

Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences

Ref.: AL OTH 116/2024
(Please use this reference in your reply)

21 August 2024

Mr. Dagalo,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 50/7, 50/18, 54/14, 53/4, 50/6, 52/20, 52/26 and 51/15.

We are independent human rights experts appointed and mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council to report and advise on human rights issues from a thematic or country-specific perspective. We are part of the special procedures system of the United Nations, which has 60 thematic and country mandates on a broad range of human rights issues. We are sending this letter under the communications procedure of the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council to seek clarification on information we have received. Special Procedures mechanisms can intervene directly with State and non-State actors on allegations of abuses of human rights that come within their mandates by means of letters, which include urgent appeals, allegation letters, and other communications. The intervention may relate to a human rights violation that has already occurred, is ongoing, or which has a high risk of occurring. The process involves sending a letter to the concerned actors identifying the facts of the allegation, applicable international human rights norms and standards, the concerns and questions of the mandate-holder(s), and a request for follow-up action. Communications may deal with individual cases, general patterns and trends of human rights violations, cases affecting a particular group or community, or the content of draft or existing legislation, policy or practice considered not to be fully compatible with international human rights standards.

In this connection, we would like to follow up on the joint allegation letter dated 15 August 2023 (AL OTH 101/2023) and your subsequent response dated 19 January 2024, in addition to the joint urgent appeal sent on 6 August 2024 (OTH 115/2024) regarding the alleged serious human rights and humanitarian law violations in North and West Darfur. In particular, we would like to bring to your attention information we have received concerning the **continuation of wide-spread violence against women and children**, including human rights violations reportedly attributed to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), despite its commitments expressed in RSF's

Rapid Support Forces

response cited above. Allegations largely consist of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, denial of sexual and reproductive health services, denial of assistance and protection for survivors of violence and internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, refugees, trafficking, abduction, acts tantamount to enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings.

According to the information received:

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that as of August 2024, 7.9 million persons have been displaced within Sudan since the start of the conflict in April 2023, and that there are a total of approximately 10.7 million internally displaced people. In addition, an estimated two million people have fled Sudan since April 2023, of which 78 per cent are estimated to be women and children. Since the start of the conflict, an additional 200,000 non-Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers already residing in Sudan have been displaced. Risks of gender-based violence severely increased for displaced women and girls, and the United Nations Population Fund reports that up to 6.7 million people are at risk of gender-based violence. Credible reports from human rights and humanitarian organizations have described that women and girls, including internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers, reportedly continue to be targets of rape and sexual assault by the RSF and that exposure to conflict-related sexual violence remains a pervasive issue in Sudan, particularly in conflict-affected regions [REDACTED]

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported in the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan issued in December 2023 that almost 25 million people in Sudan require humanitarian assistance. Despite these serious violations and deteriorating conditions, accountability remains elusive.

Incidents of gender-based violence in camps for internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees in Darfur have surged, with reports of sexual violence, including rape, forced marriage, and domestic abuse being alarmingly common. Significant barriers to justice and support for survivors remain, with sexual violence continuing to be widespread in conflict zones. In particular, in Gezira and Western Senna, where the RSF took control, numerous allegations of extreme violence have been reported, including systematic sexual violence and rape, including gang rape. Victims of gang rape have allegedly included girls between the age of thirteen and seventeen as well as older women. There have also been accounts of mothers being raped in front of their children and of women being raped in front of their husbands.

