

2022

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence as an Early Warning Indicator of Escalating Violence And Armed Conflict

Christie J. Edwards

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lawcommons.luc.edu/lucilr>



Part of the [International Law Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Christie J. Edwards *Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence as an Early Warning Indicator of Escalating Violence And Armed Conflict*, 19 Loy. U. Chi. Int'l L. Rev. 1 ().

Available at: <https://lawcommons.luc.edu/lucilr/vol19/iss1/2>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by LAW eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Loyola University Chicago International Law Review by an authorized editor of LAW eCommons. For more information, please contact [law-library@luc.edu](mailto:law-library@luc.edu).

COMBATING INCELS: ADDRESSING MISOGYNISTIC VIOLENCE AS  
AN EARLY WARNING INDICATOR OF ESCALATING  
VIOLENCE AND ARMED CONFLICT

Christie J. Edwards, JD, LL.M.\*

**Abstract**

The spectrum of misogynistic violence between incels (“involuntary celibates”), non-State armed groups, and armed forces using extreme violence against women is based around the desire to restore “traditional” gender norms of male dominance, maintain systemic inequality between men and women, and often manifest in gender-based hate crimes before escalating into community violence and armed conflict. Governments and policy makers must dismantle structural inequalities and discrimination against women, as well as ensure effective criminal justice responses to gender-based hate crimes and all other forms of violence against women in order to address and prevent violence and armed conflict, as well as build sustainable peace.

**Table of Contents**

I. Introduction . . . . .	2
II. Historical and Current Trends in Violence Against Women . . . . .	3
A. Misogyny, Domestic Violence, and Intersectional Gender-Based Hate Crimes . . . . .	3
B. The Incel Movement’s Links to White Supremacy and Violent Far-Right Extremists . . . . .	6
C. Systemic Gender Discrimination and the Impact on Social Unrest . . . . .	10
D. Links Between Gender Inequality and Armed Conflict . . . . .	13
III. Legal Frameworks Addressing Discrimination and Violence Against Women . . . . .	19
IV. Legal and Political Remedies to Address All Forms of Misogyny, Discrimination, Violence Against Women, and Prevention of Armed Conflict . . . . .	22
A. Policy Approaches for Prevention of Violence and Armed Conflict . . . . .	22
B. Accountability for All Forms of Violence against Women in Criminal Justice Systems . . . . .	23
C. Peacebuilding Through Enhancing Gender Equality . . . . .	24
V. Conclusion . . . . .	25

---

\* Christie J. Edwards, JD, LL.M, is a human rights lawyer, humanitarian implementer, and gender specialist who works globally on gender and conflict, sexual violence, human rights, and international humanitarian law.

## I. Introduction

In May 2014, twenty-two-year-old Elliot Rodger went on a murderous spree near Santa Barbara, California, targeting women from a sorority “‘to exact revenge on the society’ that had ‘denied’ him sex and love.”<sup>1</sup> The following month, among other crimes, the Islamic State group began their campaign and conquest of territory, demarcated by mass executions, kidnappings, sexual slavery, gender-based torture,<sup>2</sup> and rape, among other crimes.<sup>3</sup> The systematic enslavement and rape of Yazidi women and girls became a core practice and key theological tenet of the Islamic State group since it announced they were reinstating the practice of slavery in 2014, and these practices were often highlighted in their recruitment efforts.<sup>4</sup>

At first glance, Rodger’s attack on women at a California sorority, and the Islamic State group’s recruitment campaign advertising the sex slaves given to caliphate recruits and fighters may not seem to be directly linked, but the spectrum of misogynistic violence between lone shooters and non-State armed groups using extreme violence or engaged in armed conflict has many troubling ideological commonalities based around gender inequalities and the desire to restore “traditional” gender norms of male dominance,<sup>5</sup> and often manifest in gender-based hate crimes before escalating into community violence and armed conflict.<sup>6</sup>

The correlation between misogyny and acts of violent extremism take place at the individual level, as many of the perpetrators of violent extremism have documented histories of committing domestic abuse and expressed misogyny, and at the larger community or collective level, where misogyny and control over women’s bodies is part of the explicit ideology and tactics of the world’s most prominent terrorist groups and non-State armed groups in conflict areas.<sup>7</sup> Numerous studies have shown significant support for a relationship between gender

---

<sup>1</sup> Elliot Rodger: *How Misogynist Killer Became ‘Incel Hero,’* BBC NEWS (Apr. 26, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43892189> [hereinafter *Elliot Rodger*].

<sup>2</sup> Christie J. Edwards, *Forced Contraception as a Means of Torture*, in GENDER PERSP. ON TORTURE: L. & PRAC. 139, 140 (Ctr. for Hum. Rts. & Humanitarian L., Am. Univ. Wash. Coll. L.).

<sup>3</sup> See U.N. Hum. Rts. Council Indep. Int’l Comm’n of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [UN COI], *They Came to Destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/32/CRP.2 (June 15, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Rukmini Callimachi, *ISIS Enshrines a Theology of Rape*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 13, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/14/world/middleeast/isis-enshrines-a-theology-of-rape.html>; *The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour*, DABIQ: THE FAILED CRUSADE, 14-16 (2014).

<sup>5</sup> *Male Supremacy*, S. POVERTY L. CTR., <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/male-supremacy> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> See *Gender-Based Hate Crimes*, OSCE OFF. FOR DEMOCRATIC INST. & HUM. RTS. (n.d.), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/1/480847.pdf> [hereinafter *Gender-Based Hate Crimes*]; see also *No. 10/07, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding*, OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL (Nov. 30, 2007), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/7/29452.pdf>; see also *Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes: A Resource Guide for NGOs in the OSCE Region*, OSCE OFF. FOR DEMOCRATIC INST. & HUM. RTS. 11 (2009), <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/a/39821.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Pablo Castillo Díaz & Nahla Valji, *Symbiosis of Misogyny and Violent Extremism: New Understandings and Policy Implications*, 72 J. INT’L AFF. 37, 38 (2019).

inequality, misogynistic violence, and armed conflict, concluding that “countries which have higher levels of gender inequality are more likely” to become involved in armed conflict, the levels of violence are more extreme, and peace agreements are more difficult to achieve and maintain than countries where women are treated with more equality.<sup>8</sup> Misogyny is therefore a “gateway,” motivator, and early warning signal that acts of individual violence towards women can escalate into broader community violence.

This article examines the ideological similarities and spectrum of discrimination, misogyny, violence, and escalation to armed conflict from individuals engaging in acts of violence towards women, to extremist groups and non-State armed groups. It also examines structural inequalities and gender disparities leading to inter-community conflict. The article concludes with proposed legal and political solutions for accountability, social cohesion, peacebuilding, and structural gender equality.

## II. Historical and Current Trends in Violence Against Women

### A. Misogyny, Domestic Violence, and Intersectional Gender-Based Hate Crimes

Man Haron Monis, who murdered two people during a siege at a café in Australia in 2014, had recently been charged with 22 counts of aggravated sexual assault, 14 counts of aggravated indecent assault, and 40 additional related offenses, as well as being an accessory to the brutal murder of his ex-wife immediately prior to the attack.<sup>9</sup> He also claimed allegiance to the Islamic State group, among his other radical viewpoints.<sup>10</sup> In 2016, Cedric Ford shot seventeen people at his workplace in Kansas, killing three, immediately after being served with a restraining order barring him from contact with his ex-girlfriend, who said that he had repeatedly abused her.<sup>11</sup> A few months later, following gunman Omar Mateen’s mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub during Pride month celebrations, investigators uncovered Mateen’s long history of domestic violence towards his ex-wife, as well as his antipathy towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and claim to be a follower of the Islamic State group.<sup>12</sup> In 2020, a seven-

---

<sup>8</sup> Erika Forsberg & Louise Olsson, *Gender Inequality and Internal Conflict*, OXFORD RSCH. ENCYCLOPEDIA POL. (Mar. 23, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.34>.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Safi & Ben Quinn, *Man Haron Monis: Fringe Figure Whose Crime Record and Erratic Behavior Made Him Notorious*, THE GUARDIAN (Dec. 15, 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/dec/15/man-haron-monis-sydney-siege-suspect>; Amanda Taub, *Control and Fear: What Mass Killings and Domestic Violence Have in Common*, N.Y. TIMES (June 15, 2016), <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/16/world/americas/control-and-fear-what-mass-killings-and-domestic-violence-have-in-common.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Safi & Quinn, *supra* note 9.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Haxel & Mark Berman, *Kansas Gunman Served with Restraining Order Just Before Shooting Spree, Police Say*, THE WASH. POST (Feb. 26, 2016, 6:38 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/02/26/kansas-gunman-served-protection-from-abuse-order-shortly-before-shootings-sheriff-says/>; Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Goldman, Joby Warrick & Max Bearak, *‘He Was Not A Stable Person’: Orlando Shooter Showed Signs of Emotional Trouble*, THE WASH. POST (June 12, 2016), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/insider/wp/2016/06/12/orlando-shooter-showed-signs-of-emotional-trouble/>.

