



Gender Alert

THE IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THE MILITARY ESCALATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

April 2026

 UN
WOMEN

 FOR ALL
WOMEN
AND GIRLS

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UN Women Cover photo: Emergency Response in Baalbek-Hermel :Women peacebuilders in Baalbek and Hermel are stepping up in response to the crisis, supporting displaced families, delivering aid, and easing community tensions. Photo Credit: Peace Labs

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INTRODUCTION

Military escalation in the Middle East is reshaping the lives, rights, and futures of women and girls, with immediate and long-term consequences. Since 28 February 2026, thousands of people have been killed or injured, millions have been displaced, access to essential services and supplies has become increasingly limited, and livelihoods have been severely disrupted.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted due to entrenched gender discrimination that limits their access to resources, services, and decision-making power. This is exacerbating structural gender inequalities, contributing to long-term socio-economic regression, and jeopardizing hard-won gains in gender equality.

The current escalation is unfolding in a region already facing extremely high humanitarian needs, hosting the world's largest number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection at the start of 2026.¹ The region is home to 24.3 million forcibly displaced people, many of whom face serious protection risks and urgent humanitarian needs.²



Even before this escalation an estimated **676 million women and girls** worldwide lived **within 50 kilometers** of a deadly conflict event.

This represents approximately one in six globally - the highest proportion recorded since the 1990s.³ In countries affected by conflict and crisis, progress on gender equality has often stalled, slowed, or reversed.⁴

The escalation is intensifying violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, weakening democratic institutions, and fueling backlash against gender equality. Its effects extend far beyond the region, as rising prices, supply chain disruptions, and reduced remittance flows increase food insecurity, erode livelihoods, and place additional strain on social protection systems across Asia, the Caucasus, and Africa.

This is unfolding in a global context of declining compliance with international norms and treaties, with women, girls, and marginalized groups bearing the consequences. In early 2025, one in four Member States implementing the Beijing Platform for Action reported a backlash against women's rights.⁵ At the same time, shrinking civic space and declining funding are weakening the capacity of women's rights and women-led organizations and undermining community-based response mechanisms.

Women-led organizations, already underfunded and overstretched, have been particularly hard hit by funding cuts.⁶ In this context, progress on the Women, Peace and Security agenda has stagnated or reversed in many countries between 2020 and 2025, despite strong normative foundations.⁷

[1] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Escalation in the Middle East and Beyond: The Humanitarian Response* [EN/AR]. Available at: [Escalation in the Middle East and Beyond: The Humanitarian Response](#) [EN/AR]. OCHA

[2] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Operational Data Portal: Middle East Situation*. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/middle-eastern>

[3] Rustad, Siri Aas. *Women Exposed to Armed Conflict, 1990–2024*. *Gender, Peace and Security Policy Brief*. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2025. Available at: <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2025/556>

[4] UN Women. *Women's Rights in Review: 30 Years after Beijing (2025)*. Available at: [womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf](#)

[5] United Nations. *Report of the Secretary-General: Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly*. 2025. Available at: [Document Viewer](#)

[6] UN Women. *At a Breaking Point: The Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Women's Organizations in Humanitarian Crises Worldwide (2025)*. Available at: [At a breaking point: The impact of foreign aid cuts on women's organizations in humanitarian crises worldwide | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

[7] United Nations. *Women and Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General (2025)*. Available at: [Women and peace and security](#) :

Rising military expenditure – which diverts critical public resources away from essential social and development priorities, including gender equality, women’s empowerment, health, education and livelihoods – combined with declining development assistance is further reducing already limited resources for life-saving services for women and girls.

Sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data remain limited, with both quantitative and qualitative gender data largely missing from analyses and assessments. This leaves the experiences and needs of women and girls invisible, and hinders informed policymaking, advocacy and programming.

This UN Women Gender Alert examines the immediate impacts and potential longer-term consequences of the current military escalation on women and girls across the Middle East and in interconnected contexts, including in Asia, the South Caucasus and Africa. This analysis draws on available data, supplemented where necessary by proxy indicators and contextual analysis due to limited sex- and age-disaggregated data. It offers an initial assessment and underscores the urgent need for more systematic gender data collection to better inform humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding policy and programming.

