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Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General

Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Promotion and protection of the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations: ensuring justice, remedies and reparation for victims

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/19, provides an overview, based on the contributions of States, relevant United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, of best practices and main challenges in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations, with a focus on ending impunity and ensuring accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and on the provision of effective remedies and reparation for the victims.

* The present document was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/19, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare an analytical report on best practices and main challenges in the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations, with a focus on ending impunity and ensuring accountability for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and on the provision of effective remedies and reparation for the victims.

2. The report is informed by approximately 50 submissions received in response to a call for inputs issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)[1] and by the work of United Nations human rights mechanisms and investigative bodies.

II. Context

3. The steady increase in the number of armed conflicts, reaching a historic peak of 61 in 2024,[2] up from 59 in 2023, reflects a growing fragmentation of global security and has brought about an intensification of harm to civilians, among whom women and children are disproportionately affected. In 2023, women and children constituted roughly 70% of civilian fatalities (40% and 30%, respectively), [3] underscoring how contemporary warfare is increasingly characterized by patterns of violence that shift the burden of conflict onto the most vulnerable. Children face recruitment and family separation. Women and children face killings, forced displacement and gender-based violence and are disproportionately impacted by attacks on health facilities and workers, attacks on educational facilities, teachers and students and denial of access to essential services.[4] In post-conflict settings, they frequently experience compounded violations arising from poverty, insecurity, marginalization and structural discrimination.[5]

4. Conflict-related sexual violence surged in 2025, with women, including women human rights defenders, and girls primarily targeted through rape, abduction and sexual slavery.[6] The proliferation of arms and institutional collapse compounded these violations and amplified barriers to protection and accountability, while widespread impunity for these crimes persisted.[7] Women and girls from racially and ethnically marginalized groups and others facing similar discrimination are often disproportionally affected by gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, during conflict.[8]

5. In 2024, an estimated 473 million children – over one in six globally – lived in conflict-affected areas, which is nearly double the proportion recorded in the 1990s.[9] In the same year, the United Nations verified 41,370 grave violations against children, representing a 25 per cent increase from the previous year. [10] These included killing and maiming, recruitment, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. Girls accounted for approximately one third of all victims. [11]

[1] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2026/call-inputs-inform-report-united-nations-high-commissioner-human-rights.
[2] Siri Aas Rustad, *Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2024* (Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2025), p. 8.
[3] S/2024/385, para. 6.
[4] S/2026/321, paras. 2 and 9; and A/HRC/61/37, paras. 4–6.
[5] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 30 (2013), paras. 49, 54, 63 and 74.
[6] S/2026/321, para. 9.
[7] Ibid., para. 14.
[8] A/80/496, para. 28.
[9] Gudrun Østby and Siri Aas Rustad, "473 million children live in conflict zones", Peace Research Institute Oslo, 31 October 2024.
[10] A/79/878-S/2025/247, para. 5.
[11] Ibid.

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Simultaneously, 676 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of active conflict, representing the highest figure since the 1990s.[12]

6. United Nations human rights experts have observed that armed non-State actors are responsible for a wide range of abuses, including the recruitment and use of children in hostilities and conflict-related sexual violence, and have emphasized that victims must be able to seek redress regardless of whether violations are committed by State or non-State actors. The proliferation of non-State actors has often coincided with weakened institutional protection frameworks, increased insecurity and persistent impunity for serious violations.[13]

7. Across diverse conflict settings, human rights violations against women, boys and girls have emerged. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, OHCHR reported that the conduct of hostilities has resulted in exceptionally high civilian casualties, with women and children comprising the majority of those killed.[14] Starvation and attacks on health infrastructure have compounded harm to women and children.[15] According to the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, women and girls have faced severe restrictions in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, with the targeting and destruction of such facilities amounting to reproductive violence.[16]

8. In the Sudan, OHCHR reported that conflict-related sexual violence had been employed as a weapon of war, with recurring patterns of rape, gang rape and sexual slavery directed predominantly against women and girls, often on ethnic grounds.[17] Pregnancies resulting from rape have left victims facing stigma, and children born of sexual violence risk rejection by their families.[18] By June 2026, the United Nations had verified 5,700 grave violations against children since the conflict had begun.[19] According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over 9.3 million people, including 5.6 million children, remain displaced nationwide. By the end of 2025, 10.8 million children were out of safe learning environments due to school destruction, occupation, displacement and service collapse.[20]

9. OHCHR has reported that, in Ukraine, ongoing hostilities continue to inflict significant civilian casualties, including among women and children, with explosive remnants of war causing harm even far from front lines.[21] Damage to critical infrastructure, including disruptions to electricity, has restricted access to essential services for older persons and others with reduced mobility,[22] which may place additional caregiving pressures on women. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), displacement,

[12] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Facts and figures: women, peace, and security", 20 October 2025. See also Peace Research Institute Oslo, "Record number of women living in conflict in 2024", 22 September 2025.

[13] A/HRC/51/34, paras. 66–74; and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Joint statement by independent United Nations human rights experts on human rights responsibilities of armed non-State actors", press release, 25 February 2021. See also S/2026/321, paras. 9, 15, 29 and 30.

[14] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/opt/occupied-palestinian-territory-overview-report-east-jerusalem-practices-en.pdf, para. 9.

[15] UN-Women, "Advocacy brief: the cost of war in Gaza on women and girls", 2026, pp. 3 and 4.

[16] See the conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel entitled "'More than a human can bear': Israel's systematic use of sexual, reproductive and other forms of gender-based violence since 7 October 2023", available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session58/a-hrc-58-crp-6.pdf, para. 171.

