



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 August 2021

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-eighth session

13 September–1 October 2021

Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Partners For Transparency, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The Situation of Women and Girls in Conflict & Post-Conflict Areas

Armed conflicts and civil wars exacerbate human rights violations to which women and girls are subjected, and put them in precarious circumstances, as they are subjected to many forms of direct violence such as random killing, displacement and arrest, in addition to the additional burdens and responsibilities placed on them as wives and mothers, not to mention sexual violence in the detention facilities managed by the conflicting parties, whether government or armed groups. Some elements of these parties have excelled in humiliating and intimidating all those who oppose their ideological orientations or object to their decisions, which has caused disastrous results that left thousands of women victims amid flagrant disregard by the actors in the international community. Post-conflict victims, on the other hand, suffer from social and societal stigma as well as societal discrimination in accessing psychological and health care needed to recover from conflict, at a time when perpetrators may enjoy complete impunity.

The military forces have carried out disproportionate and random attacks on civilians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the surrounding territories, killing 12 women, wounding many others, and forcibly displacing nearly 110, 000 people due to the conflict. On the other hand, the random missile strikes carried out by the Turkish government on northern Syria resulted in the killing of 4 women and 3 girls, in addition to the arrest of 48 women during the period between January to July 2021 by its affiliated factions. This intervention highlights the violations to which women were subjected during the armed conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the consequent psychological and physical damages that women suffered from, as well as the suffering to which women in northern Syria are subjected by the Turkish government armed factions.

Women in the crosshairs of armed forces

On December 27, 2020, Azerbaijani army, launched an intense attack on Artsakh using airpower, missiles, and tanks. artillery bombardment targeted civilian settlements, including civilians, residential neighborhoods, and service buildings within 44 days, leading to the death of 12 women according to human rights estimates, not to mention the escalation of the number of physical and psychological injuries that remain even after the end of the conflict. For example, a woman and her child were killed in the first day of the conflict during a bomb that targeted a school by the Azerbaijani armed forces.¹ Armed forces killed a woman with special needs with her son when she entered the Hadrut city on October 10, 2020.² A woman was killed along with her two grandchildren on November 6, 2020, against the background of an Azerbaijani missile that hit their house in Stepanakert city. Targeting service buildings by the forces, particularly schools and hospitals, caused panic among citizens, especially women, which affected their psychological safety. For example, the maternity hospital in Stepanakert city was subjected to an Azerbaijani air raid, which caused many injuries among women.³

On the other hand, women suffered bouts of fear, panic, and depression in light of many practices committed by the Azerbaijani forces. Estimates indicate that a state of panic spread among women against the background of the armed factions of the Turkish government whom the government sent from the Syrian Arab Republic to the conflict zone in Artsakh to support the Azerbaijani government in the imposition of Islamic law by force on the cities it enters, as non-Muslim women were forbidden to go out without headscarves in addition to

¹ Azerbaijani military drone makes threatening approaches against Armenian reporters covering battle Save. <https://bit.ly/3fZE9qv>.

² Azerbaijani crime complete - the killing of a mother and her son with special needs in Artsakh after the incursion of Azerbaijani forces into it, <https://bit.ly/3fGDSby>.

³ Azerbaijan continues war crimes and bombs a maternity hospital in the capital of Artsakh-Stepanakert, <https://bit.ly/3xtC8bW>.

the ban on alcoholic beverages.⁴ In midst of that, hostilities led to the forced displacement or eviction of up to 110 thousand persons from their homes, most of them women and children, as a result, many girls will not be able to complete their education, in addition to the difficulty in accessing health services and medical equipment, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, not to mention the increased feeling of loneliness as a result of separation from the family or the loss of one of its members, which causes very serious psychological damage.⁵

