"Youth will shape the world"

CEDAW
STUDY GUIDE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Welcome Letter

Dear Delegates of the CEDAW committee,

It is my utmost pleasure and honour to welcome each and every one of you to the 12th annual session of HASALMUN and specifically to the CEDAW committee. I am proud to say, on behalf of our whole academic and organisation team, that every detail of this conference was devised with careful dedication and sincere enthusiasm so as to provide all of you with pleasant and unforgettable memories.

MUN is not just about building connections, the value of it goes much deeper; MUN is about bonding over world issues. It is about realising how all human beings are bound by different problems and understanding that the world is waiting for courageous, intellectual, kind-hearted leaders and individuals to heal the broken hearts, and rebuild the shadowed dreams.

HASALMUN has, since its day of foundation, been a stage where everyone is provided with the opportunity to express, debate, and negotiate. Every delegate is received with the greatest amount of excitement, happiness and pride; because, as young individuals ourselves, we know the importance of being recognized as worthy individuals. I assure you that HASALMUN'25 will be a place for growth, in every possible context.

Women's rights and gender-based equality have been one of the most pressing issues in human history. Even though progress has been made, heart-breakingly and disappointingly there are still countless women, all around the globe, who are suffering due to the patriarchal system that has been opressing their rights and freedom for centuries. This year in HASALMUN'25, the CEDAW committee will be tackling an issue that requires great empathy, deep thought processes and heated yet respectful debates. Luckily, our irreplaceable Under-Secretary General **Ms. Meryem Sönmez** and her hard-working Academic Assistant **Ms. Sevda Naz Karslıoğlu** have prepared this amazing study guide with invaluable efforts in order to ensure that all delegates receive every piece of information they need from this document alone. I thank them for being the greatest in their job and their marvelous commitments to the conference.

Last, but definitely not the least, I want to thank you delegates for making this conference truly meaningful. Without your words and actions, HASALMUN would not be what it is today. Thank you to all the youthful minds for adding value into this conference and the world we live in. Youth will shape the world!

Best wishes & Yours sincerely,
Öykü Tekman
Secretary-General of HASALMUN'25

1.2 Letter From the Committee Board

Dear Delegates,

We proudly welcome you to the 12th edition of HASALMUN on behalf of the committee board of Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Allow us to extend our warmest welcome to each of you. We are looking forward to seeing you express your valuable ideas along with your dedicated peers in spirited debates.

As Zanny Minton Beddoes said, *"Nations that fail women, fail."* This is not simply a feminist declaration but a social truth. Societies that allow the subjugation of half their population are doomed to instability. The discrimination of women is never a local issue; it extends across borders, into systems, institutions, and minds. That is why this is our problem; not theirs, not hers, not someday's.

Your attendance signifies your dedication to eradicate all kinds of discrimination and bias imposed on women; therefore, makes the CEDAW committee a meaningful place where cries, prayers and dreams are seen and heard.

This committee will ask you to do more than write resolutions. It will ask you to challenge complacency. To recognize that peace without justice for women is not peace at all. As delegates of CEDAW, you are the voices that must not tremble when confronting injustice with truth. You are, in essence, tasked with ensuring that no woman is forgotten in the shadow of war.

It is strongly advised that you carefully read the whole guide beforehand and be familiar with procedural formalities, as it will help you shine throughout the conference and have a smooth experience.

Should you have any further inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us via hasalmuncedaw25@gmail.com as we, alongside the Secretariat, are more than willing to help and support you. We wish all the best for each of you, and we simply cannot wait to see you debate, cooperate and create!

Yours in service,
CEDAW Committee Board

2. Important Notice Regarding the Position Papers

All delegates are **mandated** to submit a position paper prior to the conference. A position paper is a formal document that outlines a country's stance on the agenda item being discussed. It is a valuable opportunity to clarify what your country supports, opposes, and hopes to achieve during sessions. You are expected to submit your paper via email to hasalmuncedaw25@gmail.com. The **deadline** for submitting position papers is **14 June** 2025 at **23:00**. Failure to submit a position paper may affect your eligibility for awards and your participation in committee debates.

Your position paper should ideally include the following sections:

- **Introduction**
  Begin by clearly stating your country's official stance on the agenda item. This section should reflect your nation's perspective, considering its political ideology, economic interests, and historical context. Avoid generic statements; instead, provide specific insights that showcase your country's viewpoint.
- **Background of the Agenda Item**
  Summarize the historical context of the agenda, past international efforts, and actions taken by the UN, your committee, or other relevant organizations.
- **Your Country's Policy and Past Actions**
  Detail how the agenda item affects your country directly. This could include past actions taken by your nation, its involvement in related international agreements, or any regional implications. Demonstrating this connection underscores the relevance of the topic to your country and provides a foundation for your proposed policies.
- **Proposed Solutions and Strategies**
  Conclude with policy proposals your country advocates for addressing the issue. These should be realistic, align with your nation's interests, and be feasible within the committee's framework. While you don't need to list every possible solution, presenting a few well-thought-out proposals will guide your contributions during committee sessions.

Submission Guidelines:

Language: All position papers must be written in English, the official language of our committee.

Formality: The language must remain formal and diplomatic throughout.

Heading: Please include your **Committee name**, **Agenda item**, and **Country name** at the top of your document.

Format: Use Times New Roman, font size 12, and standard margins.

Deadline: Position papers must be submitted **no later than 14.06.2025 at 23:00**.

3. Introduction

3.1 Introduction to the Committee

Adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, CEDAW stands for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women[1]. It is globally acknowledged as the universal index of women's rights. Today, 189 countries are signatories of the Convention, which entitles it as one of the most widely recognised human rights agreements.

CEDAW mandates member states to take legislative action in order to eliminate discrimination against women in all places, provide annual reports regarding the initiatives and measures taken, and adopt the General Recommendations issued by the Convention. It also reviews member states' reports regarding the issue periodically, and publishes General Recommendations which underline the current status of women from a global perspective.

As it allows international bodies to examine women's rights and social security, CEDAW particularly plays a significant role in circumstances where terrorism or extremism exploit, under-prioritise or discriminate against women. Thanks to CEDAW and its efforts, women under the impact of terrorist or extremist groups are able to have an accessible and international platform where their suffering is seen and voices are heard.

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[1] "Text of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women." n.d. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm.

3.2 Introduction to the Agenda Item

Agenda Item: Examining and Addressing the Impact of Extremist and Terrorist Groups on Women's Rights and Social Security

Extremist and terrorist groups pose a severe threat to global security, stability, and human rights, with women disproportionately affected by their ideologies and actions. These groups systematically target women's rights using extreme methods and policies to silence opposing voices, and weaken social systems. The UN report states that 612 million women and girls lived within 50 kilometres of at least one armed conflict in 2023.[2]

In regions affected by extremism, women's access to education, mobility, employment, healthcare, and legal protections is often the first to be restricted. Beyond direct harm, extremist violence breaks down the systems that protect social welfare. In many cases, the erosion of public services and the militarization of society place women in heightened states of dependency, risk, and invisibility.

Understanding the intersection of extremism, terrorism, and gender requires tracing both historical and contemporary patterns of violence against women particularly conflict zones and globally. In today's world, these dynamics persist and in some places, have intensified. Armed extremist groups, especially those with unchangeable ideological or religious agendas, continue to use gender-based violence as a weapon. What's especially concerning in the modern world is how digital tools and propaganda networks are also being weaponized to spread misogynistic ideologies.