[17] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/sudan/2026-devastating-impacts-conflict-related-sexual-violence-ohchr-report-sudan-en.pdf, paras. 11 and 55.

[18] Ibid., paras. 46 and 47.

[19] See https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-deputy-executive-director-hannan-suliemans-remarks-united-nations-security.

[20] See https://www.unicef.org/media/178991/file/Sudan-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.38-(End-of-Year)-31-December-2025.pdf.pdf, pp. 2 and 3.

[21] OHCHR, "Ukraine: protection of civilians in armed conflict – May 2026 update", p. 5.

[22] OHCHR, "The human rights situation of older persons in Ukraine in the context of the armed attack by the Russian Federation", briefing paper, May 2023, para. 43.

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insecurity, the reduction in provision of humanitarian assistance and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions have further driven increases in gender-based violence.[23]

III. Normative framework applicable to conflict and post-conflict situations

10. The protection of women and children in conflict and post-conflict settings rests on a robust convergence of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international criminal law. International law obliges all parties to armed conflict to prevent and address violations and ensure accountability for breaches of international law, while requiring States to guarantee victims' access to effective remedies and reparations.

11. International humanitarian law is aimed at limiting the humanitarian impacts of armed conflict. It applies in international and non-international armed conflicts. It governs the conduct of hostilities between the parties to the conflict and protects persons who are not, or are no longer, directly participating in hostilities, including by prohibiting murder, torture and rape, enforced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence. It requires respect for the specific protection, health and assistance needs of women affected by armed conflict.[24] Children are entitled to special protection, including prohibition against allowing them to take part in hostilities and against recruitment into armed forces or groups.[25] Serious violations of international humanitarian law constitute war crimes. States have an obligation to investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of war crimes, as well as to extradite them in case of grave breaches.[26]

12. International human rights law applies at all times, including during armed conflict. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in law and in practice, with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women clarifying that these obligations extend to preventing and punishing violations by non-State actors in conflict zones.[27] The Committee noted that women have historically had and continue to have a role as human rights defenders, as members of resistance movements and as active agents in both formal and informal peacebuilding and recovery processes.[28] Despite having such roles, their equal representation and participation in peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes have been lagging behind.

13. States Parties must comply with all aspects of their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This includes ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, guaranteeing access to the full spectrum of services, including information, psychosocial support, family planning, including emergency contraception, maternal healthcare, safe abortion, prevention and

[23] United Nations Population Fund, "An overview of gender-based violence in Ukraine: advocacy brief 2024", December 2024, pp. 5, 6 and 8.

[24] Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (First Geneva Convention), art. 12; Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea (Second Geneva Convention), art. 12; Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Third Geneva Convention), art. 14; Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), art. 27; and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), art. 76. See also International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, rule 134.

[25] Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 77 (2); and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), art. 4 (3) (c). See also ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, rules 136 and 137.

[26] First Geneva Convention, art. 49; Second Geneva Convention, art. 50; Third Geneva Convention, art. 129; and Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 146. See also ICRC, Customary International Humanitarian Law Database, rule 156.

[27] General recommendation No. 30 (2013), para. 15.

[28] Ibid., paras. 2, 6 and 13.

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treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and care for injuries such as fistula.[29] For this reason, UNFPA has called upon States to ensure that the Minimum Initial Service Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health is incorporated into all humanitarian preparedness and response plans to ensure the timely delivery of life-saving sexual and reproductive health services for survivors of sexual violence.[30]

14. Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 19, 32, 34–36, 38 and 39) and the Optional Protocol thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict mandate comprehensive protection for children from violence, exploitation and recruitment, emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration. Civil and political rights, such as the right to life, freedom from torture and equality before the law, remain fully applicable during conflict. Under international human rights law, States have the obligation to investigate and provide effective remedies for violations of human rights.[31]

15. International criminal law establishes individual criminal liability under international law for certain crimes. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court explicitly recognizes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and enforced sterilization as crimes against humanity, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population. They also constitute war crimes if a nexus is established with an armed conflict.[32] The Rome Statute defines as war crimes the conscription and enlisting of children under 15 into the national armed forces, or into armed forces or groups, or the use of them to participate actively in hostilities.[33] Crucially, the Rome Statute and jurisprudence by several international courts affirm that official capacity does not exempt a person from criminal responsibility, and amnesties or statutes of limitation do not apply, in relation to crimes under international law that fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.[34] The Rome Statute also recognizes victims' rights to reparations through mechanisms such as the Trust Fund for Victims.[35]

16. The Security Council has further developed the women and peace and security policy framework, which emphasizes the crucial importance of ensuring women's participation in peace processes and recognizes the differentiated impact of conflict on women and girls, affirming that sexual violence may constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or an act of genocide.[36] The Security Council has called for the exclusion of such crimes from amnesty provisions and emphasized survivor-centred approaches to justice.[37] Similarly, the children and armed conflict framework developed by the Security Council establishes mechanisms to monitor six grave violations, promoting accountability through action plans, sanctions and prosecution, while underscoring the need for child-sensitive rehabilitation and justice.[38]

[29] Ibid., para. 52 (c).

[30] See https://www.unfpa.org/resources/minimum-initial-service-package-misp-srh-crisis-situations.

[31] See, for instance, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 2 (3); and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2. See also Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *I.D.G. v. Spain* (E/C.12/55/D/2/2014), para. 11.3; and *Ben Djazia and Bellili v. Spain* (E/C.12/61/D/5/2015), para. 13.4; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, art. 14; Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights), art. 13; American Convention on Human Rights, art. 25; and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 7. See also E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1.

