

# **Submission on the Addendum to General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post Conflict Situations in Relation to the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda**

**9 December 2025**

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women  
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**Contact: Timothy Roberts**

President, NSW Young Lawyers

**Jessica Lighton**

Submissions Lead, NSW Young Lawyers

**Claudia Robinson**

Human Rights Sub-Committee Chair, NSW Young Lawyers

**Contributors:** Claudia Robinson, Tara Seymour, Caity Suchanow

The NSW Young Lawyers Human Rights Sub-Committee and International Law Sub-Committee (**Sub-Committee**) makes the following submission in response to the call for input for the Addendum to General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations in relation to the Women, Peace and Security (**WPS**) Agenda.

### **NSW Young Lawyers**

NSW Young Lawyers is a Committee of the Law Society of New South Wales that represents the Law Society and its members on issues and opportunities arising in relation to young lawyers i.e. those within their first five years of practice or up to 36 years of age. Through its multiple sub-committees, each dedicated to a substantive area of law, NSW Young Lawyers supports practitioners in their professional and career development by giving them the opportunity to expand their knowledge, advance their career and contribute to the profession and community.

The Human Rights Sub-Committee comprises a group of volunteers and subscribers interested in human rights law, including lawyers working in academia, for government, private and NGO sectors and other areas of practice that intersect with human rights law, as well as barristers and law students. The objectives of the Sub-Committee are to raise awareness about human rights issues and provide education to the legal profession and wider community about human rights and their application under both domestic and international law. Members of the Sub-Committee share a commitment to effectively promoting and protecting human rights and to examining legal avenues for doing so. The Sub-Committee takes a keen interest in providing comment and feedback on legal and policy issues that relate to human rights law and its development and support.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Addendum be annexed to General Recommendation No. 30 (2013).
2. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Addendum recognise that women's experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs differ according to age, disability, cultural or ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and other identity factors.
3. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Addendum support the design, implementation, and monitoring of policies, justice processes, humanitarian assistance, and peacebuilding initiatives with an intersectional lens, recognising that women may experience gender-based violence or conflict-related sexual violence differently based on age, disability, cultural or ethnic background, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other identity factors.
4. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Addendum ensure that diverse groups of women, particularly survivors of gender-based violence and/or conflict-related sexual violence, are meaningfully consulted in the design, decision-making, and monitoring of programs and systems that aim to prevent, address or provide reparations for sexual violence.
5. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Addendum explicitly address emerging threats against women including technology-facilitated violence, cyber threats, and climate-related displacement, recognising their disproportionate impact on women and girls.

## Background

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (**the Committee**)'s adoption of General Recommendation No. 30 in 2013 was in response to women's increasing participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding efforts and post-conflict reconstruction. Since the introduction of General Recommendation No. 30, this space has evolved and developed, necessitating an Addendum to General Recommendation No. 30 to ensure it keeps pace with advancements in technology and the understanding of gender-based violence (**GBV**) and conflict-related sexual violence (**CRSV**).

## **Survivor-centred justice and participation**

We welcome the Addendum's emphasis on survivor-centred justice (paras 8-11), including dignity, privacy, access to care, protection from stigma and retaliation, and the meaningful inclusion of survivors in justice processes. We also support the acknowledgement of the necessity for justice systems to be rooted in survivor-centred principles and further encourage explicit recognition that processes such as evidence collection, witness protection, and mental health support should be co-designed with survivors to avoid further traumatisation. We urge the Committee to also consider intersectionality in applying these principles, recognising that survivors' experiences and needs differ according to age, disability, cultural background, or other identity factors.

We welcome the acknowledgement that historically, rape was viewed as an attack against a woman's "honour" (para 12). We urge the Committee to emphasise that rape is a crime against a woman's personal autonomy and bodily integrity, and that historical language linking sexual violence to family or community honour should not inform current standards of justice.

## **Women's leadership and inclusion in peacebuilding**

We welcome the Addendum's recognition of the critical role of women's leadership in peace and security (paras 14–16), including the emphasis on parity across all sectors as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. However, we note that progress on women's leadership in peace processes remains insufficient. Despite recommendations for 1% of Official Development Aid to reach women-led groups in conflict zones, only 0.3% was delivered in 2021–2022, and women remain underrepresented as negotiators, mediators, and signatories to peace agreements. We urge the Committee to recommend concrete mechanisms and funding targets to strengthen the participation and leadership of women, including support for grassroots, Indigenous, and young women-led organisations, and the development of capacity-building initiatives to ensure women can engage meaningfully in all aspects of peace and security processes.