Globally, there is increasing recognition of the need for gender-sensitive approaches to conflict and counter-terrorism. The United Nations and various international bodies now emphasize women's roles in peacebuilding and preventing violent extremism. However, implementation remains inconsistent. Some countries continue to focus on militarized responses, while others are pushing for more inclusive, community-based solutions that involve women and civil society actors.

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[2] https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security#_edn1

By understanding the unique and systemic ways women are affected by extremism and terrorism, the international community should work upon developing more effective, inclusive strategies that prioritize prevention, strengthen resilience. Because when women are silenced or sidelined, entire societies bear the cost.

3.3 Key Terms

Ideology: An ideology is a system of ideas, beliefs, or values that shapes how people see the world and guides their political, social, or cultural actions. Examples include democracy, feminism, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism.

Radicalism: The beliefs or actions of people who advocate thorough or complete political or social reform. The belief that society needs to be changed, and that these changes are only possible through revolutionary means. It can exist across the political or religious spectrum and sometimes leads to activism, protest, or even violence to achieve its goals.

Marginalization: The act of treating someone or something as if they are not important. It is the process of pushing individuals or groups to the edge of society, where they have little social, economic, or political power or influence because of factors like gender, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, or economic status.

Perpetrator: A perpetrator is a person who commits a harmful, illegal, or violent act. This can include crimes like assault, theft, or acts of terrorism. In general, the term refers to someone responsible for causing harm or wrongdoing.

Mitigator: A mitigator is a person or thing that reduces the severity, seriousness, or harmful effects of something.

Exploitation: Exploitation is the unfair or unethical use of someone or something for one's own benefit, often by taking advantage of another person's vulnerability.

Supremacy: Supremacy refers to the state or condition of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status. It often describes ideologies or systems where one group claims dominance over others, such as racial supremacy where one race is considered superior.

Right-Wing: The conservative or traditional side of the political spectrum. Right-wing ideologies typically emphasize values such as nationalism, individual responsibility, free-market economics, law and order, and the preservation of traditional social structures.

Left-Wing: Left-wing refers to the progressive or reformist side of the political spectrum. Left-wing ideologies generally emphasize equality, social justice, government intervention in the economy to reduce inequality, and the protection of minority rights.

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold the primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control over property. In a patriarchy, men often have authority over women and children, and social, economic, and cultural norms tend to reinforce male dominance and limit women's rights and opportunities.

4. Understanding the Terminology

4.1 Defining Extremism

To understand the impact of extremist and terrorist groups on women and society, one must first grasp the core nature of these two phenomena.

Extremism is defined as "the quality or state of being extreme" or "the advocacy of extreme measures or views"[3]. It refers to a set of beliefs or ideas that strongly go against the commonly accepted values or rules of a society. Most simply it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the from the ordinary.

An **extremist group** on the other hand, is a collective of individuals who share and promote extremist beliefs. Nowadays, extremism is mostly used to address in the context of terrorism and is used as a concept that points to separatist.

What makes extremism different from simple disagreement or criticism is not just what is believed, but how those beliefs are expressed. Extremist groups often reject important social principles like tolerance, open discussion, and the idea that others may have valid

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opinions. They tend to be unwilling to compromise and may try to force others to agree, sometimes using violence, threats, or illegal actions**.** What unites them is not just their ideas, but their refusal to accept different viewpoints and their willingness to act outside the norms of society to push their agenda.

In conflict settings it manifests as a severe form of conflict engagement. However, the labeling of activities, people, and groups as "extremist", and the defining of what is "ordinary" in any setting is always a subjective and political matter.[4] Therefore any meaningful discussion of extremism should take into account the complexities it brings. The same act that is labeled as extremist can be seen very differently depending on who is observing it. Some may view it as morally justified and helpful to society, such as acts of "freedom fighting" while others may see it as harmful and unacceptable, like "terrorism."

These differences in perception often depend on the observer's values, political views, moral beliefs, and relationship to the people involved. Additionally, opinions about whether an extremist act is right or wrong can change over time.

For example, Nelson Mandela's use of guerilla tactics against the South African government was once widely criticized, but later came to be seen by many as part of a just struggle. Another example can be the suffragette, a women's suffrage movement in Britain, aiming to enable women to vote in parliamentary elections. They were founded during the early 20th century. Frustrated by slow progress, some suffragettes resorted to civil disobedience, hunger strikes, and public protests.[5] At the time, their actions were considered extreme and even criminal by many, and they were often imprisoned or violently suppressed. However, their efforts played a crucial role in advancing gender equality, and their once radical demands are now seen as basic human rights in democratic societies.

Changes in leadership, global opinion, political events, and historical interpretation all influence how such acts are judged. Power differences also play a key role on labeling an act as extreme. Actions by weaker or marginalized groups are often more likely to be labeled as extreme than similar actions by more powerful or mainstream groups.

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[4] https://en-m-wikipedia-org.translate.goog/wiki/Extremism?
[5] https://www.twinkl.com.tr/teaching-wiki/suffragettes

4.1.1 Violent Extremism

Extremism on its own refers to holding radical or extreme ideas, which may strongly oppose societal norms or mainstream ideologies, but does not necessarily involve violence. Extremism is about ideas, while violent extremism is about turning those ideas into destructive action.

Violent extremism refers to the beliefs and actions of individuals or groups that promote, justify, or engage in violence to achieve ideological, political, or religious goals. Unlike terrorism, which focuses mainly on criminal acts, violent extremism takes a broader approach, including the ideologies, narratives, and behaviors that support or tolerate such violence. It includes not just those who carry out attacks, but also those who encourage, allow, or legitimize the use of unlawful force to impose their views.

According to the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, violent extremism is often rooted in deeper social and political problems. Structural factors such as lack of economic opportunities, marginalization, discrimination, poor governance, human rights abuses, and unresolved conflicts create environments where extremist ideologies can take hold. For example, when people feel excluded from society or denied justice, they may become more vulnerable to radical messages.[6]

There are also personal and psychological factors that push individuals toward violent extremism. These include personal grievances, a sense of victimization, identity crises, or the influence of charismatic leaders and peer networks. Extremist groups often distort religious, political, or cultural beliefs to justify their actions and recruit followers, especially in places like prisons or unstable communities.

In short, violent extremism is not only about the violence itself, but also about the conditions and ideologies that enable and sustain it.

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[6] https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field

4.2 Defining Terrorism

In 1994, the General Assembly's Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism stated that terrorism includes "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes". Since 1994, many different definitions have been made to define terrorism; however, there is no single, universally accepted definition of terrorism under the international law.

When it comes to bringing those who commit terrorist acts to justice, it's important to understand how, why, and how much the lack of a clear, shared global definition of terrorism has affected the ability to properly investigate and take legal action against these crimes. Different countries, organizations, and legal systems define it in slightly different ways. For instance, the United Nations has drafted several counterterrorism treaties, but none of them contains a comprehensive definition. Without a consistent definition, the same act might be labeled as terrorism in one country and as a form of resistance or political dissent in another. Establishing a clear, objective, and politically neutral definition remains one of the most urgent yet complex tasks in international law and policy.

