recruited, in violation of international law, into situations of armed conflict, including as combatants, sexual slaves or providers of domestic services.

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