GENDERED IMPACTS OF THE ESCALATION

1. Conflict Exposure and Displacement: Risks to Women’s Health, Safety and Rights

The escalation has resulted in significant loss of life and injury among affected populations, with women, girls among those killed or injured. On the first day of the escalation, 168 girls were reportedly killed when a strike hit their primary school in Minab, Iran.⁸ Since then, hundreds more women and girls have reportedly been killed across the region, including more than 200 women in Iran⁹ and more than 250 women in Lebanon¹⁰, according to national health authorities. Deaths of women and girls have also been reported in Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, the occupied Palestinian territory, and the United Arab Emirates, according to national health authorities.



With shelters overwhelmed, thousands of women and girls have been forced into the streets. One month into the conflict, many are still without a safe place to stay. Siad, Lebanon, 2026. Photo: UN Women/ Georges Rokouz

[8] Ministry of Public Health, Iran. *Official Data on Casualties and Health Impacts (as of April 2026)*.

[9] *Ibid*

[10] Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon. *Health Impact Data (as of 12 April 2026)*.

Displacement

Millions of people have been displaced across affected countries.



In Iran, an estimated up to **3.2 million** people have been internally displaced¹¹, including approximately **1.6 million women and girls**.



In Lebanon, around **1.2 million** people have been internally displaced, including an estimated **620,000 women and girls** - nearly one quarter of the country's female population.¹²

Displacement affects women, girls, boys and men differently, and risks and needs are shaped by how gender intersects with age, ethnicity, disability, and other factors. Gendered displacement patterns are associated with heightened protection risks for women and girls, including increased exposure to gender-based violence, exploitation, and abuse. In Lebanon, 85 per cent of displaced women are living outside formal shelters, increasing exposure to protection risks.¹³

Since the escalation, 38,000 undocumented Afghans have returned to Afghanistan from Iran, out of which approximately 17 per cent are women.¹⁴ Preparedness efforts for possible new cross-border outflows and movements towards neighboring countries are ongoing in various countries.

In Armenia, projections indicate that 60 to 70 per cent of potential new arrivals may be women and girls as the country prepares for possible cross-border displacement due to its geographic proximity and transit role in the region.¹⁵



Women and children stand in a queue outdoors at a displacement shelter, waiting in line in a courtyard. Lebanon, 2026. Photo: UN Women/Georges Roukoz

Health and Protection Systems are Under Strain

The escalation is placing severe additional pressure on already overstretched health systems. Even before the recent escalation, an estimated 50,000 pregnant women in Gaza and around 70,000 in Lebanon needed maternal health services, with many facing serious barriers to adequate care.¹⁶ In Lebanon, there have been over 100 attacks on healthcare since 2 March 2026.¹⁷ In Gaza – where women and girls were already grappling with the collapse of essential services – border crossing closures and humanitarian access constraints have further reduced access to critical life-saving support.

[11] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Middle East Situation (29 March 2026). Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/121779>

[12] UN Women Lebanon. Rapid Gender Analysis: Gendered Impacts of Displacement Outside Collective Shelters in Lebanon (March 2026). Available at: https://lebanon.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/rqa_march_2026_-_un_women_lebanon.pdf

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Middle East Situation (29 March 2026). Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/121779>

[15] Armenia Interagency Contingency Plan April 2026

[16] UNFPA (2023–2024), State of Palestine Situation Reports; OCHA (2023–2024), Flash Updates – Gaza; UNFPA (2023–2024), Lebanon Humanitarian Response / Country Briefs

[17] World Health Organization (WHO). Strategic Situational Analysis (SSA) Database. Available at: <https://extranet.who.int/ssa/Index.aspx>

Compounded Vulnerabilities

Female-headed households, refugee and migrant women, women with disabilities and those from other groups experiencing discrimination face heightened barriers to accessing services and support, with risks to their lives and wellbeing.



