

**Совет Безопасности**

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Письмо постоянных представителей Дании, Соединенного Королевства Великобритании и Северной Ирландии и Сьерра-Леоне при Организации Объединенных Наций от 24 октября 2025 года на имя Генерального секретаря и Председателя Совета Безопасности

Дания и Сьерра-Леоне в качестве сопредседателей Неофициальной группы экспертов по женщинам и миру и безопасности и в тесном сотрудничестве с Соединенным Королевством хотели бы представить резюме заседания Неофициальной группы экспертов, посвященного положению на Ближнем Востоке, включая палестинский вопрос (см. приложение)*.

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(Подпись) Кристина Маркус Лассен
Постоянный представитель Дании
при Организации Объединенных Наций

(Подпись) Джеймс Кариуки
Временный поверенный в делах
Постоянное представительство Соединенного Королевства
при Организации Объединенных Наций

(Подпись) Майкл Имран Кану
Постоянный представитель Сьерра-Леоне
при Организации Объединенных Наций

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Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, held on 9 July 2025

On 9 July 2025, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Security Council members were briefed by the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i., accompanied by colleagues from the region. The briefing was followed by additional observations by the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Relief Agency and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other United Nations entities, and an overview of key recommendations for the Security Council by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Questions from Security Council members

Security Council members raised several questions about women's participation in peace negotiations between Israel and the State of Palestine, including on technical issues such as ceasefire negotiations, humanitarian access and the exchange of hostages and prisoners. They asked about the main challenges to women's participation and how the United Nations could expand its reporting beyond United Nations-led or co-led peace processes and make this information available to the Security Council members. Council members also raised questions regarding women's access to services in Gaza and the support provided in the women-led committees established by UNRWA, and how to amplify the work of local civil society organizations led by women. They asked about sexual and gender-based violence, including which armed actors were responsible for the recent increase in the sexual and gender-based violence cases in Gaza, and what had been done to support sexual and gender-based violence service providers, including one-stop community service centres supported by the United Nations. One Council member objected to the inclusion of the International Criminal Court and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel as part of the recommendations of the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group.

Main points raised by the briefers in the meeting

Current situation of women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

- The conflict has inflicted unimaginable suffering on women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian territory. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, more than 57,000 Palestinians have been killed in the context of Israeli security forces military operations in Gaza since 7 October 2023 (as at 2 July 2025). According to UN-Women, an estimated 28,000 of them are women and girls, meaning that one woman and one girl have been killed on average every hour in hostilities. Among those killed, thousands were mothers.

- The whole population in Gaza (2.1 million people) is facing the threat of starvation. The most recent data from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification of May 2025 indicate that approximately 1.94 million people, nearly half of whom are women and girls, are experiencing acute food insecurity. Female-headed households, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers are especially at risk. Attacks on civilians attempting to access food and supplies continue in Gaza, with the Gaza Ministry of Health estimating that, between 27 May and 8 June 2025, 583 Palestinians were killed and 4,186 wounded near distribution points or while waiting to pick up food. The protection risks for women attempting to reach aid in these circumstances are acute.
- An estimated 55,000 pregnant women in the Gaza Strip are facing growing health risks, such as miscarriages, stillbirths and giving birth to undernourished newborns. Approximately 130 children are born daily, with around 30 requiring caesarean sections. Only seven hospitals and four field hospitals provide obstetric and newborn care, and none of them are fully functional. The lack of fuel and medical supplies is a severe threat to the continuation of critical services.
- Due to the frequent displacement, evacuations, and the near-total destruction of housing, hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza are without adequate shelter. Women and girls face heightened risk of physical and sexual violence, both in the makeshift shelters and tents and while walking long distances. There are also reports of increasing domestic violence in the Gaza Strip.
- The war has impacted all aspects of daily lives of women and girls in Gaza: they have little to no access to water, food, shelter, health and protection. This impacts their physical and mental health, dignity, safety and privacy. The situation is further exacerbated for women with vulnerabilities, such as women-headed households, elderly women and women with disabilities.
- Children in Gaza have not had schooling in the past 20 months, which has both immediate and long-term consequences. The lack of schooling reinforces patriarchal masculinities and increases the risk of recruitment into armed groups and criminal activity for boys, while it deepens social and economic vulnerabilities, dependence, and risk of sexual violence for girls.
- Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs show a 22.6 per cent increase in women's unemployment since October 2023 across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with the unemployment rate having reached 90 per cent in Gaza.
- The situation in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is alarming. There has been a sharp increase in violence against Palestinians by settlers combined with repeated use of excessive force by Israeli security forces, increased movement restrictions, high number of arrests, and large-scale demolitions. Over 40,000 Palestinians have been displaced in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since January 2025. As a result of access restrictions, road gates and checkpoints, more than 232,000 women and adolescent girls in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, are unable to access sexual and reproductive health services. Destruction of homes, infrastructure and schools across the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is also jeopardizing the right to education for nearly 13,000 students, over half of whom are girls.