[32] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 7 (1) (g) and 8 (2) (b) (xxii) and (e) (vi).

[33] Ibid., art. 8 (2) (b) (xxvi) and (e) (vii).

[34] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 27 and 29. See also ICRC, "Amnesties and international humanitarian law: purpose and scope", *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 101, No. 1 (2019), pp. 357–363.

[35] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 75 and 79.

[36] See Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and 2467 (2019).

[37] Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), para. 4; and 2467 (2019), para. 16 (d).

[38] See, e.g., Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1612 (2005).

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IV. Participation and survivor-led initiatives

A. Effective participation

17. Effective participation within processes that are aimed at addressing human rights violations or at building peace is essential, including for women and children.[39] Meaningful participation requires that victims exercise genuine agency over outcomes.[40] For survivors of sexual violence in conflict, this entails creating safe, confidential spaces and services free from stigma and revictimization and ensuring that their leadership in decision-making roles is actively supported rather than merely permitted and that consultations are conducted in ways acceptable to their culture with adequate support throughout mapping, design, implementation and monitoring.[41]

18. For children, effective participation includes direct methods, such as age-appropriate testimonies, art and dialogue, and indirect methods, such as representation by civil society or youth parliaments, ensuring safety while amplifying diverse voices.[42] It was emphasized in the submissions that children must be recognized as rights holders, and not merely as victims, with participation extending beyond criminal proceedings into truth-seeking, reparations design and guarantees of non-repetition.[43] For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone reported having produced a child-friendly final report illustrated and co-designed with children, while the Truth Commission in Colombia utilized literary narratives and digital platforms to make transitional justice findings accessible to younger audiences.[44]

19. Survivor-led initiatives have proven to be the most transformative drivers of change. It was noted in one submission that, where survivors have mobilized and advocated domestically, significant advances in accountability have been achieved.[45] In its submission, Colombia reported that women's organizations secured the unprecedented creation of a gender subcommission at the Havana negotiations, leading to the mainstreaming of gender across the 2016 peace agreement.[46] Colombia also reported that broad civil society coalitions, including LGBTIQ+ groups, ensured the inclusion of diverse victims' rights in the final peace agreement.[47]

20. It was indicated in the submissions that civil society organizations and national human rights institutions played a critical role as trusted intermediaries, mapping and registering

[39] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 21; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 25; and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 7. See also Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 30 (2013), paras. 46 (b) and 81 (e); and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 12 (2009), para. 125.

[40] See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-03/UNDP-UNWomen-Womens-Meaningful-Participation-in-Transitional-Justice.pdf, pp. 23 and 24.

[41] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Docs/2014/UNSG-Guidance-note-Reparations-for-conflictrelated-sexual-violence-2014-en.pdf.

[42] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/RuleoflawTruthCommissionsen.pdf ; and https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/form/young-meaningful-participation-global-events-us-children-1-en.pdf.

[43] Submission by Essa Faal and others; and submission by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

[44] See, e.g., Sean Molloy, "Empowering the future: enhancing child participation in transitional justice", research paper, Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform, 2025, p. 26; and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Innocenti Research Centre, *Children and Truth Commissions* (2010), pp. 44–46.

[45] Submission by the Global Survivors Fund.

[46] See also https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2025/07/the-peace-deal-that-put-women-first-what-colombia-taught-the-world.

[47] Submission by Colombia.

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victims and providing legal representation and psychosocial assistance.[48] In the Sudan, women-led civil society reportedly developed a survivor-centred one-stop model to deliver legal awareness and consultations, enabling hundreds of survivors to understand their rights and engage in accountability pathways safely.[49] It was noted in another submission that, across the world, women-run organizations often lead demands for accountability and sustain searches for missing persons longest, pioneering science-based approaches such as the forensic genetics work of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.[50]

B. Protection considerations

21. Effective participation requires that safeguards be embedded throughout all stages of judicial mechanisms. For survivors of sexual violence in conflict, this entails specialized, gender-responsive programmes, thorough risk assessments, guarantees of strict confidentiality and identity protection, the provision of continuous psychosocial support before, during and after participation, and safe environments to prevent revictimization.[51] Informed consent protocols for children should be adapted to their evolving capacity.[52] It was noted in one submission that protection must extend beyond the duration of proceedings to address long-term risks of retaliation, stigma and socioeconomic vulnerability, particularly where national witness protection programmes are absent or underresourced.[53]

22. Practices in Liberia and Sierra Leone have been described as demonstrating that the safe participation of children requires dedicated mandates, trauma-sensitive methodologies and creative platforms that allow children to articulate their visions for peace without retraumatization.[54] One submission highlighted a 2022 law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that reinforces confidentiality through anonymization, pseudonyms, remote testimony and closed or in camera hearings, while courts have embedded psychosocial professionals in judicial workflows for trauma-informed interviewing adapted to the child's developmental age.[55]

V. Accountability mechanisms: investigations and prosecutions

23. Under international law, States have the obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence.[56] According to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, States should take the measures necessary to strengthen the effectiveness of international legal principles concerning universal and international jurisdiction. For example, no statutory limitation should be applied to war crimes and crimes against humanity.[57] International law precludes amnesty provisions impeding such accountability.[58] Furthermore, the Security Council has stressed that sexual violence must be excluded from amnesty provisions in the

[48] Submissions by the Global Survivors Fund and TRIAL International.
[49] Submission by Legal Action Worldwide.
[50] Submission by the International Commission on Missing Persons.
[51] A/75/174, paras. 59–61.
[52] Submission by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.
[53] Submission by TRIAL International.
[54] See, e.g., Molloy, "Empowering the future", pp. 16–18.
[55] Submission by TRIAL International.
[56] A/HRC/48/60, paras. 18–24; First Geneva Convention, art. 49; Second Geneva Convention, art. 50; Third Geneva Convention, art. 129; Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 146; Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, arts. I, IV and V; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, art. 6; and Convention against Torture, art. 4.
[57] A/HRC/54/24, paras. 40 and 41; Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity; and Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 29.
[58] A/HRC/54/24, paras. 40 and 41.

