



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

# SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATES QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

MITIGATING REPRISAL RISKS FOR WOMEN CIVIL SOCIETY BRIEFERS IN PUBLIC SECURITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

© UN Women 2026.

This work is available open access by complying with the Creative Commons license created for inter-governmental organizations, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO.

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/>.

Publishers must delete the UN Women logo from their edition and create a new cover design. Publishers should email the file of their edition to: [permissions@unwomen.org](mailto:permissions@unwomen.org).

Photocopies and reproductions of excerpts are allowed with proper credits.

Produced by UN Women, New York, March 2026.

**Lead drafter:** Mause-Darline François, UN Women

With inputs and review from UN experts and civil society partners.

**Cover photo:** UN Women/Ryan Brown

**Copy editing and proofreading:** Anji Manivannan.

**Design:** Diego Corzo Rueda & Juan Ortiz Zableh.

Please cite this publication as: UN Women. 2026. SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATES QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE. Mitigating Reprisal Risks for Women Civil Society Briefers in Public Security Council Meetings. New York: UN Women.

# SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATES QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Mitigating Reprisal Risks for Women Civil Society Briefers in Public Security Council Meetings

**Peace, Security and Resilience Section**

**UN Women**

New York, 2026

## What this guide is about and how to use it

This guide focuses on women civil society representatives who brief the Security Council in its public meetings (hereinafter referred to as “women civil society briefers”, “women briefers” or “briefers”) and may face risks similar to those experienced by women human rights defenders (WHRDs),<sup>1</sup> even if they do not formally identify as such. This guide responds to these risk patterns while remaining applicable to women civil society briefers more broadly and offers practical considerations to support their safer participation in the Security Council’s work.



**The guide does not and cannot guarantee protection from or fully prevent reprisals, as risks can never be eliminated. Rather, it aims to support risk anticipation, risk mitigation and informed follow-up actions while underscoring that a woman civil society briefer’s participation in public Security Council meetings must be voluntary and undertaken with her informed consent.**

The guide is organized around four components: (i) Understanding reprisal risk patterns; (ii) Preparing and mitigating risks before the briefing; (iii) Signalling protection during the briefing; and (iv) Following up after the briefing. It is designed to support sound judgment and flexibility, while establishing minimum safeguarding standards where risks are foreseeable or identified.

The guide is aligned with the Secretary-General’s mandate on intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and is consistent with United Nations system-wide commitments to strengthen protection for WHRDs in conflict settings. It seeks to complement existing OHCHR’s guidance for Security Council Presidencies on good practices to support the safe engagement of civil society with the Security Council and subsidiary bodies, capturing the distinct risks faced by women briefers and providing practical considerations that Member States can operationalize in real time.

1. Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are individuals who identify as women and engage in human rights work as well as individuals of any gender who work to advance women’s rights or gender equality.

## Who this guide is for

This guide is intended for current and incoming Security Council Member States’ missions, particularly their:

- Advisors who draft briefing formats, agendas and background notes
- Staff who communicate with briefers or UN interlocutors
- Permanent Representatives and other senior officials who may chair or participate in public Security Council meetings.



## When this guide is most helpful

This guide is most useful when Security Council Member States are preparing for, conducting or following up on public Security Council briefings by women civil society representatives, particularly when Member States are:

- Anticipating potential intimidation or reprisals
- Selecting the most appropriate briefing modality
- Applying risk-sensitive engagement principles
- Planning follow-up actions after a briefing.

## How Security Council Member States should use this guide

- To help make decisions
- To anticipate and reduce foreseeable and identified risks
- To support briefers’ responsible and informed engagement with the Security Council
- To help inform diplomatic practice without defining operational protection responsibilities for Security Council Member States
- To complement, without replacing, existing civil society and UN protection actors’ risk processes.

## What this guide does not do

- It is not a compliance checklist.
- It is not a tool for conducting risk assessments or investigations.
- It does not eliminate or neutralize the risk of reprisals.
- It is not a guarantee of safety.
- It is not a nomination or monitoring tool.
- It does not establish operational protection responsibilities for Security Council Member States.
- It is not a procedure for vetting or approving content.
- It does not duplicate or replace roles held by civil society or UN protection actors.