In general, terrorism is usually used to refer to the use of violence or the threat of violence to create fear and pressure others, usually governments or the public into taking a certain action or changing a policy. The people who carry out these acts, known as terrorists, often target civilians or public places to get attention and send a message. The most common violent acts used by terrorists are bombing, assassinations, kidnapping, bank robbery, and shootings.[7]

But terrorism is not just about using physical force, it is also seen as one form of political violence, that uses violence as a method, a way of communicating a message. According to this point of view the violence involved is usually symbolic, even though the impact and destruction of it is concrete. The specific form of violence is also selected in order to be shocking and disturbing because terrorism primarily relies on shock to change the minds of decision-makers and to control society.

Hence, the main goal of terrorism is not just to harm individuals, but to spread fear and influence decisions. Terrorists may act in the name of political beliefs, religious ideas, or

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[7] https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/489132

social causes. For example, they might want to make a government leave a certain area, change a law, or respond to a political demand.

A terrorist organization is a structured group that engages in, supports, or finances acts of terrorism to advance its goals. These groups often have hierarchical structures, ideological doctrines, training camps, and sources of funding. Some even provide social services or education in territories they control to gain local support. However, these services are often tied to strict social control, especially over women.

4.2.1 The Relationship Between Extremism and Terrorism

As explained, extremism and terrorism are closely related but fundamentally different concepts. Terrorism often emerges from extremism, but not every extremist becomes a terrorist. While many terrorists do hold extremist beliefs, not all people with extremist views commit acts of terrorism. Extremism is about having radical or extreme ideologies, often rejecting democratic principles. Terrorism, on the other hand, involves the use or threat of violence to achieve those ideological goals. In other words, terrorism is often a violent outcome of extremism, but the two are not the same. By understanding the difference, it becomes possible to develop more precise and balanced responses that address root causes without over-criminalizing belief systems.

4.3 Human Rights and Terrorism

Terrorist groups pose a serious threat to human rights, both directly and indirectly. Their actions often involve deliberate and systematic violations of fundamental rights, including the freedom of expression, freedom of religion, education, and personal security. Most importantly through acts of violence terrorist groups directly violate the most basic human right: the **right to life and physical integrity**.[8]

In addition to these direct abuses, terrorist groups often target specific populations based on their religion, ethnicity, gender, or political beliefs, undermining principles of

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[8] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Factsheet32EN.pdf

equality and non-discrimination. For instance, many extremist organizations impose severe restrictions on women's rights, including denying them access to education, employment, and public life. In such contexts, women are not only victims of gender-based violence but are also stripped of their agency and social identity. The impact of terrorist organizations on specific groups and minorities will be further explained and discussed in the following sections of the guide.

4.4 Women's Position in the Context of Extremism and Terrorism

Understanding and addressing women's paths to radicalization and the roles they play in violent extremism is crucial to disrupting terrorists' abilities to recruit, deploy, and abuse them. Extremist groups rely on women to gain strategic advantage, recruiting them as facilitators, online propagandists, and even as suicide attackers, while also benefiting from their subjugation. Yet women's complex roles in violent extremism as perpetrators, mitigators, and victims are often overlooked, which weakens counterterrorism strategies.[9]

Many extremist groups promote an ideology that classifies women as second-class citizens and offers strategic and financial benefits through women's subjugation, using gender-based violence to instill fear, displace communities, and even generate revenue through trafficking. Subjugation also helps control reproduction and exploit labor.

4.4.1 The Roles Women Play: Perpetrators, Mitigators, and Victims

Women's involvement in violent extremism is far more complex than traditional narratives often suggest. While they are commonly portrayed solely as victims, women also take on active roles as perpetrators and mitigators within extremist dynamics. Their engagement in one of these three roles **perpetrator, mitigator, or victim** depends not only on their environment but also on how they are perceived, empowered, or exploited by the society and extremist structures around them.

As **perpetrators**, women are increasingly taking active roles in extremist movements not just as passive supporters, but as direct participants in violence. Some

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[9] https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report

are recruited or radicalized to become suicide bombers, online propagandists, or logistical operatives. Female militants have carried out attacks, recruited new members, especially other women, and spread extremist ideologies via social media. In Algeria, for instance, female National Liberation Front fighters evaded checkpoints in the 1950s to deploy bombs at strategic urban targets. In Sri Lanka in the 1990s, all-female battalions earned a reputation for their fierce discipline and ruthless combat. Women have also helped found militant groups, from Germany's Baader-Meinhof gang to the Japanese Red Army. Their involvement often goes unnoticed or underestimated due to gender stereotypes that portray women as inherently peaceful or uninvolved in armed conflict. This oversight has allowed some extremist organizations to use women strategically, taking advantage of their perceived harmlessness to bypass security and law enforcement.

Modern extremist groups use social media to actively enlist women into supportive roles, reaching unprecedented numbers through narrowcasting, creating a targeted message for a specific subgroup. For instance, the Islamic State's concerted campaign to recruit Western women emphasized camaraderie, sisterhood, and opportunities to enjoy freedom and adventure as state builders.

It should be taken account that women's involvement as perpetrators in extremist activities does not always indicate willing participation. Many are coerced, manipulated, or trafficked into extremist groups and forced to commit acts of violence. Their roles are often shaped by complex factors such as exploitation, survival, ideological pressure, or lack of alternatives. Boko Haram *(check section 8 for detailed information)* strategically kidnapped young girls and teenagers and forced many into suicide missions, raising questions about their agency and accountability.

As **mitigators**, women have significant potential to prevent violent extremism and promote peace, though this role is often neglected in counterterrorism strategies. Women are usually among the first to observe changes in behavior that signal radicalization especially in their homes, schools, or communities. Their positions as mothers, educators, religious leaders, and community figures give them unique influence to counter extremist narratives and promote resilience. When engaged meaningfully, women can act as early-warning agents, peacebuilders, and key voices

in shaping inclusive, community-based responses to extremism. However, the lack of resources, inclusion, and recognition limits their effectiveness in this critical role.

As **victims**, women suffer deeply from the actions and ideologies of extremist and terrorist groups. They are often subjected to systemic gender-based violence, including rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery, and human trafficking. These acts are not incidental but are used deliberately to assert control, instill fear, enforce compliance, and generate revenue. In extremist-controlled areas, women's rights are typically among the first to be dismantled. Education, freedom of movement, healthcare access, and participation in public life are heavily restricted. The trauma and marginalization women face in these contexts have long-term social, psychological, and economic consequences not just for the women themselves, but for entire communities.[10]

A more detailed analysis of how extremist and terrorist groups affect women and their fundamental rights will follow in the later sections of this guide.

5. Historical Background

5.1 History of Terrorism

The history of terrorism stretches back centuries, though its methods and motivations have evolved over time. The term "terrorism" first gained prominence during the French Revolution in the late 18th century, where it was associated with state led violence, known as the "Reign of Terror", used to suppress opposition. Back then the tactics used by terrorist groups were similar to those used in wars between countries. Around a century ago, terrorist attacks often followed rules similar to military codes targeting soldiers and officials, while avoiding harm to civilians. In the 19th century, terrorism became more associated with non-state actors, particularly anarchist movements in Europe who used targeted assassinations and bombings to challenge political systems.[11] This era marked the beginning

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[10] https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/Discussion_Paper_Bigio_Vogelstein_Terrorism_OR.pdf
[11] https://www.unodc.org/documents/e4j/18-04932_CT_Mod_01_ebook_FINALpdf.pdf

of terrorism as a tool of revolutionary violence. As warfare became more industrialized in the 19th and 20th centuries, weapons became more destructive and less precise.