teen-year-old young man became the first Canadian ever indicted for committing an “incel-inspired terror attack” after fatally stabbing one woman and injuring two others with a machete at an erotic massage parlor in Toronto, Canada.<sup>13</sup>

Analysis of F.B.I. data on mass shootings from 2009-2015 indicated that “57 percent of cases included a spouse, former spouse, or other family member among the victims, and that 16 percent of the attackers were previously charged with domestic violence.”<sup>14</sup> Another study found that since 2011, in twenty-two mass shootings, 86 percent of the shooters had a strong history of domestic violence, 50 percent had specifically targeted women, and 32 percent had stalked and harassed women.<sup>15</sup> Several of these perpetrators had been influenced by the incel movement, short for “involuntarily celibate,” a violent political belief system based on aggressive prejudice towards women and white supremacy.<sup>16</sup>

Perpetrators of domestic violence or intimate partner violence (usually men) follow a pattern of behavior seeking control over every aspect their partner’s (usually women) lives by physical force, resulting from feelings of low personal control by the abuser and a desire to enforce “traditional” gender roles where men have control over women’s bodies.<sup>17</sup> Some experts even refer to this behavior as “intimate terrorism.”<sup>18</sup> Outside of the home or the private sphere of a specific relationship, this behavior may escalate into a gender-based hate crime, or even a mass shooting or terror attack.<sup>19</sup>

Rodger is one of the more well-known idols of the incel movement, cited by a number of perpetrators who carry out attacks on women and other mass shootings or terror attacks.<sup>20</sup> The rapidly growing online incel community is primarily composed of young men who are angry and extremely frustrated by their inability to find sexual partners, and who see themselves as victims of oppressive feminism.<sup>21</sup> The incel ideology advocates violence and bloodshed primarily against

---

[www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/ex-wife-of-suspected-orlando-shooter-he-beat-me/2016/06/12/8a1963b4-30b8-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/ex-wife-of-suspected-orlando-shooter-he-beat-me/2016/06/12/8a1963b4-30b8-11e6-8ff7-7b6c1998b7a0_story.html); Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>13</sup> Justin Ling, *Incels Are Radicalized and Dangerous. But Are They Terrorists?*, FOREIGN POL’Y (June 2, 2020, 3:08 PM), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/06/02/incels-toronto-attack-terrorism-ideological-violence/>; *Teenage Boy Charged in Canada’s First ‘Incel’ Terror Case*, BBC NEWS (May 20, 2020), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52733060>.

<sup>14</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9; *Guns and Violence Against Women: America’s Uniquely Lethal Intimate Partner Violence Problem*, EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY SUPPORT FUND: REP., <https://everytownresearch.org/report/guns-and-violence-against-women-americas-uniquely-lethal-intimate-partner-violence-problem/> (last updated Jan. 26, 2022) [hereinafter *Guns and Violence Against Women*].

<sup>15</sup> Mark Follman, *Armed and Misogynist: How Toxic Masculinity Fuels Mass Shootings*, MOTHER JONES, <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2019/06/domestic-violence-misogyny-incels-mass-shootings/> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022); *Guns and Violence Against Women*, *supra* note 14.

<sup>16</sup> Shannon Zimmerman, et al., *Recognizing the Violent Extremist Ideology of ‘Incels’*, WOMEN IN INT’L SEC.: POL’Y BRIEF (2018), <https://www.wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Policybrief-Violent-Extremists-Incels.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9; Debra Umberson et al., *Domestic Violence, Personal Control, and Gender*, 60 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 442, 442 (1998).

<sup>18</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*; Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>20</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

women as a way to intimidate the broader society generally and women in particular.<sup>22</sup>

Violent misogynist attacks and gender-based hate crimes are motivated by common beliefs about male supremacy, sexuality, and the desire to violently restore a “traditional” and mythologized system of heterosexual gender norms where all men have access to and control of a female sexual partner.<sup>23</sup> While incel attacks and misogynistic attitudes and antipathy may not always focus on women from a specific religious or ethnic group, many women face intersectional discrimination and attacks due to their multiple and intersecting identities, which lead to stereotypes about how certain women are supposed to behave or look.<sup>24</sup>

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (“OSCE”) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights describes gender-based hate crimes as

criminal offences motivated by bias against a person’s gender [which] often seek to intimidate and suppress ways of life or expressions of identity that are perceived as not complying with traditional gender norms. . . The victims of such crimes are often targeted due to their perceived deviation from gender norms including on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>25</sup>

The OSCE notes that “hate crimes are message crimes,” which communicate to both individuals and entire communities that they are unwanted and unwelcomed, and that “threats and violence will never be far away.”<sup>26</sup> Left unchecked, the escalation of community violence can trigger larger conflict across communities, intensify civil unrest, and in the worst cases, result in mass atrocities.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Emily Baumgaertner, *Atlanta-Area Spa Shootings Highlight Knotted Intersection of Sexism and Racism, Scholars Say*, L.A. TIMES (Mar. 19, 2021, 6:04 PM), <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2021-03-19/atlanta-area-spa-shootings-highlight-knotted-extremist-ideas-scholars-say>; see, e.g., *Eight Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, With Fears of Anti-Asian Bias*, N.Y. TIMES, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth> (last updated Mar. 26, 2021) [hereinafter *Eight Dead in Atlanta*].

<sup>25</sup> *Gender-Based Hate Crimes, supra* note 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Lack of Comprehensive Approach to Hate Crimes Leaves Them Invisible and Unaddressed, OSCE Human Rights Head Says*, OSCE OFF. FOR DEMOCRATIC INST. & HUM. RTS. (Nov. 15, 2021), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/504244>; see generally Barbara Perry & Shahid Alvi, ‘We Are All Vulnerable’: The In Terrorem Effects of Hate Crimes, 18 INT’L REV. VICTIMOLOGY 57 (2011).

<sup>27</sup> OSCE, *Countering Hate Crime: An Overview of ODIHR’s Work*, YOUTUBE (Mar. 21, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFP9z92FSvc>.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

### B. The Incel Movement's Links to White Supremacy and Violent Far-Right Extremists

*Expressed misogyny and domestic violence [are] precursors to mass violence, public shootings, and acts of terror.*<sup>28</sup>

According to the Anti-Defamation League (“ADL”), “[w]hile not all misogynists are racists, and not every white supremacist is a misogynist, a deep-seated loathing of women acts as a connective tissue between many white supremacists, especially those in the alt right, and their lesser-known brothers in hate like incels.”<sup>29</sup> For example, Rodger’s online manifesto and posts in many online incel forums shortly before his shooting spree were not only extremely misogynistic, they were also tremendously racist<sup>30</sup> – in one instance complaining that “an inferior, ugly black boy [was] able to get a white girl and not me.”<sup>31</sup> The 2019 fatal attack on a Jewish synagogue in Halle, Germany was carried out by a perpetrator who blamed Germany’s liberal immigration policies for his failure to be in a relationship, telling the investigating judge for the attack that he was a “dissatisfied white man” who had never been in a relationship with a woman.<sup>32</sup> He told the judge that men like him “don’t get women” because foreigners take women from them.<sup>33</sup>

Many individual mass shooters do not belong to specific terrorist groups and are often categorized by law enforcement as “lone wolf” shooters who commit random acts of violence.<sup>34</sup> However, these individuals often engage in online extremist forums where they find “a community, an ideology, tactics, and targets.”<sup>35</sup> Since Rodger’s attack and publication of his manifesto, the incel movement has been joined by many far-right extremists who find close links between “men’s rights activism” and white supremacy, particularly in their viewpoints and propensities towards intolerance, hatred, and violent hate crimes.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 41.

<sup>29</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy*, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (July 20, 2018), <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/when-women-are-enemy-intersection-misogyny-and-white-supremacy> [hereinafter *When Women Are the Enemy*].