Sexual violence has also been reportedly perpetrated by the RSF in other parts of Sudan, including Omdurman, and Gezira. In December 2023, women and girls were reportedly raped, including by a gang, while travelling or fleeing violence in Wad Madani. Families with women and girls in different areas were reportedly threatened with rape in exchange for valuables, such as gold or other belongings. In North Darfur, where a state of famine was declared due to disruptions in access to food and aid, the RSF reportedly forced women and girls into performing sexual acts in exchange for food, essential services, including healthcare, education, and social support. Reportedly, these acts of sexual violence are not isolated and appear to form part of a deliberate and

concerted campaign to terrorize and control the civilian population. They also represent a complete disregard of civilians' fundamental rights to life, safety, dignity, and freedom from violence, and an adequate standard of living, and force the civilian population into submission. In addition, the RSF has reportedly engaged in forced marriage and kidnapping of women and girls in the areas under their control. In some areas, the RSF appears to have targeted women who are visible and active in society, such as those working in the healthcare system. Women working as street vendors or in the markets have also been reportedly targeted. Women, including older women, have allegedly been forced to cook and clean for the RSF without remuneration or consent. Furthermore, the RSF has reportedly arbitrarily detained and intimidated women human rights defenders, coercing them to collaborate with the armed group.

The ongoing conflict has further limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. The persisting violence and instability have allegedly made it difficult for women and girls, particularly survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, to obtain necessary assistance and protection. Many hospitals and clinics have reportedly been damaged or destroyed by the conflict throughout Sudan, and those that remain functional are often overwhelmed and under-resourced. In conflict-affected regions, access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health care appear to be further hindered by insecurity and logistical challenges. Humanitarian organizations have struggled to reach these areas due to safety concerns and restrictions imposed by parties to the conflict. We are also concerned that the current conditions in camps for internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, marked by overcrowding, insecurity, and insufficient medical care, which demonstrate a failure to uphold the fundamental human rights principles also referred to in the previous communications AL OTH 101/2023, and UA OTH 115/2024. Armed groups and factions in Sudan have repeatedly hindered the movement of aid convoys, imposed bureaucratic obstacles, and, in some cases, directly attacked humanitarian workers. Women and girls in these regions reportedly face extreme difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, such as prenatal care, safe delivery options, and emergency contraception.

The denial of access to sexual and reproductive health services has reportedly led to increased maternal mortality and morbidity. Women are allegedly forced to give birth in unsafe conditions, and complications during pregnancy and childbirth often go untreated. The lack of access to contraception and safe abortion services have reportedly contributed to severe health complications and deaths. Moreover, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence face significant physical and psychological trauma, with inadequate medical and psychological support. There have been at least seven documented cases of suicide by survivors. The direct impact of these violations on women and girls are profound, which collectively affect their health, psychosocial well-being, economic stability, and educational opportunities.

Attacks against women first responders and human rights defenders

In addition to the killing of at least one human rights defender, several women first responders and volunteers have been attacked and subjected to sexual violence by the RSF and other armed forces. In October 2023, two women

volunteers in Khartoum who provided psychosocial care to survivors were reportedly raped, and another was reportedly murdered in her home by the RSF. On or around December 2023, two Emergency Room volunteers in Omdurman who provided medical support to survivors of sexual violence were also raped by armed assailants.

Moreover, from January to June 2024, at least nine women human rights defenders and activists have reportedly been targeted by the RSF and by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) for interrogation, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests. Among them were activists affiliated with international humanitarian and non-governmental organizations as well as several local organizations. Many of the activists had been providing support to women in displacement sites, volunteering at healthcare centers, and/or documenting cases of gender-based violence. The series of targeted attacks and intimidation against women human rights defenders and first responders have left a chilling effect, interfering with their ability to deliver services and document human rights violations.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we are deeply concerned by the reported repression and serious human rights abuses against women and girls, including internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, as well as violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual and gender-based violence, harassment, abuse and sexual exploitation. We further express serious concern about the reported killings, targeted intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and lack of protection for women human rights defenders, activists affiliated with different organizations and first responders, who are undertaking the critical work of documenting abuses and supporting survivors. These acts of violence have grave consequences, such as loss of life, and instill lasting fear and trauma in affected communities. Victims and their families often face severe psychological and economic hardships. Additionally, targeting women and girls disrupts social structures and contributes to the overall destabilization of affected regions.

