CREDOMUN III

UNCSW

STUDY GUIDE

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

It is my team's and my utmost pleasure and honour to host you at the 3rd edition of CREDOMUN as the Secretary-General.

A few days from now, all of you will be walking through the doors of your committees, and while it may seem daunting now, trust me when I say this: it will be one of the most fulfilling experiences of your life.

The three days of the conference are not just about debate, drafting resolutions, or winning awards, but about experiencing something larger than yourself.

This edition of CREDOMUN gives you the platform to explore a wide range of cultures and engage with diverse schools of thought from across the city.

After being honoured with the role of DDG at last edition's conference, I am gratefully excited to host all of you amazing delegates this year as the Secretary-General. This places the utmost responsibility on my team to ensure that you leave this conference having gained something meaningful from it.

While I do not intend to bore you right now whilst you read this note, I must warn you about the time when I will have to give a speech in front of you. At that time, I will take no action to stop myself from being boring and annoying.

Till then, you have everything you could ever need in these study guides and all the time in the world before the eve of the 23rd. I look forward to seeing the ideas you challenge, the solutions you develop, and the memories you create throughout the conference.

Warm regards,

Fazl Abbas,
Secretary General,
Credo Model United Nations III

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Delegates,
It is my humble privilege to welcome you all to the 3rd edition of CredoMUN

CredoMUN has been the focal point of my debating journey, from being a delegate in its 1st edition, then an ACD in its 2nd edition and now the President of the 3rd edition, CredoMUN has truly given me a platform to learn and lead

I have always skipped through the notes in a study guide because why spent time reading the note from someone i dont even know, so please do skip along if I am eating into your limited research time.

The reality is CredoaMUN is truly special because here, delegates can feel at home, debate and have fun, make memories without having to process 5 Bashes at the same time, because at CredoMUN every delegate gets a chance to express themselves, learn how to improve and make unforgettable memories along the way.

As the President of this conference, I promise you all one thing, excellence. Whether it is across exceptional debate, incredible committee topics, or the wonderful people you meet along the way, my team and i ensure that you will be part of the best CredoMUN to date

And if you ever feel overwhelmed by the spectacle, you can always find me practicing a long range volley in our futsal court

Warm Regards,

Saif Khan,
President,
Credo Model United Nations III

Measures To Prevent Abduction Risk, Securing Digital and Physical Spaces for Women

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1. Committee Overview

1.1 Introduction to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality, the rights of women and girls, and their empowerment. It is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established by ECOSOC resolution 11(II) on 21 June 1946 to prepare recommendations on women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. Threats to women's security arise in homes, schools, workplaces, public spaces and digital platforms alike, and addressing them requires coordinated policies, effective institutions and international cooperation rather than isolated protective measures. (UN Women)

In 1996, ECOSOC resolution 1996/6 expanded the Commission's role, giving it a leading position in monitoring and reviewing progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in supporting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective across United Nations activities. This matters for the present agenda because preventing violence against women, improving physical safety, strengthening access to justice and addressing digital violence all require gender-responsive policies and institutions. (UN Women)

The Commission meets annually at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Member States, United Nations entities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in consultative status with ECOSOC take part; during sessions, Member States discuss progress, identify gaps and negotiate agreed conclusions containing policy recommendations. Women's security involves interconnected challenges: physical threats arise in unsafe public environments, digital threats expose women to harassment, intimidation and exploitation, and online contact and the misuse of personal information can sometimes contribute to physical risk. Effective prevention therefore requires policymakers to consider both environments together rather than as separate areas of concern. (UN Women)

The Commission is primarily a policy-making and standard-setting body. International recommendations can set priorities and encourage coordinated action, but their effect depends on how individual countries translate them into national policies, legislation, institutions and services. Its role is to build shared commitments and practical recommendations that Member States implement according to their own circumstances and responsibilities.

1.2 Committee Mandate, Core Powers and Draft Resolution

The mandate of the CSW is to promote women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through international policy discussions, recommendations and negotiated conclusions. It can identify international priorities, encourage governments to strengthen laws and institutions, and recommend measures for prevention, protection, accountability and support. In relation to this agenda, prevention means reducing the circumstances in which abduction and exploitation occur; protection concerns the safety and rights of those facing threats or harm; accountability means strengthening legal and institutional responses; and support means access to services for affected individuals.

The Commission does not enforce national laws or command police forces; implementation of its recommendations depends on Member States and theirnational institutions. Resolutions should therefore propose realistic measures thatgovernments, international bodies and civil-society actors can actually implement: stronger reporting systems, safer public spaces, digital-safety measures, improved law-enforcement capacity, survivor support, data collection and international cooperation. These measures should reinforce one another, and proposals should address risks in both physical and digital environments.

A draft resolution normally contains preambulatory clauses, which establish thebackground and existing international commitments, and operative clauses,which propose concrete measures. For this agenda, operative clauses could cover abduction-prevention mechanisms, safety in public spaces and public transport, digital privacy and cybersecurity, accessible reporting systems, survivor support, data collection, protection of vulnerable women and girls, and cooperation between law-enforcement agencies across borders. A strong resolution connects prevention, protection and accountability, supported by data collection and international cooperation.

On 19 December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/71/167, titled “Trafficking in Women and Girls,” without a vote. The resolution called for strengthened prevention, protection, prosecution, and international cooperation to address trafficking in women and girls. It is relevant because trafficking may involve the recruitment, transportation, or exploitation of women and girls and may overlap with abduction and other forms of coercion. However, trafficking and abduction remain distinct concepts and should not be conflated. The resolution also emphasizes the importance of cooperation among authorities and institutions when trafficking, exploitation, or related criminal activities cross national borders (United Nations Digital Library).

1.3 Relationships with Other International Bodies and Civil societies

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and works with United Nations entities dealing with gender equality, human rights, development, humanitarian protection, and international peace and security. UN Women provides substantive support to the Commission through policy analysis, documentation, and assistance with civil-society participation (UN Women).

Two documents illustrate this institutional context. The Secretary-General's report E/2023/82, titled "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into All Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System," issued on 10 May 2023, assessed progress in integrating gender equality across the UN system. Although the report does not specifically address abduction, it highlights the importance of considering the different risks faced by women and girls when developing laws, services, public spaces, and protection systems. Similarly, during its sixty-eighth session in March 2024, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions E/CN.6/2024/L.3, focusing on addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing through a gender perspective. Although broader than the issue of abduction, these conclusions are relevant because effective prevention and protection require strong institutions and adequate resources.

Civil society also plays an important role in international discussions by contributing written statements and practical expertise. At CSW68, for example, the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights submitted statement E/CN.6/2024/NGO/58 on women's rights and economic, social, and cultural rights, demonstrating how non-governmental organizations contribute information and recommendations to international policymaking. NGOs are also active in humanitarian settings, where restrictions on female workers can prevent women and girls from accessing essential services. On 16 January 2023, CARE International announced that it would resume health and nutrition operations in Afghanistan after receiving assurances that its female staff could work safely. The organization had suspended operations following the de facto authorities' December 2022 ban on women working for NGOs. CARE emphasized that female staff were essential to reaching women and girls. This case demonstrates that protecting women and girls also requires ensuring continued access to essential services, particularly in humanitarian emergencies (CARE International).

1.4 Role of International Cooperation

Abduction, trafficking and digital threats cross borders: victims, perpetrators, digital evidence, transport routes and financial transactions may involve several countries at once. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) support States through information-sharing, joint investigations and cross-border action.