Since attacks on Gaza began in October 2023, UN Women estimates that **over 58,600 households - about 14 percent - are now headed by women.**

An estimated 11,000 women and girls in Gaza are living with conflict-related lifelong injuries.¹⁸ In Lebanon, women with disabilities face significant barriers to mobility, access to assistance and safe living conditions, particularly in overcrowded and inaccessible settings.¹⁹

In Iraq, IDPs and women returnees continue to face compounded risks, particularly those facing stigma and suffering from legal marginalization. Across Asia, economic shocks are affecting female-headed households, including in Myanmar, where they make up a disproportionate share of the already displaced population and face greater barriers to accessing assistance.

In Afghanistan, prior to the escalation, more than 10.7 million women and girls were already expected to need humanitarian assistance in 2026, with two-thirds reporting they did not know how to access support.²⁰ Women returnees in multiple provinces also reported limited awareness of services provided by de facto authorities or international organizations, and

nearly 4 in 10 fear eviction – conditions that heighten exposure to gender-based violence, exploitation, and repeated displacement.²¹ Child marriage was projected to increase by 25 per cent, adolescent childbearing by 45 per cent and maternal mortality by at least 50 per cent in 2026.²² The escalation is likely to exacerbate this trajectory.

Long-Term Risks

Sustained exclusion of women from livelihoods, services, and decision-making deepens their vulnerability and that of their families by further limiting access to resources, rights, and opportunities. It also weakens social cohesion and increases longer-term risks to peacebuilding, stability, and prevention efforts.

At the same time, growing financial constraints risk diverting critical funding away from gender equality, including support for women-led and women's rights organizations and for the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This would weaken locally grounded prevention, participation, and protection efforts at the very moment they are most needed.



Women peacebuilders in Baalbek and Hermel are stepping up in response to the crisis, supporting displaced families, delivering aid, and easing community tensions, Lebanon, 2026. Photo Credit: Peace Labs

[18] UN Women. *What It Means to Be a Woman in Gaza Today* (12 September 2025). Available at: [What it means to be a woman in Gaza today](#).

[19] UN Women Lebanon. *Rapid Gender Analysis: Gendered Impacts of Displacement Outside Collective Shelters in Lebanon* (March 2026). Available at: https://lebanon.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/rga_march_2026_-_un_women_lebanon.pdf

[20] *Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026*; [af-20250409708-Gender-Alert-Returnees-from-Pakistan-and-Iran_JUN2025.pdf](#)

[21] International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Protection Monitoring Report (January–March 2025)*. Available at: [af-20250409708-Gender-Alert-Returnees-from-Pakistan-and-Iran_JUN2025.pdf](#).

[22] UN Women. 2024. *Gender Country Profile: Afghanistan. Kabul: UN Women Afghanistan*. Available at: [Gender-country-profile-Afghanistan-en.pdf](#)

2. Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Risks

Women experience higher rates of food insecurity than men globally²³ and are often the first to absorb food shocks within households, reducing their own consumption to prioritize others. These dynamics are expected to intensify as rising food prices and supply disruptions deepen food insecurity – with impacts differentiated by intra-household food allocation, unequal access to income and assets, and gender-entrenched caregiving roles.

Women and girls are more likely to face reduced dietary intake and limited access to nutritious food, increasing risks of malnutrition, including during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Female-headed households face the greatest affordability pressures. These effects extend beyond directly affected countries as global price volatility and supply constraints persist.



More than

24 million
women and girls

across **Syria, Yemen, Lebanon**, the **occupied Palestinian territory**, and **Iraq** are facing deepening food insecurity, driven by price volatility, disrupted supply chains, and declining purchasing power in a region highly dependent on food imports.²⁴

In Iran, pre-existing economic pressures, with rising inflation and a soaring cost of living are increasing food insecurity risks, particularly for refugees, vulnerable households, and women-headed households.²⁵ In Myanmar, 12.4 million people – 52 per cent of whom are women – are projected to face acute hunger in 2026, including 1 million at emergency levels, mainly IDPs, returnees and stateless persons as indirect impacts of the escalation – particularly rising food and fuel prices and supply disruptions—exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.²⁶

In Afghanistan, 42 per cent of women-headed households reported going to bed hungry in 2025; during parts of 2025-2026 an estimated 8.3 million women are projected to experience crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] Phase 3+).²⁷

In Armenia, economic dependencies on Iran are increasing women's vulnerability. An estimated 20 to 25 per cent of the country's trade flows transit through Iran,²⁸ and Iranian gas underpins part of Armenia's electricity generation capacity through a gas-for-electricity exchange – with no immediately available alternative.²⁹ Disruption to these supply chains, combined with rising regional energy and food prices, disproportionately affects women in low-income households, agriculture, and unpaid care roles.

