FAQs: *What Can and Cannot Be Done with ACLED's New Gendered Associate Actors*

The scope of the data

Q: What does 'political violence *targeting* women' mean?

A: Women are only coded as the main victims in events if the victim(s) are composed entirely of women/girls, majority women/girls, or if the primary target was a woman/girl (e.g. a female politician attacked alongside two male bodyguards). These events refer to cases of direct targeting, and are coded under the event type 'Violence against civilians' with sub-event type 'Attack', 'Abduction/forced disappearance', or 'Sexual violence', or under event type 'Riots' with sub-event type 'Mob violence'. Events in which women are killed alongside men, for example, are not categorized as such. In cases of women being targeted through 'Explosions/Remote violence', when targeting has the potential of being more random, this rule is applied more conservatively. Cases such as an airstrike killing 3 women and 1 man would therefore not be coded as 'targeting women'. However, such events where the targeting is clearly directed at women/girls are included (e.g. a remote explosive targeting a girls' school, or a grenade thrown at a female politician). These are cases in which we assume that women have been targeted because of their gender.

Q: What does 'demonstrations *featuring* women' mean?

A: Demonstrations featuring women are those where demonstrators are made up entirely by women or a majority of women (e.g. a gathering of mothers of prisoners), a women's group (e.g. Women of Zimbabwe Arise [WOZA]), or are organized around women's rights or issues specifically (e.g. women's reproductive rights, or policies around women's clothing). Events in which women are simply demonstrating alongside men, for example, are not categorized as such.

Q: Women can be perpetrators of violence too and not just victims. Is this captured in these data?

A: No. Within this initiative, only political violence in which women are *targeted* is included here. Perpetrators of violence that involve women, such as the Free Women's Units of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK-YJA STAR), are not coded with an associate actor category denoting 'women' as part of this coding structure. This means that suicide bombings *by women*, for example, are not included as 'political violence targeting women'; suicide bombers' *targets* are what determines whether an attack is categorized as such or not.

Q: Can these data help me understand how much violence women face?

A: No. The data here capture political violence *targeting* women — which is not equivalent to all political violence *against* women. For example, an airstrike on a town may kill both men and women; the women in this case were not specifically targeted over the men, rather civilians more generally were targeted. Such a case would not be specifically categorized as 'political violence

targeting women' here. A number of other types of violence that women face — such as private, domestic, interpersonal, or intimate partner violence, as well as criminal violence, and non-physical violence (e.g. psycho-social, threats, intimidation, etc.) — are also not included here (for more on that, see Q&A further below). Furthermore, it is important to note that underreporting of violence targeting women by victims is common due to backlash or normative concerns and this should be considered when drawing conclusions from the data. As is the same for all datasets, coverage within the ACLED dataset is limited to what has been reported in some capacity. **As such, these data should *not* be used to understand *all* violence women face; that is a much larger set of information.**

Q: Can these data tell me how many women have been targeted?
A: No. ACLED is an event-based dataset, meaning that each entry in the dataset is an 'event'; events are denoted by the involvement of designated actors, occurring in a specific named location and on a specific day. When recording political violence targeting women, an event can involve one to many victims: three women killed by a soldier in a specific town on a certain day is collected as a single event; a girls' school attacked in a specific town on a certain day is coded the same way. The number of *events* should therefore not be conflated with the number of *victims* – in the same way that the number of violent events in the ACLED dataset should not be conflated with the number of fatalities. These capture different trends.

Q: Can these data help me understand how often women demonstrate?
A: No. The data here capture demonstrations *featuring* women or women's issues — these are not equivalent to demonstrations *involving* women. Demonstrations featuring women are those in which the demonstrators are made up entirely by women or a majority of women (e.g. a gathering of mothers of prisoners), a women's group (e.g. Women of Zimbabwe Arise [WOZA]), or organized around women's rights specifically (e.g. women's reproductive rights, or policies around women's clothing). Demonstrations which would not be categorized as 'featuring women' might include, for example, a protest around labor rights involving both men and women; the women in this case were not necessarily a majority, nor were they advocating for 'women's rights' in particular. **These data should *not* be used to understand the *full* involvement of women in social movements; that is a much larger set of information.**

Q: Does ACLED disaggregate events by gender?
A: No. **This is not a gender disaggregation of the ACLED dataset.** It should *not* be assumed that events in which women are not coded as an *associate actor* did not involve women; those can be events in which reports do not note the gender of the victim(s), or may be events in which women were killed alongside men.

Q: Does ACLED disaggregate fatalities by gender?
A: No. **This is not a gender disaggregation of the ACLED dataset.** It should *not* be assumed that all fatalities in events categorized as violence targeting women were necessarily women. Women may be targeted and killed alongside men; for example, a case in which a female politician is killed alongside two of her male bodyguards would be categorized as 'violence targeting women' and

would be coded with three fatalities, even though not all three of those fatalities are women. In turn, it should also *not* be assumed that all fatalities in events *not* categorized as 'violence targeting women' are male victims. Women can be killed alongside men, such as by an airstrike or as a result of live fire targeting labor demonstrators. Hence, some of the fatalities from such events can indeed also be women. Furthermore, it is important to remember that fatality numbers are frequently the most biased and poorly reported component of conflict data.

The targets and types of violence

Q: Who can the targets of 'violence targeting women' be?
A: Women (including trans-women,[1] when reported) and girls are included as victims. This means that politicians, government agents and elected officials, voters, and activists are coded, as are other categories of women. Women are coded as an *associated actor* when their gender is a salient identity in their targeting. Gender will not be the salient identity in every instance of political violence against women. Salient identities are not fixed in time and space; the intersectional nature of identities means that different aspects of one's identity may be salient at different times, places, and contexts.

