

Women, Peace and Security

August 2022

Syria

For August, in which the China has the presidency of the UN Security Council, the MAP provides recommendations on the situations in **Syria and Ukraine**.

The Security Council's recent decision to shorten the length of the mandate of the Syria cross-border mechanism from [12 months to 6 months](#) is resulting in an unacceptable level of instability for the more than 4.1 million people in need in northwest Syria, the majority of whom are women and children. Although an [immediate catastrophe](#) has been averted, uncertainty of future access to meet basic needs is only exacerbated by the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, winterization, drought, skyrocketing food prices, and ongoing conflict that targets civilians and civilian infrastructure. In forthcoming discussions on the situation in Syria, Council members must call for rights-based, survivor-centered humanitarian action that is age and gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and provides immediate and non-discriminatory aid and quality healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health services and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, mitigation, and response services. In particular, it is important to minimize the continuing spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the context of an already [weakened healthcare system](#), testing equipment and vaccines must be adequately [available to civilians](#) without discrimination. Women are [particularly affected](#) by the weakened healthcare system and the resulting reduction of access to sexual and reproductive health services, including maternity care, which continues to be [exacerbated](#) by considerable [funding shortfalls](#).

The Council should also call on its members and parties in Syria to uphold the ceasefire in the north-west and call for a complete and nationwide ceasefire, in line with resolution [2532 \(2020\)](#), to allow the country to address its ongoing health and humanitarian crises, including growing food insecurity, which has affected at least [60%](#) of the population. Further, past briefings have been inconsistent in providing a clear picture of the gender dimensions of the situation; in line with expectations, briefings should include gender, age and disability-sensitive conflict analysis regarding the situation for diverse women, including [women in public life](#), displaced women, women and girls with disabilities, and the way in which women and girls' rights are at the [center](#) of development and peacebuilding efforts.

Finally, accountability, justice, including reparations, and equal rights must be the foundation of any political solution. However, this foundation is undermined by the [ongoing impunity](#) for past, and current violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including the recent enactment of a new [anti-torture](#) law that fails to address the [crimes](#) carried out over the past decade. In this context, gender equality and international human rights law must be priorities in the [outcome of any process](#), including a gender-sensitive constitution, and women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership should be a norm at every stage.

Ukraine

As the conflict in Ukraine moves into its sixth month, the severity and scale of the humanitarian crisis continues to grow, with hundreds of thousands of individuals [newly displaced](#) over the last month, and potentially up to [500,000 more](#) before winter. Due to destruction of [critical infrastructure](#) in some regions of the country, the [majority](#) of the remaining civilian population, often comprised of large numbers of [older women and women with disabilities](#), is entirely dependent on aid for food, water, clothing, and shelter. In [Mykolaiv](#), for example, the [severe water shortage](#) places women with mobility challenges at high risk of

dehydration because they are unable to travel to access bottled water when it is distributed. In Kharkiv, the [concentration of aid distribution](#) in urban areas results in older women living in rural areas, who were already more [food insecure](#) prior to the war, at risk of dying of hunger. [Gender-based violence](#) of all forms, including [sexual violence](#), [domestic violence](#), and trafficking, continues to increase for all women and girls due to the [multiple and intersecting impacts](#) of the conflict, including lack of access to services, livelihoods, increased caregiving obligations, and lack of access to adequate shelter. In its discussions on the situation in Ukraine, the Security Council should:

- Demand an immediate cessation of hostilities, end to civilian harm, respect for [international humanitarian and human rights law](#), and ensure that all investigations of violations, including alleged [war crimes](#) and crimes against humanity, fully encompass and address the gendered and intersectional elements of these crimes.
- Support measures to promote the inclusive and meaningful participation and leadership of women from diverse communities at all levels of peace and political processes and humanitarian response, including in-country coordination mechanisms, and further liaise, partner, and consult with diverse women leaders, women's rights and peacebuilding groups, persons with disabilities, [LGBTIQ+ people](#), stateless people, and members of the Roma community and other minority groups.
- Reinforce the importance of ensuring that sex, age, gender, and [disability-sensitive](#) data and intersectional gender-sensitive analysis informs all facets of the humanitarian response, including at border crossings and reception centers, to ensure that individuals fleeing violence do not face additional gender-specific risks, such as sexual exploitation and abuse and trafficking, and accelerate efforts to support local organizations including diverse women's rights, humanitarian, peacebuilding and LGBTIQ+ groups, in their efforts to provide necessary, frontline support to [displaced populations](#).
- Emphasize the importance of addressing the conditions and factors that heighten the risk of all forms of GBV, including [domestic violence](#) and trafficking by ensuring all aspects of the response are inclusive, non-discriminatory, and transparent, including by ensuring access to appropriate, adapted and accessible information through various channels, especially on the protection risks they face, how to seek help and report complaints; civil status documentation, accessibility of services to those without documentation, prioritizing the gender-sensitive distribution of [cash and social support](#) to groups already marginalized and without resources, equal application of temporary protection for all people wishing to cross a border, provision of opportunities for livelihoods for displaced people that include social support, such as child care, and access to [sexual and reproductive healthcare](#), including maternal, newborn and child health and GBV response services, and early medical abortion for displaced populations, safe abortion and post-abortion care, and a range of contraceptive options including emergency contraceptive and long-acting methods for displaced populations, and [mental health and psychosocial](#) support for adults and children.
- Promote and protect civil society space and ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society, journalists, peacebuilders and all human rights defenders, including diverse women and LGBTIQ+ people, in both [Ukraine](#) and [Russia](#), in order to fulfill obligations under international human rights law, and actively push back against disinformation, stigmatization and persecution of civil society actors engaged in criticizing warring parties, providing and disseminating information, defending human rights, providing basic services, promoting dialogue, and peacebuilding.