



## **The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) Express Deep Concern Over Escalating Violence Against Women in Conflicts exacerbated by weapons**

The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW Platform) expresses profound concern over the increasing violence faced by women and girls in conflict areas, and other social conflicts, particularly the devastating impact of small arms and light weapons. Independent human rights organizations focused on women's rights warn that the escalation of armed violence in conflict settings is having disproportionate and severe effects on women and girls, who are subjected to various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, abuse, and discrimination in these contexts.

In recent years, conflicts have become more complex and protracted, often exacerbated by the widespread availability and use of firearms. This alarming trend has led to a marked increase in physical and psychological harm, displacement, exploitation, and human rights abuses against women and girls. Armed conflict intensifies existing sexual and gender-based violence, with firearms becoming a frequent tool of intimidation, control, and harm. In many cases, the presence of weapons significantly heightens the risks faced by women and girls, making them more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, as well as femicide. The proliferation of small arms in post-conflict societies sustains an environment of insecurity, perpetuating violence against women and undermining efforts to rebuild communities.

Cultural norms around masculinity and gun ownership often glorify male dominance, particularly during times of conflict, reinforcing power imbalances and the use of firearms as symbols of control and aggression. Weak legal frameworks and enforcement of gun control laws in times of peace and conflict fail to protect women and girls adequately.

The EDVAW Platform is particularly concerned about the implications highlighted in the 2021 report from the UN Secretary-General on the arms industry and its connection to conflict and gendered violence. The report underscores the vital need for international cooperation and regulations to prevent the exacerbation of violence through the proliferation of arms. The platform recognizes the importance of continuing to incorporate gender specific perspectives in Arms Control policies as required by the Arms Trade Treaty, including the need for States to assess the risks that arms, including small arms could facilitate acts of gender-based violence or violence and violence against children, including girls.

It also stresses the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and the structural inequalities that disproportionately impact women and girls.

The independent bodies of the EDVAW Platform urgently call on states, international organizations, and arms industry actors to:

1. Adopt and enforce stringent arms control measures to reduce the availability of firearms in conflict and post -conflict areas

2. Ensure effective accountability mechanisms for violations of women's rights in conflict-affected areas, including those related to sexual and gender-based violence.
3. Prioritize the protection of women and girls in humanitarian and peacekeeping initiatives, focusing on measures to mitigate violence facilitated by firearms.
4. Ensure that women and girls are able to effectively participate in all conflict resolution, peacebuilding processes as well as a humanitarian response where it is relevant in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The specific needs of women and girls must be at the forefront of all these processes.
5. Urgently adopt policies that address the intersections of conflict, arms proliferation, and sexual and gender-based violence, in line with the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's report.
6. Promote community-based disarmament programs, prioritizing areas with high levels of small arms proliferation and domestic violence.
7. Train law enforcement, judicial actors, and other stakeholders to recognize and address the gendered dimensions of armed violence. This includes sensitization to how small arms exacerbate violence against women and girls.
8. Build capacity for gender-sensitive data collection and analysis on firearm use in violence against women and girls, with particular attention to documenting cases of femicide and firearm-related intimate partner violence to better understand patterns and inform prevention strategies.
9. Address cultural norms that glorify gun ownership and reinforce patriarchal power structures.

The EDVAW Platform calls for urgent action to protect women and girls from the escalating impacts of armed conflict. Without immediate and coordinated measures, the continued violence and abuse facilitated by firearms will only further entrench the injustices faced by women in these regions.