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context of conflict resolution processes.[59] Structural conditions fostering impunity and procedural deficiencies disproportionately affect women, girls and boys.[60]

A. Barriers to accountability

1. Structural barriers

24. As the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence has noted, only a small proportion of perpetrators of crimes under international law are subjected to investigation. Accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of human rights, including crimes under international law, is further undermined by the continued use of amnesties and immunities, the application of statutory limitations inconsistent with international law, gaps in the domestic criminalization of crimes under international law, practical obstacles linked to the scarcity of human and financial resources, a lack of capacity or political will and practices such as pardons, sentence reductions and early release.[61]

2. Procedural and evidentiary barriers

25. Accountability mechanisms continue to face significant shortcomings in addressing the specific needs of women and children. According to the submission by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, gender bias and stereotypes within justice systems undermine the investigation and prosecution of sexual violence and the credibility of victims' testimonies, while the absence of child-sensitive procedures limits the effective participation of children and the recognition of harms specific to them. Children associated with armed forces or groups are often treated as perpetrators rather than as victims, including through detention or military prosecution.[62] Survivors frequently experience secondary victimization due to procedural insensitivity, limited psychosocial support and evidentiary rules that do not adequately account for trauma.[63]

3. Contextual and protection barriers

26. In conflict settings, stigma, fear of reprisal, family rejection and retraumatization deter survivors, including women and children, from engaging with accountability mechanisms.[64] The lack of safety mechanisms for victims often constitutes a de facto obstacle to investigation.[65] General victim and witness protection programmes often do not provide efficient coverage for victims of sexual violence.[66] These gaps not only deny justice to victims but also undermine prevention efforts, allowing cycles of violence against women and children to persist despite existing legal obligations.[67]

B. Judicial responses

27. One of the ways in which national judicial systems address the challenge of prosecuting gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law is by adopting prosecutorial prioritization strategies, establishing a strategic order for the investigation and prosecution of cases based on criteria

[59] Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), para. 4.
[60] E/CN.6/2026/3, paras. 18–22 and 27.
[61] A/HRC/48/60, para. 28; and A/HRC/54/24, paras. 40 and 41.
[62] See https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/en/children-in-detention.
[63] A/75/174, paras. 51 and 58–61; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 33 (2015), paras. 26 and 27; and submission by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.
[64] S/2025/389, paras. 12 and 13; and submission by UN-Women.
[65] See, e.g., https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/ReportLessonsLearned.pdf, p. 8.
[66] A/75/174, para. 59.
[67] See, e.g., A/HRC/48/60, para. 45.

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such as gravity, systemic nature or representative value, rather than processing cases as they are received.[68] In this context, the absence of such a strategy risks dispersing investigative efforts, concentrating on low-level perpetrators while those most responsible evade accountability, and failing to address crimes requiring specialized efforts, including gender-based violence and the recruitment and use of children in hostilities.

28. In its submission, Colombia indicated that the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, operational since 2018, addresses systematic violations that occurred during the internal conflict through 11 "macrocases", using an intersectional and gender- and age-responsive approach. These include cases concerning gender dynamics in armed groups, persecution of women leaders, recruitment of children and gender-based violence.

29. States have also established specialized prosecutorial units or bodies to strengthen the technical expertise required for complex crimes under international law.[69] For example, Ukraine created a specialized conflict-related sexual violence unit within the Office of the Prosecutor General in 2022,[70] benefiting from mentorship under a strategic cooperation framework with United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In 2026, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, for which OHCHR is a co-lead, launched the global network and community of practice for prosecutors and practitioners pursuing criminal accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, connecting domestic and international practitioners to share expertise and strengthen criminal accountability for conflict-related sexual violence.[71]

30. National courts are also increasingly exercising extraterritorial jurisdiction, including universal jurisdiction, to prosecute crimes under international law occurring outside their territory, including crimes against women and children. In 2025, globally, 42 distinct charges of sexual violence were filed in proceedings initiated under universal jurisdiction,[72] several of them concerning Yazidi survivors. In its submission, Germany reported that 30 convictions had been handed down by courts under the Code of Crimes against International Law since 2002. The Code had been amended in 2024 to address legal and procedural gaps identified in recent trials, including to provide for a more comprehensive definition of sexual violence and the access of survivors to psychosocial assistance during proceedings.

31. Universal jurisdiction has enabled victims supported by international organizations to bring cases across borders. According to one submission, in 2025, survivors of the Tigray conflict filed a criminal complaint in Germany against senior officials of Eritrea and Ethiopia, citing sexual violence, torture and starvation crimes.[73] Similarly, another submission reported that Rohingya survivors had pursued justice in Argentina, where a federal criminal court had issued universal jurisdiction arrest warrants in February 2025 against 25 individuals for crimes committed between 2012 and 2018.[74]

C. International and regional courts and mechanisms

32. International and regional courts and mechanisms, such as United Nations commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, can contribute to advancing accountability for violations against women and children.