Yazidi woman rescued from Gaza (2024): a Yazidi woman abducted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014 was rescued through cooperation between Iraq, the United States, Israel and Jordan, which coordinated information-sharing to bring her safely back to Iraq. (Al Jazeera, based on Reuters)

INTERPOL Operation Storm Makers (21-25 March 2022): coordinated action across 25 countries produced 121 arrests, 193 new investigations, 80 trafficking victims rescued and roughly 3,400 irregular migrants identified, with about 15 million database checks at air, land and sea borders. (INTERPOL, official report)

- Philippines: 32 trafficking victims rescued and eight suspects arrested for trafficking, child exploitation and child abuse.
- United Arab Emirates: rescue of a 17-year-old Pakistani girl who had been brought there at age 13 and forced into sexual exploitation by a family member.
- Malaysia and Cambodia: 16 people lured with promises of well-paid call-centre jobs were confined and forced to scam for up to 14 hours a day; investigations continue with INTERPOL support.
- Vietnam, Hungary and Romania: Vietnamese migrants intercepted at the Hungary-Romania border; their alleged smugglers had coordinated the journey through social media platforms.
- Turkey, India and Indonesia: four suspects arrested in a suspected organ-trafficking network that falsified documents and staged wedding photographs to fake family relationships between donors and recipients.
- Coordination infrastructure: operational coordination units in Hanoi and Abu Dhabi, and smart electronic gates at UAE airports linked to INTERPOL databases.

Romania-UK trafficking case (2023): on 4 August 2023, Romanian and UK authorities ran coordinated operations against a network trafficking Romanian women to the UK for sexual exploitation, arresting seven suspects and safeguarding eight victims, with Europol and Eurojust supporting through a Joint Investigation Team. (Europol and Eurojust, 4 August 2023)

Digital recruitment and trafficking (2023): INTERPOL's Operation Storm Makers II spanned 27 countries and targeted networks using fake online job advertisements to recruit victims, resulting in 281 arrests and 149 victims rescued. It connects digital safety directly to physical protection, since recruitment now often begins on a screen.

Relevance to the agenda: these cases show what information-sharing, joint investigations and victim protection look like in practice, and they give delegates concrete models for stronger cross-border cooperation and better protection of women and girls.

2. Key Definitions and Terminology

Understanding the terminology used in this agenda is essential for identifying different threats, distinguishing between related forms of violence and developing appropriate prevention and protection measures.

2.1 Abduction

Abduction refers to the unlawful taking or confinement of a person without their consent.
In conflict situations, international United Nations reporting may separately document abduction of civilians or children and may identify whether abduction was connected to recruitment, ransom, sexual violence or other purposes.

2.2 Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence refers to violence directed against a person because of their gender or violence that disproportionately affects people because of gender inequality.

2.3 Violence Against Women

Violence against women includes acts of physical, sexual, psychological or other harm directed against women because they are women or that disproportionately affect women. The definition follows the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104, 1993).

2.4 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons through specified prohibited means for purposes of exploitation, as defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol, 2000). Trafficking can include sexual exploitation, forced labour and other forms of exploitation.

2.5 Digital Safety

Digital safety refers to measures designed to reduce risks arising from online activity, including harassment, cyberstalking, threats, unauthorized access, exploitation and abuse.

2.6 Digital Privacy

Digital privacy refers to protecting personal information, communications, photographs, accounts and other digital information from unauthorized access, disclosure or misuse.

2.7 Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking refers to repeated unwanted monitoring, communication, harassment or threatening behaviour carried out through digital technologies.

2.8 Doxxing

Doxxing refers to publishing or distributing someone's private or identifying information online without their consent, particularly where the disclosure exposes them to harassment, intimidation or other harm.

2.9 Physical Safety

Physical safety refers to measures designed to reduce exposure to physical violence, abduction, harassment and other threats to personal security.

2.10 Safe Spaces

Safe spaces are physical or digital environments designed to reduce violence, harassment and other threats and to allow women and girls to access services, education, work and public life more safely.

2.11 Prevention Mechanisms

Prevention mechanisms are measures designed to identify risks before violence or abduction occurs and reduce the likelihood of such incidents.

2.12 Protection Mechanisms

Protection mechanisms are legal, institutional, community or humanitarian systems that provide safety, assistance and support to people facing violence or exploitation.

2.13 Access to Justice

Access to justice means the ability to report violations, obtain legal assistance, receive protection and seek appropriate remedies through justice institutions.

2.14 Survivor-Centred Approach

A survivor-centred approach prioritizes the safety, dignity, privacy, rights and choices of survivors when providing protection and assistance.

2.15 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the process of identifying potential threats, vulnerabilities and circumstances that could increase the likelihood of violence or abduction.

2.16 Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity refers to measures designed to protect digital systems, accounts, devices, networks and information against unauthorized access, disruption or attacks.

Together, these definitions establish the terminology needed to examine the agenda from both physical and digital perspectives. They also help delegates distinguish between preventing threats, protecting affected individuals and ensuring access to appropriate support and justice.

3. *INTRODUCTION TO THE AGENDA*

3.1 The Intersection of Physical Dangers

The physical safety of women and girls is closely connected to their ability to participate freely in education, employment, transportation and public life. Threats such as abduction, trafficking and violence restrict this freedom, while unsafe environments and inadequate protection systems increase vulnerability.

Physical dangers faced by women and girls can include trafficking, forced marriage, sexual violence, conflict, displacement and unsafe public spaces. UN Women estimates that approximately 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime (UN Women, 2019, p. 35). The World Health Organization's 2021 prevalence estimates describe the same finding in absolute terms, putting it at about 736 million women, so the two figures should be read as one reality rather than as competing statistics. UNODC's most recent global trafficking report likewise shows that women and girls make up the majority of detected trafficking victims; the detailed figures appear in Section 4.1.

Risks rise during conflict, displacement, poverty and weak institutional protection, and prevention requires safer public spaces and transport, accessible reporting systems, trained law enforcement and reliable data collection.

Different countries and international organisations have introduced measures to address these risks, including legislation, specialised agencies, support centres and safer public-space initiatives.

- **Pakistan:** The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018; Prevention of Anti-Women Practices (Criminal Law Amendment) Act, 2011; and Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), 2016 provide legal measures addressing trafficking, harmful practices and cybercrime.
- **India:** The Nirbhaya Fund supports women's safety initiatives, while One Stop Centres provide medical, legal, police, shelter and counselling services (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development).
- **Nigeria:** The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) works to prevent trafficking, prosecute offenders and support victims (NAPTIP).
- **Sudan:** UNFPA-supported Women and Girls Safe Spaces provide protection and medical and psychosocial support during conflict and displacement (UNFPA Sudan).
- **Democratic Republic of the Congo:** UNFPA-supported mobile clinics and safe spaces provide medical and psychosocial assistance to women and girls affected by gender-based violence (UNFPA DRC).
- **International:** UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme promotes safer public spaces through gender-responsive urban planning and safer transportation.

These examples span legal protections, specialised agencies, humanitarian assistance and safer urban design, and they show that responses must fit the circumstances, whether conflict, displacement or everyday city life. Effective protection requires prevention, law enforcement, access to justice, survivor support and safer environments working together.

3.2 Real-World Case Studies of Physical Abduction and Conflict-Related Risks

Physical abduction risks can arise in both everyday settings and conflict-affected communities. The following cases illustrate the importance of early reporting, effective investigations, prevention measures, and long-term support for those affected.

Pakistan — Zainab Ansari

Zainab Ansari disappeared in Kasur in January 2018, within a wider investigation into attacks on girls. CNN's reports of 13 and 24 January 2018 documented the investigation, the CCTV evidence and the arrest of a suspect whose DNA authorities said matched evidence from the case, illustrating the value of rapid reporting and forensic work.

Pakistan — Pooja Kumari

Al Jazeera's 31 March 2022 report documented prior harassment and threats against Pooja Kumari's family, an alleged attempt to abduct her for forced marriage, and the police arrests that followed, showing how earlier harassment can foreshadow an abduction attempt.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Secretary-General's 2024 report recorded 2,028 children abducted between April 2022 and March 2024, including 1,436 boys and 592 girls (S/2024/705, para. 65, p. 11), underscoring the need for stronger child-protection systems, safer schools and communities, improved reporting mechanisms and effective online safeguards. (United Nations Digital Library)

Sudan

The United Nations reported credible information that over 160 women and girls were abducted and held in captivity, some reportedly moved from Khartoum to Darfur, with reports of sexual violence, slave-like conditions and ransoms paid for relatives' return (S/2024/292, para. 65, p. 22). (United Nations Digital Library)

Central African Republic

Women and girls abducted by non-State armed groups have been held captive, with some subjected to sexual slavery for several years, and survivors face long-term health and psychological consequences even after release (S/2024/292, para. 12, p. 5).