## Why this guide matters



An invitation to brief the Security Council presents a woman civil society representative with both an opportunity to influence international decision-making and a risk of exposure to reprisals. When a woman civil society representative speaks at the Security Council, she does so not as a neutral observer, but as someone deeply connected to the realities she describes. Her testimony may challenge entrenched power structures or dominant narratives. This dynamic is precisely what makes her contribution valuable, yet it is also what can make it dangerous.

The reported number and severity of intimidation and reprisals against individuals and groups for their engagement with the United Nations remains high. Reprisals against women civil society briefers frequently take gender-specific forms, including sexualized harassment and reputational attacks against the briefers themselves and pressure on their families. These harms often have longer-term impacts on their livelihoods, caregiving responsibilities and legitimacy in public life. These reprisals should be understood not as isolated incidents, but as part of broader patterns of shrinking civic space in which intimidation is systematically used to deter women's public participation.

A 2024 UN Women survey found that 28 per cent of women civil society briefers reported experiencing reprisals following their engagement with the Security

Council, including smear campaigns, cyberattacks and raids on their offices.<sup>2</sup> These findings highlight that participation itself can trigger harms, particularly in contexts where gender norms are used to delegitimize women's public voices.

Through its resolutions and commitments on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the Security Council has repeatedly recognized the importance of ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace and security discussions, including through civil society briefings. Reprisals against women briefers deter their engagement and weaken the Security Council's ability to benefit from diverse and independent perspectives. More specifically, such reprisals:

- Distort the information environment by discouraging authentic voices
- Undermine the four pillars of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) by restricting women's participation in decision-making, exposing women to gender-specific harms, silencing early warning voices essential for prevention and disrupting women's leadership in peacebuilding and recovery
- Compromise the integrity of the United Nations by demonstrating that speaking to the world's highest security body may result in punishment.

**The Security Council's added value lies in its ability to shape the conditions that reduce foreseeable harms and manage identified risks while preserving women civil society briefers' independent and meaningful engagement. This calls for practical foresight, consistent diplomatic practice and a willingness to engage with briefers, even when risks exist.**

## Objective of this guide

This guide aims to provide Security Council Member States with practical, principled guidance to anticipate, mitigate and respond to reprisals against women civil society briefers while recognizing that zero risk cannot be guaranteed in Council engagements.

**Above all, the guide underscores the importance of Security Council Member States continuing**

2. These findings reflect self-reported experiences of women civil society briefers and may not constitute verified cases based on the methodology for the Secretary-General's annual reports on reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations.

to invite women civil society briefers to engage with the Security Council, consistent with Women, Peace and Security commitments, while using informed consent, risk assessment, risk mitigation and follow-up actions to enable briefers' voluntary, safe and meaningful participation.



## COMPONENT I: UNDERSTANDING REPRISAL RISK PATTERNS

Harms against women briefers and best practices for engagement

### Methodology

This guide was prepared with the support of the United Kingdom and in consultation with women's civil society organizations and UN experts, and it incorporates findings from annual surveys carried out with WHRDs who have briefed the Security Council. It also draws on experiences shared by Security Council Member States' missions during consultations in February and March 2026, including practical case studies from recent presidencies, to illustrate how missions have successfully mitigated risks and responded to challenges.

### 1.1. How reprisals unfold and how they can be anticipated

Reprisals against women briefers often follow identifiable patterns shaped by political, social and digital dynamics. They often begin with challenges to credibility or representation and escalate over time into professional, legal or personal pressures. Reprisals may be carried out by State or de facto authorities, armed or political actors, or individuals acting on their behalf, including through digital or proxy means. They often extend beyond the briever, affecting family members, colleagues, organizations and wider community networks. Structural conditions, including limited safeguards, digital exposure or economic precarity, can further heighten her vulnerability. Understanding these patterns and types of harms would enable earlier anticipation and more informed risk mitigation by Security Council Member States.