[68] See, e.g., A/HRC/27/56, paras. 35 and 44.
[69] Ibid., paras. 88 and 89.
[70] See https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/AR2025TOE.pdf, p. 8.
[71] See www.crsv-prosecutionnetwork.org.
[72] TRIAL International, *Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review 2026* (2026), p. 14.
[73] Submission by Gender Empowerment Movement Tigray.
[74] Submission by Legal Action Worldwide.

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1. Advances in normative standards

33. International courts have established that rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and enforced sterilization constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.[75] In 2021, in *Prosecutor v. Ntaganda*, the Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court determined that children born of rape and sexual slavery were direct victims eligible for reparations.[76] In 2008, the Special Court for Sierra Leone recognized forced marriage as falling under crimes against humanity.[77]

2. Victim-centred approach

34. International mechanisms have advanced child- and gender-responsive procedural and evidentiary standards. The Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court adopted a new policy on gender-based crimes in December 2023,[78] while investigation protocols, such as the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), as revised, and the guidelines on justice for child victims and witnesses of crime,[79] provide operational guidance for trauma-informed documentation. International tribunals have further established precedents allowing children's testimony without corroboration and mandating protective measures for vulnerable witnesses.[80] This principle has been repeatedly applied by the chambers of the International Criminal Court when assessing the testimony of children and survivors of sexual violence, which, in line with the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the Court, may be sufficient if deemed credible and reliable.

3. Evidence preservation and capacity-building

35. International mechanisms have been able to preserve evidence and build investigative capacity with increasing attention paid to gender- and age-specific harms, owing to increasingly explicit mandates and to dedicated gender and child rights expertise embedded from their inception.[81] The recently established Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan aims to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of international crimes and the most serious violations of international law, "including against women and girls", and prepare case files for future proceedings.[82] Fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry contribute to accountability by documenting gender-specific and child-specific violations and advancing legal characterizations, such as the independent international fact-finding mission for the Sudan, which identified patterns of sexual violence indicative of genocidal intent.[83]

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[75] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 7 (1) (g) and 8 (2) (b) (xxii) and (e) (vi); and International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, *Prosecutor v. Kunarac, Kovač and Vuković*, Appeals Chamber, Case No. IT-96-23 & IT-96-23/1-A, Judgment, 12 June 2002.

[76] International Criminal Court, *Prosecutor v. Ntaganda*, Reparations Order, ICC-01/04-02/06-2659, 8 March 2021, paras. 120–123.

[77] Special Court for Sierra Leone, *Prosecutor v. Brima, Kamara and Kanu*, Appeals Chamber, Case No. SCSL-2004-16-A, Judgment, 22 February 2008.

[78] See https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/2023-policy-gender-en-web.pdf.

[79] Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20, annex.

[80] International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, *Prosecutor v. Akayesu*, Case No. ICTR-96-4-T, Judgment, 2 September 1998, paras. 603–609 and 688.

[81] See, e.g., S/2025/556, para. 15.

[82] Human Rights Council resolution 60/2, paras. 25 and 26.

[83] A/HRC/61/77, paras. 114–116. See also, inter alia, A/HRC/58/67, A/HRC/61/61 and the conference room paper of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel entitled "'The essence of childhood has been destroyed': Israel's deliberate targeting of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory since 7 October 2023", available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session62/a-hrc-62-crp-2.pdf.

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VI. Access to justice

36. Effective access to justice enables victims to seek timely, equitable remedies for human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and encompasses recognition before the law, fair hearings, appellate rights and equal court access, including effective judicial protection and diverse complaint mechanisms delivering tangible outcomes.[84]

A. Structural and social barriers

37. High costs, physical distance, insecurity, lack of decentralized structures and inadequate legal aid are some of the obstacles that victims, including women and children, face in accessing justice. According to one submission, administrative restrictions, migration policies and lack of documentation, such as birth certificates, may further complicate access to justice.[85] Domestic legislation itself can be a barrier. For instance, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) indicated in its submission that discriminatory laws criminalizing same-sex relations or sexual relations outside marriage place survivors at risk of prosecution, deterring reporting. According to another submission, women and children in detention may not have access to safe and effective complaint mechanisms.[86] In conflict and post-conflict settings, these structural barriers are exacerbated. Courts may be destroyed or systems instrumentalized to shield perpetrators or repress political opponents, and emerging governance structures may lack adequate frameworks to address human rights violations.[87]

38. Patriarchal norms, resulting in social restrictions, in many instances prevent women and children from reporting violations and abuses, especially sexual violence. In its submission, UN-Women further noted that stigma and family rejection prevent rural, displaced and marginalized women, including Indigenous women, women of African descent, women with disabilities, LGBITQ+ women and older women, from seeking help. It was also reported in the submissions that biased or negligent attitudes of justice officials, including lack of confidentiality and evidentiary standards failing to account for trauma-affected memory, may also lead to revictimization.[88] According to the submission by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, children associated with armed forces and armed groups face stigma in their communities and are treated as security threats by authorities and not as individuals entitled to access justice.

[84] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (General Assembly resolution 60/147, annex), paras. 12–14; Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 8; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, arts. 2 (3) and 14; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, arts. 2, 3, 5 (a) and 15; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 5 (2003), paras. 24 and 25. See also https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/observer-paper-key-messages-ohchr-women-access-justice-csw70-crsv-1-en.pdf; and https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/csw-70-expert-group-meeting-observer-paper-un-toe-crsv-en.pdf.

[85] Submission by Essa Faal and others.

[86] Submission by Legal Action Worldwide.

[87] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/transitionaljustice/sg-guidance-note/2023_07_guidance_note_transitional_justice_en.pdf, pp. 16 and 17; and submissions by Human Rights Myanmar and Just Access.