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Hoffman & Jacob Ware, *Incels: America’s Newest Domestic Terrorism Threat*, LAWFARE (Jan. 12, 2020, 10:00 AM), <https://www.lawfareblog.com/incels-americas-newest-domestic-terrorism-threat> [hereinafter Hoffman & Ware, *Incels*]; Josh Glasstetter, *Elliot Rodger, Isla Vista Shooting Suspect, Posted Racist Message on Misogynistic Website*, S. POVERTY L. CTR. (May 24, 2014), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/05/23/elliott-rodger-isla-vista-shooting-suspect-posted-racist-messages-misogynistic-website>.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce Hoffman & Jacob Ware, *Are We Entering a New Era of Far-Right Terrorism?*, WAR ON THE ROCKS (Nov. 27, 2019), <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/are-we-entering-a-new-era-of-far-right-terrorism/> [hereinafter Hoffman & Ware, *Are We Entering*].

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*; *Halle-Attentäter glaubt an jüdische Weltverschwörung* [Halle Assassin Believes in Jewish World Conspiracy], SPIEGEL PANORAMA (Oct. 25, 2019, 2:10 PM), <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/halle-attentater-stephan-balliet-glaubt-an-juedische-weltverschwuerung-a-1293330.html> [hereinafter Halle Assassin].

<sup>33</sup> Hoffman & Ware, *Are We Entering*, *supra* note 31; Halle Assassin, *supra* note 32.

<sup>34</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 46.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> Hoffman & Ware, *Incels*, *supra* note 30.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

Another study of young men and violent extremism, based on interviews about social and economic pressures with American neo-Nazis and white supremacists, European anti-immigration skinheads, as well as jihadists and Islamists, finds gender at the center of a filtering process that allows some men to cope with these stressors, while others turn to rage and violence.<sup>37</sup> Online spaces such as 8chan,<sup>38</sup> Reddit's Red Pill forum, Proud Boys, Pick Up Artists, and many other men's rights activist forums illustrate the interconnected relationship between the politicized misogyny of the incel movement and the extreme views on race and immigration of far-right political groups.<sup>39</sup>

An investigation into the tweets surrounding the 2022 "Freedom Convoy," which claimed to fight against State control and COVID-19 vaccination mandates, indicated links between several disparate right-wing extremist movements and some parallel common myths.

One is the myth of a "Golden Age." This concept harks to ideas of a mythical past that is regarded as perfect. The fantasy includes the way traditional forms of authority were venerated and racial and religious superiority was uncontested. Another myth, or old logic, is that of an "us" versus "them," pitting immigrants and racialized others against a unified, imagined "us." And finally, the posts display a desire to restore an idealized masculinity that advances and reinforces nationalist and masculine projects.<sup>40</sup>

At the root of these myths is a significant fear of losing perceived power, as well as "culture, religion, values, and beliefs."<sup>41</sup> Members of the convoy advocated for traditional forms of "masculinity and toughness" to ensure the security of the State, indicating how dominant, toxic masculinity is used by far-right extremists to provide credibility for "hierarchical gender relations between men and women, femininity and masculinity, and pure and 'corrupt' masculinities (*i.e.*, racialized, minority and queer masculinities)."<sup>42</sup>

ADL notes, "it's not a huge leap from 'women's quest for equal rights threatens my stature as a man' to 'minorities and women's quests for equal rights

---

<sup>37</sup> See generally MICHAEL KIMMEL, *HEALING FROM HATE: HOW YOUNG MEN GET INTO—AND OUT OF—VIOLENT EXTREMISM* (Univ. of Cal. Press 2018).

<sup>38</sup> 8chan was removed after the 2019 El Paso, Texas mass shooting but later re-launched as 8kun. Hoffman & Ware, *Are We Entering*, *supra* note 31; Oscar Gonzalez, *8chan, 8kun, 4chan, Endchan: What You Need to Know*, CNET (Nov. 7, 2019), <https://www.cnet.com/news/politics/8chan-8kun-4chan-endchan-what-you-need-to-know-internet-forums/>; Vanessa Roma, *El Paso Walmart Shooting Suspect Pleads Not Guilty*, NPR (Oct. 10, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/10/769013051/el-paso-walmart-shooting-suspect-pleads-not-guilty>.

<sup>39</sup> Hoffman & Ware, *Are We Entering*, *supra* note 31.

<sup>40</sup> Zeinab Farokhi, David Anderson & Yasmin Jiwni, *A Twitter Investigation Reveals What the 'Freedom Convoy,' Islamophobes, Incels and Hindu Supremacists Have in Common*, THE CONVERSATION (Feb. 15, 2022, 10:12 AM), <https://theconversation.com/a-twitter-investigation-reveals-what-the-freedom-convoy-islamophobes-incels-and-hindu-supremacists-have-in-common-177026>.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*



threaten my stature as a white man.’”<sup>43</sup> Misogyny is often therefore considered a “gateway drug” into a broader hatred, discrimination, or acts of violence towards others, such as ethnic or sexual minorities.<sup>44</sup> “Once individuals from the dominant group internalize this notion of victimization where feminism and women are to blame, it is easier for them to apply that ideological framing to other categories of “others,” and it is also why sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry and intolerance frequently go together.”<sup>45</sup> Additional studies also show a correlation between sexist and racist attitudes, and scholars suggest that “societies with a very high level of male dominance in politics tend to be dominated by hypermasculine political cultures. This norm also prescribes violence as a means to resolve conflict on the highest decision-making levels.”<sup>46</sup>

At the core of both the incel ideology and alt-right white supremacist groups is deep-seated sexism where men believe they have a “responsibility to bring girls back to their proper place [and] to lead them into their natural roles as wives and mothers.”<sup>47</sup> One online commenter evoked the Nazi imagery of an ideal Aryan family, suggesting that the ideal woman should be “breeding six warriors while being a happy hausfrau,” while others complained “that ‘women’s liberation’ has actively hurt (white) men’s ability to procreate, because when white women have choices, they are less likely to get married, have children, and perpetuate the white race.”<sup>48</sup>

The Norwegian mass shooter Anders Breivik, whose manifesto expressed a fear of white ethnic replacement by migrants from the Middle East and North Africa,<sup>49</sup> inspired the Christchurch shooter, whose manifesto entitled “The Great Replacement” began with: “It’s the birthrates. It’s the birthrates. It’s the birthrates.”<sup>50</sup> Scholars have since explained that misogynistic ideas of women’s roles as solely reproductive are central for all of these violent extremists, as well as the bridge that leads to further radicalization for many of them.<sup>51</sup> “The birthrate conversation – and the question that goes with it, of women’s continued freedom – has become a key recruitment tool for white supremacists. It is often the first

---

<sup>43</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy*, *supra* note 29.

<sup>44</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy*, *supra* note 29.

<sup>45</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 43-44.

<sup>46</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>47</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy*, *supra* note 29.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> Will Englund, *In Diary, Norwegian ‘Crusader’ Details Months of Preparation for Attack*, THE WASH. POST (July 24, 2011), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-diary-norwegian-crusader-details-months-of-preparation-for-attacks/2011/07/24/gIQACYnUXI\\_story.html?tid=LK\\_in\\_line\\_manual\\_21](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-diary-norwegian-crusader-details-months-of-preparation-for-attacks/2011/07/24/gIQACYnUXI_story.html?tid=LK_in_line_manual_21).

<sup>50</sup> Rosa Schwartzburg, *The ‘White Replacement Theory’ Motivates Alt-Right Killers the World Over*, THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 5, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/05/great-replacement-theory-alt-right-killers-el-paso>.