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

Patterns	Types of harm
<b>Reputational attacks, misleading narratives and public-facing pressures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disinformation questioning women’s legitimacy to speak in public spaces or portraying women advocates as neglecting their family or caregiving responsibilities</li> <li>• Defamation and reputational attacks</li> <li>• Accusations of being “foreign influenced”, immoral, or disloyal to community norms</li> </ul>
<b>Technology-facilitated violence and harassment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexualized online harassment and threats of sexual violence</li> <li>• Coordinated trolling campaigns targeting participation in public debates or advocacy spaces</li> <li>• Non-consensual sharing or manipulation of images, including fabricated or sexualized images</li> <li>• Doxing exposing the briefer’s personal or family information</li> </ul>
<b>Mobility and pressures in physical spaces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats of sexual or gender-based violence</li> <li>• Intimidation and harassment in public spaces</li> <li>• Surveillance or intimidation linked to presence in political or diplomatic spaces</li> <li>• Restrictions on movement or travel affecting participation in advocacy or public life</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional, administrative and legal pressures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judicial harassment or arrest under laws used to police morality, dress or public conduct</li> <li>• Administrative restrictions on women-led organizations or civic participation</li> <li>• Investigations, audits or legal actions used to discredit advocates or leaders</li> <li>• Efforts to limit participation in political or international forums</li> </ul>
<b>Pressures on relatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harassment or intimidation targeting children, spouse, partner or other relatives</li> <li>• Community pressures or reputational attacks affecting family members</li> <li>• Threats involving children’s schooling, custody or access to services</li> <li>• Pressure exploiting caregiving roles to discourage public engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Physical attacks or violence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual or gender-based assault</li> <li>• Arbitrary detention or imprisonment</li> <li>• Enforced disappearance or abduction</li> <li>• Killing or attempted killing</li> </ul>

- **These harms may target the briefer following engagement with the Security Council or reflect broader patterns affecting women human rights defenders and advocates more generally.**
- **Reprisals against a woman briefer often begin with attempts to undermine her legitimacy. These dynamics frequently draw on gendered norms to delegitimize or silence her engagement. Reprisals should be treated as a protection concern linked to her participation in political and diplomatic processes, including engagements with intergovernmental bodies.**
- **These patterns and mitigation approaches presented here are not exhaustive. Risks vary across environments and may intensify during elections, transitions, militarized operations, peace negotiations or diplomatic crises. Assessment should always guide engagement.**

## 1.2. Principles for engagement

A briefer's participation in a Security Council briefing should be voluntary and undertaken with her informed consent. Neither UN Women nor Security Council Member States can guarantee zero risk. At the same time, women briefers' engagement with the Security Council is stronger when briefers are not left to manage

the risks alone. Engagement should not require women briefers to choose between contributing to peace efforts and protecting themselves or their families. The Security Council should shape safer conditions by adopting consistent, principled approaches.

Principle	Interpretation	Best practice(s) for Security Council Member States to consider
<b>Risk mitigation, not silence</b>	<b>Zero risk is impossible.</b> Risk mitigation should inform how engagement happens, not whether it happens, and should be applied as a minimum safeguard where risks are foreseeable or identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan, assess and mitigate risks early.</li> <li>Adjust the briefing's modality, rather than cancel the briefer's participation.</li> </ul>
<b>Briefer-centred risk assessment and decision-making</b>	Risk assessment and mitigation discussions should centre the briefer's own analysis of her situation, exposure risks and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite the briefer to share her own assessment of potential risks and mitigation options.</li> <li>Do not frame the briefer's participation as expected once the invitation is extended.</li> </ul>
<b>Credibility without censorship</b>	Authentic testimonies should remain untouched and unfiltered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While you may wish to offer insights into Council dynamics on the relevant topic, it is recommended to avoid censoring the briefer's statement, including through requiring advance review of their draft statement unless the briefer welcomes this to support their preparations.</li> <li>Focus on broader trends and dynamics rather than names or identifying information.</li> </ul>
<b>Informed consent as a safeguard, not a formality</b>	Informed consent applies to the briefer's identity, statement's content and any reuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm the briefer's informed consent and revisit it if conditions change.</li> </ul>
<b>Protection as continuous</b>	A briefing is not isolated and has post-engagement implications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct follow-up check-ins with the briefer after the briefing.</li> </ul>
<b>Survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach to engagement</b>	Engagement should not expose briefers to unnecessary emotional harm or pressure them to disclose traumatic experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not request the briefer to share personal experiences of violence or sensitive details during preparatory discussions.</li> </ul>
<b>No extraction of information</b>	Briefers should not be asked to share sensitive information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not request names, documentation or sensitive details during preparatory discussions or follow-up engagements.</li> </ul>
<b>No outsourcing of risk</b>	Engagement implies shared responsibility between the briefer and the Security Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the briefer's participation is voluntary and informed.</li> <li>Do not place risk assessment and mitigation solely on the briefer.</li> </ul>