[23] United Nations. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025 (2025)*. Available at: [progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2025-en.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pubs/2025/04/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2025-en.pdf)

[24] UN Women estimates, April 2026

[25] World Food Programme (WFP). *Iran Country Page*. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/iran-islamic-republic>

[26] OCHA. *Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (2026)*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2026-enmy>

[27] OCHA. *Afghanistan 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (2026)*. Available at: [Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 \(December 2025\)](https://www.ocha.org/publications-and-outputs/afghanistan-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2026) [EN/Dari]. OCHA

[28] Hetq.am, March 6, 2026. *Potential Effects of the Middle East War on Armenia-Iran Trade*. <https://hetq.am/en/article/180132>

[29] IEA, 2022. *Armenia 2022 Energy Policy Review*. <https://www.iea.org/reports/armenia-2022>; Columbia University Center on Global Energy Policy, February 2026. *Downside and Upside Scenarios for Iranian Gas*. <https://www.energypolicy.columbia.edu/downside-and-upside-scenarios-for-iranian-gas/>

Millions more people could be pushed into acute hunger, adding to the projected global total of 318 million³⁰, with particular concern for Sudan, where nearly 11 million women and girls were already acutely food insecure as of late 2025 and 73.7 per cent of women did not meet minimum dietary diversity.³¹

In Bangladesh, prior to the escalation, 17 per cent of the population were projected to be above the critical threshold of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) and 30 per cent of Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar were classified as IPC Phase 3 or above.³²

The indirect effects of the escalation are expected to place additional pressure on essential services within the Rohingya refugee camps. Of particular concern, disruption to the supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) for cooking would have direct impacts on the health and well-being of women and girls.



Women peacebuilders in Baalbek and Hermel are stepping up in response to the crisis, supporting displaced families, delivering aid, and easing community tensions, Baalbek-Hermel, 2026. Photo Credit: Peace Labs

3. Erosion of Livelihoods and Rising Unpaid Care Burdens

Women across the Middle East, Asia, and the South Caucasus are concentrated in informal, low-paid, and shock-sensitive sectors such as tourism, domestic work, and services, leaving them more exposed to economic shocks.

The escalation is disrupting export-dependent sectors across Asia, including garment manufacturing and agriculture. Rising food prices and limited access to agricultural inputs are adding further pressure on smallholder farms and agribusinesses where many women work. At the same time, women’s unpaid care work - already significantly higher than men’s - is increasing further.

This constrains women’s time, mobility, income, access to services, and participation in public life.



In Lebanon, displacement has significantly intensified women’s unpaid care responsibilities, with **adolescent girls shouldering greater burdens** at the expense of their access to education, services, and peer networks.³³

[30] World Food Programme (WFP). Global Hunger Crisis Overview. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/global-hunger-crisis>

[31] UN Women. Gender Alert: “Last and Least” – Gender Dimensions of Food Insecurity in Sudan (2025). Available at: [Gender alert: ‘Last and least’: Gender dimensions of food insecurity in Sudan | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#)

[32] Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). Bangladesh Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Report (2025). Available at: [IPC_Bangladesh_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Acute_Malnutrition_Jan_Dec2025_Report.pdf](#); Note - IPC estimates are based on household-level analysis and are not routinely disaggregated by sex, limiting visibility into gender-specific food insecurity outcomes.

[33] UN Women Lebanon. Rapid Gender Analysis: Gender, Conflict and Internal Displacement in and from South Lebanon (2024). Available at: [Rapid Gender Analysis – Gender, Conflict and Internal Displacement in and from South Lebanon | Publications | UN Women – Lebanon](#)

In Gaza, the collapse of health, education, water, and protection systems has forced women to spend increasing amounts of time securing basic necessities, caring for injured or traumatized family members, and protecting children in overcrowded and unsafe displacement settings.³⁴

In Afghanistan, women surveyed reported that caring for children, older persons, and persons with disabilities had become more difficult as cross-border tensions with Pakistan increased.³⁵

In Bangladesh, women dominate the informal workforce and increasingly its agricultural sector. Yet they have limited access to productive resources and financial support needed to absorb rising fuel and food prices, and energy and transport disruptions.