<sup>51</sup> Nellie Bowles, *‘Replacement Theory’, a Racist, Sexist Doctrine, Spreads in Far-Right Circles*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 18, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/18/technology/replacement-theory.html>.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

political point of agreement a white supremacist recruiter online will find with a target, especially with young people.”<sup>52</sup>

These misogynistic ideas of “traditional” gender roles seek to preserve the dominance of heterosexual men and idealize a time before the sexual revolution.<sup>53</sup> Members of the incel movement believe that despite a woman’s lack of interest or protests, men have a right to have sex with them anytime they please.<sup>54</sup> They believe that before the 1960s, every man was able to have access to a female partner, but with the rise of women’s empowerment, women now choose to sleep with only the most physically attractive men, and consequently, fewer and fewer men have access to women’s bodies.<sup>55</sup> Since “society” has failed to give them access to women’s bodies, to which they feel entitled, they feel their only option is to conduct violent attacks on the prevailing system, particularly against women whom they feel have “wronged” them, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community who are seen as a threat to their sexuality.<sup>56</sup>

Scholars note that there are quite striking parallels between intimate partner violence and mass terror attacks perpetrated by individual attackers, as both are attempts to provoke fear and assert control.<sup>57</sup> Incels and white supremacists often use similar arguments for the need for an armed and violent insurrection in order to overthrow the prevalent system.<sup>58</sup> This act conforms to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 definition of terrorism as “criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury. . . with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population.”<sup>59</sup>

The frustration by incels with the increasing gender equality, which they feel denies them the patriarchal roles to which they are entitled by virtue of their gender, in addition to their adherence to an ideology that endorses violent responses, exacerbates the danger of incels engaging in acts of violence, as well as increases the likelihood that they will be receptive to recruitment by broader far-right or extremist groups.<sup>60</sup> The rapid growth, notoriety, and membership of the incel movement is also heavily due to the same social media tools and messages

---

<sup>52</sup> Bowles, *supra* note 51.

<sup>53</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>54</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy*, *supra* note 29; Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>55</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*; for example, the sorority members were attacked by Elliott Rodger. *Elliot Rodger*, *supra* note 1; there was an incel attack on women in a yoga studio in Florida. Steve Hendrix, *Yoga Shooting Incel Attack Fueled by Male Supremacy*, THE WASH. POST (June 7, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/local/yoga-shooting-incel-attack-fueled-by-male-supremacy/>; an attack primarily on Asian women in spas in Georgia. *Eight Dead in Atlanta*, *supra* note 24; and an incel-inspired attack on a crowd in Toronto. *Toronto Van Attack: Minassian Guilty of Killing Ten People*, BBC NEWS (Mar. 3, 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56269095>; see also Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>57</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>58</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>59</sup> S.C. Res. 1566, ¶ 3, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1566 (Oct. 8, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

which create community mobilization and likeminded behavior<sup>61</sup> used by the Islamic State group and other violent far-right extremists and terrorist groups.<sup>62</sup> The language of patriarchal masculinity provides the most basic foundation for far-right extremist viewpoints, where the “restoration of masculinity [and] retrieval of masculine entitlement” is the cornerstone for recruitment of men into these groups.<sup>63</sup>

The strict gender norms which control women (and their sexuality in particular) promoted by some non-State armed groups and certain terrorist groups can be a “pull” factor for possible new members who already have misogynistic attitudes or desires which “push” them towards groups with more radical ideologies.<sup>64</sup> One journalist notes:

it is almost inevitable that these men would then be attracted to belief systems – whether it’s Isis, evangelical Christianity, or the fundamentalist version of pretty much any major religion – that advocate wildly restrictive attitudes towards gender and endorse patriarchal systems which encourage men to punish women for their own failings.<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, the *United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention* indicates that “[i]ncreased serious acts of violence against women and children, or creation of conditions that facilitate acts of sexual violence against those groups, including as a tool of terror” is one of the major risk factors which enables or prepares an environment conducive to the commission of atrocity crimes.<sup>66</sup> The ability for governments and communities to appropriately identify and address attitudes which support the subordination of women is therefore one of the best ways to prevent the escalation of violence.

### C. Systemic Gender Discrimination and the Impact on Social Unrest

*The surest way to curse one’s nation is to subordinate its women.*<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> *When Women Are the Enemy*, *supra* note 29; Abby Ohlheiser, *Inside the Online World of ‘Incel,’ the Dark Corner of the Internet Linked to the Toronto Suspect*, THE WASH. POST (Apr. 25, 2018, 7:50 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2018/04/25/inside-the-online-world-of-incels-the-dark-corner-of-the-internet-linked-to-the-toronto-suspect/>.

<sup>62</sup> Antonia Ward, *ISIS’s Use of Social Media Still Poses a Threat to Stability in the Middle East and Africa*, THE RAND BLOG (Dec. 11, 2018), <https://www.rand.org/blog/2018/12/isiss-use-of-social-media-still-poses-a-threat-to-stability.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Farokhi et al., *supra* note 40.

<sup>64</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9; Zimmerman, *supra* note 16.

<sup>65</sup> Hadley Freeman, *What Do Many Lone Attackers Have in Common? Domestic Violence*, THE GUARDIAN (Mar. 28, 2017), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/28/lone-attackers-domestic-violence-khalid-masood-westminster-attacks-terrorism>.

<sup>66</sup> *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, U.N. 16 (2014), [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3\\_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes\\_EN.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/about-us/Doc.3_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> *Societies That Treat Women Badly Are Poorer and Less Stable*, THE ECONOMIST (Sept. 11, 2021), <https://www.economist.com/international/2021/09/11/societies-that-treat-women-badly-are-poorer-and-less-stable> [hereinafter *Societies That Treat Women*].

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

While the incel ideology may be a newer and more violent form of misogyny and social unrest stemming from the inability of men to find sexual partners, this phenomenon has similar roots in other countries and societies.<sup>68</sup> In order to better identify ways in which gender inequality can lead to the outbreak of internal armed conflicts or civil war, researchers have looked at a number of measurement metrics.<sup>69</sup> Academics have found “that the very best predictor of a [S]tate’s peacefulness is not its level of wealth, the quality of its democracy, or its ethno-religious identity, but how well its women are treated.”<sup>70</sup> The basic correlating factors which determine whether women are treated well are often issues relating to “access to power to decide (over everything from the more ‘private’ matters of one’s own body to influencing the larger ‘public’ structures), and access to varying forms of material and immaterial resources (such as land, money, education, etc.).”<sup>71</sup> The social dimension of gender inequality relates to the value given to individuals based on their sex and the structural perceptions of masculinity or femininity in their particular society (*i.e.*, gender), where gendered discrimination is often based on patriarchal power structures.<sup>72</sup> One important factor that indicates a society’s level of gender inequality or discrimination is the sex ratio.<sup>73</sup>

This inequality is particularly evident in East and South Asia, where the sex ratios are highly disproportionate due to gender discriminatory practices.<sup>74</sup> In China, the local vernacular for young adult males who will never marry is *guang gun-er*, or “bare branches” – those who will never marry because they cannot find spouses.<sup>75</sup> Scholars across a wide array of social sciences, including anthropology, biology, criminology, psychology, organization behavior and sociology agree that large numbers of “bare branches” lead to increased instability, violence and a potential threat to Chinese society.<sup>76</sup>

Due to China’s former One Child Policy and the estimated 130 million missing women worldwide due to sex selective abortions and infanticides, a Chinese official magazine entitled “Theory and Time,” published in Shenyang, China, predicted “that the disproportionate gender balance would lead to ‘a large army of bachelors composed of 90 million men’ as well as a severe breakdown in social order and the abduction and sale of women.”<sup>77</sup> Researchers at Columbia

---

<sup>68</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>69</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>70</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 39.

<sup>71</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Id.*; G.A. Res. 34/180, Art. 16, U.N. Doc A/34/46 (Dec. 18, 1979) [hereinafter CEDAW].

<sup>74</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67; Valerie M. Hudson & Andrea M. den Boer, ‘Bare Branches’ and Dangers in Asia, THE WASH. POST (July 4, 2004), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2004/07/04/bare-branches-and-danger-in-asia/6eb320ef-7d65-4772-98b7-f154fd709fb/>.

<sup>75</sup> Hudson & den Boer, *supra* note 74.

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*; Tatu Vanhanew, Valerie M. Hudson and Andrea M. den Boer, *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia’s Surplus Male Populations*, 5 JAPANESE J. POL. SCI. (Nov. 2004).

<sup>77</sup> Susan Tiefenbrun & Christie J. Edwards, *Gendercide and the Cultural Context of Sex Trafficking in China*, 32 FORDHAM INT’L L. J. 731, 776 (2009).