- **A zero-tolerance stance is most effective when signalled early as an expectation, not after the harm occurs.**



## COMPONENT II: PREPARING AND MITIGATING RISKS BEFORE THE BRIEFING

Minimum safeguarding standards to reduce foreseeable and identified risks

### 2.1. Prerequisites for engagement

Early attention to risk assessment, informed consent, visibility and logistical arrangements can significantly reduce risks even before a briefing is publicly confirmed.

#### Core prerequisites

- Discuss consent parameters early, including identity, visibility and the publication and reuse of statement details.
- Refer only to information voluntarily offered by the briefer.
- Do not request the briefer to identify any individuals, including officials or armed actors.
- Apply a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach, and do not pressure the briefer to disclose

#### BOX 1

### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

#### Assessing safeguards when engaging young briefers

Excited about sending a powerful message, a mission wanted to invite girls from conflict zones to speak at a thematic event. But partner consultations quickly revealed protection realities, lifelong exposure risks, family pressures and limited safeguards as challenges. These discussions helped identify possible safeguards and informed decisions about how young briefers' participation could take place in a way that prioritized their safety and well-being.

**Key takeaway:** The participation of diverse civil society voices remains essential. Early consultation and risk assessment can help Security Council Member States missions identify safeguards that support briefers' safe and meaningful engagement.

personal experiences or sensitive details, particularly when discussing sexual and gender-based violence.

- Prepare introductions and formats that do not share undisclosed personal or contextual details.
- Identify contingency options, such as quiet diplomatic engagements, logistical adjustments, relocation arrangements or digital protection measures, that can be quickly activated if needed.

### 2.2. Preparation of internal workflows and avoiding inadvertent internal exposure

- Designate early on a focal point to coordinate briefers' participation with UN secretariat (SCAD)
- Share the briefer's name and identifying information only with those who require it for operational purposes.
- Do not include names, identifying information or locations in email subject lines or broad internal circulations until close to the briefing.
- Ensure technical staff (e.g., interpreters, note-takers and virtual support) are aware of any discretion requirements to avoid inadvertent exposure of the briefer.
- Store sensitive material only on restricted platforms.

### 2.3. Avoiding inadvertent external exposure

- Do not include contextual cues in agendas, invitations or concept notes.
- Do not associate the briefer with any constituency or network unless she self-identified.
- Do not reference documents that could reveal the briefer's affiliations, including reports, petitions or prior statements not raised by the briefer herself.



## 2.4. Digital safety, information handling and avoiding inadvertent digital exposure

- Ensure the briefer's virtual participation does not inadvertently reveal identifying information, including through display labels, backgrounds or audio settings.
- Ensure the meeting link, passcode and technical instructions are shared only with essential focal points and the briefer.
- Limit screen- and file-sharing, as well as chat-saving functions, to the briefer and the technical host.
- Discourage the sharing of personal contact details or social media handles through chat features.
- When feasible, conduct virtual briefings from a United Nations facility or trusted partner organization to reduce risks linked to broadcasting from private residences.

### BOX 2

#### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

##### Coordinating a virtual briefing at UN facilities

A woman civil society representative invited to brief the Security Council was unable to travel due to visa issues, so virtual participation became the only option. Rather than connecting from home, risking exposure of her living environment, the inviting mission coordinated with the briefer and the relevant UN entity/agency for her to join from a UN facility, ensuring a stable internet connection while signalling institutional support. No personal details were visible, and the setup looked neutral. After the briefing, the mission confirmed via UN contacts that she remained safe.