In the early 20th century, anti-colonial movements used terrorist tactics as part of their struggle for independence, as seen in Algeria and Vietnam. The widespread use of destructive weapons led to more indiscriminate violence. After World War II, the creation of new states and shifting global power dynamics led to the rise of nationalist and separatist terrorist groups, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This shift influenced post-war terrorist groups, who began using more irregular and urban tactics like guerrilla warfare. The late 20th century saw the emergence of ideologically driven groups not only nationalists, but also those motivated by socialism or Marxism.

The 21st century has been defined largely by religiously inspired terrorism, especially following the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaeda in 2001. Groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab have combined extremist ideologies with brutal tactics to achieve political and religious aims, often targeting civilians and destabilizing regions. Technological advancements and global communication networks have also enabled these groups to recruit, radicalize, and operate across borders.

5.2 Terrorist Groups and Their Impact on Women

Terrorist groups' impact on women has evolved significantly across history, yet certain patterns, especially the use of violence to assert control over female bodies and autonomy have remained consistent.

Before the 21st century, much of the global discourse on terrorism did not prominently highlight women, either as victims or perpetrators, as the dominant narratives and analyses focused heavily on the political, military, and ideological components of terrorism led by male figures. However, a closer historical examination reveals that women have always been involved in, impacted by, and even instrumental to terrorist movements though often in gendered ways shaped by societal norms and patriarchal ideologies.

5.3 Key Events and Milestones

From the 19th century onward, women have been entangled in the landscape of terrorism. In revolutionary Russia, female radicals such as Sophia Perovskaya were central to the operations of Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will), the group that carried out the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. This marked one of the earliest visible examples of women's direct involvement in terrorist violence. Their commitment elevated them to the status of political martyrs and showed that revolutionary terror was not a male-only domain. However, even in these early phases, their visibility was more symbolic than structural; they were rare exceptions in male dominated insurgent circles.

By the mid-20th century, women were being tactically integrated into terrorist operations more strategically. During the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962), women affiliated with the National Liberation Front (FLN) played crucial roles in urban guerrilla campaigns, especially during the Battle of Algiers. Using their perceived innocence, they transported bombs past French checkpoints and into cafes and public spaces. This tactic revealed a disturbing shift: women were no longer just ideological supporters but valuable assets in tactical deception and operational success. Figures like Djamila Bouhired became iconic in both the resistance and international human rights discourse, highlighting the dual role women could play as perpetrators and later, victims of state torture and repression.[12]

Perhaps the most militarized use of women came with the rise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. From the late 1970s onward, the LTTE employed women not only as fighters but as suicide bombers a global first. The assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 by a female operative named Dhanu cemented this role in history. The LTTE's Black Tigers unit normalized the presence of women as death operatives, trained in discipline and indoctrinated with martyrdom. While this challenged gender stereotypes, it also reflected a deeply exploitative system in which women's bodies were instrumentalized for maximum symbolic and operational impact.

One of the most systematic and brutal examples of terrorism's impact on women occurred under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which rose to power in 1996. The Taliban institutionalized gender-based repression: banning female education, employment, and

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[12] https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/the-role-of-women-in-the-algerian-independence-movement-37868

visibility in public life[13]. This regime's rule marked a form of state sponsored terrorism where violence against women was not incidental but foundational to governance.

A similarly violent pattern emerged during the Algerian Civil War of the 1990s, particularly at the hands of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Women were targeted for not wearing veils, for working outside the home, or simply for being visible. Thousands were raped, mutilated, or murdered acts often accompanied by public declarations justifying them in religious terms. The use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror during this "Black Decade" demonstrated how women were deliberately targeted to assert dominance and enforce extremist ideology. Terrorist violence here intersects with misogyny in its most brutal form.

5.4 Establishment of Frameworks and Legal Responses

The recognition of violence against women in the context of terrorism and extremism has been a relatively slow but steadily growing concern within international frameworks. For much of the 20th century, global treaties and counterterrorism conventions primarily focused on state security, aircraft hijackings, hostage-taking, and the suppression of financing. Those addressing armed conflict and its impact on social security rarely considered the matter at hand from a gendered perspective. For instance, although the Geneva Convention established in 1949 addressed women as civilians and obligated women's social security, it did not effectively address gender-specific dangers women face due to extremist or terrorist groups.

Through the late 1990s and early 2000s, gender-specific human rights declarations experienced a significant rise. Beijing Declaration adopted in 1995 stands as the first major acknowledgment of violence against women in areas affected by terrorism and extremism; hence, defined the matter as a human rights violation. It also recognised women's vulnerabilities in times of armed conflict and underlined the fact that in areas under terrorist or extremist influence, rape was a war crime. Later in 1998, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court became the first treaty to openly state that sexual slavery, imposed prostitution and human trafficking were crimes against humanity, with or without the effect of terrorism or extremism. Finally in 2000, the UN Security Council acknowledged trafficking of women for sexual purposes as a tactic of terror in Resolution 1325.

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[13] https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan

The growing global alarm over terrorist groups in the 2010s highlighted the deeply gendered nature of extremist violence. These atrocities pressured the United Nations and regional bodies to treat sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as integral to terrorism's impact and not a secondary concern. As a response, institutions such as UN Women, UNODC, and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) began developing gender-sensitive policies and training modules. These aimed to ensure that counterterrorism and counter-extremism programs acknowledged how women are specifically targeted by terrorist groups

Likewise, CEDAW fundamentally defines discrimination against women from a wide perspective which includes areas affected by terrorism or extremism as well. In particular, Article 6 mandates all member parties to combat human trafficking and sexual violence, especially in times of armed conflict caused by terrorist or extremist groups. Furthermore, adopted in 2013, General Recommendation 30 remarked on women's social security during conflict prevention and post-conflict times. It also openly mentioned that women's bodies, choices and rights are specifically targeted by extremist and terrorist groups. Lastly, the General Recommendation adopted in 2017 expanded the definition of violence against women applied by political organs to include non-state members, such as terrorist or extremist groups, as well.

5.4.1 Existing Gaps in International Frameworks

Despite the significant progress in recognizing the gendered impact of terrorism and extremism, substantial gaps remain in the international response. One of the most pressing issues is the **lack of consistent implementation**. Although documents like UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its successors call for the inclusion of women in peace and security efforts, many member states have yet to translate these recommendations into national laws, policies, or action plans. Even where such frameworks exist on paper, they often lack sufficient funding, political will, or enforcement mechanisms, resulting in symbolic rather than substantive change.

Another critical gap lies in the **limited integration of gender perspectives in mainstream counterterrorism and security policies**. Many counterterrorism

strategies remain gender-blind or, worse, use gender in a hypocritical manner. For instance, while there is increasing recognition of the roles women play in preventing violent extremism, this often translates into burdening women with the responsibility of "watching over" their communities, without granting them decision-making power, adequate training, or resources. This reduces women to tools for state surveillance rather than empowering them as political actors.