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

University found that for every 1 percent rise in the ratio of men to women, violent and property crime rose by 3.7 percent.<sup>78</sup>

Other scholars feared that as Chinese families consciously selected male children over female children, there would be a significant increase in societal and intersocietal violence, as well as the potential for political leaders to co-opt these young men into the military in order to engage in military aggression or political violence.<sup>79</sup> In particular, the ability to mobilize these men for violent action or armed conflict is made easier by their hypermasculine-based culture where violence is encouraged as a means of resolving conflict, and, as they are frequently excluded from mainstream society due to their inability to find spouses or jobs, they have a higher likelihood of gathering and forming violent groups or gangs.<sup>80</sup> They are also more receptive to gender-discriminatory language for recruitment for these violent groups, and often already belong to groups which could be easily encouraged to engage in acts of violence.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, Indian scholars have also documented “a very strong relationship between sex ratios and violent crime rates in Indian states, which persists even after controlling for a variety of other possible variables.”<sup>82</sup> Notably, the state of Kashmir, which has long been contested territory between India and Pakistan, has one of the highest sex-ratio imbalances in the world.<sup>83</sup>

Worldwide, single young men commit more violent crime than married young men.<sup>84</sup> According to sociologists, young adult men with few societal attachments from the lowest socioeconomic classes and with little opportunity to form their own families are much more likely to attempt to improve their personal and financial situations through violent and criminal behavior, working cooperatively with other single young men.<sup>85</sup>

Another tool for measuring gender inequality and discrimination as it relates to the stability of societies is the dimension of physical security (or insecurity) – particularly violence against women.<sup>86</sup> As many forms of violence against women are underreported or not even criminalized, scholars use the concept of security equality to analyze levels of physical insecurity of women, which looks at “resource distribution to protective measures set in place for different forms of violence, as violence tends to follow gender-specific patterns.”<sup>87</sup> This could examine, for example, whether crimes which predominantly affect women, such as

---

<sup>78</sup> Lena Edlund, *Sex Ratio and Crime: Evidence from China*, 95 REV. ECON. & STAT. 1520, 1521 (2013).

<sup>79</sup> Peter A. Morrison & Dudley L. Poston Jr., *China: Bachelor Bomb*, THE RAND BLOG (Sept. 14, 2005), <https://www.rand.org/blog/2005/09/china-bachelor-bomb.html>; Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>80</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> Hudson & den Boer, *supra* note 74.

<sup>83</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>84</sup> Hudson & den Boer, *supra* note 74; Vanhanen, *supra* note 76.

<sup>85</sup> Hudson & den Boer, *supra* note 74.

<sup>86</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

domestic violence and rape, are given equal amounts of resources, investigations, or victim support, in comparison to crimes of assault or battery, which primarily affect men.<sup>88</sup> Data collected by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime shows that although men are the primary victims of homicide globally, women bear the principal burden of lethal victimization as a result of gender stereotypes and gender inequality.<sup>89</sup>

Over the years, many scholars and researchers have highlighted how misogyny and oppression of women make societies poorer and less stable.<sup>90</sup> In a recent study, researchers ranked 176 countries for what they call the “patrilineal/fraternal syndrome,” looking at issues such as “unequal treatment of women in family law and property rights, early marriage for girls, patrilocal marriage, polygamy, bride price, son preference, violence against women and social attitudes towards it (for example, is rape seen as a property crime against men?).”<sup>91</sup> The authors found a strong statistical link between violent political instability and the patrilineal/fraternal syndrome.<sup>92</sup> The syndrome explained 75 percent of the variation in a country’s score on the Fragile States Index<sup>93</sup> and serves as an even “better predictor of violent instability than income, urbanization,” or good governance (as measured by the World Bank).<sup>94</sup> The authors also noted that patriarchy and poverty are inextricably linked.<sup>95</sup> The patrilineal/fraternal syndrome explained four of five of the variations in food security, as well as four of five of the variation of scores on the UN Human Development Index,<sup>96</sup> on metrics as lifespan, health and education.<sup>97</sup> By structurally subordinating women in society, countries thus institutionalize the harms against all of their citizens.

#### D. Links Between Gender Inequality and Armed Conflict

*When is terrorism not terrorism? When the political motivations are misogyny.*<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>89</sup> *Global Study on Homicide 2019: Gender-Related Killing of Women and Girls*, U.N. OFF. OF DRUGS & CRIME 11 (2019), [https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet\\_5.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet_5.pdf) (explaining that globally, women make up 64 percent of intimate partner/family-related homicide and 82 percent of intimate partner homicide).

<sup>90</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>91</sup> VALERIE M. HUDSON ET AL., *THE FIRST POLITICAL ORDER: HOW SEX SHAPES GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY WORLDWIDE* (Columbia Univ. Press 2020); *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>92</sup> HUDSON ET AL., *supra* note 91, at 107-43.

<sup>93</sup> *Country Dashboard*, FRAGILE STATE INDEX, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/country-data/> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>94</sup> HUDSON ET AL., *supra* note 91, at 107-43; *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>95</sup> See generally HUDSON ET AL., *supra* note 91, at 167-78.

<sup>96</sup> *Human Development Index*, U.N. DEV. PROGRAMME, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>97</sup> HUDSON ET AL., *supra* note 91, at 167-78.

<sup>98</sup> Sara Meger, *When Is Terrorism Not Terrorism*, GENDER & WAR PROJECT (Apr. 26, 2018), <http://www.genderandwar.com/2018/04/26/when-is-terrorism-not-terrorism/>.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

Poverty and political instability are not the only harms linked to gender inequality. The relationship between international violence and domestic gender inequality has been highlighted in numerous studies on the role of gender equality and armed conflict,<sup>99</sup> as countries characterized by gender inequality are more likely to be involved in internal and international disputes and more likely to use various forms of violence to resolve those disagreements.<sup>100</sup> Research by the World Bank also links societies with higher levels of gender inequality and gender-based violence with greater risk of armed conflict and increased levels of violence within these conflicts.<sup>101</sup>

Additionally, researchers note the “implications of existing hierarchies and constructions of masculinities and femininities appear to play central roles” in internal or non-international armed conflicts, particularly where they intersect with other identities, such as ethnicity, religion, or class.<sup>102</sup> Finally, the root causes as well as the detrimental consequences of many forms of sexual and gender-based violence tend to be interconnected in many ways, especially during armed conflict and other situations of violence.<sup>103</sup> These interrelated and intersectional links can be a variety of factors, “such as: age (e.g., unaccompanied or separated children, children in detention, child migrants or children associated with the armed forces or armed groups); psychological, intellectual, sensory and physical impairments; situations of internal displacement and migration; and detention.”<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> E.g., Mary Caprioli, *Gendered Conflict*, 37 J. PEACE RSCH. 51, 51 (2000) [hereinafter Caprioli, *Gendered Conflict*]; Mary Caprioli, *Primed for Violence: The Role of Gender Inequality in Predicting Internal Conflict*, 49 INT'L STUD. Q. 161, 162 (2005) [hereinafter *Primed for Violence*]; Mary Caprioli & Mark A. Boyer, *Gender, Violence, and International Crisis*, 45 J. CONFLICT RESOL. 503, 503 (2001); Valerie M. Hudson & Andrea den Boer, *A Surplus of Men, a Deficit of Peace: Security and Sex Ratios in Asia's Largest States*, 26 INT'L SEC. 5, 5 (2002) [hereinafter Hudson & den Boer, *A Surplus of Men*]; Erik Melander, *Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict*, 49 INT'L STUD. Q. 695, 695 (2005); Hudson et al., *The Heart of the Matter: The Security of Women and the Security of States*, 33 INT'L SEC. 7, 19 (2009) [hereinafter Hudson et al., *The Heart of the Matter*]; Theodora-Isemene Gizelis, *Gender Empowerment and United Nations Peacebuilding*, 46 J. PEACE RSCH. 505, 508 (2009); Elin Bjarnegård & Erik Malender, *Disentangling Gender, Peace and Democratization: The Negative Effects of Militarized Masculinity*, 20 J. GENDER STUD. 139, 143 (2011); Jacqueline Demeritt et al., *Female Participation and Civil War Relapse*, 16 CIV. WARS 346, 354 (2014); see also *Global Conflict Risk Index*, EUR. COMM'N DISASTER RISK MGMT. CTR., <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/initiatives-services/global-conflict-risk-index#documents/1059/list> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022); Matina Halkia et al., *The Global Conflict Risk Index: A Quantitative Tool for Policy Support on Conflict Prevention*, 6 PROGRESS DISASTER SCI. 1, 1 (2020).

<sup>100</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 162; see also Caprioli, *Gendered Conflict*, *supra* note 99, at 55; Caprioli & Boyer, *supra* note 99, at 503; Hudson & den Boer, *A Surplus of Men*, *supra* note 99, at 6; Melander, *supra* note 99, at 696; Hudson et al., *The Heart of the Matter*, *supra* note 99, at 19; Gizelis, *supra* note 99, at 508-509; Bjarnegård & Melander, *supra* note 99, at 6-7; Demeritt et al., *supra* note 99, at 347.