We welcome the recognition of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (paras 37-39), noting the close and interconnected relationship between peaceful societies, sustainable development, and equal access to justice. We also commend the Addendum's reference to the

UNSG's 2024 annual report on WPS, which called on States to better align WPS and arms control policies considering the nexus between peace, security, and illicit arms flow. However, we consider that this harmonisation must occur on the basis of multilateral agreement to ensure State accountability and address the reality that illicit arms trade often transcends State borders. We suggest that the Addendum recognise or propose a mechanism for the harmonisation of National Action Plans in an effort to foster the coordinated prevention of illicit arms flow and contribute to more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable societies.

We commend the Addendum's recognition of the urgent need to protect women HRDs, peace activists, and student activists (paras 47-48). We acknowledge the vital role of women HRDs and activists in promoting civic accountability and driving policy change. However, we also recognise the increasingly hostile reception of women HRDs in the current global climate and urge the Committee to prioritise the protection of women and student activists from anti-rights actors operating both in-person and online. We direct the attention of the Committee to the rise of technology-facilitated violence against women activists, as condemned by the report of the UNSG submitted pursuant to resolution 77/193. We acknowledge the role of UN declarations and resolutions in underscoring the importance of protecting human rights defenders from violence and discrimination and recognise that 62 countries have at least one mechanism in place to do so. We note the varying effectiveness of domestic mechanisms in protecting activists and their general failure to account for gendered perspectives in specifically protecting women HRDs. We suggest the to provide further guidance on the legal protections available to women HRDs, both domestically and internationally.

## **Accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes**

We welcome the Addendum's detailed recognition of conflict-related sexual violence and sexual and gender-based crimes (paras 17–27). We support the emphasis on the inclusion of men and boys as survivors, the protection of children born of sexual violence, and the need for holistic justice, reparations, and gender-sensitive services for survivors.

We also welcome the acknowledgement that sexual violence in conflict can constitute torture and sexualised persecution, reinforcing survivors' rights to rehabilitation, compensation, and protection under international law. Recognising the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN

peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, we support the Addendum's reference to zero-tolerance policies and collective accountability measures, including command responsibility and troop-contributing country obligations. However, we also urge the Committee to promote the co-design of justice and reparations processes with survivors to avoid re-traumatisation and ensure meaningful survivor participation.

We welcome the Addendum's acknowledgement of the wide variety of actions that can constitute torture (paras 26-27). We note that, under international law, acts of torture generally require the knowledge, consent, or acquiescence of a government or public official.<sup>1</sup> While sexual violence committed by state actors clearly falls within this definition, CRSV perpetrated by non-state armed groups or other private actors may not always meet the strict legal threshold of "torture," despite often causing equivalent or greater harm. We urge the Committee to recognise the substantive impact of sexual violence regardless of perpetrator status and to ensure that legal frameworks, accountability measures, and reparations mechanisms are responsive to survivors of both state- and non-state-perpetrated sexual violence.

We welcome the Addendum's recognition of the deliberate gendered denial of education as constituting intellectual violence against women (paras 71-73). We commend the Addendum's identification of intellectual violence as implicit in the militarisation of educational institutions, the closure of schools for women and girls, and the implementation of exclusionary policies specifically targeting the ability of women and girls to access education. We also commend the acknowledgement that such intentional denial of education on gendered grounds constitutes a violation of the right to equal education and may be tantamount to persecution on gender grounds thus a crime against humanity. We note that women and girls are often the first to lose access to education during periods of conflict, either as an intentional weaponisation of control or as a by-product of the widespread social and institutional instability engendered by warfare. We recommend that the Committee recognise the correlation between the women, peace and security agenda and the ability of women to access education.

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<sup>1</sup> Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, opened for signature 10 December 1984, 1465 UNTS 85 (entered into force 26 June 1987) Art 1.

We commend the Addendum's reference to the July 2025 arrest warrants issued against the Supreme Leader of the Taliban and the Chief Justice of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as representing the first time gender persecution has been charged as a distinct crime by the Prosecutor (paras 74-75). We consider that this prosecution is overdue and welcome the development of gender persecution as a stand-alone charge. The codification of the maintenance of systematic oppression of women as 'gender apartheid' is essential in this development. However, widening the scope of conduct open to prosecution under international law is also crucial. We urge the Committee to consider how it might insist upon the further codification of gender persecution.

