

Sexual violence in conflict

[Conflicts and situations of instability](#) increase pre-existing inequalities against women and girls, such as sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced marriage, and any other form of gender-based violence that is related to a conflict.

Although both women and men may experience conflict-related sexual violence, women and girls are predominantly more subject to such violence. In 2019, the [United Nations](#) documented 2,838 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, of which 96% targeted women and girls. Moreover, in 2018, women and girls accounted for about 65% of more than 45,000 detected trafficking victims globally.

The vast majority of victims of conflict-related sexual violence refrain from reporting these crimes because of fear and cultural stigma. In fact, *“practitioners in the field estimate that for each rape reported in connection with a conflict, 10 to 20 cases go undocumented.”*

To this end, in 2015, the [United Nations General Assembly \(A/RES/69/293\)](#) proclaimed 19th June of each year the **International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict** to raise awareness on the importance of putting an end to conflict-related sexual violence, to honour the victims and survivors of sexual violence worldwide, and to pay tribute to all those who worked to combat such crimes.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how women disproportionately shoulder unpaid care and domestic work. Indeed, women [worldwide](#) do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. Post-pandemic, reports of violence against women and girls have [increased](#) in countries where restrictive measures have been adopted to curb the spread of the virus. Additionally, according to the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) [data](#), employment losses were higher for women than men during the pandemic. Between 2019 and 2020, women’s employment declined by 4.2% while men’s employment declined by 3%.

Women and girls should not only be seen as victims of conflict and instability, but also as active agents during conflicts and situations of instability. [Between 1992 and 2019](#), women

constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide.

The role of women and girls in armed conflict has been acknowledged since the 31st October 2000 when the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted [Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#). The Resolution recognises the role of women as active agents of peace and emphasises that peace is linked to equality between women and men. Sustainable peace can only be achieved through women's economic and political empowerment, alongside their involvement in decision-making processes. Hence, the main prerequisite for peace, security, sustainable development and justice is gender equality.

At national level, in 2020, Malta launched its [first National Action Plan \(NAP\)](#) on WPS to ensure the implementation of this Resolution. The main four pillars of the NAP's framework are to promote the WPS agenda domestically and internationally, prevent all forms of violence, including gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, increase participation and representation of women at all decision-making levels, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and increase and strengthen partnerships to accomplish the WPS agenda domestically.

In this context, the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA) set up an Oversight Committee to serve as a monitoring body to the implementation of the NAP. The Committee brings together representatives from government ministries and entities, civil society organisations, and academics. As the NCPE Commissioner, I am also a member of the Oversight Committee. We all work together to further improve and promote Malta's progress in implementing the UNSC Resolution 1325 and enhance the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. In today's world, where conflict-related sexual violence is spreading, Resolution 1325 is becoming even more relevant and significant.

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