A further issue is the **uncertain legal status of women associated with terrorist groups**, especially those who were forcibly recruited or trafficked. Many women and girls who were victims of terrorist violence such as those captured by Boko Haram or ISIS *(check section 8 for detailed information)* criminalization or detention upon returning to their home countries. The lack of a clear international framework distinguishing between victimhood and perpetration, especially in cases of coerced involvement, results in injustices and contributes to re-traumatization. Children born of sexual violence by terrorists are also often denied legal status or rights, compounding the generational impact of such crimes.

6. Overview of the Issue

6.1 Current Global Trends in Extremism and Terrorism

Terrorism and violent extremism have evolved significantly in the 21st century. While traditional threats from groups like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) remain, the global landscape has become increasingly fragmented, localized, and ideologically diverse. Modern extremist threats now span across religious, ethno-nationalist, far-right, and far-left ideologies, often fueled by complex regional grievances, political instability, economic inequalities, and identity-based marginalization. These groups no longer operate solely in failed states or conflict zones; they are increasingly present in stable democracies, exploiting online platforms and societal tensions to radicalize and recruit.

6.2 Rise of Right-Wing and Ethno-Nationalist Extremism

In recent years, right-wing extremism has surged in parts of North America, Europe, and Australasia. Unlike earlier eras when international jihadist terrorism was the dominant

concern, current security assessments in many Western nations now highlight the rise of white supremacist, anti-immigrant, and neo-Nazi movements as a major domestic threat. These movements often organize in loosely affiliated online communities, making detection difficult, and are responsible for attacks such as the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand. They capitalize on fears of cultural change, economic decline, and the erosion of traditional identities, often targeting minority groups and immigrants. According to the Global Terrorism Index, terrorist attacks in the West rose by 63%, with Europe being the most affected region, where the number of attacks doubled to 67 in the past year. [14]

Right-wing and ethno-nationalist movements are often deeply rooted in patriarchal worldviews, which idealize rigid gender roles and promote traditional, male-dominated family structures. Women in these ideologies are typically seen not as autonomous individuals but as bearers of national identity; mothers, wives, and caretakers of the "racial" or "cultural" lineage. This reduces women's societal role to reproductive and domestic functions, restricting their participation in public, political, or professional life.

As these movements gain traction, they often incite organized backlash against feminist movements and LGBTQ+ communities. Far-right narratives depict feminism as a destabilizing force that emasculates men and weakens national cohesion. In countries where these ideologies have entered mainstream politics (e.g. the U.S., Hungary, Poland, and parts of India), we've seen efforts to roll back reproductive rights, defund gender equality programs, and silence women's advocacy through intimidation and disinformation. Online, women who speak out on gender justice are frequent targets of harassment, and threats of sexual violence from extremist sympathizers.

Women from minority, immigrant, or refugee communities are particularly vulnerable under ethno-nationalist regimes. These ideologies promote exclusionary definitions of citizenship and identity, often painting foreign women as cultural invaders or morally inferior. In some cases, such as in India's Hindu nationalist movements or Europe's anti-Muslim rhetoric, minority women face double marginalization, both as women and as ethnic outsiders. This can manifest in state violence, hate crimes, forced sterilizations, or denial of access to public services.

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[14] https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/

A recent attack on a mosque in La Grand-Combe, France, serves as a stark illustration of how ethno-nationalist extremism can intersect with gendered and racialized violence. While this specific attack targeted a male victim, the implications for women, particularly Muslim women, are profound. The rise in Islamophobic incidents, including attacks on mosques and public harassment, disproportionately affects women who wear visible religious attire, making them more susceptible to public scrutiny and violence.[15]

6.3 Persistent Islamist Extremism in Fragile States

Islamist extremism continues to thrive in many fragile states, where weak governance, armed conflict, and social unrest create fertile ground for radical ideologies to take root and endure. According to the Global Terrorism Index Islamic State (IS) expanded its operations to 22 countries and remains the deadliest organisation, causing 1,805 deaths, with 71% of its activity being in Syria and DRC. While according to the same sources Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) emerged as fastest-growing terrorist group, with 90% increase in attributed deaths.[16]

In the Middle East, groups such as ISIS and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) have continued to assert themselves, particularly in power vacuums left by collapsing regimes or post-conflict governments. Syria is a key example. After the fall of President Bashar al-Assad in late 2024, former HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa became president. His administration is now grappling with the integration of thousands of foreign Islamist fighters who helped bring down Assad but whose presence poses new security threats and ideological fractures. While Sharaa's government represents a significant shift in Syrian politics, it remains vulnerable to renewed insurgency, evidenced by the Islamic State's recent return to attacking government forces.[17]

In Africa, countries like Somalia, Mali, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso remain deeply affected by Islamist extremist factions. Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria have sustained long-term insurgencies, often controlling rural areas and using terror tactics against civilians. The decline of state control in these regions allows these groups to establish parallel systems of governance, enforce harsh interpretations of Sharia law, and recruit disillusioned youth.

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[15] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/27/suspect-in-france-mosque-attack
[16] https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/
[17] https://apnews.com/article/syria-islamic-state-group-attacks-al-sharaa

South Asia also continues to be affected by persistent Islamist extremism, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021 reignited global concerns about the country becoming a safe haven for international terrorist groups, especially with evidence of al-Qaeda operatives regrouping there. Pakistan faces ongoing violence from groups like Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

6.4 The Role of Technology and Online Radicalization

Extremist groups increasingly target women and youth. The digital environment has transformed how extremism operates. Social media has allowed for more tailored propaganda that appeals to personal frustrations, feelings of alienation, or the promise of purpose and belonging. Encrypted messaging apps, and algorithm-driven content platforms facilitate rapid radicalization, peer-to-peer recruitment, and coordination of attacks. Lone-wolf attackers and small cells often rely on online propaganda, bypassing traditional organizational structures. Deepfakes, AI-generated content, and the dark web complicate counter-extremism efforts by enabling anonymity and the rapid spread of extremist ideologies. Online spaces have also become echo chambers where disinformation, conspiracy theories, and hate speech thrive creating fertile ground for radicalization.

7. Gendered Impact of Extremist and Terrorist Groups on Women's Rights

7.1 Gender Dimensions of Violent Extremism

The term gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities that a given society considers appropriate for men and women, while sex refers to the biological and physiological differences between them. Understandings of gender are shaped by cultural, historical, and societal factors, meaning they can vary widely across regions and time periods. These socially constructed norms influence what is seen as "feminine" or "masculine" and are deeply embedded in daily life guiding expectations, shaping behavior, and determining who has access to leadership, education, or economic resources.

In the context of violent extremism, gender norms are not just reflected but actively weaponized. Extremist perspectives mainly strengthen patriarchal gender roles. Promotion of ultraconservative perceptions of women's "roles" as mothers or wives by terrorist or extremist groups cause an extensive discrimination against women. For instance, ISIS utilises religious beliefs to undermine women's rights regarding their life or body, which revitalises extreme gender norms. Women are frequently targeted as symbols of a society's "morality," "honor," or "cultural purity," and this symbolic burden is used to justify restrictions on their autonomy. Furthermore, toxic masculinity which represses women is also reinforced since men are seen as "superior" than women whereas women are only slightly valued when they become mothers or wives. This also violates the Article 5 issued by CEDAW, which calls all member states to eliminate cultural gender norms and practices that cause discrimination towards women.