[88] Submissions by the Global Survivors Fund and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

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B. Innovative approaches

39. To overcome these barriers, States and civil society organizations have developed innovative approaches that prioritize accessibility, safety and victims' agency. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gender-responsive mobile courts have improved access for women victims of conflict-related sexual violence in remote areas.[89] In Haiti, in 2025 and 2026, gender-responsive mobile courts deployed under the Justice and Anti-Impunity Support Programme combined immediate legal access with community engagement, providing safe spaces for reporting gender-based violence and informing residents about their rights, thus strengthening trust in judicial institutions.[90] Similarly, in its submission, Mexico reported that travelling legal outreach units staffed by female lawyers and community interpreters addressed the systemic exclusion of Indigenous communities facing barriers accessing centralized urban institutions, by facilitating free legal and administrative services. Specialized units build trust within formal structures, such as the litigant units for women in Yemen, which resolved 450 cases, benefiting 145 women in 2024 and demonstrating how women paralegals bridge trust between communities and justice institutions.[91] In its submission, Colombia reported the creation of child-friendly safe spaces such as play libraries within judicial infrastructure to prevent revictimization through its Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

40. United Nations guidance from 2015 has recommended one-stop centres to consolidate medical, psychosocial, legal and case management services into a single safe location, ensuring holistic care and eliminating the need to navigate disjointed systems; such centres have since become the best practice for responding to gender-based violence in emergencies, including in conflict zones.[92] According to a submission by Legal Action Worldwide, this model was leveraged in the conflict in the Sudan to enable survivors to know their rights and engage with accountability pathways aligned with their safety and well-being.

41. New technologies, accompanied by appropriate safeguards, offer scalable alternatives where physical access remains constrained.[93] For example, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme reported that the Survivors Assistance Platform in Ukraine had reached over 130,000 users in 2024, serving those in territories not under government control or abroad.[94]

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[89] A/75/174, para. 56; and submission by TRIAL International.
[90] Submission by UN-Women.
[91] See https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-09/undp-unwomen-gender-justice-platform-ar2024.pdf, p. 29. See also https://rolhr.undp.org/annualreport/2024/impact/arab-states/yemen.html.
[92] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Essential-Services-Package-Module-3-en.pdf.
[93] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/ruleoflaw/Briefer-Online-hearings-justice-systems.pdf.
[94] See, e.g., https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-09/undp-unwomen-gender-justice-platform-ar2024.pdf, p. 27.

VII. Effective remedies and reparation

42. The right to an effective remedy for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law encompasses the rights to access justice, truth, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence,[95] reinforced by specific protections for women and children in conflict,[96] and complemented by international humanitarian law obligations.[97]

43. Despite significant normative advancements, the implementation of reparation programmes remains globally undermined by the exclusion of gender-specific harms, the overreliance on inadequate judicial avenues and the failure to incorporate victims' meaningful participation into transformative administrative schemes that guarantee both individual redress and structural non-recurrence.[98] According to one submission, this systemic delay inflicts irreversible secondary harm on survivors and their children, underscoring an imperative for immediate interim reparative measures that address acute medical and psychosocial needs without waiting for comprehensive State-led frameworks to be finalized.[99]

A. Judicial and administrative remedies

44. Judicial remedies are essential for establishing criminal accountability and often serve as a catalyst for States to establish complementary out-of-court reparation programmes to ensure redress for victims.[100] For instance, the International Criminal Court has ordered reparations to be paid through its Trust Fund for Victims.[101] These remedies are often grounded in specific reparation laws that provide the legislative mandate, eligibility criteria and funding necessary for administrative mechanisms, or non-judicial State bodies such as reparations commissions or truth-seeking entities, to operate.[102]

45. Laws increasingly mandate gender-responsive design, requiring mechanisms to adapt procedures to the specific needs of women and girls, such as providing gender-sensitive interviews and access to sexual and reproductive health services, ensuring the participation of women staff and prioritizing forms of reparation that address gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence.[103] For instance, the Yazidi Female Survivors Law (Law No. 8 of 2021) of Iraq provided for the creation of an exclusive administrative body, with a significant representation of women, including survivors, tasked with delivering

[95] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 8; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 2 (3); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 6; Convention against Torture, art. 14; Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 39; International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, art. 24; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, art. 2 (b) and (c); African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, art. 7; American Convention on Human Rights, art. 25; European Convention on Human Rights, art. 13; and Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation.

[96] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 30 (2013), paras. 42–47; and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

[97] Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 91.

[98] A/HRC/14/22, paras. 23, 28–31 and 85.

[99] Submission by Global Survivors Fund; and Global Survivors Fund, "Briefing on reparation for children born of conflict-related sexual violence", June 2024, pp. 8–15.

[100] Ibid., para. 15; Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, paras. 11, 12 and 15–18; and Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Barrios Altos v. Peru*, Judgment, 14 March 2001.

[101] Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, arts. 75 (2) and 79.

[102] OHCHR, *Rule-of-Law Tools for Post-Conflict States: Reparations Programmes* (New York and Geneva, 2008), pp. 1–4, 11 and 32.

[103] A/75/174, paras. 14, 15, 103 and 104.