## **Enforced disappearances**

We welcome the Addendum's recognition of enforced disappearances and recommend an expansion to address the gender-specific drivers, impacts, and consequences of disappearances during armed conflict. Women are disproportionately affected both as victims of gender-targeted disappearances and as the primary searchers for the disappeared. Women face heightened risks of kidnapping, trafficking, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and torture when disappeared by state or non-state actors.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, when male family members have disappeared, women are often forced into roles of economic and legal responsibility with limited state support, exposing them to further exploitation and violence.<sup>3</sup>

We further note the role of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance<sup>4</sup> and encourage the Addendum to recognise enforced disappearances as a form of gendered harm when linked to forced recruitment, trafficking, sexual violence, or reproductive coercion.<sup>5</sup> We recommend that the Committee call on States to collect gender-

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<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Council, *Enforced Disappearances, Gender and Human Rights*, UN Doc A/HRC/50/34 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, opened for signature 20 December 2006, 2716 UNTS 3 (entered into force 23 December 2010)

<sup>5</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, *Missing Persons and Their Families: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* (2016).

disaggregated data on missing persons, implement survivor-centred search and identification processes, and ensure the protection of women searching for missing relatives.<sup>6</sup>

We commend the assertion that the denial of humanitarian access and the wilful impediment of humanitarian aid is a “gross violation of the laws and customs of war” (para 59). We recognise the persistent use of the denial of humanitarian aid as a weapon of political warfare with catastrophic impacts on innocent civilian life. We acknowledge that the denial of humanitarian aid is often justified by suggesting that such aid is associated with malicious actors. This discourse contributes to the weaponisation of aid by donor countries<sup>7</sup> and the securitisation of the means by which essential resources are provided to civilians in the crossfire of conflict. We note that the wilful impediment of humanitarian aid creates the danger of artificial scarcity, which often disproportionately disadvantages women and children. We urge the Committee to unconditionally condemn the denial of humanitarian access and the impediment of humanitarian aid, including indirectly by the weaponisation of funding by donor countries.

We appreciate the Addendum’s recognition that mass forcible transfers exacerbate gender-related inequalities. Women and girls face an amplified risk of sexual violence during periods of mass forcible transfer, rendering them particularly vulnerable to victimisation. Mass forcible transfers sever individuals’ inherent rights to familial, social, cultural, and geographic connections. Such transfers create exceptionally unstable conditions for civilians, heightening their risk of violence, illness, and starvation. While mass citizen transfers represent a strategic assertion of control by the enforcing state, their actual experience constitutes severe and unjust punishment of innocent civilians.

## **Sustainable peace**

We welcome the Addendum’s recognition of UNSCR-2601 (para 49), which concerned the violation of the rights afforded to children in armed conflict. We note that girls are especially vulnerable to the deprivation of the right to education, which can occur both through express

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<sup>6</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, *Missing Persons and Their Families: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* (2016).

<sup>7</sup> See especially Anas Iqtait, ‘From Conditionality to Weaponisation: The Transformation of Aid in Palestine Post-October 2023’ (2025) 46(3) *Third World Quarterly* 1–21.



prohibition and by practical limitations on attending school free from risk and fear. We suggest the Addendum include provisions for the codification of detailed mechanisms to ensure education remains accessible during conflict, recognising the essential role of education in providing for the long-term well-being of children.

We commend the recognition of UNSCR-2347 (paras 50-51), which characterises the destruction of cultural heritage as a tactic of war. We acknowledge the incalculable and irreversible impact that cultural destruction has on the common identity and history of a people. This destruction occurs not only through physical monuments and other tangible manifestations of cultural heritage but is also eroded by the forced displacement of peoples from their cultural lands, traditions, and kinship networks. Cultural heritage exists in and is maintained by the practice of community, which is vulnerable to erasure when a people endure prolonged conflict and dispossession. Women have an indispensable role in such a community. We also recognise that the destruction of cultural heritage undermines a group's claim to qualification as a 'people' for the purposes of international law, thereby impacting their ability to assert legal rights such as the right to self-determination.

