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FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND LAW

## **PRESS RELEASE: New Data Confirm Political Violence Targeting Women is on the Rise**

**28 May 2019:** Women around the world are facing unprecedented levels of targeted political violence. According to new data on political violence targeting women collated by the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project \(ACLED\)](#) – in partnership with the [Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law](#) at The University of Texas at Austin – the threat to women has grown in recent years, currently reaching some of the highest levels ever recorded.

The data capture information on political violence and demonstration events that occur within the public sphere, ranging from war-time sexual violence and attacks on female politicians to repression of everyday women trying to engage in political processes. They confirm a variety of expected threats, such as high levels of political violence targeting women during war, while also revealing surprising new trends, like the disproportionate use of intervention and excessive force against demonstrations featuring women.

**Dr. Roudabeh Kishi, Research Director of ACLED:** *“Political violence targeting women, both sexual and otherwise, is on the rise -- during and outside of war-time and election periods. Women of all walks of life, not solely politicians, increasingly find themselves in the crosshairs when engaging in political processes. Such violence is used to create high-risk political spaces, to humiliate and oppress women, and to prevent their effective political participation. New data from ACLED and the Strauss Center allow users to identify the chief perpetrators, map patterns of violence, and track emerging threats to women around the world as they engage in the public sphere.”*

**Anne Clary, Assistant Director of the Strauss Center:** *“ACLED represents a vital complement to the Strauss Center’s commitment to addressing issues of contemporary international importance. Political violence targeting women is a problem that intersects with a host of systemic ills. With these new data, the Strauss Center is proud to partner with ACLED to provide users with a key resource for events that are not readily available elsewhere and which can be used to assess larger trends.”*

### **Top Trends**

***Political violence targeting women is increasing; there were twice as many such events reported during the first quarter of 2019 than during the first quarter of 2018:***

- Women are frequently targeted where levels of organized violence are high, such as during conventional warfare. Both Syria and Somalia are indicative cases.
- However, even where levels of organized violence do not top the charts, women often still face high levels of targeting. Burundi and Pakistan are indicative cases.



***Political violence targeting women extends beyond sexual violence, which makes up only one-third of all violence targeting women events:***

- Political violence targeting women takes a variety of forms and varies across region and context.
- Sexual violence, abductions/forced disappearances, and mob violence are all proportionally more common in violence targeting women than in political violence in which gender does not drive targeting choices.
- Non-sexual attacks targeting women are the most common form of violence targeting women. These non-sexual attacks -- such as attempted assassinations of female politicians, or repression by state forces -- account for 47% of violence targeting women, while sexual violence accounts for 34%.

***Political violence tactics targeting women vary by region:***

- Non-sexual attacks are the predominant way in which women are targeted in the Middle East, accounting for 82% of all events.
- Sexual violence is the leading type of violence targeting women in Africa, accounting for 42% of all violence targeting women on the continent. Sexual violence is also widespread in Southeast Asia, and makes up 36% of all violence targeting women in the region.
- Mob violence makes up a third of all violence targeting women in South Asia, reflecting the prominence of mob violence more largely as a feature of the region's conflict landscape.
- Abductions and forced disappearances are comparatively more common in Africa relative to other regions, where they make up 10% of all political violence targeting women.

***Perpetrators of political violence targeting women also vary across regions:***

- Anonymous armed groups have carried out the largest proportion of violence targeting women from the start of 2018 to the present. Violence against women by unidentified armed groups (UAGs) constitute one-third of such events over that time period.
  - UAGs are the primary perpetrators of this type of violence in Africa, and in Southeastern & Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This points to the importance of capturing violence involving these anonymous agents.
- Of identified and named groups, political militias are responsible for the most violence targeting women in Africa; state forces carry out the largest proportion in the Middle East; and mobs, including those with links to political parties and religious groups, are the primary perpetrators in South Asia.

***Demonstrations featuring women face disproportionate levels of excessive force:***

- Demonstrations featuring women are on the rise; in nearly every region of ACLED coverage, the first quarter of 2019 featured record or near-record high levels of demonstration events featuring women.



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- Across all regions, the vast majority of demonstration events featuring women are peaceful protests in which demonstrators do not engage in violence or vandalism and are not met with any intervention, by state forces or otherwise.
- However, higher proportions of demonstration events featuring women are met with excessive force (e.g. live fire) and intervention (e.g. arrests, tear gas) than demonstrations not featuring women, especially in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and across Africa. This intervention usually comes at the hands of the state.

*A US-based 501c3 established in 2014, [ACLED](#) is the highest quality, most widely used, real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world.*

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*The [Robert Strauss Center for International Security and Law](#) integrates expertise from across The University of Texas at Austin, as well as from the private and public sectors, in pursuit of practical solutions to emerging international challenges.*

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