<sup>101</sup> WORLD BANK & U.N., *PATHWAYS FOR PEACE: INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT* 116 (2017).

<sup>102</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>103</sup> ICRC *Special Report 2020: Addressing Sexual Violence*, INT'L COMM. OF THE RED CROSS 15 (2020), [https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/Activities/Sexual-violence/icrc\\_sexual\\_violence\\_special\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/Activities/Sexual-violence/icrc_sexual_violence_special_report_2020.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> *Id.*

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

Violence and conflict, whether internal or international, can be triggered by a large number of factors, often centered around various forms of grievances. Many mass killers feel a sense of personal or political grievance and their belief that only a violent response is warranted to respond to this harm,<sup>105</sup> while many non-State armed groups resort to violence due to a strong sense of historical and political injustice and grievances.<sup>106</sup> In many of these situations, there is also a “complex interaction of inequality, discrimination,” deprivation, and rebellion which can lead to violence and armed conflict.<sup>107</sup> These factors are often in addition to or due to historical colonization, corporate resource-grabbing, and other negative historical legacies that have led to divisions between communities.<sup>108</sup> In addition, gender inequalities may also contribute to increasing the risk for violent conflict, as masculinized political cultures lower the threshold for violence, and unequal ratios of men versus women in communities provide large numbers of men who can be recruited for conflict.<sup>109</sup>

When groups have a strong sense of group identity and “othering” – or an “us versus them” mentality – violence leading to armed conflict is also likely.<sup>110</sup> A feeling of relative deprivation by a smaller group within a society can create “a sense of shared identity within that group based on their shared grievances and can provide a motive for violence.”<sup>111</sup> This sense of deprivation is based on the feeling of individuals that their expectations for certain needs to be met are not being realized – or that they are not receiving everything to which they believe they are entitled.<sup>112</sup> This frustration over unfulfilled expectations fosters aggression and violence, and encourages or motivates groups to engage in collective violence.<sup>113</sup>

Systematic exploitation that becomes part of the social order thus creates a system of structural violence as well as the integral justification for violence on a broad scale.<sup>114</sup> Gender in particular is a fundamental aspect of “structural and cultural violence,” as gender comprises the underpinning of structural inequality everywhere in the world.<sup>115</sup> Although gender roles shift over time and differ between various cultural contexts, “gender is used as a benchmark to determine access and power, and is the rubric under which inequality is justified and main-

---

<sup>105</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>106</sup> See generally TED ROBERT GURR, *WHY MEN REBEL* (2015); Author’s note: I am not evaluating the rationale of the perception of harms, merely observing a common emotional response that triggers violent reactions, versus non-violent political movements to address these grievances, for example.

<sup>107</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 162.

<sup>108</sup> Gus Waschefort, *Africa and International Humanitarian Law: The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same*, 98 INT’L REV. RED CROSS, 593, 599 (2016).

<sup>109</sup> See generally Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>110</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 166.

<sup>111</sup> *Id.* at 162-63.

<sup>112</sup> *Id.*

<sup>113</sup> *Id.* at 163.

<sup>114</sup> *Id.* at 164.

<sup>115</sup> *Id.*



## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

tained.”<sup>116</sup> Specifically, gender determines “roles, power relationships, responsibilities, expectations, and access to resources” at both the micro and macro levels.<sup>117</sup>

Gendered structural violence is maintained through gender stereotyping, exploitation, and a persistent threat of violence against women, all based on the mentality that women are inferior and treating them as such.<sup>118</sup> In highly patriarchal societies, children who are raised in communities where men dominate and control the women in their families view this violent and domineering interpersonal dynamic as “normal.”<sup>119</sup> These highly patriarchal communities also promote stereotypical gender norms where manhood is perceived as being “tough,” engaging in more “warlike” attitudes and conduct, and advocating that “men are superior to women.”<sup>120</sup> Gendered structural hierarchies, based on norms of violence and oppression, often result in violence by desensitizing communities to violence and allowing a framework for justifying violence.<sup>121</sup> At the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing,<sup>122</sup> UNESCO noted the link between gendered inequality and violence and concluded that inequality between men and women is a strong barrier to long-lasting peace.<sup>123</sup>

Gendered hierarchies also have an additional role in explaining inter-ethnic conflicts, which further destabilize communities.<sup>124</sup> Nationalist movements are often antagonistic towards gender equality, as “men are considered the guardians of culture and tradition and any reforms to the cultural distribution of power are viewed as a threat to nationalist efforts to protect or unify the community.”<sup>125</sup> Nationalists frequently use gendered imagery to encourage masculine heroes to fight for their homeland, and political leaders urge women to support the State’s collective goals, even when they oppose gender equality goals (*i.e.*, “breeding six warriors while being a happy hausfrau”).<sup>126</sup> This gendered nationalism is also the foundation of patriarchal militarism, defining women primarily for their role in bearing and taking care of children, as in contrast to male soldiers, and legitimizing men’s control over reproduction.<sup>127</sup> Gender differences and cultural defini-

---

<sup>116</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 165.

<sup>117</sup> *Id.* at 164-65.

<sup>118</sup> *Id.* at 165.

<sup>119</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>120</sup> *Id.*

<sup>121</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 165.

<sup>122</sup> *Fourth World Conference on Women*, U.N. WOMEN, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>123</sup> *Statement on Women’s Contribution to a Culture of Peace*, U.N. EDUC., SCI. & CULTURAL ORG. (Sept. 1995), <https://www.culture-of-peace.info/annexes/declarations/Beijing.pdf>.

<sup>124</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 165.

<sup>125</sup> *Id.* at 166.

<sup>126</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 166.

<sup>127</sup> *Id.* at 167.

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

tions thus become emblematic of the culture and intensify a sense of ethnic belonging.<sup>128</sup>

Former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura wrote:

A common factor that presages the rise of authoritarian and extremist movements is their assault on women's rights and freedoms. This often includes strict enforcement of traditional dress codes and gender segregation, as well as the use of women's bodies as breeding ground for the next generation of fighters. Nazism included bureaus dedicated to both women and eugenics, including the sterilization of those deemed unfit, and lauded motherhood as the sole purpose of female existence. Today, the use of women as biological weapons for changing the demographics of a region is part of ISIL's genocidal campaign against religious and ethnic minorities. They are attacking the kinship ties that bind Yazidi, Christian, and Turkmen Shia communities, so that new families can be forged.<sup>129</sup>

Within this nationalist rhetoric, minority communities, particularly ethnic minority groups, frequently become targets of nationalist calls for violence.<sup>130</sup> As women usually constitute a minority group in terms of their relative power in society, and minority groups are often targeted as a means of mobilizing nationalist sentiment, minority women face increased intersectional harms of both ethnic and gender discrimination and targeting not only from within their own communities, but also from without.<sup>131</sup> At the same time, the "militarization of ethnic nationalism" frequently relies on convincing individual men that they will only be viewed as "real men" if they join the military or insurgent forces.<sup>132</sup> Gendered nationalism and the militarism of ethnic nationalism thus rely on highly distinct gender roles which reinforce structural inequalities and systems of violence.<sup>133</sup> These structural inequalities in turn play a role in facilitating ethnic conflicts,<sup>134</sup> as groups which observe systems of violence and oppression believe it to be "legitimate to oppress and dominate over other groups, be it women, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, or political opposition groups."<sup>135</sup>

Another extremely socially destabilizing practice in patriarchal societies is polygamy.<sup>136</sup> Though, on average, only 2 percent of people live in polygamous households worldwide, the figures in unstable and conflict-countries are much

---

<sup>128</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 167.

<sup>129</sup> Zainab Bangura, *Faith in Islam & Faith in Women: Gender Justice Is Key to an Islam Without Extremes*, MEDIUM (Oct. 30, 2015), <https://medium.com/the-future-of-conflict/faith-in-islam-faith-in-women-why-gender-justice-is-key-to-an-islam-without-extremes-8920277ef674>.

<sup>130</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 166.

<sup>131</sup> *Id.*

<sup>132</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8; *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 167.

<sup>133</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 167.

<sup>134</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 167.