Interestingly, these rigid roles can attract some women, particularly in societies facing instability. For example, in Central Asia, many men migrate for work, leaving women behind without the traditional structures of family life (such as marriage or raising children). Some of these women feel a sense of loss or insecurity in this situation and may become drawn to extremist ideologies that promise to restore a "traditional" social order. [18]

Those working in rehabilitation and reintegration of former extremists and their families observed that some women genuinely believe in the value of this traditional order. This belief can become a factor in their radicalization meaning that they may not be coerced, but instead willingly support or join extremist movements because they see these groups as offering stability, purpose, and identity within a traditional gender structure.

7.2 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender or sex. In areas affected by violent extremism and terrorism, SGBV becomes a systematic tool of oppression, control, and punishment. Extremist groups use sexual violence not only to terrorize communities and punish opposition but also to reinforce deeply patriarchal ideologies. Women and girls, in particular, are frequently subjected to rape, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and trafficking, while men and

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[18] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/c/525297.pdf

boys may also be victims, especially in the context of torture or forced conscription. The use of SGBV in these settings is not random; it is often intended to demoralize communities, enforce submission, or alter ethnic and religious demographics. The United Nations verified 3,688 reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2023, a shocking 50 per cent increase from the previous year. [19]

Furthermore, survivors of SGBV often face double victimization: first at the hands of extremists and later through societal stigma, exclusion, or even prosecution in their own communities. Many governments and systems still lack the international frameworks or survivor-centered support mechanisms to address these crimes adequately.

To effectively combat SGBV in the context of extremism, responses must go beyond reactive humanitarian aid. There is a need for comprehensive prevention strategies that include gender-sensitive education, community engagement, psychological support and accountability mechanisms.

7.3 Restrictions on Women's Access to Education, Healthcare, Mobility and Employment

Education of women is specifically targeted by terrorist or extremist groups as education empowers women. Real life examples are Boko Haram, which means "Western education is forbidden.", and the Taliban. Boko Haram has bombed schools, abducted teenage girls and subjected women to sexual violence for countless times. Similarly, the Taliban forbids women from accessing higher education in Afghanistan.

Healthcare, especially reproductive and maternal care is becoming inaccessible and unaffordable for women as terrorist or extremist groups criminalise such services. For instance, ISIS in Syria and Iraq shut gynecology clinics, causing reproductive healthcare service to be out of reach for women. Moreover, conflicted areas significantly lack basic natal services, which increases maternal mortality.

Women living under the effect of terrorist or extremist groups are very much restricted in every aspect of life. The Taliban continuously issues new legislative actions to

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[19] https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures

erase women from social life. In Afghanistan, women are to cover their whole bodies and faces if they have to leave the house out of necessity, and their voices must not be heard under any circumstance. Afghan women stated several times that these actions bound them to their male relatives.

Lastly, women are mostly banned from being employed in public-sector jobs. This not only causes women to lose their financial independence but also puts a spanner in overall economical welfare since half of the labor force is lost.

7.4 Psychological Trauma and Long-Term Mental Health Effects

The psychological consequences of violent extremism on women are profound, long-lasting, and often invisible. Survivors of rape, forced marriage and sexual assault and other types of harrasment are often rejected or discarded by their relatives and loved ones. Lack of mental healthcare services in such regions make it harder for survivors to recover from the complex trauma; hence, psychological effects mostly persist from one generation to another. Children of traumatized mothers may also suffer from secondary trauma, disrupted attachment, or behavioral issues, creating intergenerational cycles of harm. Comprehensive approaches that combine psychosocial support, community healing, and accountability can contribute to both individual recovery and broader societal resilience.

7.5 Threats to Feminist Movements and Women Human Rights Defenders

Feminist movements and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) face significant threats in regions affected by violent extremism. Extremist groups often perceive these activists as direct challenges to their patriarchal ideologies that seek to confine women to submissive roles. As a result, feminist activists are frequently targeted with intimidation, harassment, violence, and even assassination attempts aimed at silencing their voices and halting progress on gender equality. These threats make it hard for feminist groups to do their work, like helping victims of violence or pushing for laws that protect women. Women human rights defenders in conflict areas are especially at risk because they expose abuses by both extremist groups and governments. When these activists are silenced, it hurts the fight for women's rights and allows extremist ideas to spread more easily.

8. Social Security: Definition and Relevance to Women's Rights

8.1 Destruction of Social Security Systems in Conflict-Affected States

Social security refers to the set of public policies and institutional mechanisms designed to protect individuals and households from economic and social vulnerabilities. Traditionally, this includes protections against unemployment, poverty, disability, illness, and the financial insecurities associated with old age. However, in conflict-affected or fragile settings, particularly those impacted by terrorism and violent extremism, the scope of social security expands to include safeguards against displacement, loss of livelihood, gender-based violence, and breakdowns in essential public services. Social security is both a human right and a critical component of state responsibility, and its presence or absence has direct consequences on people's resilience to crisis and violence.

In areas affected by terrorism and extremism, the disruption of social security systems is both a symptom and a tool of instability. Armed groups often deliberately destroy public services, target healthcare and education infrastructure, and manipulate aid distribution to control populations. The collapse of state institutions in many fragile states often leads to a lack of public services and security, spaces that extremist groups readily fill with their own authority, often providing food, protection, or rudimentary justice systems in exchange for allegiance.

As a result women, who are often the primary caregivers and economic providers in disrupted communities, face intensified burdens. Their access to income, healthcare, childcare, and safety nets can vanish overnight. This deterioration increases not only economic dependency and social vulnerability but also the likelihood of women being coerced into exploitative relationships, recruitment by extremist actors, or victimization through trafficking. It creates a vacuum where sexual violence, forced labor, and early marriage become widespread.

8.2 Displacement, Refugee Crises, and Gender Vulnerabilities

War zones controlled by terrorists or extremists cause individuals to flee away in hopes of finding a safe place. Reports from anonymous international bodies state that 80% of all refugees are women and children. Although women escape from armed conflict to build a better life, refugee camps are not safe either. With exposure to sexual harassment, human trafficking, enforced prostitution and restricted access to menstrual hygiene goods, women's rights are being stepped over. Displacement mostly occurs with no official or legal documentation, so legal protection is out of reach for women refugees. Long-term marginalisation happens over time since teenage girls are deprived of education and are forced into marriages. This creates a cycle of poverty and trauma over generations. Humanitarian responses fail to address the specific needs of women affected by terrorism-related displacement, leaving critical protection gaps.

8.3 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is defined as "the transportation, harboring or receipt of individuals by using abusive power of force for the purpose of exploitation" in many official UN texts. Exploitation in this context can take any form; sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or organ removal. It is significant to highlight that around 71% of human trafficking victims are women who are subjected to sexual exploitation and other forms of slavery acts[20].

Human trafficking significantly interrupts women's social security from many aspects. Women subjected to human trafficking are usually housed in abusive environments, away from basic healthcare services and deprived from access to education. Consequently, women lack access to fundamental human rights with their ID documents lost and citizenship recognition missing. In the end, social security is very weakened since women's rights are undermined.

Article 6 of CEDAW obligates all states to take adequate action to eliminate all forms of human trafficking exploiting women. General Recommendation 30 also references the importance of preventing human trafficking during or after conflict to eliminate prostitution

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[20] "Trafficking in Persons." n.d. United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime. https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/glotip.html.

of women[21]. In addition to CEDAW, the Palermo Protocol established to prevent, suppress and punish human trafficking especially for women and children is another international organ to address this issue.

