



UN Special Representative Pramila Patten expresses concern about the impact of escalating violence in Ukraine, especially on women and girls

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New York, 28 February 2022: United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, is gravely concerned about the rapidly deteriorating situation in Ukraine and urgently calls for the protection of civilians, especially women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and displacement. “This conflict is already severely impacting the safety and security of civilians, especially women and girls, who are at heightened risk of violence”, stated Special Representative Patten. “I call on all parties to uphold the human rights and dignity of all people, exercise restraint, and ensure full compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence”, she added.

The fighting has compelled displacement on a massive scale, forcing many civilians to flee their homes, including to neighbouring countries. Unless the conflict ceases, thousands of additional families will be forcibly displaced, dramatically escalating the scale of the already dire humanitarian situation, and increasing the risk of sexual violence and exploitation.

“I echo the appeal of the UN Secretary-General for an immediate cessation of hostilities and call for unhindered humanitarian access to those in need, especially women and girls. I further call on all parties to refrain from attacking essential healthcare and other civilian infrastructure, which is critical to ensuring sustained access to services, including sexual and reproductive health care and psychosocial support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence”, Special Representative Patten said. “I call for the prioritization of life-saving support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence within the humanitarian response”, she concluded.

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