Syria

In 2023, approximately 15.3 million people in Syria required humanitarian assistance, around half of them women and girls. The UN documented kidnappings of women and children by criminal gangs to pressure families into paying ransoms, sexual violence in displacement sites and detention facilities, and severe underreporting driven by stigma and fear of retaliation (S/2024/292, paras. 68-69, pp. 22-23).

Together, these cases show the importance of early-warning systems, accessible reporting channels, effective investigations, secure environments and survivor-centred protection in preventing abduction and reducing conflict-related risks.

3.3 The Intersection of Digital and Physical Dangers

Violence against women and girls remains a global crisis, affecting their health, safety and participation in society. According to the United Nations Secretary-General's report A/77/302, approximately one in three women worldwide has experienced physical and/or sexual violence at least once in her lifetime. The report also highlights how digital violence can overlap with offline abuse, creating risks that extend beyond the internet.

• **Digital violence and physical threats:** Women journalists, politicians and human rights defenders face heightened risks of online abuse. The report cites research on women journalists, discussed in detail in Section 3.4, in which most respondents had experienced online violence during their work, including threats of physical and sexual violence as well as attacks on their digital security.

• **Online abuse leading to offline violence:** One in five women journalists surveyed reported being abused or attacked offline in connection with online violence. This demonstrates how threats made through digital platforms can be associated with physical insecurity.

• **Online attacks against women in politics**: A 2021 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that 46% of women parliamentarians surveyed in Africa had been targeted by sexist online attacks. A similar study in Europe found that 58% of women parliamentarians surveyed had experienced online attacks.

• **Sexual harassment and stalking**: The report identifies sexual harassment, stalking, coordinated online abuse, unwanted sexual content, persistent sexual advances and threats as forms of digital violence. It also highlights doxing, which involves sharing personal or identifying information online without consent, potentially exposing women to further harassment and physical risks.

• **Emerging digital threats:** The report explains that technological developments have created new forms of abuse, including deepfake pornography, harassment in virtual environments and abuse facilitated by artificial intelligence. These threats can damage women's personal and professional lives.

• **Digital violence connected to domestic abuse**: Violence that begins in physical relationships can continue or intensify online. The report notes that stalking, financial abuse and coercive control may be replicated or intensified through digital technologies.

• **Violence during the pandemic:** UN Women's 2021 report Measuring the Shadow Pandemic found that 45% of women surveyed across 12 countries reported that they or a woman they knew had experienced at least one form of violence since the pandemic began, and three in five believed sexual harassment in public spaces had worsened (UN Women, 2021).

• **Targeting women who speak out:** Women activists, particularly those advocating on gender justice, face coordinated online attacks intended to silence them, which discourages participation in public life and creates additional security concerns.

Relevance to the Agenda

The pattern across these findings is that online and offline harm feed each other. Harassment, stalking, threats and the unauthorised sharing of personal information can expose women to further abuse, and physical violence can continue or intensify through digital tools. A resolution that addresses abduction risk therefore has to treat digital protection and physical protection as one problem rather than two.

Source: United Nations Secretary-General, *Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls*, A/77/302 (2022), pp. 2-4 of the report.

3.4 Real-World Case Studies of Digital Threats

Digital threats can take different forms across countries, from targeted harassment of individual women to coordinated attacks that restrict women's participation in public life

India — Bulli Bai Case (2022): In January 2022, the Bulli Bai application on GitHub shared photographs of dozens of Muslim women without their consent, displaying them in fake online auction listings. The case targeted women, including journalists, and was investigated as an instance of communal harassment. Delhi Police arrested a 20-year-old engineering student suspected of creating the application, while Mumbai Police separately arrested three other suspects. The incident highlighted how digital platforms can be misused to publicly humiliate women, promote discrimination, and coordinate targeted online harassment. (Reuters, January 2022, reported by Euronews).

Bangladesh — Online Harassment Against Women: According to an unpublished UN Women study, 66% of surveyed women in Bangladesh reported receiving explicit or threatening messages on social media during and after the 2024 civil unrest. Women activists also reported threats of physical and sexual violence, demonstrating how online harassment can create fear for their safety offline. In response, UN Women and UNDP introduced Safetyforher.Net, an interactive drama addressing digital harassment, privacy violations, deepfakes and online blackmail. (Source: UN Women, Bangladesh).

International — Online Violence Against Women Journalists: A 2020 global study by UNESCO and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), involving 714 respondents from 125 countries, found that 73% of surveyed women journalists had experienced online violence related to their work. Additionally, 25% reported receiving threats of physical violence, while 18% received threats of sexual violence. The findings demonstrate how digital harassment can extend beyond online spaces, threatening women's physical safety and discouraging their participation in public life. (Source: UNESCO and ICFJ, 2020.)

The Inter-Parliamentary Union figures cited in Section 3.3 come from the same A/77/302 report, which uses them to show how digital violence narrows women's participation in public and political life.

What these cases share is that the harm began on a screen but did not stay there. Threats, harassment and the misuse of personal information can affect women's physical security, privacy, freedom of expression and participation in society.

4. Anatomy of Physical Threats

4.1 Definition and Scope of Physical Abduction Risk

Physical abduction risk exists in ordinary criminal activity, trafficking, armed conflict, forced recruitment and exploitation. Available international statistics usually count detected or verified cases rather than every incident, so they should not be read as the complete global prevalence of abduction. Abduction means the unlawful taking or confinement of a person without consent; motives range from ransom and financial gain to trafficking, forced marriage, sexual exploitation and recruitment by armed groups. Women and girls face added vulnerability where discrimination, displacement, poverty or limited access to protection restrict their ability to seek help.

The surrounding environment matters as much as the perpetrator: poorly secured public spaces, unsafe transport routes, inadequate child-protection systems, weak reporting mechanisms and limited access to law enforcement all make prevention and intervention harder, and in conflict-affected areas displacement and the breakdown of essential services magnify every one of these weaknesses.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024 offers one measure of the wider exploitation risk: women and girls represented 61 per cent of the 68,836 detected trafficking victims reported by 135 countries in 2022, with adult women at 39 per cent and girls at 22 per cent. The report was produced to analyse global trafficking patterns and support prevention and criminal-justice responses, and it is relevant because trafficking involves transportation, coercion and exploitation that can overlap with abduction. The two are not identical, however: trafficking is defined by the acts, means and purpose specified in law, whereas abduction concerns the unlawful taking or confinement of a person, so trafficking statistics should never be presented as abduction statistics. (UNODC)

Assessing physical abduction risk therefore requires more than counting reported incidents. It means identifying vulnerable settings, recognizing warning signs, opening safe reporting channels and ensuring that authorities can investigate allegations promptly. Survivors may require medical care, psychological support, legal assistance and protection from further exploitation, and reliable data collection and cooperation among governments, international organisations and community services are essential to identify patterns, strengthen accountability and improve prevention.

4.2 Criminal and Legal Definitions of Forced Disappearance and Kidnapping

Understanding the legal distinctions between different forms of abduction is important when determining how incidents should be investigated and addressed under international law.

Enforced disappearance is legally narrower than ordinary kidnapping. Under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, enforced disappearance involves deprivation of liberty by State agents or persons acting with State authorization, support or acquiescence, followed by refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or concealment of the person's fate or whereabouts.

An ordinary kidnapping by a private criminal group does not automatically constitute enforced disappearance under this definition. This distinction matters in the study of abduction because international law contains different legal categories for different forms of unlawful deprivation of liberty.