8.4 Preventing Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism

Unlike traditional forms of conflict that occur between nation-states or identifiable armies, violent extremism today is borderless and decentralized. Extremists often live within civilian populations, making it difficult for security forces to distinguish them from ordinary citizens. They fluidly shift between roles one day a fighter, the next a worker, neighbor, or parent. This complexity makes many traditional counterterrorism tactics, such as military intervention or conventional policing, ineffective. In the early 2000s, strategies against violent extremism largely relied on military force, epitomized by the "War on Terror." These security-focused approaches aimed to eliminate terrorist groups through force, often deploying troops and conducting airstrikes.

However, with time, it became increasingly clear that these militaristic approaches were not only insufficient but sometimes harmful. For instance, military operations that result in civilian casualties can fuel resentment and lead to further radicalization. Similarly, aggressive policing may alienate already marginalized communities, increasing their vulnerability to extremist ideologies. As a result, the global conversation began to shift toward more preventive, long-term solutions what is often called "upstream" prevention. Understanding that terrorism is not just a battlefield issue but a social and ideological one, governments and international bodies are now recognizing the importance of inclusive, non-violent counterterrorism strategies. This approach focuses on addressing the root causes of radicalization, such as political exclusion, lack of economic opportunity, identity crises, or social injustice.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 recognizes the need to engage with women on PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism). It urges states and the United Nations to "ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism including through countering incitement to commit terrorist acts, creating counter narratives and other appropriate interventions".

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[21] OHCHR. n.d. "General Recommendations."
https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/general-recommendations.

To effectively prevent violent extremism (PVE) and counter terrorism (CT), it's essential to implement a gender-sensitive lens within security and justice systems. Ensuring equal access to justice for all genders and holding security actors accountable for misconduct are fundamental steps toward fair and effective CT practices. Strong collaboration with civil society especially women's organizations, gender experts, and representatives of marginalized communities is vital.

Building the gender capacity of security sector actors is another priority. Gender analysis must inform all stages of PVE and CT programming, and data collection should be disaggregated by sex, age, and other relevant indicators. Training must strengthen both values (e.g., gender equality and freedom of religion) and practical skills like gender-sensitive community engagement. Security teams themselves should reflect the diversity of the populations they serve, including women, LGBTI individuals, and ethnic or religious minorities. Leadership must visibly promote human rights and institutional trust-building with communities.[22]

8.4.1 Engaging Men and Challenging Harmful Masculinities

Effective PVE must also account for how young men are often recruited through distorted narratives of masculinity where proving manhood is associated with violence, dominance, or martyrdom. Therefore, it's crucial to engage fathers, elders, and male role models who can offer alternative visions of strength and community leadership. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a targeted intervention used education to challenge the strong ideas of masculinity and promote gender equity. The result was a measurable decline in young men's attraction to extremist groups. Similarly, campaigns in South Africa that encouraged men to become more involved in caregiving roles showed positive effects on children's mental health, academic achievement, and reductions in delinquency indirectly building long-term resistance to radicalization.

8.5 Women In Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Situations

Women have the voice and power to be agents of change. Recognizing and integrating women's contributions in both conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery is not just a matter of

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[22] https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/7/447094.pdf

equity but a strategic necessity. Inclusive peacebuilding efforts that empower women are more effective, more legitimate, and more likely to lead to lasting peace. Women's experiences, insights, and leadership must be fully recognized at all levels from grassroots mediation to international peace negotiations if we are to move beyond reactive crisis management toward a more peaceful, just, and resilient global order.

Women are well-positioned to mitigate radicalization. Recent research shows that anti-terrorism messages are disseminated quite effectively throughout families and communities by women, who can challenge extremist narratives in homes, schools and social environments. They have particular influence among youth populations, and are strategically placed to serve as a buffer between radical influences and those who are next to be targeted. Morocco, for example, recognizing women's influence in their families and communities, educates women to become religious scholars and sends them out to where radical Islamists target disenfranchised youth for recruitment.[23]

In the aftermath of conflict, women's participation is equally vital in shaping recovery efforts and sustainable peace. Post-conflict societies often face a breakdown of institutions, societal trauma, and increased vulnerability to further violence. Women, particularly those active in civil society, are instrumental in rebuilding trust, healing communities, and advocating for inclusive governance. Their presence in truth and reconciliation commissions, constitution-drafting bodies, and peace negotiations helps ensure that post-conflict solutions are comprehensive and equitable.

9. Case Studies

9.1 Afghanistan: the Taliban and Its Impact on Women

As the US decided to leave the region, the Taliban came to power in August 2021 after 20 years. The first thing they did was to integrate Sharia and Islamic law into government. Despite the fact that they claimed to be reformist, the Taliban has always targeted women and their rights.

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[23] https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep17365.pdf

The Taliban's policies towards women are rather inhumane. For instance, schoolgirls above sixth grade are banned from higher levels of education. Most public jobs including those in NGOs or the UN are exclusive to men. It is even legislated that women cannot travel more than 72 kilometers without a male relative, named "mahram". If women have to leave their houses out of necessity, they are to wear full-body coverings and their voices must never be heard in public.

The impact of such policies on women is enormous. It is found in international studies that depression and suicide among Afghan women have been rising since the Taliban came to power in 2021. Due to the systematic repression policies, fear and trauma have become chronic. As women are banned from workplaces, they lose their financial independence and social protection systems are gradually destroyed.

9.2 Nigeria: Boko Haram and Chibok Girls

In 2002, Boko Haram which means "Western education is forbidden." started rising among other political figures in Nigeria. Similar to the Taliban, Boko Haram's goal is to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state where Sharia law is adopted. To do this, they do not hesitate to use violence, fear or repression on women and young girls. Examples of such actions include the 2014 Chibok Kidnapping, during which more than two hundred teenage girls were kidnapped and subjected to sexual violence, and the ongoing human trafficking in the area. It is estimated by UNICEF that approximately one thousand children have been kidnapped since Boko Haram came to power.

Survivors of such actions are usually labelled as "Boko Haram wives" by their relatives; hence, it is unusually hard for them to re-integrate into the community they live in. They suffer from chronic post-traumatic stress disorder and social discrimination. Moreover, Boko Haram's repressive gender policies cause women to be isolated from schools, hospitals and other public spaces. Hence, social services and fundamental rights are inaccessible for women living under Boko Haram regime.

9.3 Iraq and Syria: ISIS and Sexual Slavery of Yazidi Women

In 2014, ISIS established a caliphate ruled under Sharia laws in Iraq and Syria. Yazidis are an ethno-religious minority in the Middle East, mainly located in Iraq. Labelled

as "devil worshippers", over six thousand Yazidi women and girls were abducted and subjected to human trafficking. Ownership contracts and sexual slavery markets created by ISIS have been discovered since the 2014 Yazidi Genocide. Survivors of the genocide are mostly deprived of citizenship; therefore, social security. The violent acts of ISIS towards Yazidi women is defined as genocide by the UN, and it violates CEDAW's fundamental legal framework.

