

Executive Summary

Safer Now

Rapid rise in violence against women and girls demands highest level of global commitment

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Over the past few years, stories and reports have emerged on how global crises such as war, climate change, Covid-19 and abusive uses of technology are driving a rise in violence against women and girls. Floods have forced families to flee to camps, where rape and harassment are rampant. Women report feeling unsafe at home due increased incidents of intimate partner violence as a result of Covid-19. Sexual violence in conflict and in the military has skyrocketed.

The data is telling:

- **One in two women report that they or a woman they know have experienced violence** since the Covid-19 pandemic.¹
- The **risk of being trafficked can increase by 20 to 30 percent** in the aftermath of extreme weather events.²
- **As many as 73 percent of the world's women have been exposed to some form of online violence**, making cyberviolence one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women.³
- In 2021, the UN reported a significant **increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence in conflict**.⁴

The rise in violence begs a single question: Are the needs of women and girls being met under the current international framework?

The indisputable answer is no. While the current framework⁵ has produced extraordinary advances, it is not enough to outpace the rising tide of violence. More is needed. For 30 years, experts including the Commission on the Status of Women, Special Rapporteurs on violence against women, and frontline advocates have repeatedly called for a global treaty to eliminate violence against women and girls. Today, a treaty remains the most powerful tool available to curb the rise in violence and build a more comprehensive framework that allows women and girls to exercise their full human right to a life free from violence.

Are the needs of women and girls being met under the current international framework? The indisputable answer is no.

A new treaty would build on the extraordinary foundation of the current system, working in concert with existing mechanisms, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and regional treaties.

- While CEDAW is exceptional at addressing discrimination against women, **the scope of discrimination and violence against women are both so vast that both treaties are essential to the lives and well-being of women and girls.**

- In an analysis of 85 of the CEDAW Committee’s recent Concluding Observations, only an average of 17.73 percent was afforded to violence against women and girls, a small percentage simply because so many other areas of discrimination need attention.⁶ **A new treaty would be able to devote 100 percent of its focus to violence against women and girls, supporting and complementing the work of CEDAW.**
- The three regional treaties on violence against women – the Belém do Pará Convention in the Americas, Africa’s Maputo Protocol, and the Istanbul Convention in Europe – have been essential in moving toward a more comprehensive and coordinated framework, but they are limited by geography, covering only about 25 percent of the world’s women. That leaves **nearly 75 percent of women, the majority of whom are women of color, without protection from a treaty specific to eradicating violence against women and girls.**⁷

In the face of rising violence, the lack of a binding global instrument leaves the lives of women and girls in peril.

A new treaty would consolidate definitions and best practices from various instruments into one comprehensive mechanism, codifying standards into clear, actionable and measurable steps on women’s protection and security. A treaty would ensure that all acts of violence against women and girls are understood as a violation of women’s human rights. It would also work to establish stronger global norms and expectations on the issue, and improve the quality and consistency of laws on violence against women and girls globally.

Women and girls cannot wait. In the face of rising violence, the lack of a binding global instrument leaves the lives of women and girls in peril. As Her Excellency Shara Duncan Villalobos, UN Ambassador, Costa Rica, says, it’s time “to take on the challenge not only for women and girls but for the whole of society.”

“Women and girls are dying. The activists defending them are hunted. It’s time for us to come together to end violence against women and girls once and for all.”

– Judge Najla Ayoubi,
Afghanistan



Endnotes

1. UN Women, Measuring the Shadow Pandemic, Survey Report, p 6, <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/vaw-rga>.
2. Reem Asalem, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, including environmental degradation and related disaster risk mitigation and response, UN General Assembly, UN Doc A/77/136 (July 11, 2022), section V, undocs.org/en/A/77/136. The report is a detailed look at the multiple ways in which climate change increases violence against women and girls, particularly among women with intersecting vulnerabilities, including indigenous women, elderly women, and women belonging to minority groups.
3. UN Broadband Commission Working Group on Gender, Combatting Online Violence Against Women & Girls: A Worldwide Wake-up Call: Highlights, September 2015, <https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/highlightdocumentenglish.pdf>.
4. United Nations Development Programme, "Rising rates of rape and sexual violence in conflict should be an alarm bell, UNDP, June 15, 2022, <https://www.undp.org/blog/rising-rates-rape-and-sexual-violence-conflict-should-be-alarm-bell>.
5. This framework includes multiple instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women; Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Rome Statute; UN Security Council Resolution 1325; Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime; and general comments relating to violence against women and girls of the Committee of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment Nos 2 (2008) and 3 (2012).
6. Analysis by Every Woman of 85 of the CEDAW committee's recent Concluding Observations. We conducted a textual analysis of each recommendation using key terms.
7. Analysis conducted by the Every Woman, February 2020, updated October 2022.

**Thank you for your interest in
ending violence against
women and girls.**

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