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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS
AMID CONFLICT AND INSTABILITY**

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PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AMID CONFLICT AND INSTABILITY

Context

- The 2026 theme of **International Women's Day** as '**Rights, Justice, Action: For All Women and Girls**' highlights the need to move beyond symbolic commitments and ensure **concrete action toward gender equality**, particularly in a world increasingly marked by **armed conflicts, displacement and humanitarian crises**.

About International Women's Day (IWD)

- It is observed globally on **8 March every year** to celebrate women's achievements and promote gender equality and women's rights. It has evolved from a labour movement initiative into a global forum for gender equality.

Key Milestones: Historical Precedents

- **Early 1900s: Labour and socialist movements**, where women demanded better working conditions, voting rights, and equality.
- **1911**: First International Women's Day observed in several European countries.
- **1975**: UN officially began celebrating International Women's Day during the **International Women's Year**.
- **1977**: The UNGA invited Member States to proclaim **8 March as the UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace**.
- **Present**: A global day for advocacy on gender equality, women's rights and empowerment.

Theme (2026): 'Rights, Justice, Action: For All Women and Girls'

- **Rights**: Women's rights are fundamental human rights, encompassing equality before the law; access to education and healthcare; freedom from violence and discrimination; and political participation;
- **Justice**: It requires accountability for gender-based violence; legal frameworks protecting women during peace and conflict; and institutional mechanisms for gender equality;
- **Action**: It implies implementation of global commitments; inclusive governance and peace processes; and concrete policy measures rather than symbolic declarations;

Why Women's Participation Matters?

- Women's involvement significantly improves peacebuilding outcomes. Benefits of women's participation are:
 - ◆ Broader social representation in negotiations;
 - ◆ Greater attention to humanitarian and community issues;
 - ◆ Increased durability of peace agreements;
 - ◆ Inclusive post-conflict governance;
- **Peace agreements with female signatories and participants are more likely to endure over time**, demonstrating the strategic importance of gender inclusion in diplomacy and governance.

Issues and Concerns Related to Rights, Justice & Action for Women

- **Gender-Based Violence**: Sexual violence, rape and exploitation are frequently used as **strategies of war**, along with domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking.
 - ◆ It undermines women's fundamental rights, social participation, and economic independence.
- **Limited Access to Justice**: Even where legal protections exist, women frequently face barriers in accessing justice systems.

- ◆ Institutional weaknesses and cultural barriers often prevent women from obtaining legal remedies for violence and discrimination.
- **Underrepresentation in Decision-Making:** Women remain significantly **underrepresented in political and governance structures**.
- **Economic Inequality:** Economic disparities continue to restrict women's empowerment and autonomy.
 - ◆ Economic inequality reduces women's ability to **exercise their rights and participate fully in social and political life**.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:** Traditional norms and patriarchal structures often limit women's rights and opportunities.
 - ◆ Such norms **reinforce gender inequality and restrict women's autonomy in many societies**.
- **Displacement and insecurity:** Women and children constitute a large share of **refugees and internally displaced persons**.
- **Mental health impacts:** Increased cases of **depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**.
- **Institutional and Policy Gaps:** Although international frameworks such as **CEDAW and UNSCR 1325** promote gender equality, implementation remains inconsistent.
 - ◆ These gaps result in a **disconnect between global commitments and ground realities**.

Gap Between Commitments and Reality

- Despite international commitments, the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda remains limited.
- **Key challenges:**
 - ◆ **Low representation of women in peace negotiations;**
 - ◆ Weak implementation of **National Action Plans (NAPs)** under UNSCR 1325;
 - ◆ Inadequate accountability mechanisms;
 - ◆ Persistent patriarchal political structures;
- Women remain marginal in formal peace processes despite evidence of their positive impact on peace outcomes.

Global Framework: UN Security Council Resolution 1325

- Recognizing the gendered impacts of war, the **UNSC adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000**.
- **Objectives of UNSCR 1325:** The resolution calls for:
 - ◆ **Protection** of women and girls in armed conflict;
 - ◆ **Participation** of women in peace negotiations and decision-making;
 - ◆ **Prevention** of gender-based violence;
 - ◆ **Inclusion of gender perspectives** in peacekeeping and reconstruction;
- It marked a historic shift by acknowledging that **women are not only victims of conflict but also crucial agents of peacebuilding**.

Way Forward: Policy Measures

- To make the 2026 theme meaningful, concrete steps are necessary. These include:
 - ◆ Ensure women's participation in peace negotiations and political processes.
 - ◆ Strengthen implementation of UNSCR 1325 and National Action Plans.
 - ◆ Enhance protection mechanisms against gender-based violence in conflict zones.

- ◆ Provide humanitarian support including food, healthcare, education and financial assistance.
- ◆ Support women's organizations and grassroots initiatives in conflict-affected areas.
- ◆ Promote gender-sensitive governance and post-conflict reconstruction.

Conclusion

- International Women's Day 2026 reminds the global community that **gender equality is inseparable from peace and security**.
- While global commitments such as **UNSCR 1325** recognize the role of women in conflict resolution, **persistent implementation gaps continue to undermine progress**.
- Ensuring **rights, justice and action for all women and girls requires translating commitments into tangible policies**, particularly in conflict-affected regions.
- Protecting women and enabling their participation in peacebuilding is essential for **sustainable peace and inclusive development**.

Source: TH

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Discuss how gender-based violence, displacement, and economic insecurity undermine women's rights in conflict situations.