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comprehensive compensation, housing, healthcare and education specifically tailored to the trauma and social reintegration of Yazidi women survivors of genocide.[104]

46. Documentation efforts often prioritize evidence-gathering for criminal accountability over identifying victims and their specific harms. Victims' registries, which are defined as tools used to identify populations suffering human rights violations and guide reparation programmes,[105] are aimed at systematically documenting harms and affirm victims' status as rights holders entitled to redress. In Colombia, the Central Register of Victims mandated by Law No. 1448 of 2011 has registered over 9 million victims, including over 48,000 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, to facilitate their inclusion in reparation programmes.[106] According to one submission, in a conflict situation, existing fragmented documentation efforts could be consolidated into a single registry that could lay the groundwork for urgent interim reparations and future justice.[107]

B. Forms of reparations

47. The Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law identify five complementary forms of reparation: restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition (see sect. VIII below). They are designed to address distinct dimensions of harm and are most effective when applied in combination.[108]

48. Restitution seeks to restore the victims to their original situation before the violation occurred, including return of property and to family life.[109] For example, in the Sepur Zarco case in Guatemala, domestic courts ordered land restitution for Maya Q'eqchi' women subjected to sexual slavery during the civil war; the order linked property restoration directly to the gendered dimensions of dispossession, addressing both material loss and systemic inequality.[110]

49. Compensation refers to monetary payment for economically assessable damage as appropriate and proportional to the gravity of the violation and the circumstances of each case, including physical harm and moral suffering.[111] As an example, in April 2024, Ukraine, supported by the Global Survivors Fund, launched an urgent interim reparation pilot project to support conflict-related sexual violence survivors, under the framework of which each eligible survivor received €3,000 as interim compensation, in recognition of their right to reparation without waiting for the end of the conflict. This project informed the development of the 2024 law on reparations.[112]

50. Rehabilitation encompasses medical, psychological, legal and social services for recovery.[113] In Peru, the reparations programme implemented free combined medical and

[104] See, e.g., S/2022/272, para. 14. Other such laws include Colombia, Law No. 1448 of 2011; Democratic Republic of the Congo, Law No. 22/065 of 2022; and Ukraine, Law No. 4067-IX of 2024.

[105] Jairo Rivas, "Official victims' registries: a tool for the recognition of human rights violations", *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, vol. 8, No. 1 (February 2016), pp. 116–127.

[106] Submissions by Colombia and Global Survivors Fund.

[107] Submission by Global Survivors Fund; and conference room paper of the independent international fact-finding mission for the Sudan entitled "Paths to justice: accountability for atrocities in the Sudan", available at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/ffm-sudan/a-hrc-60-crp.7-en.pdf, para. 57.

[108] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, paras. 19–23.

[109] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/transitionaljustice/sg-guidance-note/2023_07_guidance_note_transitional_justice_en.pdf, p. 18.

[110] Global Survivors Fund, "Country briefing: Guatemala", September 2024; and https://knowledge.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Research-paper-Documenting-good-practice-on-accountability-for-conflict-related-sexual-violence-Sepur-Zarco-en.pdf.

[111] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, para. 20.

[112] Global Survivors Fund, "Urgent interim reparation pilot project for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence: Ukraine – impact report", November 2025.

[113] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, para. 21.

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psychological care with literacy training, microcredit opportunities and livelihood support to address both immediate trauma and long-term structural inequality.[114]

51. Satisfaction includes truth-telling, public apologies, commemorations and sanctions against perpetrators.[115] For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone pioneered child-responsive satisfaction measures by dedicating a chapter to children's experiences in its final report and producing a child-friendly version developed with child participants. Through its National Vision Project, it publicly exhibited children's drawings, poems and essays, formally acknowledging their experiences and archiving them as part of the national record.[116]

VIII. Prevention and guarantees of non-recurrence

52. States must guarantee non-recurrence through conflict prevention, effective monitoring and institutional reforms that uphold the rule of law.[117] Such measures should be grounded in gender- and age-responsive analysis and address structural drivers of inequality and impunity, including discriminatory laws, patriarchal norms, the exclusion of women from security and justice sectors,[118] and gaps in command responsibility for conflict-related sexual violence. Effective guarantees of non-recurrence should also encompass societal preventive measures, including the protection of civic space and education to address root causes of violence,[119] and ensure the meaningful inclusion of women, youth and those marginalized as key stakeholders in preventing recurrence.[120] Prevention requires moving beyond reactive responses to violations towards proactive transformation of the structures that enable them.

A. Institutional and legal reforms

53. Successful legislative reform has been described as requiring a holistic approach combining legal change with institutional capacity to transform social norms.[121] UN-Women reported that, in Colombia, legislative advances, including the 2016 peace agreement implementation laws, Law No. 2358 of 2024 creating the "No Time to Keep Quiet" Fund for women journalists, and Law No. 2364 of 2024 protecting women searching for the disappeared, resulted from the convergence of strong civil society mobilization, intersectional analysis addressing compounded discrimination and sustained international support amplifying local advocacy for enforceable reforms.[122]

54. In its submission, Mexico reported that the 2024 constitutional reform mandated gender parity in public administration (art. 41) and established specialized prosecutor's offices (art. 116). A decree published in January 2026 amended 18 federal laws to close impunity gaps, mandate State-funded reconstructive care for acid attack victims and institutionalize gender violence alerts. The submission by Uzbekistan indicated that laws establishing protective orders and State-funded shelters had been enacted, with 2023 amendments criminalizing domestic violence and strengthening administrative liabilities.[123] Addressing gender inequality, including women's underrepresentation in decision-making

[114] See, e.g., A/75/174, para. 39.
[115] Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation, para. 22.
[116] Sierra Leone, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report for the Children of Sierra Leone* (2004).
[117] A/HRC/54/24, para. 70.
[118] A/75/174, paras. 63, 64 and 66.
[119] A/HRC/54/24, paras. 75 and 76.
[120] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/transitionaljustice/sg-guidance-note/2023_07_guidance_note_transitional_justice_en.pdf, pp. 20 and 21; and submission by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.
[121] See https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/advancing-gender-equality-through-legislative-reform-in-transitional-justice-contexts-en.pdf, p. 21.
[122] Ibid., annex 1.
[123] Law No. ZRU-561 of 2019.

