

# **Statement of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on the refugee crises and the protection of women and girls**

*Adopted on 20 November 2015 during its sixty second session*

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) continues to follow with great concern the unfolding crisis and developments involving asylum seekers and refugees fleeing armed conflicts, and how these conflicts disproportionately impact women and girls. Recalling its General Recommendation No. 32 (2014) on gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee reiterates its position that women and girls can be especially vulnerable to abuse during mass displacement situations as experienced presently with the largest numbers of asylum seekers since the Second World War.

The Committee calls on States parties to ensure their duty to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and girls throughout the displacement cycle, as well as in the enjoyment of durable solutions including integration and/or resettlement in receiving States and/or voluntary repatriation to their States of origin, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and General Recommendation No. 32 (2014). It thus calls on the international community to respect the principle of non-refoulement and to ensure the effective implementation of the rules of international refugee law and international human rights law. To this extent, it urges the international community to integrate a gender perspective in its strategies aimed at addressing the current refugee crisis.

The Committee recalls that States parties are bound to uphold the rights of women and girls who are asylum seekers, refugees or stateless so that they have access to food, housing, water, sanitation, health services including sexual and reproductive services, education, economic activities, and can escape poverty as well as gender-based violence including domestic violence. States parties should particularly ensure decent conditions of living for asylum seekers and refugees in camps and other places where they are being hosted.

The Committee calls for international cooperation to protect persons of concern who are in need of international protection throughout the displacement cycle and ensure that they are also protected from extreme risks for their lives including exploitation by smugglers, particularly women and girls who might be subjected to other grave risks such as sexual and gender-based violence. Most importantly, the international community should protect them from falling prey to extremist groups who seek to exploit their vulnerable situations. It further calls on political leaders and other key actors to refrain from making disparaging and inflammatory comments which foment negative stereotypes and prejudices towards asylum seekers and refugees.

The Committee further calls on the international community to significantly increase its support to the countries which are presently hosting a significant number of refugees as

well as contributions to UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other international, regional and national organisations providing support and relief.

In view of the situation, particularly in the Middle East and parts of Africa, and the magnitude of the refugee crisis, the Committee calls on the international community to expedite the development and implementation of scheduled resettlement plans for millions of people in vulnerable situations, particularly women and girls.

The Committee also calls on States parties to fully respect the rights of women and girls during the entire asylum-seeking process and to fully integrate a gender-sensitive approach in the implementation of national legislation on asylum, in particular regarding the special claims for asylum that women and girls may have due to their exposure to discrimination and/or violence in their country of origin and/or during their flight. Finally, the Committee calls on the international community to spare no effort to find durable political solutions to current conflicts, which continue to be the main drivers of displacement for women and girls. In this context, the international community should ensure the full involvement of all parties to the conflicts and relevant stakeholders in bringing early and durable solutions to the conflicts.

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