Lack of investigation and accountability for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence

We are concerned about the compounded effects of conflict and the devastating impact of the denial of sexual and reproductive health services on women and girls in Sudan. High maternal mortality rates, widespread sexual and gender-based violence, and the lack of access to essential health services create a public health crisis. The inability to access contraception leads to unintended pregnancies, often resulting in unsafe abortions and associated complications. We are concerned that the widespread sexual and gender-based violence, forced arbitrary displacement, and denial of access to sexual and reproductive health services contravene international human rights standards, and their direct effects on the female population are devastating.

While the establishment of an internal investigative committee, is in principle a welcome step, we remain very concerned about the prevalence of uninvestigated sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas and the lack of timely, effective accountability mechanisms for victims and survivors. The failure to prevent, investigate, and prosecute these crimes highlights a significant breach of international commitments and a lack of political will to swiftly end acts of gender-based violence

and hold perpetrators accountable. In this regard, we are alarmed that despite RSF's public declaration of a zero-tolerance policy regarding sexual violence and its reassured commitment to investigate and eliminate such criminal activities in areas under the RSF's control, cases of sexual violence, acts tantamount to enforced disappearances, forced marriage, trafficking and targeting women and girls continue to be rampant. We urge the RSF to respect international humanitarian and human rights law, and to conduct thorough, effective, independent, impartial, credible and transparent investigations of all human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, in line with international standards, and to bring perpetrators to account and provide reparations to the survivors.

Obstruction of humanitarian access

The ongoing conflict in Sudan is a devastating humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by the deliberate denial of access and safety for humanitarian personnel. We are concerned that the deliberate targeting and endangerment of humanitarian workers by armed groups have created an environment where aid organizations are unable to operate safely, resulting in a vacuum in the provision of critical aid to those in desperate need. We are concerned that women and girls are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to essential services such as healthcare, food, clean water, and shelter, which has placed them in an extremely vulnerable position. In conflict zones, absence of humanitarian aid significantly heightens the risk of gender-based violence, including sexual assault and exploitation.

We would like to emphasize that the denial of humanitarian access is a violation of international humanitarian law. These actions are not only unlawful but also morally reprehensible, as they effectively deprive the most vulnerable populations of the means to survive. We call for robust measures to be implemented to guarantee safe and unimpeded access to conflict-affected areas and internally displaced persons, asylum seekers and refugees, and for special attention to be given to women and girls in the provision of humanitarian aid, regardless of their migration status. It is imperative that women and victims of sexual and gender-based violence can access safe spaces, sexual and reproductive health services, and psychosocial support. Women must also be involved in the planning and implementation of humanitarian initiatives to ensure that the aid provided effectively meets their needs.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international humanitarian rights law** attached to this letter which cites international humanitarian and human rights standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information on the measures undertaken to guarantee immediate and complete cessation of all violence against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls and deprivation of basic services, such as sexual and reproductive

health care.

3. Please provide information on the actions taken by the internal investigative committee to investigate acts of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls that were reportedly committed by the RSF and the outcomes of these investigations.
4. Please provide information on the measures taken to prevent the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, as well as efforts made to identify, rescue and refer child victims of these crimes in line with their best interests for reintegration.
5. Please provide information on the measures undertaken for the provision of remedy, assistance, protection, rehabilitation, recovery and redress for victims of gender-based violence.
6. Please provide information on steps taken to investigate all cases of potentially unlawful killings by the RSF, in particular the confirmed case of unlawful killing of a human rights defender as well as a woman volunteer in Khartoum, in accordance with applicable international standards, notably the Minnesota Protocol (2016).
7. Please provide information on actions taken to investigate intimidation and arbitrary arrests of women activists and human rights defenders, and measures taken to prevent any further incidents.
8. Please provide information on the measures undertaken or envisaged to prevent further arbitrary displacement, provide protection and assistance to refugees, as well as to investigate violations of their rights and ensure remedy and accountability.
9. Please provide information on the measures undertaken or envisaged to prevent further arbitrary displacement, provide protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, investigate violations of their rights, and ensure accountability for perpetrators and remedy to victims, and facilitate durable solutions to their displacement.
10. Please provide detailed information on actions taken to protect the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees, in particular women and girls, and provide remedies for violations and abuses against them, including those suffering or at risk of suffering sexual and gender-based violence and other abuses and violations.
11. Please indicate the measures undertaken to ensure safe corridors for civilians fleeing the conflict either within Sudan or crossing into neighboring countries.
12. Please provide information on the measures undertaken or envisaged to guarantee safe and regular access to humanitarian assistance, ensure that international and national humanitarian actors can safely access affected victims and communities in need of assistance, investigate attacks against humanitarian personnel and hold perpetrators

accountable.