Zero Point of Islam Qala – Returnees from Iran to Afghanistan, 2025. File Photo: UN Women/Sayed Habib Bidell

In Afghanistan, worsening cross-border tensions with Pakistan have impacted women's livelihoods, with affected women in the eastern region of Afghanistan identifying loss of income or work as one of the most significant challenges since the increase of tensions.³⁶

Reduced remittance flows are compounding financial vulnerability, particularly for female overseas workers reliant on income from the Middle East, and for female-headed households with high remittance dependency.

The Gulf Cooperation Council countries host approximately 31 million economic migrant workers³⁷, mostly from South and Southeast Asia.

Recent sex-disaggregated data is lacking but 2019 estimates indicate that men comprise an estimated 70 to 83 per cent of these workers, while women, though fewer, are concentrated in undervalued and less regulated sectors, like domestic work and care services, with heightened risks of exploitation and abuse.³⁸

The disruption of air travel due to airspace closures and additional restrictions mean female domestic workers cannot independently leave their employer or the country.

[34] UN Women. *Community Perspectives and Gender Analysis of Humanitarian Assistance in Gaza* (forthcoming, April 2026).

[35] UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. *Gender Alert: Gendered Impacts of Hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan* (2026). Available at: (<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2026-03/af-20260465436-gcg-gendered-impacts-of-hostilities-between-afghanistan-and-pakistan.pdf>)

[36] Ibid.

[37] World Bank Group. *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies* (2023). Available at: [World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies](#)

[38] International Labour Organization (ILO). *ILO Estimates on Migrant Workers* (2021; updated 2024)- estimates as of 2019 (ILO 2021), ILO (2024) reports that SADD for the Gulf remain limited

4. Shrinking Civic Space and Risks to Women Human Rights Defenders and Women’s Organizations

Across affected countries, the escalation is narrowing conditions under which women can exercise their rights, organize, access information, and participate in decision-making. In conflict-affected and politically restricted settings, women human rights defenders and women-led organizations face increased surveillance, restrictions on movement and expression, and greater personal risk, especially when documenting violations, delivering services, or organizing in their communities.

In Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, women human rights defenders have reported defamation, threats, and physical harm in recent years, highlighting the need for stronger protection. Across the Middle East, shrinking civic space has pushed many women activists and defenders to limit their public advocacy out of fear of reprisals. Even where formal restrictions are less severe, economic shocks, displacement, and digital disruptions are making it harder for women to participate in public and political life and in decision-making.

In Iran, a near-total internet shutdown has further constrained women’s access to information and expression. Increased crackdowns on civic space and women’s freedom of expression is also driving widespread self-censorship.

In Afghanistan, more than 43 per cent of women and men reported speaking less outside the home³⁹, and nearly half of women (46 per cent) have limited the topics they discuss in public, since the de facto authorities returned to power in August 2021.⁴⁰

Women-led organizations are among the most trusted and effective first responders – yet they are under severe strain. Recent substantial reductions in humanitarian aid have worsened a funding crisis that was already placing these organizations at risk of significant contraction and closure across crisis-affected countries.⁴¹ Persistently low funding and narrowing operating space undermine their vital work and the quality, reach, and accountability of humanitarian response more broadly.



In collective shelters across Lebanon, displaced women and girls face growing challenges in accessing basic needs amid limited resources, overcrowding, and increased demand for assistance, Beirut, Lebanon, April 2026. Photo: UN Women/Georges Roukoz

[39] UN Women. *Four Years of Taliban Rule: Afghan Women Resist as Restrictions Tighten (2025)*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/afghanistan-gender-alert-2025-08-en.pdf>

[40] UN Women. *2025. 2025 Gender Flagship Survey - Afghanistan*. Currently embargoed.