**Key takeaway:** For virtual formats, defaulting to using UN facilities can help mitigate location risks and technical issues. Discuss this option early in talks about consent parameters.

### BOX 3

#### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

##### Managing digital exposure during a virtual briefing

While preparing for a virtual briefing, one mission's staff noticed that objects visible in the background of the briefer's video could reveal identifying details about the location. The briefer and mission staff worked together to adjust the setting and remove identifiable items before the virtual briefing.

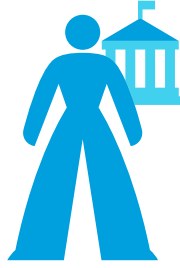
**Key takeaway:** Preparing the visual environment during virtual briefings can help prevent unintended disclosure of sensitive information or the briefer's identifying information.

## 2.5. Scenario-based considerations

- For briefings on political transitions, ensure the meeting framing does not imply the briefer is aligned with any political party.
- For briefings on issues involving non-State actors, ensure the meeting framing does not imply the briefer's cooperation with, proximity to or direct association with those actors.

## 2.6. Essential considerations before a briefing is confirmed

- Conduct a risk assessment grounded in the specific country context, including political dynamics, prior incidents of reprisals and available protection or response pathways.
- Engage early with relevant UN entities working on protection, human rights, and women, peace and security to identify potential risks and mitigation measures.
- Discuss participation arrangements and a contingency plan with the briefer before the briefing is publicly announced with an option of revisiting arrangements if circumstances change.
- Clarify the public nature of Security Council briefings to the briefer, including attribution, broadcasting, interpretation and translation into UN official languages, and public availability of statements and records.



- Obtain informed consent from the briefer before any discretionary reuse of the briefing beyond official Security Council records, such as in social media, press remarks, speeches, side events or reports.
- If the briefer has briefed other UN bodies, revisit her consent in case her visibility needs have changed.
- Offer the briefer a clear option to decline participation if she does not feel safe or comfortable with the arrangements.
- Do not proceed with the briefing if the briefer disagrees with the modality or feels unsafe.

#### BOX 4

### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

#### Preparing a civil society briefer with a civil society organization's support

For a high-profile thematic debate, one presidency felt the pressure of public scrutiny. Its mission reached out to a civil society organization that had Security Council experience and knew how to handle briefers. Together, the mission and civil society organization staff identified a strong voice and facilitated early discussions with the briefer on the format of the meeting, the visibility associated with addressing the Security Council and possible protection considerations. This preparation helped ensure that the briefer felt informed and comfortable with the process.

**Key takeaway:** Early preparation and consultation with actors familiar with Security Council engagement can help Member States missions support briefers and discuss potential risks in advance.

## 2.7. Strategic safeguards before the briefing itself

- The briefer's own assessment of risks is essential, particularly regarding impacts on her family members, colleagues or communities.
- The final decision on whether and how to participate should always rest with the briefer, based on her own assessment of risks.
- Security Council Member States should consider protection measures early on, allowing potential risks to be realistically mitigated without shifting responsibility onto the briefer.
- Security Council Member States should remain attentive to the context and be ready to adjust plans if conditions change, especially since political timelines, online discourse and public narratives can shift quickly, sometimes with little or no warning.
- If risks cannot be reasonably mitigated, the Security Council should consider inviting another briefer, in consultation with the original briefer to preserve engagement.

## 2.8. Format selection

Format decisions are not only logistical, but also reflective of how risk and exposure are considered in each context. Public, in-person briefings remain the default modality for Security Council engagements, but advance assessment helps determine whether any adjustments are warranted for specific circumstances such as the briefer's ability to travel and her assessment of risks. Choosing the right format is a risk mitigation measure that balances impact with exposure and should be informed by a context-specific risk assessment. The examples below are illustrative and non-exhaustive; assessment remains essential.