We endorse the Addendum's recognition that extractive industries have deeply gendered impacts, including sexual violence, displacement and exploitation. We support UNSCR-2467, which requires private sector actors to ensure that proceeds from materials acquired for production do not fund armed groups. We consider that this requirement should extend to private sector actors seeking to acquire materials from sources that engage in the exploitation and displacement of workers, both men and women. We suggest that targeted sanctions against those who perpetuate and direct sexual violence in conflict be extended, at least in part, to private entities that profit from the economically advantageous supply of conflict materials, thereby indirectly perpetuating sexual violence.

We support the Addendum's prioritisation of the WPS Agenda as a key framework for action in pandemics. We commend the recognition of UNSCR-2565 and note that the provision of quality, safe and effective healthcare is incredibly difficult during periods of conflict. We urge the international community to acknowledge the essential role of vaccine distribution in mitigating the impacts of pandemics on war-torn nations, and to ensure that vaccines are available at a fair and affordable cost.

## Early Warning Gender Indicators of Conflict

We welcome the Addendum's acknowledgement of prevention obligations and recommend explicit incorporation of gender-responsive early warning systems. Extensive research demonstrates that rising GBV, shrinking civic space, legislative rollbacks on women's rights, online misogyny, political exclusion of women, and increased attacks on women HRDs are leading indicators of instability.<sup>8</sup> These patterns often precede the outbreak or escalation of armed conflict.<sup>9</sup> We strongly encourage the Committee to recommend that States integrate gender-specific indicators into national early-warning mechanisms, including indicators related to technology-facilitated violence, restrictions on women's autonomy or mobility, targeted surveillance, socio-economic precarity, and climate-driven displacement patterns that disproportionately affect women and girls.<sup>10</sup> Early warning systems should be co-developed with women's civil society organisations, particularly Indigenous, rural, and displaced women.<sup>11</sup>

## Outerspace

We welcome the Addendum's recognition of emerging global security domains and urge explicit attention to the WPS framework implications of the militarisation and weaponisation of outer space. Anti-satellite weapons, cyber interferences with satellite infrastructure, and dual-use technologies threaten humanitarian operations, disaster response systems, and communication networks relied upon by women HRDs, activists, and communities in conflict zones.<sup>12</sup>

Women and girls are disproportionately affected when space-based systems fail, including:

- breakdown of communications that support humanitarian aid;
- collapse of GPS-enabled early-warning systems for disasters;
- disruption of supply chains for medicine, food, and essential goods;

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<sup>8</sup> UN Women, *Gendered Early Warning Indicators* (Policy Brief, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security*, UN Doc S/2023/725 (2023).

<sup>10</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, *Women's Participation in Peace Processes* (Report, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> OECD, *States of Fragility 2022* (Report, OECD Publishing, 2022); UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security*, UN Doc S/2023/725 (2023).

<sup>12</sup> GA Res 76/231, UN GAOR, 76th sess, Agenda item 109 (2021) '*Prevention of an arms race in outer space: reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours*' <A\_RES\_76\_231-EN.pdf>.

- increased vulnerability of women HRDs who rely on satellite communications in closed civic spaces.<sup>13</sup>

We recommend that the Committee encourage States to incorporate gender analysis into space security assessments, ensure the participation of women in space governance, and recognise that destabilising space activities can undermine peace, hinder humanitarian response, and exacerbate gendered vulnerabilities.<sup>14</sup>

## Climate Crisis

We welcome the Addendum's recognition of the intersections between climate, conflict, and gender and urge the Committee to frame the climate crisis as a threat multiplier that disproportionately harms women before, during and after conflict.<sup>15</sup> Climate-driven resource scarcity, displacement, food insecurity, and livelihood collapse increase women's exposure to GBV, child marriage, trafficking, and intimate partner violence.<sup>16</sup>

The climate crisis also contributes to displacement, border militarisation, and competition over land and water, heightening the likelihood of conflict. Women, particularly Indigenous, rural, and coastal women, carry the largest burden yet have the least access to decision-making roles in climate adaptation, disaster management, and post-climate reconstruction.<sup>17</sup>

We urge the Committee to recommend:

- gender-responsive climate-warning systems and adaptation planning;
- climate-reparations funding for displacement and loss and damage with clear allocations to women's organisations;
- protection for women defenders confronting environmental degradation and extractive industries.

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<sup>13</sup> Secure World Foundation, *Global Counterspace Capabilities: An Open-Source Assessment* (2024).

<sup>14</sup> UN Office of Outer Space Affairs, *Gender Equality and the Space Sector* (2021).