[41] *At a breaking point: The impact of foreign aid cuts on women’s organizations in humanitarian crises worldwide* | Publications | UN Women – Headquarters

RECOMMENDATIONS

UN Women calls on Member States, humanitarian actors, and development partners to take the following priority actions:

1. Uphold the ceasefire and ensure it delivers for women and girls

The ceasefire that entered into force on 8 April 2026 is a critical but fragile step; full compliance with its terms and with international humanitarian law is essential. Women, including those from displaced and marginalized communities, must be fully, equally, and safely represented in any future peace negotiations, ceasefire monitoring, and transitional justice, in line with the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

2. Ensure unimpeded humanitarian access and protect humanitarian personnel and scale up gender-responsive humanitarian assistance

Principled and unimpeded humanitarian access must be guaranteed, with particular attention to the risks faced by women aid workers. Structural barriers that prevent women and girls from safely accessing assistance - including movement restrictions, documentation requirements, and digital access gaps - must be urgently addressed.

Donors and humanitarian actors should urgently increase funding for sexual and reproductive health services, GBV prevention and response, food assistance, and protection services, prioritizing displaced women and girls, including those living outside formal shelter facing acute protection risk.

Donors should provide direct, flexible, multi-year financing for women-led and women's rights organizations across the region in line with commitments on localization and on gender equality. These organizations must be systemically included in crisis preparedness and response coordination mechanisms as decision-makers, not only implementers.

3. Safeguard women's livelihoods and strengthen social protection

Governments and development partners should work to ensure women impacted by secondary economic fallout and compounding crises are supported to recover their livelihoods and that inequalities are not permanently deepened. This includes advancing targeted measures, such as cash transfers and livelihood support, prioritizing female-headed households, women in informal sectors, and migrant and domestic workers facing structural barriers to safely exiting conflict-affected areas. As displacement and service reductions drive a sharp rise in caregiving demands, investment in care services is equally critical to prevent these burdens from falling disproportionately on women and girls. Gender-responsive monitoring of sustained economic impacts must be built into response frameworks from the outset.

4. Protect civic space and women human rights defenders

Harassment, arbitrary detention, and violence against women human rights defenders and women-led civil society organizations must cease immediately. States must strengthen legal protections, ensure accountability for violations, and provide emergency protection measures for women human rights defenders. Protection of women human rights defenders and women leaders must be integrated as a core element across humanitarian, stabilization and peace and security efforts.

5. Prevent further militarization of the region

Human security must be prioritized over further militarization, ensuring that public spending supports gender-responsive peacebuilding and social cohesion. Strengthened public oversight and transparency, including meaningful participation of civil society, women, youth, and local communities in policymaking and monitoring, are essential to enhance accountability and prevent further escalation.

UN WOMEN RESPONSE

UN Women is operational across the affected regions through its Country and Regional offices, working with UN partners, governments, and women-led and women's rights organizations to sustain essential services, address gendered impacts and protect gains in gender equality. Country Offices in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, Armenia, Myanmar, among others, are engaged in response and preparedness efforts, supported by Regional Offices for Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Central Asia.

UN Women leads and supports coordination on gender equality within the UN system across current humanitarian and refugee responses with the aim of integrating gender equality into planning, programming, operational delivery and monitoring. UN Women works on the collection, analysis and use of gender data to inform humanitarian, development, and peace and security efforts in the regions.

Throughout the affected countries, UN Women supports the provision of women-centered protection, psychosocial, and legal services as well as targeted food assistance and income generation/livelihood opportunities through women-led and women's rights organizations. In parallel, UN Women is engaged in early warning and preparedness planning in various countries, including for potential cross-border displacement, working with partners to ensure that corresponding plans are gender-responsive.

In the Arab States region, UN Women also leverages regional women peacebuilding and mediation networks to support early warning, social cohesion, prevention and women's leadership.

Across the affected regions, UN Women contributes to system-wide response efforts through its normative and coordination roles within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). UN Women's work is grounded in global and national normative commitments on gender equality, women's rights and empowerment, including the Women, Peace and Security agenda.



UN Women staff assessing the critical role of women led organizations and the dire needs of women and girls in Gaza as winter is coming. November 2025. File Photo: UN Women/Sulaiman Hejji

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead United Nations entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social norms and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector, coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations, deliver lasting changes. We make strides in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and peace, security and humanitarian action. UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.