<sup>135</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>136</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

higher.<sup>137</sup> For example, in war-torn countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan, more than one-third of married women are married to polygamous men.<sup>138</sup> In large parts of northeast Nigeria controlled by the militant group Boko Haram, 44 percent of women aged fifteen to forty-nine are in polygamous relationships.<sup>139</sup>

If the top 10 percent of wealthy men can afford to have up to four wives each, 30 percent of men at the bottom of the economic spectrum will not be able to marry (assuming equal sex ratios in society).<sup>140</sup> This inability to marry or find a partner gives unmarried men a strong motivation to kill other men and commit other violent crimes.<sup>141</sup> Non-State armed groups often exploit male frustration to recruit members – in the Sahel, many unmarried men join rebel armed groups; in northwestern Nigeria, single men and their extended male family members have formed bandit groups, and Boko Haram allows its troops to kidnap girls;<sup>142</sup> and the Islamic State group institutionalized a system of rape and sexual slavery among its combatants.<sup>143</sup>

A recent report found that a significant percentage of fatal attacks on civilians in 2021 were attributed to the Islamic State, Al-Shabaab, the Taliban, and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen.<sup>144</sup> Some of the early indications of the increase in the spread of influence for each of these groups included a significant pushback on the rights of women, including sexual and reproductive rights, dress, education, and freedom of movement.<sup>145</sup> Misogynistic violence is not just a part of their range of violent tools or an incidental part of their political agenda, but a central tenet of their political goals, as control over women and their reproductive capacities is just as critical as gaining and maintaining control over physical territory and achieving success in combat.<sup>146</sup> Political terrorism has overtaken religious terrorism in the West, with religiously motivated attacks declining 82 percent in 2021.<sup>147</sup> Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many terrorist groups increasingly used internet forums and chatrooms to “spread conspiracy

---

<sup>137</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>138</sup> *Id.* Stephanie Kramer, *Polygamy Is Rare around the World and Mostly Confined to a Few Regions*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (Dec. 7, 2020), [https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/07/polygamy-is-rare-around-the-world-and-mostly-confined-to-a-few-regions/#:~:text=polygamy%20is%20most%20often%20found,%25\)%20and%20Nigeria%20\(28%25](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/07/polygamy-is-rare-around-the-world-and-mostly-confined-to-a-few-regions/#:~:text=polygamy%20is%20most%20often%20found,%25)%20and%20Nigeria%20(28%25).

<sup>139</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67; Kramer, *supra* note 138.

<sup>140</sup> *Societies That Treat Women*, *supra* note 67.

<sup>141</sup> *Id.*

<sup>142</sup> *Id.*

<sup>143</sup> Taub, *supra* note 9.

<sup>144</sup> GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX 2022: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM, INST. OF ECON. & PEACE 15 (2022), <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf> [hereinafter GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX].

<sup>145</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 46.

<sup>146</sup> *Id.* at 46-47.

<sup>147</sup> GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX, *supra* note 144, at 2.

theories and disinformation to undermine confidence in governments and gather more support for their ideology.”<sup>148</sup>

In conclusion, States which have high levels of gender inequality, with strong structural systems of hierarchy, discrimination, and violence, support violent responses as a means to resolve these issues<sup>149</sup> and the negative impact of gender inequality at the societal level goes far beyond the impact on women alone.<sup>150</sup> The higher a State’s levels of gender inequality, the more likely the State will suffer from armed conflict.<sup>151</sup>

### III. Legal Frameworks Addressing Discrimination and Violence Against Women

Much has been written about the various international and regional legal frameworks which address violence against women, so I will only offer a brief summary here. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”)<sup>152</sup> defines “discrimination against women” as:

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.<sup>153</sup>

In 1992, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the “CEDAW Committee”) adopted General Recommendation No. 19, an historic document which “clearly framed violence against women as a form and manifestation of gender-based discrimination, used to subordinate and oppress women.”<sup>154</sup> It noted that gender-based violence is “‘violence which is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately,’ and that it constituted a violation of their human rights.”<sup>155</sup>

In 2017, the CEDAW Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19.<sup>156</sup> “General Recommendation No. 35 elaborates on the gender-based na-

---

<sup>148</sup> GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX, *supra* note 144, at 15.

<sup>149</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 172.

<sup>150</sup> *Id.* at 173.

<sup>151</sup> *Id.* at 171.

<sup>152</sup> CEDAW, *supra* note 73.

<sup>153</sup> *Id.*, art. 1.

<sup>154</sup> *Launch of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 on Gender-Based Violence against Women, Updating General Recommendation No. 19*, U.N. HUM. RTS. OFF. HIGH COMM’N, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/launch-cedaw-general-recommendation-no-35-gender-based-violence-against-women-updating-general><https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/launch-cedaw-general-recommendation-no-35-gender-based-violence-against-women-updating-general> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>155</sup> *Id.*

<sup>156</sup> *Id.*

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

ture of this form of violence, building on the work of the Committee and other international human rights mechanisms, as well as developments at national, regional and international levels.”<sup>157</sup> In particular, it “recognizes that the prohibition of gender-based violence has become a norm of international customary law. . . stresses the need to change social norms and stereotypes that support violence, in the context of a resurgence of narratives threatening the concept of gender equality in the name of culture, tradition or religion[,]” and provides clear liability for States who fail to protect women from violence at the hands of the government or non-State actors.<sup>158</sup>

In 2019, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2467, which reaffirmed

that the disproportionate impact of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations on women and girls is exacerbated by discrimination against women and girls and by the under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles, the impact of discriminatory laws, the gender biased enforcement and application of existing laws, harmful social norms and practices, structural inequalities, and discriminatory views on women or gender roles in society, and lack of availability of services for survivors, and further affirm[ed] the importance of promoting gender equality by addressing these and other root causes of sexual violence against all women and girls as part of conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding[.]<sup>159</sup>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 and includes the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”) to ensure “peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.”<sup>160</sup> Goal five is to “[a]chieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and its targets include:

(5.1) End[ing] all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere [and]; (5.2) [e]liminat[ing] all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.<sup>161</sup>

Goal sixteen is to “[p]romote just, peaceful and inclusive societies” and its targets include:

(16.1) Significantly reduc[ing] all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere; (16.3) Promot[ing] the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all [and]; (16.B)

---

<sup>157</sup> *Launch of CEDAW*, *supra* note 154.

<sup>158</sup> *Id.*

<sup>159</sup> S.C. Res. 2467, U.N. Doc. S/RES/2467 (Apr. 23, 2019).

<sup>160</sup> *The 17 Goals*, U.N. DEP’T OF ECON. & SOC. AFF.: SUSTAINABLE DEV., <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>161</sup> *Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls*, U.N. DEP’T OF ECON. & SOC. AFF.: SUSTAINABLE DEV., <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

## Combating Incels: Addressing Misogynistic Violence

Promot[ing] and enforce[ing] non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.<sup>162</sup>

The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (also known as the “Convention of Belém do Pará”) was the first legally binding international treaty that criminalizes all forms of violence against women,<sup>163</sup> noting “that violence against women is an offense against human dignity and a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men.”<sup>164</sup> The Convention specifies that “[e]very woman has the right to be free from violence in both the public and private spheres”<sup>165</sup> and ensures:

[t]he right of every woman to be free from violence includes, among others:

- a. The right of women to be free from all forms of discrimination; and
- b. The right of women to be valued and educated free of stereotyped patterns of behavior and social and cultural practices based on concepts of inferiority or subordination.<sup>166</sup>

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as the “Istanbul Convention”) created a legal framework at the pan-European level to “protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute, and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence.”<sup>167</sup> In its Preamble, the Istanbul Convention also recognizes “the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> *Goal 16: Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, Provide Access to Justice for All and Build Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels*, U.N. DEP’T OF ECON. & SOC. AFF.: SUSTAINABLE DEV., <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>163</sup> *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém Do Pará Convention)*, CTR. FOR WOMEN, PEACE, & SEC., <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/vaw/regional/the-americas/convention-belem-do-para/> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>164</sup> *Preamble: Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará)*, ORG. AM. STATES (1995).

<sup>165</sup> *Id.*, art. 3.

<sup>166</sup> *Preamble: Inter-American Convention*, *supra* note 164, art. 6.

<sup>167</sup> *Details of Treaty No. 210*, COUNCIL OF EUR. TREATY OFF., <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatyenum=210> (last visited Dec. 2, 2022).

<sup>168</sup> Council of Europe Convention of Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Council of Europe, *opened for signature* Nov. 5, 2011, CETS No. 210 (entered into force Jan. 8, 2014).