Current situation of women and girls in Israel

- The 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas and other armed groups on Israel resulted in at least 1,200 Israelis killed, including at least 310 women and 57 children, and thousands more injured. A total of 251 people, including 65 women and 34 children, were abducted to the Gaza Strip by Hamas and other Palestinian groups; 50 hostages, including 1 woman, remain held in captivity. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has found clear and convincing information that some hostages have been subjected to conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and sexualized torture and sexualized cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- Around 200,000 Israelis, many of them women and girls, have been displaced during the war from communities across Israel. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced from their communities in northern Israel amid missiles, rockets and drones by Hizbullah in Lebanon. In June 2025, 28 Israeli civilians were killed during the military escalation between Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran, among them 15 women and 3 girls.
- As a result of the conflict, 40 per cent of mothers in Israel report a worsening financial situation and 13 per cent report having lost their jobs. The Ministry of Welfare of Israel recorded a 65 per cent increase in calls related to family violence during the first six months of the conflict.

Women's participation in peace and conflict mediation between Israel and the State of Palestine

- There is little information available on women's participation in negotiations between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, the United States and Egypt, or any diplomatic efforts since the escalation of hostilities, whether to negotiate ceasefires, humanitarian access or the release of hostages and detainees.
- The Women in Peace Processes Monitor of UN-Women, which tracks women's participation in peace efforts led by the United Nations as well as other actors, shows that no women were part of either delegation in the negotiations between Israel and the State of Palestine from 2020 to 2024. The data are based on publicly available sources.
- Women and women-led organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel have long played a role in efforts to resolve the conflict, end the occupation and advocate for a two-State solution. As an example, they participated in the recently organized civil society forum in June 2025 in Paris ahead of a high-level conference on the two-State solution. The conference itself had to be postponed due to developments in the region.

The role of women's organizations in providing humanitarian relief and services

- Women's organizations in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, continue to play critical roles in providing multisectoral services to conflict-affected and vulnerable women and girls, including gender-based violence prevention and response services, psychosocial support, emergency legal assistance, sexual and reproductive health services and distribution of dignity kits to women and girls. In the Gaza Strip, women's organizations face extreme operational and logistical challenges, including due to the lack of fuel and transportation and office spaces, electricity cuts, bank closures and shortages of cash, loss of vital equipment, intermittent access to telecommunications and the Internet, and the exhaustion of their staff, almost all of them displaced themselves and many of them caring for dependants.

- Women-led organizations across the Occupied Palestinian Territory have been also severely affected by the foreign aid cuts. Some 86 per cent of surveyed organizations report being significantly impacted. In the Gaza Strip, facilities that had served over 90,000 women and girls in 2025 have been closed or suspended due to the loss of funding and the ongoing conflict. As a result, many survivors have no access to life-saving support or assistance.

Continued support of the United Nations to women and girls in the State of Palestine

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has established one-stop community service centres to enable civil society organizations to continue their work, hold meetings and welcome community members in need of services, including for gender-based violence and psychosocial, educational and livelihood support. More than 8,000 women have visited these centres since August 2024. UNDP also works closely with four women's civil society organizations that provide referral services and legal, humanitarian and psychosocial services to women and girls and affected communities. The Sawasaya programme, implemented jointly by UNDP, UN-Women and the United Nations Children's Fund with 14 civil society partners, provided legal aid services to over 38,000 individuals from January 2024 to March 2025, including over 21,400 women and girls, on issues related to custody, inheritance and housing.
- Despite political pressure and legal obstacles, the death of at least 322 of its staff members and the destruction of its premises, UNRWA, with 12,000 staff members, half of whom are women, continues to be the largest provider of essential and life-saving protection, health, education, food and counselling to millions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Approximately 6,000 trucks worth of food are waiting outside Gaza but have not been allowed to go due to Israeli legislation.
- UNRWA has established 52 women-led committees in its shelters in Gaza to identify and integrate gender-related considerations in the emergency response. The women-led committees also support UNRWA staff in providing psychosocial support, protective spaces and trauma counselling for those in need.
- A recent strategic assessment of UNRWA, conducted by an independent organization, which was shared by the President of the General Assembly on 8 July 2025, highlights that UNRWA is an outstanding asset not only in terms of humanitarian relief but also in terms of recovery and peace and security both in Israel and the State of Palestine.

Sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence

- The situation of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been included within the ambit of the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence since October 2023.
- In 2024, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and a technical team conducted a mission to Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to gather, analyse and verify information after the 7 October 2023 attacks. The mission found reasonable grounds to believe that sexual violence occurred during the 7 October attacks in at least three different locations: the Nova festival, Road 232 and Kibbutz Re'im, and against some women and children in captivity. The mission recommended access to relevant United Nations investigative bodies to carry out fully fledged independent

investigations into all alleged violations, including sexual violence. Israel has not granted access for United Nations investigations to date. Hamas has not granted humanitarian access to hostages or implemented any measures to address sexual violence.

- In 2024, the United Nations verified information on conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by different branches of the Israeli security forces against Palestinian detainees and prisoners in at least five different facilities, and against Palestinians at checkpoints and during house raids. These violations include rape, attempted rape and violence against the genitals. During 2025, additional violations against Palestinian male and female detainees, including rape and sexual violence as a form of torture, have been verified by the United Nations.
- While the Government of Israel continues to engage with the United Nations, access for United Nations investigations or access to the detention facilities for monitoring purposes has not been granted.
- The lack of accountability and the impunity regarding all instances of sexual violence documented after 7 October continues to be of concern. For instance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel reported that one investigation had been opened regarding an incident of sexual violence against a Palestinian male detainee at Sde Teiman military base in July 2024, which caused him life-threatening injuries. Five Israeli reserve soldiers were indicted in February 2025 for severe physical assault, but not for sexual violence or rape, despite a detailed description of the assault.
- A report from the Centre for the Advancement of the Status of Women at Bar-Ilan University, published on 8 July 2025, lists at least 16 cases of severe sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, mutilation of genitalia and assaults, that occurred in multiple locations by members of Hamas' Qassam Brigades and other armed and unarmed Palestinian groups.

Recommendations of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security secretariat¹

In any upcoming decisions on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the Security Council should continue to look for consensus and demand the protection of civilians and the full respect by all parties of their obligations under international law, the immediate, unconditional and dignified release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups, the unconditional lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid and its safe and unhindered distribution by the United Nations and humanitarian partners, and an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. In addition, the Security Council could:

- Encourage conflict parties and international partners, including the United Nations and regional organizations and Member States involved in mediation efforts, to include women and gender experts in all negotiations, including for ceasefires, humanitarian access, the release of hostages and detainees, de-escalation and an end to the conflict.

¹ These recommendations are prepared by UN-Women as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, in consultation with other United Nations entities, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and are not recommendations of the Informal Expert Group as a whole or of Council members.

- Call on Israeli and Palestinian authorities to facilitate and support the peacebuilding work of women's organizations and networks.
- Demand Palestinian women's meaningful participation in any decisions about the future of the State of Palestine, including recovery and reconstruction.
- Recall the importance of complying with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.
- Condemn all acts of reproductive violence and gender-based violence, including sexual violence, committed by conflict parties on and since 7 October 2023 and against hostages and in prison or detention facilities, and urge all parties to cooperate with the International Commission of Inquiry and the International Criminal Court.
- Recommend strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to monitor and report on incidents, patterns and trends of conflict-related sexual violence in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory through the establishment of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence and the deployment of dedicated technical specialists, namely women's protection advisers, as mandated by the Security Council in other priority contexts.
- Demand that perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence, including against hostages and in detention and prison facilities, be held accountable in accordance with due process of law and fair trial standards, regardless of rank or affiliation.
- Demand unimpeded and secure humanitarian aid into Gaza in line with humanitarian principles, which must be gender-sensitive and include sexual and reproductive health services and services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Call for swift and independent investigations into all instances of sexual violence committed by Palestinian armed groups, and urge Hamas to adopt protection commitments in line with relevant Security Council resolutions, notably resolution [2467 \(2019\)](#), and call on the Government of Israel to grant access to relevant United Nations bodies to carry out fully fledged investigations into all alleged violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, and to investigate and address allegations of sexual violence against Palestinian detainees.

In addition, Security Council members could:

- Request the United Nations to provide information and analysis on women's participation in any negotiations or political talks related to the conflict during its briefings to the Security Council.
- Hear directly from Palestinian and Israeli women representing civil society, with due consideration to potential reprisals and measures to prevent or address them.
- Increase or restore funding to UNRWA and local women-led civil society organizations.