

Conflict-related Sexual Violence: Summary of the Report of the United Nations Secretary-general, 2018¹

Original report: <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/report/s-2019-280/Annual-report-2018.pdf>

Acronyms:

CRSV = Conflict Related Sexual Violence

ISIL = Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Daesh)

UN = United Nations

UNAMA = The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

MIDDLE EAST

Afghanistan

- High rate of underreporting of CRSV in Afghanistan due to instability, gender inequality, displacement, inadequate services, lack of monitoring access and discriminatory practices
- In 2018 UNAMA documented 37 cases of CRSV against women and girls
- 5 rapes and one forced marriage were verified as having been committed by parties to the conflict and were prosecuted – 5 of the 6 of the accused were convicted “as a result of positive steps taken by the authorities”
 - This includes members of the Taliban
- 2 cases of sexual violence against boys by members of the Afghan National Police were also verified by UNAMA
 - One of the cases involved bacha bazi, by which young boys are ‘kept’ by typically older and powerful men
- The revised Penal Code (feb 2018) includes forms of conflict related sexual violence as a war crime, crime against humanity and constitutive act of genocide
- In august UNAMA organised a dialogue with the Government, afghan military and police forces, international military forces and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission to develop strategies for combating impunity for sexual violence
- The ministry of women’s affairs established a technical committee to review the Elimination of Violence against Women Law of 2009 and align its “rape” definition with that of the Penal Code of 2018
- Throughout 2018 the national police demonstrated limited ability to address sexual crimes

¹ This summary was written by Millie Sullivan, who has been collaborating with the SEMA network since 2019.

- UNAMA held several meetings with relevant government departments to create a strong sexual harassment complaint mechanism

Iraq

- Despite women and girls being released from ISIL control throughout 2018, the Kurdistan Regional Government estimated that there are still 1,427 women and girls missing
 - These figures do not include other ethnic groups targeted by ISIL including Turkmen Shia
- Women and children with perceived affiliation to ISIL in camps for internally displaced persons suffer sexual exploitation and lack of access to services and civil documentation
- Sexual violence remains largely underreported owing to fear of reprisal, security concerns and the mistrust on the legal system
- To date, ISIL members have only been prosecuted on terrorism charges, but not for crimes of sexual violence
 - The Iraqi government launched a special administrative process to facilitate the national registration of children born of rape

Syrian Arab Republic

- Despite being tremendously difficult to get reliable data due to ongoing insecurity, credible information in 2018 confirmed that conflict related sexual violence, particularly early and/or forced marriage continues to affect women and girls
 - Early or forced marriage is often used as a coping or protective mechanism
- Fear of sexual violence in the context of abduction or detention is a significant concern raised by women, girls, men and boys
 - According to the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, the use of sexual violence during arrest, detention and at checkpoints is routine
 - The Commission also received allegations of members of extremist groups imposing “medieval forms of punishment” on men accused of homosexuality
- Formal justice systems are often non-existent outside of Government-controlled areas

Yemen

- There was an increased reporting of sexual violence in 2018 – while cases are directly attributable to parties to the conflict, most are the result of increased risks that women and children face against a backdrop of pre-existing gender inequality
 - Women and children are increasingly at risk of trafficking, sexual violence and exploitation, particularly in the context of displacement
- The extended breakdown of law and order and the heavy limitations of the justice system have resulted in widespread impunity
 - This has heavily impacted underreporting of sexual violence
 - The increase in child marriage relates to its role as a coping mechanism amid ongoing conflict and displacement
 - Many displaced persons held in unofficial centres and other migrant detention centres are at high risk of sexual violence, documented by the UN Human Rights Council
- Of the 472 reported cases of sexual violence, 341 were against refugees and asylum seekers, with 70 of the incidents involving 131 children, 80 boys and 51 girls
 - 56% of the incidents occurred in settlements and host communities for internally displaced persons
- Areas and detention centres under militia control are of grave concern as the United Nations has no access to those areas in order to document human rights violations