9.4 Somalia - Al-Shabaab and Gender-Based Oppression

Linked to al-Qaeda which carried out the September 11 Attacks, al-Shabaab has been operating in Somalia since 2006. It enforces strict gender discrimination and penalizes women who demonstrate non-compliance. Within militant ranks, sexual slavery and forced marriage cases have been reported. Women mostly live in fear of public humiliation or even execution by the state militants.
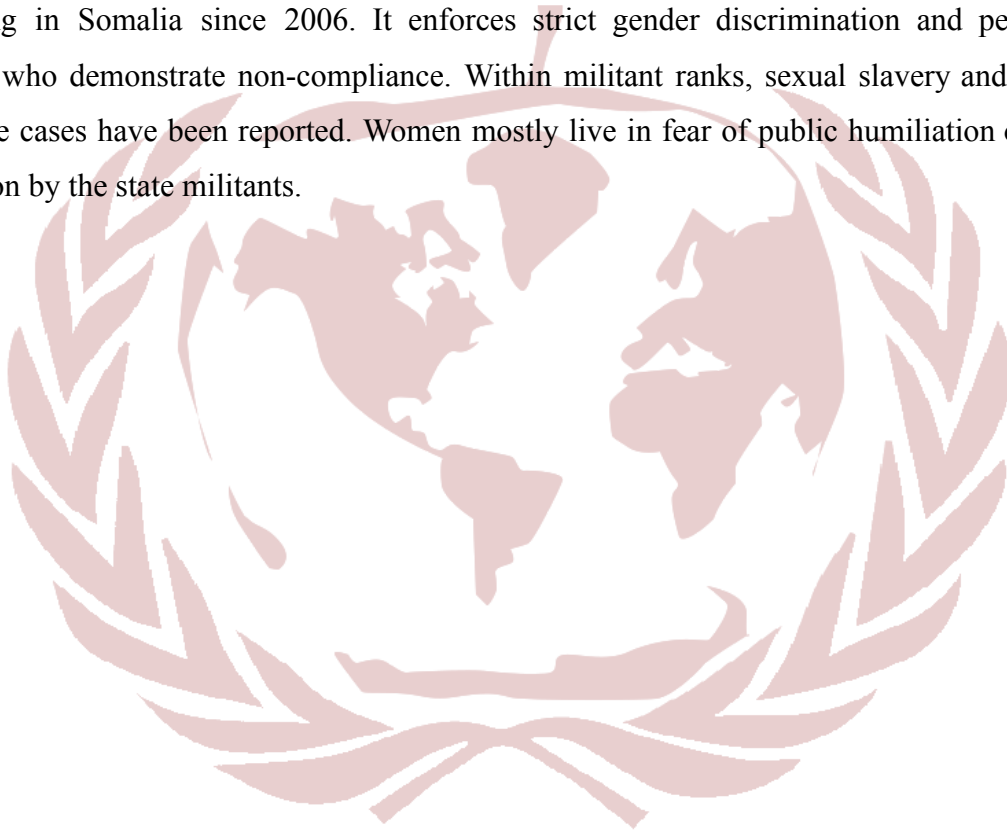
10.   Summary

Extremist and terrorist groups have a profound and multifaceted impact on women's rights and social security, often exploiting gender norms to enforce control and suppress dissent. Extremism, defined as holding radical beliefs that oppose societal norms, can escalate into violent extremism when these ideologies justify or incite violence. While extremism itself does not always involve violence, violent extremism actively employs force to achieve ideological, political, or religious goals. Terrorism, a more specific form of violent extremism, uses fear and violence to coerce governments or societies into compliance. Both phenomena disproportionately affect women, targeting their rights, safety, and social stability.

Women are impacted in multiple ways as victims of systemic oppression, as unwilling or coerced participants in extremist activities, or as mitigators who resist radicalization. Extremist groups exploit patriarchal structures, using sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as tools of terror, restricting women's access to education, healthcare, and employment, and dismantling social security systems that protect vulnerable populations.

Historically, terrorism has evolved from state-led violence during the French Revolution to modern decentralized, ideologically diverse movements. Women have been both perpetrators and victims in these conflicts, though their roles are often overlooked. Groups like ISIS, Boko Haram, and the Taliban systematically oppress women, using forced marriages, sexual slavery, and restrictive laws to enforce control. These actions violate international human rights frameworks, including CEDAW and UN resolutions, which recognize gender-based violence as a war crime and call for women's inclusion in counterterrorism efforts. However, gaps in implementation persist, leaving many women without legal protection or support.

The gendered impact of extremism extends beyond direct violence. Women in conflict zones face displacement, trafficking, and psychological trauma, with long-term consequences for their mental health and social integration. Refugee women, in particular, endure heightened vulnerabilities, including sexual exploitation and lack of access to basic services. Extremist ideologies also threaten feminist movements and women human rights defenders, silencing dissent and reinforcing patriarchal norms.

Efforts to counter extremism and terrorism must adopt a gender-sensitive approach, addressing root causes like inequality, marginalization, and political exclusion. Strategies should include empowering women in peacebuilding, challenging harmful masculinities, and ensuring women's participation in security systems.

Ultimately, combating extremism requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes gender equality, strengthens social security systems, and boost women's voices in conflict prevention and recovery. Without addressing the systemic oppression of women, efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism will remain incomplete.

11. Important Reminder

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a monitoring and advisory body, not a legislative or judicial organ. Although it operates under the United Nations framework, CEDAW **does not** have the authority to create, amend, or enforce national laws. It cannot impose sanctions, override domestic legal systems, or intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states. Its function is to review state parties' reports, assess their compliance with the Convention, and issue non-binding General Recommendations that encourage the protection and advancement of women's rights.

CEDAW's role is to facilitate dialogue, promote international standards, and encourage states to align their policies with the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. Delegates must keep in mind that no resolution passed in this committee may demand or require a state to change its internal laws. Proposals should focus on cooperation, advocacy, data collection, awareness-raising, and international collaboration rather than legislative intervention.

Moreover, this agenda item addresses deeply sensitive, often intersecting with religion, culture, and identity. Therefore, all discussions must be approached with respect and diplomacy. The committee must uphold the principles of freedom of religion, belief, cultural identity, and expression. Delegates are expected to maintain a constructive tone throughout all negotiations.

Hate speech, personal attacks, or any form of discrimination will not be tolerated. Delegates must avoid generalizations and stereotypes and refrain from making culturally or religiously insensitive statements. CEDAW seeks to build bridges, not divisions, and your contributions should reflect this mission.

12.   Questions to be Addressed

- How is the current rise in global conflicts and extremism affecting the world?
- How do extremist and terrorist groups specifically impact women's rights and social security?
- What social and economic factors contribute to women's vulnerability for extremist ideologies?
- Why do women join or support extremist movements and how is being forced different from choosing to join?
- What are the implications of women's triple roles as victims, perpetrators, and mitigators?
- How do extremist groups use the internet and social media to attract and influence women and what measures should be taken to prevent it?
- What role can men and boys play in raising awareness about gender-centered extremist violence?
- What are the mental health and intergenerational impacts of extremist violence on women and their communities?
- How to increase women's empowerment to prevent the spread of extremist ideas and support peaceful communities?
- ·How can diverse voices, including marginalized groups be included?
- What role do women play in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and countering terrorism (CT) efforts and how can women be better involved in preventing violent extremism and counterterrorism efforts?
- How to respond effectively to the challenges posed by current extremist and terrorist groups to women's rights and social security worldwide?
- How to strengthen global cooperation and international frameworks to protect women's rights and social security from the impacts of extremist and terrorist groups?

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