Situation	Appropriate format	Why that format matters
Risks are assessed as manageable and are acceptable to the briefer	Public, in-person	Reinforces the briefer's legitimacy and impact
Anticipated harassment or travel-linked pressure on the briefer	Public, remote from a secure location	Maintains the briefer's participation while reducing her exposure
Escalating, unmitigable risks for the briefer	Alternative briefer, in consultation with the original briefer	Preserves engagement while reducing harms to the original briefer

- **Modalities should be revisited if conditions change, including shifts in public narratives or restrictive movements.**



### COMPONENT III: SIGNALLING PROTECTION DURING THE BRIEFING

Diplomatic language and conduct that shape risks and expectations

#### 3.1. Diplomatic signals of protection

How a briefer is received by the Security Council affects how she may be treated afterwards. Language, tone and procedural choices signal the Security Council's expectations to external actors and can either deter or amplify reprisals. Consistent diplomatic signalling can help establish a standard for participation that reinforces the legitimacy and safety of the briefer.

#### 3.2. Practical approaches and illustrative protective language

- **At the outset of an intervention:** Security Council Member States should consider using language recalling that engagement with the Security Council should not give rise to intimidation, harassment, pressure or other adverse consequences and that such acts are inconsistent with expected international conduct and should be addressed.
- **When welcoming the briefing in national statements:** Security Council Member States should consider using neutral formulations (e.g., "We welcome today's expert briefing"), rather than detailed biographical references to the briefer.
- **In situations of emerging hostility:** Security Council Member States should consider using language to express concerns about reactions to a briefing while recalling that participation in the Council should not result in adverse consequences.
- **When reprisals are reported:** Security Council Member States should consider using language recalling that reprisals following cooperation with the Security Council are inconsistent with expected international conduct and reported reprisals should be addressed.

#### BOX 5

#### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

##### Considering the briefer's seating preferences

Some briefers may not want to sit next to a country's delegation in the Security Council because of worries that images from the chamber might be interpreted as political alignment with that country, increasing pressure on her and her family.

**Key takeaway:** Seating arrangements can be adjusted discreetly with the UN Secretariat's support to respect briefers' risk concerns, including those about being perceived as politically affiliated with a certain country.



## COMPONENT IV: FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE BRIEFING

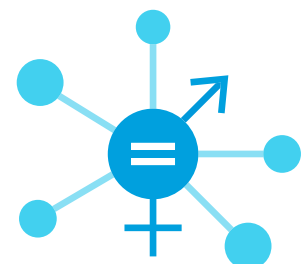
Monitoring, response options and sustained support if reprisals occur

### 4.1. Protection window

Visibility around a briefing can change rapidly, and reprisals may emerge after public attention fades, often through less visible forms of pressure.

#### Thoughtful and sustained considerations for Security Council Member States' missions to implement:

- Designate a focal point to receive any concerns raised after the briefing by the briefer or supporting organizations.
  - Pay attention to less visible forms of repression targeting the briefer, such as visa issues, investigations and bureaucratic obstacles.
  - Maintain awareness for at least 60–90 days, recognizing that reprisals may not immediately follow periods of public attention.
  - Prioritize quiet coordination over visibility where the briefer's risk is elevated.
  - Approach the absence of reporting of reprisals cases, in general or against the briefer, with caution, recognizing that reprisals are frequently underreported.
  - Pay attention to pressure on the briefer's relatives or colleagues, and if it occurs, conduct sustained, discreet follow-up.
  - Pay attention to measures affecting the briefer's livelihoods, access to services, or professional activities, as these may signal retaliation linked to their engagement
- **The briefer's risk and exposure do not end with the briefing. Instead, the implications of her engagement continue well afterwards.**



#### BOX 5

### SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

#### Maintaining contact with the briefer after the briefing

After a woman civil society representative briefed the Security Council on a conflict zone, the inviting mission remained attentive to potential risks in the weeks that followed. The mission staff member responsible for coordinating the invitation stayed in touch with the briefer, initially checking in with her frequently (during the first 24–48 hours) and then weekly. Then, the staff member gradually reduced contact as the situation stabilized. Although nothing adverse happened, these check-ins made her feel genuinely supported by the mission.

**Key takeaway:** Maintaining contact with briefers after the briefing can help detect emerging concerns and reassure them that support remains available.

