Mental Health in Conflict

An analysis of UN human rights treaty bodies' Concluding Observations

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1. Background

International Human Rights Law is applicable in situations of armed conflict, and several human rights treaties protect the right to mental health.

2. Objectives

To investigate **how UN human rights treaty bodies address mental health in conflict and post-conflict settings in their Concluding Observations.**

UN human rights treaty bodies: committees of independent experts that oversee the implementation of core international human rights treaties

Concluding Observations: documents through which UN treaty bodies articulate their recommendations following the review of States' periodic reports

3. Methodology

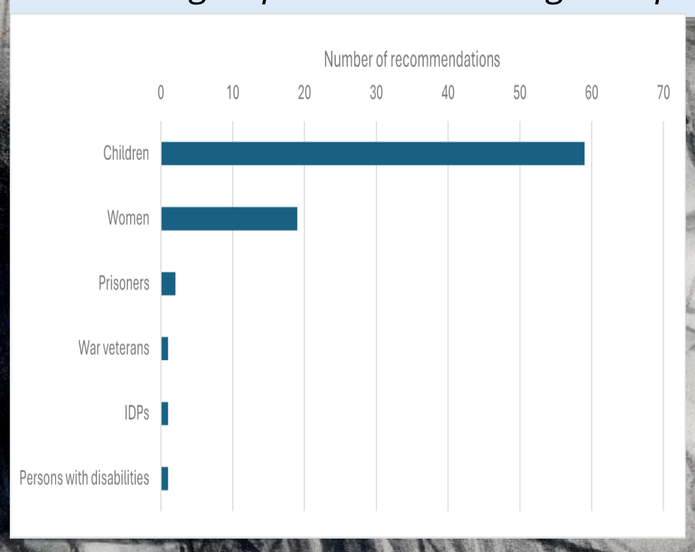
This study is based on a textual analysis of the Concluding Observations conducted through the **Universal Human Rights Index database**. Content analysis was employed to identify the most relevant **recommendations** contained in the Concluding Observations, followed by a thematic analysis when necessary. The analysis was carried out using Excel software and manual coding.

4. Results & Discussion

TARGET GROUPS

The majority of the recommendations concerned **children**, especially child soldiers, and **women**, especially those who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

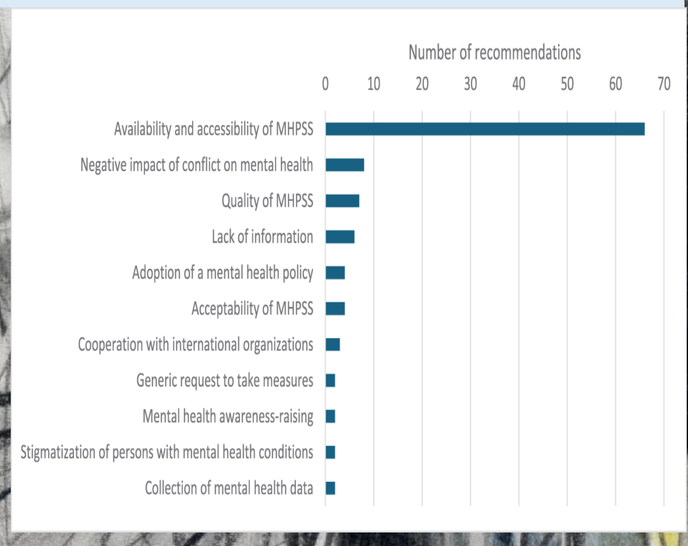
→ *These results reflect the strong focus on the impact of conflict on these two groups in the broader global policy framework.*



THEMATIC ISSUES

Treaty bodies concentrated primarily on the need to provide **mental health and psychosocial support** (MHPSS) to persons affected by conflict. Other issues included the quality and acceptability of MHPSS, the adoption of a national mental health policy, and the collection of mental health data.

→ *There is an awareness of the importance of addressing mental health at multiple levels.*



RECOMMENDING BODY

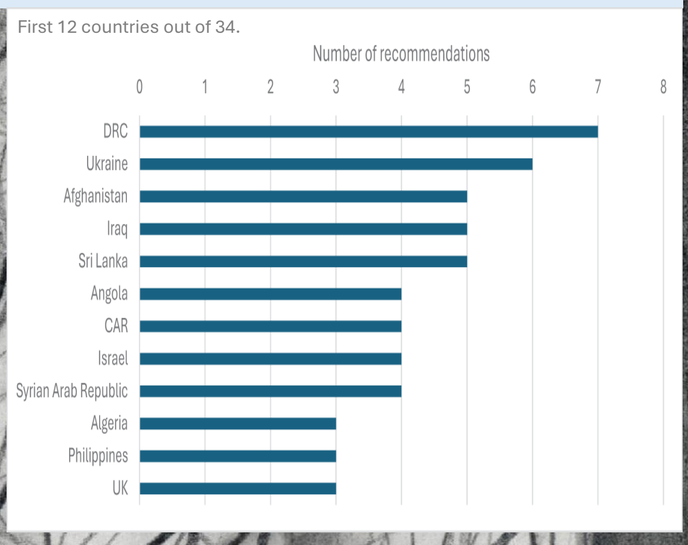
The most active treaty bodies were the **Committee on the Rights of the Child** and the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**.

→ *This finding is consistent with the parallel finding that most recommendations focused on children and women.*

COUNTRIES CONCERNED

84 recommendations were addressed to **34 countries**.

→ *The interest in the protection of the mental health of persons affected by conflict is not limited to certain geographical regions or particular conflicts.*



RECOMMENDATION DATE

There is a net increase in attention to the topic **between 2015 and 2019**.

→ *During this period, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Health was Dainius Pūras, who dedicated significant attention to the protection of mental health.*

5. Conclusion

Modern warfare tactics continue to have a profound effect on mental health. Through its empirical analysis, this paper might support States in implementing their obligations towards the mental health of persons affected by armed conflict, demonstrating **how an abstract human right can be translated into more practical and concrete steps**.

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Tables: International Review of the Red Cross, Vol. 108, Issue 932: Mental Health and Armed Conflict, August 2026, pp. 685 – 712. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383125101033.