4.3 Random Street Crimes versus Planned and Targeted Abductions

Abductions can differ in their planning, purpose, perpetrators and circumstances. Examining documented cases helps distinguish incidents occurring in ordinary civilian settings from those connected to organized criminal activity or armed conflict.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the abductions documented in Section 3.2 were not random street crimes: United Nations reporting attributed them to numerous armed groups across several provinces, and identified recruitment, ransom or extortion and sexual violence among the purposes (S/2024/705; United Nations Digital Library). In Sudan, women and girls were abducted in the context of conflict and in some cases subjected to sexual captivity or ransom-related exploitation, showing how sharply abduction patterns can shift during armed conflict (see Section 3.2).

4.4 Urban Transport Safety and Environmental Risk Factors

The design of neighborhoods and public transportation systems shapes women's safety.
Poor visibility, unsafe waiting areas, unclear pickup points and limited access to assistance raise vulnerability during ordinary journeys, and these four cases show how planning, transport reform and technology can reduce it.

1. Egypt — Poorly Designed Neighbourhoods

In Cairo and Giza, Egypt, UN Women's Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces programme documented efforts to improve the safety of neighbourhoods for women and girls. In selected areas, local authorities and community groups introduced physical changes to public spaces, including separating pedestrian areas from vehicle zones and improving spaces around schools. These measures were informed by the safety needs of women and girls and aimed to make neighbourhoods more accessible and welcoming. This example demonstrates how urban planning can contribute to safer public environments.
Source: UN Women, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces: Global Results Report 2017–2020.

2. Pakistan — Unsafe Transport Routes and Stations

Research in Lahore by the Urban Institute and Information Technology University Punjab mapped where transport users experienced harassment, violence or insecurity at every stage of the journey, from walking to a stop to boarding and travel, and identified poorly marked pickup points, unreliable schedules and low awareness of harassment among transport staff.

The team explored smartphone mapping of unsafe locations so authorities could target improvements; the lesson is that safety depends on the entire journey, not just the vehicle.

Source: Urban Institute, Using Technology to Improve Women's Safety in Pakistan's Urban Transit Systems, 19 December 20

3. Ecuador — Unsafe Public Transportation and Waiting Areas

A 2011 scoping study in Quito found that 68% of women surveyed had experienced sexual violence in public spaces during the previous year and 84% considered public transportation unsafe.

Quito responded by amending its local ordinance against sexual harassment in public spaces and adopting the 2013 Quito Safe City for Women and Girls Plan, which prioritised safer transportation and stronger municipal prevention and response services.

Source: UN Women, Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces: Global Results Report, p. 8.

4. India — Identifying High-Risk Public Areas

India's Safe City Projects cover eight major cities (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai), identifying crime hotspots, expanding CCTV surveillance, staffing women's police help desks and deploying patrols in areas considered at risk.
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Safe City Projects.

Relevance to the Agenda
These examples show how urban design, better-monitored transport routes, visible waiting areas, technology-assisted risk mapping and accessible reporting reduce vulnerability.
Coordinated action by local authorities, transport providers, law enforcement and communities is what makes public spaces safer for women and girls.

4.5 Objectification and Lack of Empathy

Objectification and a lack of empathy can contribute to environments where women's safety, dignity and rights are disregarded. When a woman is treated as an object rather than a person, the restraint that empathy normally places on behaviour weakens: her discomfort becomes easier to ignore, her refusal becomes easier to override, and harm done to her feels less like harm. Online, anonymity sharpens this effect, because a target reduced to a profile or a photograph is easier to mistreat than a person standing in front of the abuser. The same indifference appears offline in street harassment, in victim-blaming after an assault, and in institutions that treat reports of violence as routine paperwork rather than emergencies.

The scale of the violence this indifference permits is documented globally. As noted in Section 3.1, roughly one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, a finding that covers partner and non-partner violence but not every form of harassment or digital abuse (WHO, 2021).

1. Online Threats Against Women in Public Life

According to a study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 44% of the women parliamentarians surveyed across five regions reported receiving threats of death, rape, beatings or abduction. The findings highlight how women in public life can face threats and intimidation, including through digital platforms, which may undermine their safety and participation in public affairs. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016, Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians)

2. Normalized abuse and its reach

Objectification helps explain why such levels become possible and persist: where abuse is normalized, it is excused, ignored or treated as inevitable. The online abuse of women journalists and politicians (Sections 3.3 and 3.4) is one visible expression; the reporting barriers in Section 7.2 are another. Where objectification becomes normal, abuse becomes unremarkable, and both the violence and the silence around it grow.

Addressing these challenges requires public awareness, respectful treatment, accessible support services and effective accountability mechanisms.

4.6 Underground Markets Exploiting Women for Financial Profit

Financial incentives can drive trafficking and other forms of exploitation, making it important to examine how criminal networks profit from the abuse of women and girls.

Trafficking in persons generates financial incentives for the exploitation of women and girls. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), sexual exploitation and forced labour are among the major purposes of human trafficking. Women may be exploited in commercial sex, domestic work and other forms of forced labour. These crimes show how perpetrators exploit vulnerable individuals for financial gain, which is why victim identification, stronger law enforcement and measures to disrupt trafficking networks matter so much. (UNODC, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024)

The financial scale of this exploitation is now well documented. The ILO's 2024 report Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour estimated that forced labour generates about $236 billion in illegal profits every year, an increase of 37% since 2014, with exploiters extracting close to $10,000 per victim on average. Forced commercial sexual exploitation was the most lucrative sector, yielding roughly $27,252 per victim annually, and its victims are overwhelmingly women and girls (ILO, 2024). Profits on this scale explain why trafficking networks invest in recruitment, transportation and concealment, and why enforcement that follows the money, and not only the rescue, matters.
The identification and prosecution of traffickers are essential to preventing further exploitation. Criminal investigations and court cases can help authorities understand how victims are recruited, transported and exploited, including situations involving coercion, deception or abduction. Strengthening cross-border cooperation, providing safe reporting mechanisms and investigating the financial proceeds of trafficking can help protect women and girls from exploitation in both physical and digital spaces.
Relevance to the Agenda: These issues show that exploitation is sustained by both attitudes and money. Prevention therefore requires social and institutional responses together: survivor-centred support, effective investigations and cooperation that disrupts the profitability of trafficking networks.

4.7 Unsafe Workplaces

Workplace safety is an important part of protecting women from physical, psychological and sexual harm. Violence and harassment at work can undermine personal security, restrict participation and discourage individuals from reporting abuse.

According to the 2022 report Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey, published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Lloyd's Register Foundation and Gallup, 22.8 per cent of employed people worldwide had experienced physical, psychological or sexual violence and harassment at work during their working lives. The report examined these forms of violence and harassment separately.

The survey also found that young women were twice as likely as young men to have experienced sexual violence and harassment at work. These findings point to the need for effective workplace policies, confidential complaint procedures and appropriate responses to reports of harassment and violence (ILO, Lloyd's Register Foundation and Gallup, 2022)

4.8 Poor Law and Order and Failure to Serve Justice

Effective prevention requires more than laws on paper. Police must be able to receive complaints, investigate cases, collect evidence and protect complainants and witnesses.

Afghanistan — Barriers to Justice

Afghanistan demonstrates how weaknesses in the justice system can prevent women and girls from obtaining justice for violence committed against them. According to a December 2020 report by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 303 cases of violence against women and girls were documented between September 2018 and February 2020. Of these cases, 17% were not pursued by the relevant institutions because survivors either did not file a complaint or later withdrew it. The report highlighted that this placed an unfair burden on survivors to ensure that justice was served, rather than requiring the justice system to act on their behalf. Such weaknesses demonstrate the importance of effective investigations, survivor protection, and stronger institutional accountability to ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for their crimes. (UNAMA and OHCHR, 2020, p. 3).