### 4.2. Early indicators of escalating risks

Reprisals against women briefers can take multiple forms. In many cases, they begin quietly through practices that look administrative, technical or socially driven.

#### Common indicators reported by briefers and those supporting their engagement include:

- Threats, stalking or harassment
- Pressure on family members, including children, spouse, partner or other relatives
- Sudden investigations, employment reviews, interrogations about travel or scrutiny of assets



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

- Withdrawal of accreditation, licenses or access to services
- Blocked visas, passport delays or travel restrictions
- Online smear campaigns, especially gendered or sexualized defamation
- Denunciation of the briefer through community, political, religious or media actors
- Unexplained police visits or monitors near home or workplace.

**\*The absence of immediate physical harm to the briefer should not be interpreted as safety. Intimidation often begins in subtle or less visible ways and may intensify over time. For many women, reputational attacks or pressure on family members appear well before any overt forms of reprisals.**

### 4.3 Security Council-wide practice if reprisals happen

Reprisals against women civil society briefers can be violent, unpredictable and gendered. They may target the briefer or her relatives, colleagues or community.



**Core diplomatic posture:** If reprisals occur, whether physical, digital, bureaucratic or social, the safest first response is to reduce the briefer's exposure while signalling that the Security Council is attentive.

#### Do

- Seek the briefer's informed consent and preferences before taking action.
- Coordinate with relevant UN actors with protection mandates to ensure available support options remain up to date as protection and referral pathways evolve.
- Raise concerns through the most appropriate channels (e.g., bilateral engagements or existing Security Council procedures, such as "Any Other Business").
- Be prepared to facilitate the briefer's timely access to relevant protection, logistical or support pathways.
- Where appropriate and with the briefer's informed consent, refer her to existing mechanisms, such as the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund's Women Human Rights Defenders Window or other relevant support pathways.

#### Don't

- Request additional sensitive details about the briefer.
- Contact the local or national authorities to seek clarification without conducting a risk assessment.
- Escalate the briefer's visibility without considering likely impacts.
- Assume the situation is resolved because the news cycle has moved on.
- **Protective diplomacy begins with reducing a briefer's exposure, rather than seeking additional details that may increase risk.**

#### 4.4. Possible avenues for response

The provision of consent-based support to the briefer and follow-up actions should not be time-bound, as reprisals may occur months or years after the briefer's participation. Consent-based support should accordingly remain available in the longer-term.

Security Council Member States' responses to suspected reprisals vary depending on the context, consent of the briefer and assessed risks. In some contexts, response options may be limited, and diplomatic or operational actions may not be possible without increasing the briefer's risk. When possible, diplomatic signalling through national statements can help set expectations, but this should not be treated as a substitute for follow-up actions.

In practice, Security Council Member States have used a range of channels to address concerns related to reprisals, including quiet bilateral engagements with relevant authorities, coordination with UN entities or existing Security Council procedures, such as "Any Other Business." The choice of response or responses should always be guided by the briefer's consent, the likelihood of further exposure and whether additional visibility would mitigate or exacerbate risk.

##### BOX 5 SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBER STATE VIGNETTE

#### Conducting quiet diplomatic engagements following the intimidation of a briefer

Following a Security Council meeting in which a woman civil society representative raised sensitive issues, concerns emerged about intimidation of the briefer, possibly linked to the briefing. The presidency raised the matter through quiet bilateral engagements with the relevant authorities, recalling that cooperation with the Security Council should not lead to adverse consequences for civil society participants.

**Key takeaway:** Discreet diplomatic engagement can be one possible avenue to address concerns about reprisals.

#### 4.5. Support needs identified by briefers for their safe engagement

Support needs differ based on individual circumstances, the security environment and the political context of the briefer's engagement.