The suffering of women at the hands of the Turkish-backed armed factions

The continuation of the conflict in Syria has exacerbated the suffering of women and girls, as the Turkish-backed armed factions continue to commit more violations against women. During the period between January and July 2021, these factions arrested and kidnapped 48 women, in order to obtain a financial ransom from their families or to silence the mouths of their relatives to remain silent about the human rights violations committed by these factions and accept the status quo, particularly the practices of demographic change. In this context, the testimonies of some survivors of secret forced detention facilities reveal that they were subjected to torture, sexual violence, and all kinds of other atrocities and violations, in addition to the victims of the random bombing of the Turkish armed forces on the civilian targets in northern Syria, numbering 4 women and 3 girls, from the beginning of 2021 until July of the same year. For example, a woman was killed as a result of a Turkish missile strike on the village of Al-Hadriyat in the countryside of Ain Issa in March 2021.⁶

In January 2021, the armed factions of the Turkish government arrested 4 women,⁷ including citizen (R. A.), who was arrested for terrorism-related charges, but during her detention until February 2021, she was raped by three persons belonging to one of the Turkish armed factions.⁸ In the midst of that, 10 women were arrested in February 2021 by the same factions, including (Kh. Kh.), whose house was stormed and arrested by the military police of the Turkish government.⁹

Meanwhile, the wave of arbitrary arrests included 15 women in April 2021.¹⁰ In May 2021, human rights estimates revealed that a Syrian woman was raped several times in one of the military police prisons of Turkey during her three prison term.¹¹ Moreover, human rights estimates indicated that the Military Police Branch Commander of Turkey in Afrin, called Abu Riad, subjected women in Marata prison to the worst forms of sexual violence under the pretext of investigation, and despite the complaints submitted by the residents, the Turkish government hasn't decided on his case until today, which reveals impunity.¹²

⁴ Mercenaries hired by Azerbaijan to attack Artsakh begin looting shops and robbing Azerbaijani citizens, <https://bit.ly/3CjHc6a>.

⁵ Protection of Civilians during Armed Conflicts, Ngornokarbagh Case Study, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights, <https://bit.ly/3s0Qhfl>.

⁶ More than half of them are children and women. Turkish forces have killed 28 Syrian civilians since the beginning of 2021, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

⁷ Documenting the arrest and disappearance of at least 23 people in the cities of Afrin and Tal Abyad, including 3 children and 4 women, since the beginning of January 2021, Violations Documentation Center in Northeast Syria <http://bit.ly/39ati9T>.

⁸ New details about the armed men's rape of a woman detained in the prisons of the Syrian opposition in Ras al-Ain, Ezdina Foundation, <http://bit.ly/37mSetw>.

⁹ Documenting the arrest and disappearance of at least 77 people in Afrin city, including 10 women and a baby, in February 2021, Violations Documentation Center in Northeast Syria, <https://bit.ly/3it41ML>.

¹⁰ Documenting at least 147 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention in Syria in April 2021, including a child and 19 women, Syrian Network for Human Rights, <https://bit.ly/37rH9Hk>.

¹¹ Rape of a sick Syrian woman in the prisons of pro-Turkey gunmen in Tal Abyad, Violations Documentation Center in Northern Syria <https://bit.ly/3vpbiBC>.

¹² Sexual harassment and major abuses against female detainees in Marata Prison in Afrin by the Commander of the Military Police, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, <https://bit.ly/3s2szzG>.

Recommendations

Based on the abovementioned practices of the Turkish and Azerbaijani armed forces and their armed factions in targeting women during armed conflicts with random killing, forced displacement, and arbitrary arrests accompanying cases of sexual violence, Specific action points needed to be taken:

- The Human Rights Council: the need to open an urgent investigation into the war crimes committed by the Azerbaijani forces backed by Turkey and its allied factions during the armed conflict in Artsakh, and to punish all those found to be involved in crimes against women.
 - The Turkish government: the need to stop supporting the armed factions in northeastern Syria, while investigating all the crimes they perpetrate against women, especially in places of detention.
 - Human rights and humanitarian organizations: the need to provide psychological and physical support to eliminate the effects of armed conflicts on women.
-