Nigeria — Gaps Between Investigation and Prosecution

Nigeria demonstrates how weaknesses in law enforcement and prosecution can prevent survivors of gender-based violence from obtaining justice. According to the United Nations' report on conflict-related sexual violence published in March 2021, a government investigation panel documented 210 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2020, affecting 94 girls, 86 women and 30 boys. Although a specialised unit within the Office of the Attorney General investigated and prosecuted crimes committed by Boko Haram factions, no cases of sexual violence had been prosecuted by that unit at the time of the report. This highlights the gap between investigating crimes and holding perpetrators accountable. Strengthening investigations, improving access to justice and ensuring effective prosecution are essential to protecting women and girls, particularly in conflict- affected areas. (United Nations) Secretary General, March 2021)

United States — Strengthening Survivor-Centred Prosecution

The United States Department of Justice acknowledged that misconceptions about sexual assault and domestic violence can prevent valid cases from being prosecuted. In May 2024, it introduced a framework developed with input from over 120 prosecutors, advocates, academics and investigators to improve investigations, protect survivors from further trauma and strengthen accountability for perpetrators.

This underlines the need for effective investigations and a fair, survivor-centred justice system. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024, Framework for Prosecutors to Strengthen Our National Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Involving Adult Victims)

Democratic Republic of the Congo — Insecurity and Civilian Protection

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations Security Council reported that attacks by armed groups caused civilian casualties and increased protection risks. An offensive by the March 23 Movement (M23) displaced 350,000 people in one week, disrupting essential services, including food distribution and hospital operations.

The Council also expressed concern about human rights violations, including gender-based violence, sexual violence in conflict, and the abduction and recruitment of children. It called for an end to these violations and emphasized the importance of protecting civilians and holding perpetrators accountable.

This case shows how poor security and inadequate accountability can increase abduction risks and leave women and children vulnerable to violence, underscoring the need for effective law enforcement and stronger protection mechanisms. (United Nations Security Council, 2024)

Relevance to the Agenda: laws alone do not ensure safety; accessible reporting mechanisms, competent investigations, survivor protection, fair prosecutions and institutional accountability are what turn legal text into real protection.

4.9 Documented patterns of Physical Abduction

Physical abduction can occur in different contexts, and this study guide focuses on documented patterns rather than providing operational instructions that could facilitate a crime.
The case studies in Section 3.2 show the main settings in which abduction occurs: armed conflict, displacement, trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Sudan, discussed in Section 3.2, shows how these patterns assemble: abduction, sexual slavery and ransom economics appear together in conflict, and the same conditions suppress reporting about them. Fear of retaliation, social stigma and a lack of confidence in police and justice institutions discourage survivors from coming forward, and the United Nations has identified these barriers as contributing to the underreporting of conflict-related sexual violence in Sudan (Security Council Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, summary of the meeting on Sudan, S/2024/203, 2024).

Abduction risks may increase when conflict displaces families, weakens law enforcement and disrupts access to essential services. Preventing physical abduction requires coordinated action by governments, law enforcement agencies, schools, communities and humanitarian organisations. Priorities include accessible reporting mechanisms, timely investigations, protection for survivors and witnesses, support for displaced families, and accountability for perpetrators. Particular attention should be given to women and girls in conflict-affected communities, who face additional barriers to obtaining protection and justice.

5. Anatomy of Digital Threats

5.1 Basics of Digital Threats

Digital threats against women and girls include online harassment, cyberstalking, sexual harassment, threats, the misuse of private information, and gender-based hate speech. The United Nations Secretary-General's report Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate All Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls explains that digital violence can take many forms, including stalking, sexual harassment, the sharing of personal information without consent, and technology-enabled monitoring and threats. The report also highlights how traffickers use technology to recruit, control and exploit victims. These threats are relevant to preventing abduction because digital platforms can be exploited to target, monitor or manipulate women and girls, making online safety an important part of protecting their physical security. (United Nations Secretary-General, 2022, A/77/302, pp. 3-4, paras. 7-11)

The report further demonstrates the widespread nature of digital violence against women and girls. A global study cited in the report found that 38 per cent of women had personally experienced online violence, while 85 per cent of women who used the internet had witnessed digital violence against other women. The most common forms included misinformation and defamation (67 per cent), cyber harassment (66 per cent) and hate speech (65 per cent). Furthermore, only one in four women reported the abusive behaviour to the online platform where it occurred, while nearly three-quarters expressed concern that online abuse could escalate into offline threats. These findings point to better online reporting, stronger responses to digital abuse and coordinated prevention as priorities for protecting women and girls in both digital and physical spaces. (United Nations Secretary-General, 2022, A/77/302, p. 5, para. 12)

Pakistan enacted the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) in 2016 to address offences involving information systems and electronic communications. The legislation provides a legal framework for addressing certain forms of cybercrime, including unauthorised access to information systems and cyberstalking. However, the Act has subsequently been amended, including through the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act, 2025. Therefore, its current provisions and penalties must be assessed using the amended legislation. PECA is relevant to this agenda because legal protections against online harassment and other forms of digital abuse are important components of efforts to improve women's digital safety and security. (Government of Pakistan, Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, as amended in 2025)
The report's evidence on women parliamentarians and women journalists, and its finding that online abuse frequently escalates into offline attacks, appear in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 and are not repeated here.

5.2 The Root Causes

5.2.1 Unsafe Apps

Digital platforms have become an integral part of communication, education, and social interaction. However, when these platforms lack effective safeguards, they can expose women and girls to harassment, exploitation, and privacy violations. Understanding how online environments enable such abuse is essential to identifying the risks that threaten women's digital safety and may, in certain circumstances, extend into their physical lives.

Globally, women and girls face rampant online abuse, yet platforms fail to protect them. In a 2025 survey by Plan International and CNN (covering nine countries), 75% of girls reported having been harassed or faced harmful content online. Social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram) was cited most often as the medium for abuse. (Plan International)

Because of digital aggression, girls are abandoning online spaces for their safety. Another Plan International study noted multiple girls "closing social media accounts or taking breaks" to avoid abuse. Indeed, other research from UNESCO finds a majority of women journalists and young women report online violence, yet platforms rarely turn threats over to authorities or remove perpetrators. (Plan International, UNESCO)

The risks associated with digital platforms have also expanded with the development of artificial intelligence, which can be misused to create harmful content involving real people. In late 2025 and early 2026, Grok, an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool associated with the social media platform X, became the focus of international concern after users generated and shared sexualised images of real people without their consent, including images involving children. These so-called "undressing" images demonstrate how generative AI can be used to facilitate image-based abuse without the person depicted ever having created or shared an intimate image. (Reuters; The Guardian)

Such incidents raise a wider question: whether platforms act on reports at all. When emergency reporting goes unanswered, online threats translate into real danger. Nor is the problem confined to social media. Roblox, an online gaming and creation platform popular with children, has faced legal and public scrutiny over adults with alleged malicious intent contacting minors, leading to state investigations and a settlement with three US states (Nevada, Alabama and West Virginia) for a combined $35.8 million USD, along with promises to verify users' ages and limit adults' ability to contact users under 16. (Bloomberg; Insurance Journal)

Taken together, these examples show how inadequate safeguards undermine users' privacy and security across different digital environments, and why effective reporting, timely responses to abuse and stronger protections matter, particularly for women and children who face risks both online and beyond.

5.2.2 Mindset of Perpetrators

Understanding the mindset of perpetrators is essential to understanding why digital abuse continues despite growing awareness of its consequences. Anonymity, hostile attitudes, and the desire to control others can contribute to abusive behaviour online, allowing perpetrators to target women while making victims feel unsafe even in their own digital spaces.