We would appreciate receiving a response within 60 days. Past this delay, this communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#). They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

A simultaneous letter will be sent to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sudan.

Finally, we stress that this letter does not in any way imply the expression of opinion concerning the legal status of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Please accept, Mr. Dagalo, the assurances of our highest consideration.

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Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences

Laura Nyirinkindi
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

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Mama Fatima Singhateh
Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children

Tomoya Obokata
Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences

Annex

Reference to international humanitarian law and relevant standards

In connection with above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to draw your attention to the relevant international norms and standards that are applicable to the issues brought forth by the situation described above.

We wish to recall that both international and humanitarian law and international human rights law continue to apply in a situation of armed conflict, and there are obligations to respect fundamental human rights recognized in customary international law, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Customary Rules of International Law identified in the study of the International Committee of the Red Cross (“Customary Rules”). Rules of customary international law are binding at all times. In light of these grave allegations, we recall that the right to life constitutes an international customary and *jus cogens* norm, universally binding at all times (A/HRC/35/23, paras. 25-26).

We further recall that according to Common article 3 to the four Geneva Conventions persons taking no active part in hostilities shall be treated humanely and should not be subject to violence to life and person and that murder is prohibited. Additionally, the intentional killing of civilians represents a war crime and may represent a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread, systematic, or planned attack directed against any civilian population. We note that the obligation to investigate is particularly important within the human rights framework. Armed non-State actors should, as a priority, investigate killings (or acts of torture or sexual violence) committed by their members (A/HRC/38/44, para. 74). Investigations must be in line with applicable standards, including the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death (2016). Investigations should be prompt, effective and thorough, with independence, impartiality and transparency. Furthermore, and according to international human rights law, all parties to a conflict, including internal conflicts are bound by the principle of non-refoulement, from the position that the absolute prohibition of torture, cruel treatment or outrages on personal dignity are enshrined in common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. All parties to non-international conflicts, whether State or non-State must abide by it.

We also recall the absolute and non-derogable right to life and prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as an international norm of *jus cogens*, and as reflected inter alia, in Human Rights Council resolution 25/13 and United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/156. The prohibition of enforced disappearances and the corresponding obligation to investigate them equally attained the status of *jus cogens*. We would like to remind the RSF that the killing and serious injury of civilians, including the sexual abuse and rape of women, contravenes the absolute and non-derogable prohibition against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, according to international human rights law and *jus cogens* norms.

Regarding the acts of rape and sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls in conflict affected areas, we would like to stress that these acts of gender-based violence are strictly prohibited by international humanitarian law and constitute a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. When committed in the context

of internal armed conflict, such acts are prohibited through Common article 3 of four Geneva Conventions ratified by Sudan, which prohibits violence to life and person, cruel treatment and torture, and outrages upon personal dignity; and other provisions, such as article 4(2) of additional protocol II, which explicitly prohibit attacks against women, including rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault, which is a part of customary law. We recall that a range of sexual violence offenses were included in the ICC Statute and of ad hoc tribunals, ICTY and ICTR, that convicted perpetrators for rape and forced pregnancy and enslavement of rebels “wives”, as well as in other sex and gender based violence cases. UN Security Resolution 1820 requires that “all parties to armed conflict immediately take appropriate measures to protect civilians, including women and girls, from all forms of sexual violence,” noting that civilians account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict; that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate.”