Broad category	Briefer's support needs
<b>Physical safety and protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical security and protection for the briefer, her family and her colleagues</li> <li>Safe travel and relocation support</li> <li>Secure briefing venues</li> <li>Safeguarding of the briefer's offices and documents</li> <li>Confidential handling of sensitive information.</li> </ul>
<b>Cybersecurity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection from cyberattacks and online harassment</li> <li>Secure communication channels</li> <li>Digital safety training</li> <li>Strengthened security for websites and social media</li> <li>Stable internet connectivity and associated technical support.</li> </ul>
<b>Logistics and operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliable internet and audiovisual setup if the briefing is virtual</li> <li>Travel logistics (e.g., flights and accommodation)</li> <li>Access to UN facilities</li> <li>Clear operational instructions.</li> </ul>
<b>Political and risk preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance briefing on context and political sensitivities</li> <li>Information on available protection mechanisms</li> <li>Preparatory meetings</li> <li>Guidance on safe messaging and visual setup if the briefing is virtual.</li> </ul>
<b>Psychosocial and institutional support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental health support</li> <li>Mechanisms to report risks or reprisals to protection mechanisms</li> <li>Financial support when reprisals impact livelihoods.</li> </ul>

## 4.6. Responsibilities

Actor	Responsibilities
<b>The briefer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shares expertise voluntarily</li> <li>• Exercises sound judgment regarding acceptable levels of risk.</li> </ul>
<b>Security Council Member States and their missions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable the briefer's informed, voluntary participation</li> <li>• Liaise with the UN secretariat (SCAD) and relevant UN entities.</li> <li>• Remain attentive to concerns raised by the briefer or those supporting her engagement</li> <li>• Discuss forms of support available to address protection, logistical or other needs identified by the briefer to mitigate risks.</li> <li>• Signpost briefer to resources where available, including supporting organisations and UN agencies.</li> <li>• Set political expectations and best practices for engagement with civil society.</li> </ul>
<b>Security Council (as a forum)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides the political setting in which engagement occurs</li> <li>• Does not assume operational protection or monitoring functions.</li> </ul>
<b>UN secretariat and entities with protection mandates (OHCHR, UN Women, DPO/ DPPA, etc.)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where engaged, provide technical advice, coordination and support within their respective mandates, including risk mitigation, follow-up actions or referral pathways in coordination with other relevant UN entities, and where appropriate, through a designated focal point to facilitate communication and risk mitigation.</li> </ul>
<b>Independent civil society networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and support potential briefers in line with their mandates and priorities</li> <li>• Ensure their role is free from influence.</li> </ul>



Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown

## 4.7. Checklist of voluntary actions to take regarding public Security Council briefings



### Before

- Conduct a risk assessment.
- Develop a tailored mitigation and contingency plan in consultation with the briefer.
- Confirm or reconfirm the briefer's informed consent (e.g., identity, publication, recording and any reuse).
- Do not request sensitive information about the briefer or her testimony.
- Ensure the briefer's testimony is shaped by her experience, not external expectations.
- Prepare introductions and a meeting framing that does not disclose biographical details not offered by the briefer.
- Clarify media expectations, if any, and whether the briefer consents to being named or unnamed.
- Provide an option for the briefer to withdraw consent and participation.

### During



- Use protective language at the outset.
- Signal that participation in the Security Council should not result in reprisals.
- Do not use biographical, geographical or affiliation details not offered by the briefer.
- Do not prompt the briefer to disclose names, documentation or sensitive information.
- Do not use language implying the briefer's alignment or proximity to any political party or non-State actor.



### After

- Designate a focal point to remain available for post-briefing concerns.
- Maintain periodic contact with the briefer or supporting organizations immediately following the briefing (e.g., during the first 24–72 hours).
- Pay attention for 60–90 days, recognizing that reprisals may be delayed and occur over time.
- Prioritize quiet coordination or engagements over public responses if concerns arise.
- Do not increase the briefer's visibility or engage the local or national authorities without the briefer's consent and conducting a risk assessment.
- Prepare to provide consent-based protection support if reprisals occur.

---

## ANNEXES

1. Security Council Member States vignettes
2. Support Tools
3. Protection Resources for WHRDs and Other Civil Society Briefers

# UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



220 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017, USA

[unwomen.org](http://unwomen.org)  
[facebook.com/unwomen](https://facebook.com/unwomen)  
[x.com/un\\_women](https://x.com/un_women)  
[instagram.com/unwomen](https://instagram.com/unwomen)