Online abusers often feel shielded by anonymity or distance. UN Women warns that digital harassment is "amplified by AI and anonymity". Research shows those who troll or harass online typically exhibit anti-social traits (psychopathy, sadism, narcissism). This combination of hidden identity plus hostile personality normalizes extreme abuse. (UN Women)

The scale of this behaviour can be seen in research examining the experiences of women who are targeted online. Amnesty International's crowdsourced Twitter study 'Troll Patrol' sorted through ~288,000 tweets sent to 778 women politicians and journalists in the UK and USA in 2017, to find that the target group received one problematic or abusive message every 30 seconds on average. (Amnesty International)

However, digital abuse is not always driven by hostility towards strangers. Technology can also become a means of continuing existing conflicts and exerting control over someone with whom the perpetrator has a personal relationship. Technology facilitates age-old patterns of sexual and intimate violence. Many perpetrators use online tools to continue power plays after real-world conflicts. Experts note that image-based sexual abuse (so-called "revenge porn") is frequently carried out by ex-partners to punish or coerce victims. In such cases, abusers may threaten to expose private photos to pressure a woman into returning or obeying them. More generally, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) research finds that about 70% of cyber harassment victims had also endured intimate partner violence, showing that digital abuse often flows from personal conflicts. (EIGE)

These patterns show that motivations behind digital abuse range from anonymous harassment to attempts to intimidate, punish or control someone, and recognizing them explains how perpetrators use different digital methods to target victims.

5.3 How Digital Threats Occur

Digital abuse can take several forms, depending on the methods perpetrators use and the degree of access they have to their victims. One such form is stalking, in which repeated unwanted contact, surveillance, or the misuse of personal information can make victims feel that their privacy and safety are constantly threatened.

5.3.1 Cyberstalking

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), drawing on the EU-wide survey on gender-based violence and publishing its analysis in June 2026, reported that lifetime cyberstalking rates ranged from 7.4% to 18% across eight EU Member States. Among women aged 18-24, the figure was 23%. These numbers vary by region and cultural factors affect reporting. For instance, a 2022 study that surveyed 118 midwifery students at one Ghanaian university found that 80.3% had experienced one or more stalking behaviours during the previous six months. (EIGE; National Library of Medicine)

Stalking can occur through a range of digital methods, allowing perpetrators to maintain unwanted contact or gather information about their victims. Attackers use many tools: repeated texting or calling (even when ignored), creating fake profiles to send friend requests or harassing messages, or "doxxing" personal details to cause fear. They may also employ technology: for example, installing spy apps on a partner's phone to check her location, or using social media's "tagging" to broadcast her whereabouts.

The consequences can extend beyond the digital environment, affecting victims' sense of security and well-being in their everyday lives. Digital stalking erodes victims' safety even in their private spaces. It often triggers anxiety, sleep disturbances and trauma. In the UNESCO and ICFJ study discussed in Section 3.4, harm to mental health was the most frequently reported consequence of online violence, named by 26% of respondents, and 12% said they had sought medical or psychological help because of it (UNESCO and ICFJ, 2020).

Together, these examples show how digital stalking can turn everyday technologies into tools of intimidation and surveillance, undermining a victim's ability to feel safe both online and in private spaces.

5.3.2 Blackmailing

While stalking allows perpetrators to monitor and intimidate their victims, blackmail gives them another way to exert control. By threatening to expose private information or intimate images, perpetrators can pressure victims into complying with demands, turning personal information into a tool of coercion.

“Sextortion” refers to using threats to expose intimate images, videos, or other sensitive information to coerce a person into providing money, further sexual content, sexual acts, or other demands. Perpetrators may obtain this material through deception, manipulation, unauthorised access to accounts, or images initially shared consensually within a relationship.Research across multiple countries highlights the scale of this threat. A peer-reviewed study from 2024 surveyed 16,693 respondents across 10 countries. It estimated that 14.5% had experienced threats to distribute their intimate images, while 4.8% reported having perpetrated such threats. (ScienceDirect/RMIT)

Young people are also affected by threats involving intimate images. In 2025, Thorn surveyed 1,200 young people in the US aged 13 to 20. Overall, 24% reported that someone had threatened to share a sexual image of them to force them to do something. The rate was 26% among women and girls and 20% among men and boys. (Thorn)

These findings show how threats involving private images can manipulate and control victims, including young people. But digital abuse does not always depend on threats or direct communication; perpetrators may also secretly monitor someone, access personal accounts, or gather information without their knowledge.

5.3.3 Spyware, Surveillance and Data Breaches

Hidden surveillance tools and unauthorised access to personal accounts can allow perpetrators to invade a victim’s privacy without their awareness. Such methods can make it difficult for victims to know when they are being monitored or how much of their personal information has been exposed.

A 2026 report by Kaspersky on technology-enabled abuse found that more than 34,000 users were affected by stalkerware in 2024 and 2025. Its analysis of dark web marketplaces documented doxxing and stalking services offered for prices between $50 and $4,000, including tools intended to locate, track, or monitor individuals. (Kaspersky)
Surveys also indicate that these risks can occur within personal relationships, where someone may misuse access or technology to monitor a partner. Another Kaspersky survey of 21,000 people aged 16 and older across 21 countries found that 7% reported that a current or former partner had installed stalkerware on their device without their consent. Ten percent reported having their location tracked, and another 10% reported that their social-media accounts or email had been hacked by a current or former partner. Crucially, 42% of female respondents reported some form of abuse or harassment from a current or former partner, compared with 36% of male respondents. (Kaspersky)

The use of spyware is not limited to individuals or intimate relationships. Surveillance technology can also be used by powerful institutions, raising broader concerns about privacy, freedom, and the protection of individuals who may be targeted because of their work or public roles.

An investigation by Amnesty International in 2023 reported that Pegasus, a type of highly invasive spyware, was used by Indian Authorities to track multiple journalists and politicians; these attacks allegedly began as early as July 2017. This case shows that spyware can be used by anyone from immediate family members to state actors. (Amnesty International)

Taken together, blackmailing, spyware, and data breaches show how technology can be used to threaten, manipulate, and monitor individuals, undermining personal autonomy and making digital spaces unsafe. They also underline the importance of protecting personal information, preventing unauthorised surveillance, and ensuring that victims have effective ways to report abuse and seek protection.

6. Aftermath & Societal Reaction

Abduction and technology-facilitated abuse can have consequences that continue long after the immediate incident has ended. Survivors may face psychological distress, physical injuries, and practical difficulties while trying to regain their safety and rebuild their lives. Examining these consequences helps explain why effective responses must address not only the initial abuse but also survivors' longer-term needs.

6.1 Immediate Psychological and Practical Aftermath

6.1.1 Psychological Effects

Abuse can cause severe trauma. The American Psychological Association (APA) notes that "hostage and kidnap survivors can experience stress reactions including denial, impaired memory, shock, numbness, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, and a sense of helplessness" (APA).

These reactions can occur in the short term. However, survivors may also experience acute stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For example, a 2021 meta-analysis of sexual trauma found that about 75% of victims in select high-income countries met diagnostic criteria for PTSD at one month, with many still symptomatic at 1-3 months (National Library of Medicine).

The psychological impact can be particularly severe in cases involving prolonged or extreme abuse. Research on women formerly enslaved by ISIS in Iraq found PTSD rates of 90.6% in one sample of 139 survivors and 97.9% in a separate sample of 194 women. Even so, survivors do not all experience the same symptoms or develop chronic conditions; psychological responses vary depending on the severity of the abuse and the support available. (National Library of Medicine; National Library of Medicine)

Although the consequences can be serious, appropriate support helps survivors address psychological distress. The WHO has issued a handbook on psychological first aid. Separately, a clinical case report published in 2025 examined an elderly Nigerian woman who spent 12 days in captivity before her release following a ransom payment. Afterward, she experienced recurrent distressing dreams, flashbacks, heightened alertness, sleep difficulties, and a persistent sense of danger. The report described her treatment using cognitive processing therapy. (WHO; National Library of Medicine)

Recovery is neither immediate nor uniform: survivors need different forms of psychological support depending on their experiences, and may also face physical harm and practical challenges requiring medical care and other essential services.