Furthermore, regarding addressing the acts of violence against women and girls in Sudan, we recall that the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women adopted by the General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, which defines violence against women in article 2 as encompassing, but not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence. The Declaration states that women are entitled to equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other fields. These rights include, inter alia, (a) the right to life; (b) the right to equality; (c) the right to liberty and security; and (d) the right to equal protection under the law (article 3). In article 4(g), the Declaration notes the importance of ensuring that women subjected to violence receive specialized assistance, such as rehabilitation, assistance in childcare, treatment, counselling, and health and social services, facilities and programmes, as well as support structures, and should take all other appropriate measures to promote their safety and physical and psychological rehabilitation.

The Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children has highlighted in the report that during humanitarian crises, children seeking to survive are often compelled to exchange sexual services, and due to pre-existing vulnerabilities as well as discrimination, girls are even forced to marry for food, shelter, protection or safe passage (A/72/164). Moreover, children on the move or those who live in conflict and humanitarian crisis areas, may be sold or trafficked to serve as combatants in armed conflict children, some of whom fall into the hands of criminals to continue their journey to reach relatives or acquaintances in another country. The Report underscores the recommendations to ensure justice and accountability in all cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation by implementing zero tolerance for such crimes, setting up prompt and effective investigations and prosecutions, implementing commensurate penalties for those guilty of such crimes, and providing reparation for victims. The Special Rapporteur outlined in the report that care, recovery and reintegration measures should be provided to child victims as part of their right to a meaningful remedy. Prevention measures must be taken against sexual exploitation by the military, extremist groups or family members, as well as child or forced marriages, whether in refugee, internally displaced persons camps or other situations in the country. Identification measures should be implemented to safeguard those children at risks of the sexual and labor exploitation, including with the establishment of accessible, safe and regular channels of migration. Moreover, collaboration must be strengthened on data sharing and the exchange of good

practices among governments, humanitarian agencies and civil society on the identification, referral and assessment of children at risk of sale, trafficking and exploitation.

The Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children has emphasized in another report (A/HRC/52/31), that in line with the evidence based on various cases, reparation can allow for the narrowing of the gaps within communities formed by conflict and holds the potential to be an effective policy tool to promote recovery and development. There is an urgent need to step up efforts to support child-friendly remedies and reparations for victims and survivors, with a view to ensuring their access to justice and aiding their holistic recovery. Such efforts should include awareness raising for victims and their families and how to gain access to them, facilitating the expansion of free legal aid for children and building national cadres of specialized lawyers and paralegal services. Some positive steps in terms of meaningful reparation to child victims and survivors should also include; integrating legislative framework concerning survivor-centered reparation into the domestic jurisdiction, introducing co-creation model with the participation of child victims and survivors in the process of determining harms suffered, implementing interim relief measures, and ensuring child-friendly, multidisciplinary and inter-agency responses in line with age-appropriate and gender- and local-context-sensitive approaches.

We would like to recall that enforced disappearance is prohibited under customary international law (rule 98) and all parties to a conflict must take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict and must provide their family members with any information they have on their fate (rule 117). Accordingly, we would like to recall the Guiding Principles for the Search for Disappeared Persons, and in particular principle 4, which requires the adoption of a differential approach when searching for disappeared children, girls and women. With regard to the latter, principle 4.3 establishes that “in cases involving adolescent girls and women who have disappeared or are involved in the search, all stages of the search should be conducted with a gender perspective and staff, including female staff, who have received proper training”. Relevant indications on how to perform the search for disappeared girls and women and adopt adequate and effective measures of psychosocial support are also enshrined in the general comment on women affected by enforced disappearances issued by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (A/HRC/WGEID/98/2).

Additionally, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, in its report on sexual and reproductive rights in crisis (A/HRC/47/38), stressed that sexual and reproductive health matters are intrinsic to every woman and girl and tied to their ability to live with dignity and exercise their agency. It expressed deep concern about the widespread impunity for violations of the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. The experts emphasized that women and girls are entitled to receive adequate reparations, including restitution, compensation, satisfaction, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition, for violations of their sexual and reproductive health rights. The Working Group recommended expanding the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, such as through telemedicine and mobile clinics, as well as ensuring access to a full range of contraceptive information and services for women and girls, including emergency contraceptives. It also recommended expanding access to safe abortion services, including medical abortion and post abortion care.