<sup>15</sup> UN Women, *Gender, Climate and Security* (Policy Brief, 2020) <[Gender-climate-and-security-en.pdf](#)>.

<sup>16</sup> IPCC, *Sixth Assessment Report: Climate Change 2023* (2023) <[IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_LongerReport.pdf](#)>.

<sup>17</sup> UN Security Council, *Women, Peace and Security*, UN Doc S/2022/740 (2022).

## **International Law of the Sea**

We welcome the Addendum's attention to emerging domains and urge explicit recognition of the gendered impacts arising from maritime insecurity, naval blockades, piracy, illegal fishing, and maritime resource competition. Women in coastal communities experience heightened economic insecurity, increased trafficking routes at sea, and deprivation of essential resources when maritime conflict disrupts supply chains.

We recommend that the Addendum incorporate UNCLOS-based protections into WPS analysis and call on States to ensure women's participation in maritime governance, including fisheries management, maritime delimitation discussions, and responses to maritime crime. The gendered effects of naval blockades, sea-based trafficking, and coastal displacement must be addressed within the WPS framework.

## **Unilateral Sanctions**

We welcome the Addendum's discussion of economic coercion and recommend expanding the discussion to address the gendered impacts of unilateral sanctions. Broad-based sanctions that restrict access to food, medical supplies, fuel, financial systems, or humanitarian exemptions disproportionately harm women and girls who typically shoulder the majority of unpaid care responsibilities and are often the first to experience food and medicine shortages.<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, sanctions regimes frequently impede the operation of women's civil society organisations by restricting access to funding, humanitarian transfers, and cross-border collaboration and/or coordination.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, targeted sanctions against perpetrators of CRSV and gender persecution remain a vital accountability tool when designed in compliance with international law.

## **Disarmament**

We offer our full endorsement of the Addendum's reference to Anti-Personne Mines (paras 40-42), which acknowledges the "direct and indirect impact of antipersonnel mines on women and girls,

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<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report* (2022) UN Doc A/HRC/51/33.

<sup>19</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Sanctions and Women's Rights* (2023).

especially within the context of intersecting and overlapping forms of discrimination and gender stereotypes”. We note the continuing impact of anti-personnel mines on women and children following periods of conflict, and urge member states to develop comprehensive and effective mine action programs.

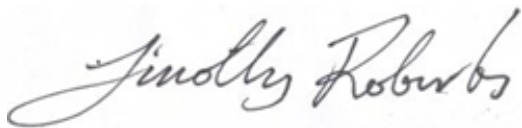
We recognise the threat posed by the illegal trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons (**SALW**) to the WPS agenda (paras 33-36) and commend the requirements of the UN Arms Trade Treaty. We query whether the assessment of the risks of GBV posed by arms transfers or exportation will be conducted uniformly and subject to international scrutiny. We also question the reliability and effectiveness of placing responsibility on States to assess and prevent gendered harm caused by the arms trade. We note that without incentivisation, some States may be unlikely to conduct honest self-assessment or act on such assessment if doing so would disturb an otherwise profitable flow of SALW.

Additionally, we offer our support to the Addendum’s comprehensive analysis of Arms Transfers (paras 43-46). We note that the increased enforcement of arms embargoes and related measures, as acknowledged by the Secretary General, requires international coordination and self-assessment by exporting countries. We commend the Addendum’s recognition that UNSCR-1820 provides an “accountability paradigm” and suggest that greater emphasis be placed on enforcing accountability among all parties directly and indirectly funding GBV through trade in arms. We acknowledge the role of regional instruments in addressing these concerns, and encourage the Addendum to reaffirm the importance of international cooperation in preventing the illicit flow of SALW.

## Concluding Comments

NSW Young Lawyers and the Sub-Committee thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. If you have any queries or require further information, please contact the undersigned at your convenience.

### Contact:



### Timothy Roberts

President

NSW Young Lawyers

Email: [president@younglawyers.com.au](mailto:president@younglawyers.com.au)

### Alternate Contact:



### Jessica Lighton

Submissions Lead

NSW Young Lawyers

Email: [submissions.YL@lawsociety.com.au](mailto:submissions.YL@lawsociety.com.au)

### Alternate Contact:



### Claudia Robinson

Human Rights Sub-Committee Chair

NSW Young Lawyers

Email: [hsrcexecutive@gmail.com](mailto:hsrcexecutive@gmail.com)