6.1.2 Physical and Practical Impacts

The consequences of abduction and violence can extend to survivors' physical health, particularly when they experience injuries, prolonged captivity, or inadequate access to medical care. Many abductees suffer injuries, malnutrition, or sexual violence. Prolonged captivity can expose survivors to poor sanitation and infectious diseases and can result in lasting complications. Of the countries assessed by the WHO, only about 48% had health guidelines for violence against women in line with its recommendations, and only 35% provided mental health services to victims. (WHO)

The effects of violence are also reflected in reports from conflict-affected settings, where survivors may encounter serious injuries and limited access to appropriate healthcare. Human Rights Watch documented sexual violence in Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman. Eighteen healthcare providers interviewed by HRW reported caring for 262 survivors between April 2023 and February 2024. Healthcare workers described survivors with debilitating physical injuries, including vaginal bleeding, bruising and other trauma. They reported that injuries contributed to the deaths of at least four women. (HRW)

Taken together, these consequences show that the aftermath of abduction and abuse can be complex and long-lasting, and that coordinated medical care, psychological support and accessible services are central to recovery.

6.2 Family Pressure, Gossip, and Judgmental Reactions

The aftermath of abduction and abuse is shaped not only by the harm survivors experience but also by how their families and communities respond to them. Instead of receiving understanding and support, some survivors encounter blame, gossip, exclusion, and pressure to conform to social expectations. These reactions can deepen their trauma and create additional barriers to rebuilding their lives.

6.2.1 Cultural Norms and Victim-Blamimg

In many societies, women are held partly or fully responsible for perceived sexual impropriety. Consequently, survivors often face victim-blaming and may be accused of immorality or of having 'exposed' themselves. A 2022 survey by IPSOS showed that 15% of respondents globally believed violence against women is provoked by the victim. (IPSOS)

These attitudes are linked to cultural norms surrounding honour and marriage. In such contexts, a sexual assault, or even spending time alone with a man, may be regarded as bringing dishonour upon the family. After abduction, survivors often marry quickly (sometimes to perpetrators) or are even killed to restore "honour," otherwise facing stigma. In Pakistan, the Christian teenager Maira Shahbaz was reported to have been abducted at age 14 and forced into marriage in 2020. Christian Solidarity Worldwide reported that she fled after a court ordered her to return to her alleged abductor. (Christian Solidarity Worldwide; USCIRF)

These pressures can have serious consequences when social expectations are used to justify violence against women or restrict their choices. Estimates of the scale of so-called "honour killings" in Pakistan vary by source and method: human rights defenders cited by Human Rights Watch have put the figure at around 1,000 women killed each year, while the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) documented at least 405 cases in 2024. The gap between the estimate and the documented count is itself revealing, since many such killings are never recorded, are misreported as suicides, or are concealed by families. (HRW; HRCP)

Such examples illustrate how victim-blaming and harmful interpretations of family honour compound the suffering caused by abduction and abuse, and how community rejection beyond the family can affect survivors' relationships, access to support and ability to reintegrate.

6.2.2 Consequences of Stigma

Societal reactions worsen trauma. In Nigeria, a UNICEF/International Alert report found that women freed from Boko Haram captivity were shunned by their communities because of the sexual violence they endured. Freed girls have been labeled "Boko Haram wives" or "terrorist spies," leading families to marry them off to regain acceptance. (International Alert)

Stigma can also affect survivors and their children long after the violence has occurred. According to United Nations reporting, in Iraq, stigma around "children of war" (offspring from women impregnated through rape by soldiers) has kept mothers isolated unless community leaders intervene. Moreover, women and children affected by sexual abuse have faced many hurdles in obtaining identity documents. This can restrict their access to essential services and their ability to exercise their rights. (United Nations)

The effects of social rejection can extend beyond personal relationships and influence whether survivors seek assistance. Broader studies of gender-based violence note that stigma and fear of dishonour are 'well-documented barriers to healthcare' for survivors. These barriers can deter survivors from reporting attacks or seeking care, making it difficult to determine the true extent of these crimes. In other words, if a survivor fears hostility, she may avoid police or clinics, prolonging her harm. (National Library of Medicine)

Stigma can therefore intensify the practical difficulties survivors already face as they attempt to resume their everyday lives. Practically, abduction disrupts daily life; education, employment, and interpersonal relationships face abrupt interruption and rarely return to normal as shock and adjustment difficulties persist. A study on the economic impacts of sexual assault found that victims' employment rates fell by 6 percentage points over the five years following an assault. These effects persisted for at least a decade and were associated with a 15% decline in employment and a 17% loss in earnings. (AEA)

Taken together, these examples show that family pressure, harmful cultural expectations, community rejection and economic disruption extend the consequences of abduction and abuse far beyond the initial incident, and that recovery requires challenging victim-blaming and stigma as well as supporting survivors.

7. The Failures: Why Physical & Online Spaces Remain Unsafe

Despite growing awareness of violence against women and better investigative and reporting systems, significant barriers still prevent perpetrators from being identified and held accountable: gaps in criminal investigations, delays in forensic testing and victims' reluctance to report allow offenders to escape detection, in both physical and digital spaces.

7.1 The Disconnect in Criminal Profiling

One challenge in preventing repeated violence is the failure to identify connections between incidents that may initially appear unrelated. When investigative systems do not effectively connect evidence across cases, perpetrators may remain undetected even when multiple victims have experienced similar crimes.

In South Africa, a 2026 case study of the Ekurhuleni serial rape investigation reported that an individual offender was linked to 97 rape-related incidents, 49 through DNA evidence; the prosecution resulted in convictions on 90 counts of rape and additional offences. Insufficient protocols for criminal profiling allow such criminals to roam free for long periods till they are, if ever, caught. (Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 2026)

Identifying and tracking perpetrators comes with many limiting factors. In the United States, FBI data show that, of 39,565 sexual assault kits tested to completion nationwide, 13,521 produced DNA profiles suitable for entry into CODIS, the FBI's DNA database, and of those profiles only 6,366 matched existing database entries. Separately, Department of Justice data on violent crime show that a staggering 78% of offenses were committed by non-strangers (friends, family or acquaintances of victims), who are likely to be overlooked by law enforcement as suspects. The two figures come from different datasets, but together they describe the same problem: the justice system is slow to connect cases and slow to look at the people closest to the victim. (FBI; DOJ)

These challenges show why investigations cannot proceed in isolation: when forensic evidence is not connected across cases, patterns of repeated offending remain concealed and perpetrators stay unidentified longer.

A forensic study of 119 unsolved South African rapes found they formed 22 distinct serial crime series once DNA profiles were examined. In other words, many "unrelated" assaults involved the same perpetrator. Yet delays in testing sexual-assault kits have long kept these patterns hidden. A peer-reviewed study shows that 25-50% of tested rape kits yield viable DNA profiles, and only about half of those profiles match any known offender. Insufficient linkage of forensic data means criminals like the Ekurhuleni serial rapist can continue offending. (ResearchGate; APA PsycNet)

The issue is not limited to South Africa or the United States: investigative priorities and public perceptions also influence which perpetrators are suspected and how cases are approached.

Internationally, the data is not much different; In India's national survey, most sexual violence is committed by husbands, family or acquaintances, not strangers. Despite this, public messaging often emphasizes stranger abduction, while police investigations may similarly prioritize stranger suspects. (DHS Program)

Taken together, these examples show how gaps in forensic testing, data linkage and investigative approach leave perpetrators unidentified. And investigations only work when victims feel safe reporting: fear of retaliation or distrust of authorities can stop cases from reaching law enforcement at all

7.2 The Silencing Effect: Victims Hide Threats

Underreporting creates another major obstacle to preventing violence against women. Survivors may remain silent because they fear retaliation, anticipate disbelief, or worry that reporting will expose them to further harm. When incidents go unreported, authorities lack the information needed to investigate offences, identify perpetrators and recognize repeated patterns of abuse.

Globally, fewer than 40% of women who experience physical or sexual violence seek any help. And of those, under 10% ever report incidents to police. This leads to countless crimes never entering justice systems and many offenders entirely absent from databases. (UN Women)

Fear and distrust can contribute to this silence. In one US DOJ report, 20% of rape survivors feared retaliation if they spoke out, and 13% believed police "would do nothing" even if they reported. (Bureau of Justice Statistics)

These concerns become especially serious when perpetrators use threats or private information to pressure victims into silence, turning the risk of further exposure into an additional barrier to seeking help.