Furthermore, as stressed by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls in one of its reports to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/23/50), stigmatization, harassment and outright attacks are used to silence and discredit women who are outspoken as leaders, community workers, human rights defenders and politicians. Women defenders are often the target of gender-specific violence, such as verbal abuse based on their sex, sexual abuse or rape; they may experience intimidation, attacks, death threats and even murder. The Working Group recommended to accelerate efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including through a comprehensive legal framework to combat impunity, in order to fulfil women's human rights and to improve the enabling conditions for women's participation in political and public life.

Here, we would also like to refer to the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, also known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In particular, we would like to refer to articles 1 and 2 of the Declaration which state that everyone has the right to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels and that each State has a prime responsibility and duty to protect, promote and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We would like to refer to the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement which establish that all authorities shall respect their obligations under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law, to prevent and avoid conditions that might lead to the displacement of persons. The Principles shall be observed by all authorities, groups and persons irrespective of their legal status and applied without any adverse distinction (principle 2). Every human being shall have the right to be protected from being arbitrarily displaced, including in situations of armed conflict or due to gross human rights violations, discrimination and fear of persecution (principle 6). Displacement shall not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected (principle 8).

Internally displaced persons should not be arbitrarily deprived of their lives, including through murder, summary or arbitrary executions, and enforced disappearances (principle 10(1)). Internally displaced persons shall also be protected in particular against direct or indiscriminate attacks or other acts of violence, starvation as a method of combat, and attacks against their camps or settlements (principle 10(2)). Authorities have the obligation to protect internally displaced persons in particular from rape, mutilation, torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and other outrages upon personal dignity, such as acts of gender-specific violence, forced prostitution and any form of indecent assault (principle 10(2a)) and from slavery or any contemporary form of slavery, such as sale into marriage, sexual exploitation, or forced labor of children (principle 10 (2b)). Internally displaced persons should also be protected from arbitrary arrest or detention and discriminatory arrest and detention (principle 12). All internally displaced persons have the right to know the fate and whereabouts of missing relatives, and the authorities should endeavor to establish the fate and whereabouts of internally displaced persons reported missing, and cooperate with relevant international organizations engaged in this task. (principle 16(1-2)).

We would also like to highlight principle 18, which sets out that internally displaced persons shall have an adequate standard of living, including safe access to essential food and portable water, basic shelter and housing, appropriate clothing, and essential medical services and sanitation. (principle 18). Internally displaced persons should receive to the fullest extent practicable and with the least possible delay the medical care and attention they require, without distinction, and that special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care as well as appropriate counselling for victims of sexual and other abuses (principle 19). National authorities have the primary duty and responsibility for providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons, and all authorities concerned shall grant and facilitate the free passage of humanitarian assistance and grant persons engaged in the provision of such assistance rapid and unimpeded access to the internally displaced (principle 25). Persons engaged in humanitarian assistance, their transports and supplies shall be respected and protected and shall not be the object of attack or other acts of violence (principle 26). We would like to remind you of the primary duty and responsibility to support durable solutions for internally displaced persons (principles 28-30).

Finally, we would like to refer to the Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, that requests authorities to establish accessible and confidential services for migrants who are survivors of violence and exploitation. These should include healthcare, counselling, reporting and complaints mechanisms, and effective referral arrangements. Migrants should have access to medical care, sexual and reproductive health services, and essential medicines, as well as psycho-social and other forms of support to assist their recovery and rehabilitation. Service providers should be trained to understand the human rights of migrants and migrant families who have been affected by violence, to respond to their needs, and to overcome anti-migrant bias. Migrants' experiences of violence, including domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence, should be addressed without causing further victimization, trauma or harm. Ensure that relevant information on protection, services and rights is made available to migrants in a format and language they understand and in an age-appropriate manner.