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Committee **Human Rights I**
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Confronting gender-based violence in conflict zones

Introduction

Anyone can be a target of gender based violence, but it is primarily girls and women who fall victims of those acts the most.

In times of war and conflicts the structure of a country and the society within falls apart. Due to this specific situation that is war, there is a disruption of social norms that are acceptable in the society. Social structures such as family structures are being broken and gender-based violence is being normalized. There is a breakdown of the rule of law happening and an element of pre-existing discrimination towards certain gender groups leads to various forms of GBV such as sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriage, and other forms of abuse. Due to militarism the levels of violence in the community rise.

Definition of Key Terms

Gender-based violence (GBV) : Gender-based violence refers to any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

The forms of violence may include:

- Physical violence.
- Verbal violence.
- Psychological violence.
- Sexual violence.
- Socio-economic violence.
- Domestic violence or in intimate relationships.
- Harassment and sexual harassment.

Conflict zones : A conflict zone is an area where military operations are coordinated, or where there is fighting happening between countries or groups of people. It may also refer to areas affected by war or political instability.

Background Information

Both men and women suffer from political and military violence during conflicts. They are both victims of the same aggression and the ongoing conflict affects them in a similar way, however we need to note that still the women's experience usually differs as it is usually women, who experience various forms of sexual violence during these conflicts. We class these forms of violence as gender-based violence, as it is violence perpetrated on individuals solemnly on the basis of a person's sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.

GBV could be regarded as an aspect of patriarchy. In a patriarchal society men want to control women, to achieve that they use numerous forms of violence. In a state disarrayed by conflict, everything is about power games. Whoever holds power has the upperhand. It's often women who become sufferers of those games. As Former UN Peacekeeping Operation commander in DR Congo Patrick Cammaert has stated in 2008: "It is now more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier in modern conflict".

GBV is becoming a weapon of war, for example trafficking is also being exacerbated during and after war. Women are being raped by the actors of the conflict to marginalize and demoralize their communities. In different regions of the world GBV is increasingly weaponized by such acts like systematic rape when a woman is forcibly impregnated to reinforce policies of ethnic cleansing, it is also a way of sexual torture.

On account of disruption of social services such as the health system or justice system, there are few institutions for the victims to turn to. They regard GBV as a fact of the situation, a natural part of war. Furthermore under the circumstances of a conflict women are

pressured by their surroundings, not to report act of sexual violence to authorities. This resolves in most acts of GBV, whether physical or psychological, underreported or considered insignificant by domestic laws . Victims of GBV often then have to suffer the effects of the acts without any aid. In addition there is a problem with collecting data of GBV crimes from the internal governments of the countries that are in conflict. Lack of those resources makes it more challenging for international organizations in resolutions-making and in efforts to solve this issue.

It is women and girls who are primary victims of GBV, however sexual violence perpetrated on males is a commonly used weapon in armed conflicts as well. Forms of sexual violence are designed to humiliate men and emasculate them. Perpetrators take diverse tactics by using various forms of sexual violence such as rape, torture or enforced nudity.

GBV committed during or after the times of war conflict has profound physical, psychological, and social consequences for survivors and leads to injuries, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and lasting trauma. There is a lot of shame and stigma around GBV that benefits the aggressor, as it outcasts the victim from their communities. This stigma also blocks victims from much needed physical and trauma healing.

GBV and intensification of GBV during conflicts is an obstruction in the face of achieving gender equality, which is one of the most important objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Past Actions

United Nations Security Council: Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000): importance of addressing GBV in conflicts, the impact of war on women. [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 \(2000\), S/RES/1325 \(2000\) | She Stands For Peace](#)

UN Women: establishment of UN Women in July 2010, promotes, among other things, efforts to end GBV. [UN Women: The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women - Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#)

There were also multiple resolutions, that strengthen the efforts to stop sexual violence in conflicts such as [Resolution 1820](#) (2008), [Resolution 1888](#) (2009), [Resolution 2106](#) (2013) etc.

Possible Solutions

The key actors responsible for the protection of women and girls during and after the war are governmental bodies, public institutions, and civil society organizations. It is those organizations and institutions that need to take part in the issue-solving steps to resolve many aspects of gender-based violence in conflict zones. The actions taken may list:

Strengthening the international legal framework that would find more efficient ways to criminalize GBV and with transparent legal process will ensure that all perpetrators of GBV will be held accountable for their acts.

Education, concerning the question of GBV, of communities impacted by conflicts, but also local NGOs and peacekeepers. It is necessary to educate them on both prevention and how to approach victims of GBV.

Humanitarian aid and sites for the victims are needed. The victims must be provided safe space and healthcare service.

Support of peacekeeping operations, instability of the region reflects the risks of gender based violence.

Inclusion of women in peace-keeping processes.

Lastly long-term strategies that would prevent reoccurring of GBV are a necessity to truly tackle this issue.

Questions to consider

1. Do pre-existing gender inequalities worsen and lead to GBV during conflicts?
2. What are the countries most affected by this issue?
3. What are the underlying factors contributing to gender-based violence in the conflict zone?
4. What are the main forms of gender-based violence in specific conflict zones and how do they vary across different groups involved in the conflict zone?
5. Are there specific risks faced by different gender groups?
6. How can we hold accountable people responsible for acts of GBV and how to prevent them?
7. What measures are taken now to prevent GBV and protect women in war zones?
8. How can we help the survivors of gender based violence?

Sources & Useful Links

[Gender-based violence | UNHCR](#)

[What is gender-based violence? - Gender Matters \(coe.int\)](#)

[Gender-based violence \(unfpa.org\)](#)

[What is gender-based violence? | EIGE \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Types of gender-based violence - Gender Matters \(coe.int\)](#)

[Gender-based violence in emergencies | UNICEF](#)

[Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women - CARE](#)

[Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of conflict and instability | OHCHR](#)

[Push forward: 10 ways to end violence against women | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

[530695.pdf \(osce.org\)](#)