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and the prevalence of gender-based violence, during times of peace is essential to preventing human rights violations in conflict and post-conflict settings.

B. Education

55. Education can serve as a vital guarantee of non-repetition if curricula are aimed at dismantling discriminatory legacies and fostering a culture of gender equality. Promising practices include revising pedagogical methods that perpetuate stereotypes, teaching human rights and the recent past in an objective manner, preventing the transmission of traumatic knowledge and gender or racial stereotypes across generations, contributing to preventing recurrence and restoring civic trust and promoting social cohesion through inclusive education.[124]

56. In its submission, Colombia indicated that, in 2025, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace had launched "recipes for peace", transforming conflict testimonies into interactive educational modules that positioned children as active protagonists in reconciliation rather than as passive victims. In its submission, Guatemala highlighted that the 2026–2036 reparation plan linked non-repetition to institutional reform, curriculum updates, historical memory preservation, the creation of a humanitarian search mechanism by 2028 and the commemoration of a national day of dignity. In Liberia, following the 2009 recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it was reported that access to free education had been made universal in 2011, while specific measures were implemented to close gender gaps and ensure safe school environments for girls.[125]

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

57. **Women and children are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and its aftermath, including due to persistent gender and age-based discrimination and stereotypes. Notwithstanding a robust international legal framework, persistent barriers, including fear of reprisals, discriminatory national legal frameworks, institutional weaknesses and lack of timely and comprehensive support, continue to limit their effective access to accountability and redress.**

58. **Addressing these gaps requires a comprehensive, human rights-based approach grounded in international law, including strengthened accountability, accessible justice mechanisms, gender- and age-responsive remedies, and institutional and legal reforms to tackle structural discrimination and prevent recurrence. Responses should be survivor-centred, inclusive, gender-responsive and child-sensitive, ensuring the meaningful participation of women, children and victims' groups throughout.**

A. Recommendations addressed to States

59. **States should take the measures set out below, in accordance with their obligations under international law, and in collaboration with national human rights institutions, civil society, survivors and their representatives, and international and regional organizations.**

1. Participation of women and children

60. **States should ensure the safe, sustained and meaningful participation of women and children who are victims and survivors, including women-led and survivor-led groups, in accountability processes, as well as gender parity in peace and transitional justice processes, with effective influence over outcomes.**

[124] See https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-UNICEF-Report-EducationTJ-2015.pdf, pp. 4–21.

[125] Ibid., p. 9; and A/75/174, para. 69. See also Clara Ramírez-Barat and Roger Duthie, *Education and Transitional Justice. Opportunities and Challenges for Peacebuilding* (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2015).

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2. Accountability

61. **States should:**

(a) **Ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law affecting women and children, including conflict-related sexual violence;**

(b) **Remove legal and policy barriers to accountability, including amnesties, statutes of limitation and discriminatory evidentiary rules inconsistent with international law;**

(c) **Ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, regardless of the official capacity of the perpetrator, and strengthen investigation, prosecution and adjudication capacities through specialized, gender-responsive and child-sensitive approaches.**

3. Access to justice and protection of victims

62. **States should:**

(a) **Guarantee accessible, safe and effective justice and complaint mechanisms for women and children, including through legal aid, protection measures, mobile or decentralized services, and gender-responsive and child- and disability-inclusive procedures, particularly in conflict-affected and displacement settings;**

(b) **Address the specific needs of women and children facing intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent, LGBTIQ+ persons, older women and children born of conflict-related sexual violence;**

(c) **Ensure that women and children can access essential services, such as healthcare, livelihoods, shelter, legal assistance and sexual and reproductive health services, including emergency contraception, prophylactic treatment, abortion care, maternal health services, and mental health and psychosocial support.**

4. Reparations

63. **States should:**

(a) **Establish adequately funded, gender-responsive and child-sensitive reparation programmes that are comprehensive and transformative, encompassing restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-recurrence, and addressing the full range of harms suffered;**

(b) **Recognize children formerly associated with State armed forces or non-State armed groups primarily as victims, ensure their transfer to civilian child protection actors, and provide long-term, community-based reintegration support;**

(c) **Recognize children born of conflict-related sexual violence as direct victims eligible for child-sensitive reparations.**

5. Prevention and institutional and legal reform

64. **States should:**

(a) **Undertake institutional and legal reforms to strengthen the justice sector, to address violation-enabling environments, harmful stereotypes and other root causes of violations, to strengthen civilian oversight, to uphold gender equality and child protection and to ensure accountability, including through command responsibility;**

(b) **Adopt comprehensive gender- and age-responsive strategies that address structural drivers of inequality and impunity, including by raising awareness of gender equality and dismantling gender and social norms at the root of gender-based violence;**

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(c) **Reinforce, through early warning and monitoring mechanisms, the protection of essential civilian infrastructure and services, the regulation of arms transfers and the integration of prevention across peacebuilding and security policies.**

B. Recommendation addressed to the Human Rights Council

65. **The Human Rights Council is encouraged to devote increased attention to the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict settings by promoting the exchange of promising practices for survivor-centred and child-responsive approaches to accountability and by strengthening the integration of gender and children's rights expertise across its mandates.**

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