**United Nations women's rights committee calls for Peace between Russian Federation and Ukraine**

The proliferation of armed conflicts worldwide once again alerts us to their catastrophic impact on societies and particularly on women and girls. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) draw the attention of the international community to General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-confict situations and General Comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, respectively, and reiterate their urgent call for women’s and children's full and meaningful participation in all peace processes, including peace negotiations and post-conflict resolution and reconstruction and transitional justice processes.

Two years after the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the CEDAW Committee remains deeply concerned about recent reports of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (the Commission) identifying, among others, alleged war crimes, systematic torture, including of women detainees, sexual violence and forced transfers of Ukrainian women and children to Russia. The dimension of military operations threatens the rules-based international order and exceeds the level of escalation that Europe has witnessed in many years. The war violates the bedrock principles of the CEDAW Convention, which in its preamble affirms that the “Strengthening of peace and security and mutual cooperation among all States, (…) will contribute to the attainment of full equality between men and women."

The CEDAW Committee calls upon the international community to exert its influence on the Russian Federation to halt, without delay, any further attacks on hospitals, schools and vital infrastructure, or otherwise targeting civilians, notably women and children, including those with disabilities. These attacks undermine the foundational principles of the CEDAW Convention and infringe the intergenerational rights of women and girls. The CEDAW Committee also recalls that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) too in its provisional order condemned attacks on "civilian facilities such as residences, schools and hospitals, and of civilian casualties, including women, older persons, persons with disabilities, and children." The CEDAW Committee recalls that in 2023, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant against the Russian Commissioner for children’s rights on charges relating to the Russian Federation’s abduction and deportation of Ukrainian children, including to Russia.

According to the findings of the March 2024 report of the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine gender-based violence committed by Russian forces against women and children in areas under their control within Ukraine is tantamount to torture. Similarly, the Commission found that sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by Russian military forces has been extensively documented in multiple provinces of Ukraine. These atrocities include attacks on girls and women of various ages, who have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence during house searches, often amounting to torture.

In its report, the Commission of Inquiry underscores its previous conclusions regarding the widespread and systematic use of torture by Russian military and security forces, both in Ukraine and within the Russian Federation itself. This includes horrific instances of ill-treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war, both women and men, in various detention facilities in Russia.

The latest report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture ([A/HRC/55/52/Add.1](https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5552add1-visit-ukraine-report-special-rapporteur-torture-and-other)), published in February 2024, corroborates many of the Commission's findings. Both reports remind us that perpetrators must be held accountable for their crimes and that the sexualized dimensions of torture during conflict must be addressed under the women, peace and security agenda established by resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. In resolution [UNSCR 2467](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Funscr.com%2Fen%2Fresolutions%2Fdoc%2F2467&data=05%7C02%7Cmarco.zanin%40un.org%7C206ce09eeaa64823623a08dc6bae9024%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638503644700836811%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=f6My%2F7LwG7935%2Bxw71cX6A11hDyCWLh2oYKAk%2FW0TuU%3D&reserved=0), adopted in 2019, the Security Council takes note of “United Nations commissions of inquiry and United Nations fact-finding missions” and their mandates to verify and “investigate allegations of violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law” as well as of their recommendations to “advance accountability and justice and protection for survivors”, including women and children. In the same vein, the Secretary General report of July 2023 on sexual violence in conflict highlights the war in Ukraine and calls for a “survivor- and witness-centered” approach, in line with the women, peace and security agenda.

The CEDAW Committee is also deeply concerned about the numerous adverse impact of the war, which disproportionately affect women and children. An alarming four (4) million persons are internally displaced within Ukraine, while 6.5 million refugees, a majority of whom are women and children, have fled Ukraine. Women, including those in occupied territories, feel the brunt of these events, dealing with trauma and loss while trying to shield children, the elderly and the disabled from danger while dealing with the death and destruction around them, yet they have little or no say in decision-making including on negotiations toward a full and just ceasefire.

The CEDAW Committee urges the international community to act together to avoid further death, destruction, and disease and calls upon the Security Council to reaffirm its commitments to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. Our Committee calls on the governments of both countries - the Russian Federation and Ukraine - to respect international law and to ensure the active participation of women at all levels of peace negotiations, in particular of women politicians and diplomats, process and implement UN General Assembly Resolutions on an unconditional permanent ceasefire and the start of peacebuilding in the region.