In a similar vein, offenders blackmail victims to avoid being reported to law enforcement: A UN-backed report describes a village gang that raped a Pakistani girl and circulated a video. The perpetrators then threatened her, warning that the video would spread further if she spoke out. (Human Rights Asia)

The response of institutions can also shape whether survivors believe reporting is safe. When victims face legal consequences or public blame instead of protection, their experiences may discourage others from coming forward.

In Indonesia, schoolteacher Baiq Nuril Maknun recorded her principal's crude sexual advances and shared them to complain. Instead of protecting her, authorities prosecuted and jailed Maknun for "distribution of pornography". Only after international outcry did the president grant her amnesty. Activists note this case "punished the victim instead of the perpetrator". Maknun's ordeal (and the justice minister's remark that she was the "real victim") underscore how reporting threats can backfire on women, discouraging others from coming forward (BBC).

These examples reveal how investigative gaps and reporting barriers reinforce one another: unidentified perpetrators erode confidence in the justice system, while fear of retaliation keeps incidents unreported and leaves investigators with less evidence. Addressing this requires stronger coordination, reliable reporting mechanisms and responses that protect survivors rather than exposing them to further harm.

7.3 Collapse of Safety Protocols

Even when laws and protective institutions exist, their effectiveness depends on how consistently they respond to threats and support victims. Delays in the justice process, misconduct by those responsible for protection, and unequal access to safety measures can leave women vulnerable even where protective mechanisms are formally in place.

A UNDP report showed that in 2024, Pakistan saw 135,000 cybercrime complaints, however only 0.6% of those (a mere 826 cases) advanced to the judicial stage. This shows significant systemic failures that make only a select minority of victims actually see any justice being delivered. (UNDP)

The effectiveness of protective institutions also depends on the conduct of the people working within them. In certain cases, those responsible for protection from attacks may themselves be offenders. In March 2025, the UN Secretary-General's annual report revealed that the UN had recorded 102 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions during 2024. These allegations involved 125 victims, including 98 adults and 27 children. The Democratic Republic of the Congo accounted for 44 allegations and the Central African Republic for 40. These incidents highlight how an institution meant to ensure safety can be disastrously incompetent in practice. (AP News)

Beyond institutional failures, a person's financial circumstances can also influence their ability to access protection and escape unsafe environments. Wealth strongly correlates with safety. A study found that in England, women living in poverty were around thrice as likely to have faced violence compared to wealthier women. Poverty limits options: women with fewer financial resources cannot easily relocate, install security, or access private protection. (Office for National Statistics, UK)

Together, these examples show that safety depends on protective systems being accessible, reliable and accountable; when they fail, victims are left unprotected, especially where the law itself provides unequal or incomplete protection against gender-based violence.

7.4 Selective Justice Systems

The ability to obtain justice varies across countries and communities. Legal protections may be incomplete, cases may remain unresolved, and the experiences of some victims may receive less effective recognition than others, weakening confidence in justice systems and leaving survivors without meaningful remedies.

Around the world, justice for violence against women is inconsistent. A 2022 UN survey found only 14% of women live in countries with “comprehensive” legal protection against gender-based violence. As of March 2026, about 54% of countries still have no law defining rape as lack of consent. (UN Women; United Nations in South Africa)

These gaps are also reflected in case outcomes and delays within national justice systems. In India, for example, official National Crime Records Bureau data show persistent obstacles to justice for Scheduled Castes. In 2024, the conviction rate for cases under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act involving Scheduled Castes was 33.9%, while 95.2% of cases before the courts remained pending at year-end.

Similar patterns occur globally: Mexico Evalúa estimated a 93.8% impunity rate for rape in 2022 and a 95.85% rate for sexual abuse in 2023. Such selective enforcement means only some victims see justice. (Dalit Project; Mexico Evalúa)

The treatment of victims can also be influenced by how courts interpret evidence, consent, and the circumstances surrounding an alleged offence. In a 2024 ruling, the Pakistan Supreme Court converted what the victim described as a rape by her brother’s friend, supported by witnesses who reported hearing her outcry, into a case of zina (fornication), reasoning that she was a consenting party because there was no physical evidence of resistance. This judgement sets a dangerous precedent that overlooks the possibility of a shock response. (Dawn)

These examples show how gaps in legal protection, delays and case handling determine whether survivors obtain justice. Inconsistent accountability lets perpetrators off lightly and discourages reporting, which is especially concerning when digital threats can develop into physical violence.

8. How Digital Threats Result in Physical Abductions

Digital platforms can create opportunities for communication and connection, but they can also be exploited to identify, monitor, manipulate, and threaten women and girls. In some cases, online contact becomes a means of establishing trust before a perpetrator attempts to control or abduct a victim.

A 2020 infographic report from The Economist showed that the overall prevalence of online violence (which may or may not include physical harm) against women was 85%, while in certain regions it was significantly higher, such as 98% in the Middle East. The same study showed global prevalence rates of 52% and 55% for violent threats and doxxing (revealing a victim's personal information, such as home address) respectively. These figures align with the study cited in Section 5.1, in which 85% of women online had witnessed digital violence against other women. (The Economist Intelligence Unit)

The connection between digital threats and physical harm is particularly evident in conflict-affected settings, where online surveillance and intimidation may intersect with existing risks to women's safety. An ACAPS analysis in northwestern Syria (late 2024 to early 2025) found that technology-facilitated gender-based violence frequently escalated from digital threats to "physical and sexual violence, so called 'honour killings', and forced marriage". Perpetrators there reportedly tracked victims via social media, sending direct threats that silenced families of missing women. (ACAPS)

Online contact can also allow perpetrators to learn about a victim's routines and movements, potentially using information shared on social media to facilitate physical crimes. In Gujarat, India (2023), a 16-year-old girl was kidnapped by a man she had met on Instagram. After months of online contact, he "forced the girl to elope" and when she refused, conspired to abduct her. Police found he had monitored her daily movements via her social media activity (Times of India).

Digital platforms can also be used to establish deceptive relationships that lead victims into situations of physical danger, including across national borders. In a similar yet more complex case from 2025, The Nigeria Police Force reported the recovery of two Ghanaian women who had been abducted in an operation involving a Facebook romance scam and cross-border criminal network operating in both Ghana and Nigeria. (Nigeria Police Force)

Taken together, these cases show that perpetrators may exploit online relationships, monitor victims' movements, use personal information to intimidate, or deceive victims into dangerous situations, which is why online safety cannot be separated from physical safety. Preventing abductions requires attention to both digital and physical warning signs, alongside effective reporting, coordinated investigations and accessible protection.

9. Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMA)

• What gaps in existing national laws and international frameworks allow the abduction and trafficking of women and girls to continue, and how should Member States address them?

• How can Member States improve safety in public spaces, educational institutions, workplaces and transportation systems to reduce the risk of abduction?

• What measures, including early-warning systems, emergency response procedures and accessible reporting mechanisms, can help prevent abductions and protect women and girls?

• How should governments and digital platforms address cyberstalking, online blackmail, doxxing and unauthorized surveillance that may expose women and girls to physical harm?

• How can Member States strengthen law enforcement, investigations and judicial accountability to ensure perpetrators are held responsible?

• What role should international organizations, NGOs and digital platforms play in preventing abductions and improving cooperation between countries?

• How can women and girls affected by armed conflict, displacement and humanitarian emergencies receive better protection against abduction and exploitation?

• What measures can ensure survivors have access to confidential reporting, legal assistance, medical care, psychological support and safe shelters?

• How can Member States address victim-blaming, social stigma and harmful practices that discourage survivors from reporting abuse or seeking assistance?

• What funding mechanisms, international cooperation frameworks and monitoring procedures should be established to ensure the effective implementation of policies protecting women's digital and physical spaces?

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