**Women Caught in the Crossfire**

**Here’s to strong women: May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them.**

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On March 8th, we commemo­rate International Women’s Day, a global acknowledg­ment of women’s social, economic, cultural, and political achieve­ments. However, it is essen­tial to recognize the atroci­ties endured by numerous women in conflict zones such as Gaza, Ukraine, Kashmir, and elsewhere on battlefields. These wom­en are not mere spectators; they are mothers, daughters, educa­tors, doctors, and leaders who form the societal backbone. Despite the devastation of war and battle, where their rights are frequently violated and their voices silenced, they dem­onstrate extraordinary resilience. Their resilience in the face of adver­sity is a powerful demonstration of the human spirit’s strength.

The conflict has far-reaching con­sequences for women. Gender-based violence is frequently used in wartime to foster fear and control over societies. Many women in war zones face catastrophic circum­stances like sexual assault, forced marriages, and trafficking.

[Strategy evolved to provide relief to people in Ramazan: Minister](https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Mar-2024/strategy-evolved-to-provide-relief-to-people-in-ramazan-minister)

In the face of never ending sor­rows of war, displacement from their houses to refugee camps and most of the time to open skies further adds to these women’s hardships. Most of the women are responsible for caring for their families in dense­ly congested refugee camps where necessities like food and water are in short supply. For example, UN Wom­en estimates that the outbreak of vi­olence and destruction in Ukraine has displaced about 493,000 wom­en and girls. According to UN Wom­en, conflict zones account for 60% of all preventable maternal deaths. According to Human Rights Watch, amid humanitarian crises, one out of every five refugee or displaced women is expected to face sexual vi­olence, and the true ratio is likely far higher. Education, another pertinent right of every human being either man or woman, is greatly impacted by war. According to UNESCO, girls living in conflict-affected nations are 2.5 times more likely to be absent from school than girls living in war zones. Menstrual discomfort might be much worse in conflict zones due to a lack of painkillers and proper sanitary facilities. For instance, the Australian Human Rights Institute UNSW reports that in Gaza, wom­en have reported a scarcity of water, pads, toilet paper, soap, and sanitary goods, which has led to severe health hazards. In the absence of Interna­tional Humanitarian Aid, the use of temporary sanitary solutions such as rags or leaves harbor bacteria, in­creasing the risk of diseases such as urinary tract infections (UTIs) and reproductive tract infections (RTIs). A report published in the Pulitzer Center stated that women in Kash­mir have been forced to wear cloth instead of sanitary pads, risking in­fection and death from toxic shock syndrome. The stress of living in a combat zone, along with physical discomfort and a lack of control over menstrual hygiene, can have a nega­tive influence on their mental health. In Ukraine, women are forced to pick between sanitary products and food, which adds to their psycholog­ical distress.

[Kalasha Museum attracts tourists, archaeology lovers in droves](https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Mar-2024/kalasha-museum-attracts-tourists-archaeology-lovers-in-droves)

There is a never-ending list of challenges faced by these resilient women in conflict zones. They are nothing but heroes and survivors. Over-pumping and poisoning from seawater intrusion, sewage, and ag­ricultural run-off have worsened Gaza’s water situation. This condi­tion endangers pregnant mothers and newborns. Malnutrition and stress, combined with unsanitary living conditions, have impaired the immune systems of these women in conflict zones, rendering them more vulnerable to a variety of infections. Women in Kashmir have experi­enced reproductive health difficul­ties as a result of the trauma caused by the violence at the hands of Indi­an forces. In Ukrainian soil, the rate of preterm deliveries has quadru­pled or threefold increased in the past couple of months due to dis­tress and health problems linked to the battle. Moreover, treatment by non-professional medical workers and the absence of the right medi­cal equipment have made childbirth even more difficult.

[Tributes paid to Capt Fahim Abbas Shaheed](https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Mar-2024/tributes-paid-to-capt-fahim-abbas-shaheed)

The UN’s theme for International Women’s Day 2024, “Invest in Wom­en: Accelerate Progress,” connects deeply with the challenges of women in crisis zones. By directing resourc­es toward their safety, health, and empowerment, we may pave the way for a future in which they not only survive and thrive but also they will be exercising a vital part in creating a more equitable and peaceful world. What can be done in Gaza for these strong women is donation and in­vestment in clean water and sanita­tion facilities to minimize the health hazards.Prioritizing mental health diagnoses in Kashmir can help wom­en cope with the trauma and stress caused by the ongoing conflict.Sup­porting female businesses in Ukraine can help to overcome gender gaps while also providing economic sta­bility during times of war.

Concluding with a hope of a bright­er future for these women caught in the crossfire from Gaza to Ukraine and in Kashmir, as ensuring wom­en’s protection and rights in con­flict zones is more than just an issue of justice; it is a step towards creat­ing a more peaceful and prosperous global community. Research reveals that communities with empowered women are more stable and resil­ient. By teaming up and taking de­cisive steps, we can truly represent the essence of International Wom­en’s Day. This is accomplished not just through verbal acknowledg­ment, but also by real actions that prepare the way for a future in which every woman, regardless of where they are in the world, can live a life free of fear and violence.

[PARC chief stresses for adaption of modern tech in agri field](https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Mar-2024/parc-chief-stresses-for-adaption-of-modern-tech-in-agri-field)

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