

# International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

@donne\_per\_la\_chiesa

## Giornata internazionale per l'eliminazione della violenza contro le donne



On November 25, 2023, we want to focus on the experience of women living in the context of war.

In 2022, 52 countries were known to be in situation of war or conflict.

A situation of war often results in higher levels of gender-based violence, including arbitrary killings, torture, sexual violence, and forced marriages. Sexual violence is increasingly being used as a tactic of war, with women and girls being the primary targets in this context. The United Nations verified 2,455 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2022, with the highest number recorded in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These numbers are underestimated, however, as many cases go unreported or cannot be verified.

Failure to provide essential services to people during conflict situations can disproportionately impact women and girls – again, often due to pre-existing discriminatory conditions. Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, may be disrupted, and women and girls are at increased risk of unplanned pregnancies, maternal mortality and morbidity, serious sexual and reproductive injuries, and sexually transmitted infections, in part due to conflict-related sexual violence.

On the other hand, as Donne per la Chiesa (Women for the Church) we would like to remind that women in situation of conflict and political instability should not only be seen as victims. Historically, women have

played and continue to play an important role as fighters, part of organized civil society, members of resistance movements, and in the defense of human rights. Finally, women are always active participants in both formal and informal peace and recovery processes.

Even in this process, we women are often targeted, because we know too well that when we take ownership of agency, we become a threat to the pre-established patriarchal system. As an example, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) verified the killing of 34 women human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries in 2022, and this is probably only a small fraction compared to the actual cases.

That is why we want to amplify the voices of those many women active on various fronts in different countries, for the just and due recognition of their efforts. As Antonietta Potente wrote:

*What could it be, then the meaning of these times? The meaning, I believe, is - as Abraham dared to remind God - the fifty righteous, or maybe twenty, or ten or who knows maybe just one righteous person (Gen 18:24-32). That is the meaning: someone who breathes in justice and imagines life.*

**In the picture (from top left, clockwise) six women who are or were active on various fields in different countries in war.**

[Tawakkol Karman](#), activist and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace 2011, Yemen; [Naw Betty Han](#), journalist, Myanmar; [Anna Mokrousova](#), activist, Ukraine; [Justine Masika Bihamba](#), activist, Democratic Republic of Congo; [Amal Habani](#), journalist, Sudan; [Shireen Abu Akleh](#), journalist, Palestine.

## Sources

Ufficio dell'Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Unite per i Diritti Umani  
Human Rights Watch  
Antonietta Potente, *Il nocciolo e la scorza*, Ed. Paoline 2020.