#### IV. Legal and Political Remedies to Address All Forms of Misogyny, Discrimination, Violence Against Women, and Prevention of Armed Conflict

In order to effectively address all forms of misogyny, discrimination, and violence against women, and support the prevention of armed conflict, a number of legal and political tactics must be implemented. These issues are both structural, individual, and require a multi-layered approach to address these issues comprehensively.

##### A. Policy Approaches for Prevention of Violence and Armed Conflict

As discrimination against women and misogyny are among the foundations and early warning signs of escalating political violence and terrorism, strategic policy approaches must be created at the global, national, and local levels to address the root issues of violent misogyny which can lead to armed conflict.<sup>169</sup> At the global level, as discussed above, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development included strong commitments by all governments to “to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls[.]”<sup>170</sup>

Each government bears “the primary responsibility to follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the SDGs and targets,” and processes for “systematic follow-up and review at the various levels” have been developed.<sup>171</sup> The UN Secretary General’s “Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022” noted that violence against women remains endemic, with over 641 million women (more than one in four women) having been subjected to intimate partner violence at least once, and only 57 percent of married women, or women in a union, are able to make their own knowledgeable decisions on sex, contraception use, and reproductive healthcare, largely due to laws which prevent access to relevant healthcare information.<sup>172</sup> All other indicators for gender equality and women’s empowerment require significantly more effort to achieve their targets by the 2030 deadline. The report specifies, “[c]ommitment and bold action are needed to accelerate progress, including through the promotion of laws, policies, budgets, and institutions that advance gender equality. Greater investment in gender statistics is vital, since less than half of the data required to monitor Goal 5 are currently available.”<sup>173</sup>

Additionally, the number of violent conflicts throughout the world is at its highest level since 1946, and 25 percent of the world’s population live in con-

---

<sup>169</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 49.

<sup>170</sup> G.A. Res. 70/1, U.N. Doc. A/RES70/1 (Oct. 21, 2015).

<sup>171</sup> G.A. Res. 70/1, *supra* note 170.

<sup>172</sup> THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT 2022, U.N. 12 (2022), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup> *Id.* at 36.

conflict-affected countries, as of the end of 2020.<sup>174</sup> “Human rights violations in conflict-affected countries have increased. . . and international humanitarian law has been disregarded, undermining the global compact of humanity.”<sup>175</sup> Additionally, as “[f]eeling unsafe in public can fundamentally erode one’s sense of well-being and reduce trust and community engagement, becoming an obstacle to development,” the report notes that about a third of the world’s population, predominantly women, say they do not feel safe walking alone in their communities at night.<sup>176</sup> Since women and girls comprise about 60 percent of all homicide victims killed by intimate partners or family members, the report notes that “accelerated progress will require additional policy interventions aimed at curbing lethal violence in the public arena, along with specific policies aimed at preventing gender-based killings.”<sup>177</sup>

At the national and local levels, governments, policy makers, and human rights monitors must also focus on “trends reflecting increases in misogyny, anti-women rhetoric, political marginalization of women or women’s groups, and strict enforcement of traditional gender norms, dress codes, or segregation.”<sup>178</sup> Funding and resources should be increased to address violence against women, including in online spaces, and calls for violence based on misogyny should be treated with as much concern as every other form of violent extremism.<sup>179</sup> Additional efforts should be made to condemn misogynistic and discriminatory rhetoric by political leaders, creating frameworks to eradicate harassment in public, in workplaces, and online, investing in law enforcement resources to investigate violence against women, rigorous monitoring of these trends within human rights and conflict cycle analyses, and taking proactive steps to empower women and girls in every aspect of their lives.<sup>180</sup>

## B. Accountability for All Forms of Violence against Women in Criminal Justice Systems

Effective criminal justice responses to violence against women, gender-based hate crimes, violent misogyny, domestic violence, trafficking, rape as a war crime and form of genocide, sexual slavery, and other domestic or international crimes are imperative to ensure that perpetrators do not enjoy impunity, and to send a strong message that all forms of violence against women will be prosecuted. However, current international legal frameworks and legal definitions for violent extremism and acts of terrorism fail to interpret the ideological content of men’s violence and the targeting of women due to misogynistic ideals.<sup>181</sup> Rather

---

<sup>174</sup> *Id.* at 23.

<sup>175</sup> *Id.* at 58.

<sup>176</sup> THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT, *supra* note 172, at 59.

<sup>177</sup> *Id.*

<sup>178</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 50.

<sup>179</sup> *Id.*

<sup>180</sup> *Id.*

<sup>181</sup> *Id.*



than merely looking at the role of aggrieved masculinities, which “over-privileg[es] [the] narrative of men’s struggles and disaffection,” which are used as excuses to engage in violence against women,<sup>182</sup> legal scholars, prosecutors, judges, and other criminal justice practitioners must address the underlying bias-motivations of these crimes, and take a victim-centered approach in response.<sup>183</sup> Domestic and international courts must focus on a wide range of gender-based crimes, including misogynistic violence and hate crimes, in addition to crimes of sexual violence.<sup>184</sup> Courts should also include a wide range of justice tools, from traditional retributive justice measures to restorative and transitional justice mechanisms.

### C. Peacebuilding Through Enhancing Gender Equality

While the sections above have examined the structural inequalities that may lead to violence and conflict, conversely, building societies around norms of gender equality may support non-violent methods of conflict resolution and reconciliation.<sup>185</sup> Since gender equality provides a normative framework to ensure respect and non-violent conflict resolution as it decreases the role of hypermasculinity, a foundation of equality may also prevent perceptions of injustice from escalating into violence or armed conflict, as well as decrease the likelihood that a post-conflict country would once again re-enter the conflict cycle.<sup>186</sup> Socially constructed equal gender roles, as well as respect for gender equality in the private sphere, can also expand into the public sphere, creating more peaceful and non-violent societies.<sup>187</sup>

Additionally, countries and societies which invest more in women and ensure their access to greater resources find that in turn, women have a stronger ability to influence and create networks within their wider communities.<sup>188</sup> These networks then can be used to ensure peace and create sustainable conflict resolution mechanisms.<sup>189</sup> In post-conflict countries, peacebuilding efforts are far more successful and long-lasting when both women and men at the local levels are engaged in peace negotiation and peacebuilding processes.<sup>190</sup> Women’s leadership and involvement make peace agreements likelier and more long-lasting, as they enhance the healing and recovery process after conflict, and even prevent conflict

---

<sup>182</sup> *Id.* at 40.

<sup>183</sup> See, e.g., *Compendium: Practices of Civil Society and Government Collaboration for Effective Hate Crime Victim Support*, OSCE OFF. FOR DEMOCRATIC INST. & HUM. RTS. (Mar. 18, 2022), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/514165>.

<sup>184</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 50.

<sup>185</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>186</sup> *Id.*

<sup>187</sup> *Id.*

<sup>188</sup> *Id.*

<sup>189</sup> *Id.*

<sup>190</sup> *Id.*

from beginning.<sup>191</sup> Studies have also shown that democracies are only more peaceful than non-democratic societies when they ensure gender equality.<sup>192</sup>

## V. Conclusion

The ideological underpinnings and spectrum of misogynistic violence from individuals to larger terrorist or certain non-State armed groups using extreme violence against women are based on the desire to restore “traditional” gender norms of male dominance, maintain systemic inequality between men and women, and escalate from individual attacks into community violence and armed conflict. In order to create strong, peaceful, and resilient communities, governments and communities must make stronger efforts to dismantle structural inequalities and discrimination against women, ensure that women are treated as equal and valued members of society, use gender-sensitive and intersectional conflict analyses, include women as key leaders in peacebuilding efforts, and ensure strong criminal justice penalties for misogynistic crimes and violence against women.

When individual misogyny, systemic gender discrimination, and structural violence are reduced, tolerance of violence by the wider society will also decrease, thus leading to fewer wide-scale conflicts and a decrease in impunity for individual perpetrators who engage in violent misogynistic attacks.<sup>193</sup> As governments, policymakers, humanitarians, and peacemakers analyze conflict cycles, trends, and resolutions, the levels of violence, oppression, and inequality of women should be a key factor in addressing and preventing violence and armed conflict, as well as building sustainable peace.

---

<sup>191</sup> Díaz & Valji, *supra* note 7, at 38.

<sup>192</sup> Forsberg & Olsson, *supra* note 8.

<sup>193</sup> *Primed for Violence*, *supra* note 99, at 165.