Q: What about men? Are they included as associate actor when they are targeted?
A: Men are included as an *associated actor* when their gender is a salient identity in their targeting — specifically, this means when they are the victims of sexual violence specifically and can be included as *associated actor* in those events.

Q: Do these data capture 'violence against women in politics'?
A: Yes, though the data are not limited to just this subset. All political/public physical violence targeting women is included, regardless of the specific occupation of the victim. This means that politicians, government and elected officials, voters, and activists are coded, as are other women. The occupation of victims is not always specifically noted — i.e. 'politicians' are not specifically coded as such.

Q: Do these data capture sexual violence?
A: Yes, all sexual violence that is political/public is included. But the data also capture much more than just sexual violence; the data also include physical, non-sexual attacks, abduction/forced disappearance, mob violence, and various forms of explosions/remote violence. In addition to these types of political violence targeting women, the data also include information on demonstrations featuring women. The coding of event and sub-event types follows the same hierarchy in line with ACLED methodology. For example, abductions that also include physical attacks (e.g. in which the hostage is killed) are coded as an 'Attack', not as 'Abduction/forced disappearance'. Or the raping and killing of victims is coded as 'Sexual violence', not as 'Attack' *(for more on ACLED coding methodology and hierarchy of coding, see the [ACLED Codebook](#)).*

---

[1] ACLED includes an LGBT identity category, when salient and reported, along the same lines outlined here.

Q: Do these data capture all types of violence that women face?
A: No. Only political/public violence is included. Domestic, interpersonal, or intimate partner violence is excluded. Additionally, only physical violence (or an attempt at physical violence, such as a failed assassination attempt) is included; threats of physical violence or intimidation are excluded (such as psycho-social violence, or online violence). **The totality of all violence women face stretches far beyond the subset of violence captured in the data here.**

Coverage in both time and space

Q: What countries and regions are covered in these data?
A: All countries covered by ACLED — currently 207 countries and territories around the world — are included *(please reference [ACLED's coverage list](#) for further information).* Future spatial expansions by ACLED include Canada and Oceania; these new regions and countries will also include this categorization for all years of coverage, as will any new efforts around historical coding.

Q: Can I do regional comparisons of violence targeting women and/or demonstrations featuring women?
A: Yes, with certain caveats. An important point to remember regarding coverage is ACLED's non-uniform coverage of regions over time. ACLED began as an African data project and hence data covering the African continent span back the farthest; geographic expansions since then allow for new regions to extend coverage back in time only to a certain point, as resources allow. It is imperative to keep this in mind when reviewing trends across regions over time so as not to introduce an artificial spike into the data with the introduction of new regions into the timeline *(please reference [ACLED's coverage list](#) for further information).* The time period from 2020 to present is easiest to compare across regions as all regions of ACLED coverage cover this period; for time periods extending back before 2020, it is important for the user to ensure they are comparing countries across periods of time that are equally covered (i.e. do not compare trends from 1997 to present between Burundi [where coverage extends back to 1997] and Syria [where coverage extends back to 2017]).

Q: What time period is covered in these data?
A: Temporal coverage across regions of ACLED coverage varies (see Q&A above). Once ACLED begins coverage of a country, it is continuously covered — regardless of whether it is a war-time context or election period specifically.

Data accessibility

Q: How do I determine which ACLED events are political violence targeting women or demonstrations featuring women?
A: Violence in which women are targeted, and demonstrations featuring women, are denoted with 'Women (COUNTRY)' being noted as an *associated actor* to civilians or demonstrators in the *Associated Actor 1* or *Associated Actor 2* columns in the data. Each week, all such events will be

disaggregated into a [curated data file](#) that can be accessed more easily for those interested in working with only that subset of data.

Q: How can I access these data?
A: These new data are publicly accessible via ACLED's website — both through [the data export tool](#) as well as via a [curated data file](#) — and also via the [API](#) on a weekly basis, allowing users to monitor these trends in near-real-time for analysis, programming, early warning, advocacy, and more. For more on accessibility and relevant stipulations, please see ACLED's [Terms of Use & Attribution Policy](#). To access the data, users will need to first register for a free account; steps are spelled out in [this guide](#), with frequently asked questions covered in [this FAQ document](#).

Q: How often are data updated?
A: These new data are updated on a weekly basis in conjunction with ACLED's weekly data release schedule (with new data published every Monday/Tuesday covering the Saturday through Friday prior, in addition to any supplemental or updated information). All previous ACLED data have been back-coded to integrate this new associated actor; all future geographic expansions by ACLED will include this information going forward as well. ACLED works to maintain a 'living dataset', meaning that in addition to weekly releases of new data covering the week prior, supplementation of historic periods is also ongoing with information from new sources, targeted research, and new partnerships being integrated.

Q: How do I cite these data?
A: Please see ACLED's [Terms of Use & Attribution Policy](#).

Other

Q: How can I help improve ACLED's coverage of violence targeting women and/or demonstrations featuring women?
A: While these data may be a positive step in offering users access to quantitative data not previously available, limitations will continue to exist, especially as a result of reporting. To combat this, ACLED will continue to supplement the historical data alongside the weekly data releases. Identifying new sources of information through harnessing 'new media' and identifying subnational media in local languages are both steps in that direction — as is the establishment of partnerships with local organizations collecting such information. ACLED collaborates with a number of such organizations already, and will continue to identify new relationships of this nature going forward in an effort to improve the data to better reflect local realities. **If you are an organization collecting information on political violence targeting women, or demonstrations featuring women, and are interested in a partnership with ACLED to help extend coverage of these threats to women further, please reach out to us at admin@acleddata.com.**