



WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

"It is perhaps more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflict."

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Patrick Cammaert
Wilton Park Conference, May 2008



Conflict, war and militarism are gendered processes. They use, maintain and often promote the traditional ideological construction of "masculinity" and "femininity": men go to war to defend or promote national/state values, territories and borders, and protect their 'own' women and children. Women are considered passive, and are the targets of intolerable acts of violence, as a strategy of war. Their multiple and diverse roles in conflict are hidden, poorly understood and, at times, consciously or unconsciously dismissed. In this context, women are not regarded as equal actors in peace building and democratic development; they are not allowed equal participation in the enforcement of rights and justice, and the creation of human security for all.

The absence of women and their perspectives in peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction, disarmament, humanitarian relief and peace building, means the absence of sustainable peace and any chance of obtaining human security. But more importantly, the persistence of wars and conflicts prevent from the achievement of gender equality and women's rights. It is time to redefine sustainable peace as the presence of human security, justice and equality, rather than the absence of war.

BEIJING '95 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



- Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts, or under foreign occupation.
- Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.
- Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.
- Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.
- Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.
- Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

FACTS & FIGURES IN EUROPE

In contemporary conflicts, as much as 90 percent of casualties are among civilians, most of whom are women and children. Rape has been a rampant tactic in modern wars. Conservative estimates suggest that 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UN data from 39 countries however show that the presence of women police officers correlates positively with reporting sexual assault.

Of the 14 peace negotiations held under UN auspices in 2011, only four women participated in negotiation teams, in Cyprus, Georgia, Guyana and Yemen. As of September 2012, 3 out of 15 International Court of Justice judges

were women. According to UN Women, in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Timor-Leste, less than 8 per cent of post-conflict spending was specifically budgeted to empower women or promote gender equality.

After conflict, female voters are four times as likely as men to be targeted for intimidation in elections in fragile and transitional states. Moreover, there is a significant increase in female-headed households during and after conflict (up to 40 per cent of households), and these are often the most impoverished, all the more so as post-conflict actions don't include financial compensation.



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY ACTIONS

- In 2010, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, the EWL joined a coalition of over 60 organisations and networks calling for **"10 points on 10 years UNSCR 1325 in Europe"**, and took the floor at high-level European conferences to raise the alert on the lack of political commitment to act on Women, Peace and Security.
- On the occasion of the 100th International Women's Day in 2011, the EWL joined a wide range of international partner organisations in issuing a **Statement calling for progress on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security** (an initiative of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict).
- Since 2011, **the EWL has supported the 12th August campaign** promoted by the Global Justice Center to ensure the right to safe abortion for women and girls raped in armed conflict. The EWL wrote to US President Obama to alert him to the "no abortion" restriction attached to US humanitarian aid; the EWL also succeeded in getting statements from the European Parliament on the need to respect women's sexual and reproductive rights in conflict and post conflict situations. In October 2013, the EWL welcomed the United Nations Security Council unanimous resolution (n°212) supporting abortion services for girls and women raped in armed conflict.

WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT & THE EUROPEAN UNION



The European Union's commitment to the issue of Women, Peace and Security, can be found in its "Comprehensive EU Approach to the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820" and the "Implementation of SCR 1325 as reinforced by 1820 in the context of European Security and Defence Policy".

The EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development also comprises objectives to support partner countries to fully implement UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889, through the development of national action plans and policies on women, peace and security. However, only 17 out of the 28 EU Member States have adopted a National Action Plan on the UN SCR 1325. Moreover, out of the 10 EU special representatives appointed in troubled areas of the world, only one has been a woman (Ms Rosalind Marsden, Special Representative for Sudan, from 2010 to 2013).

From 2014 on, the EU will partner with UN agencies in a joint programme piloting a model for EU/UN collaboration on Women, Peace and Security, to strengthen the capacity and coordination of women's civil society organisations and relevant EU and UN actors, and support women's participation in peace-building, especially with regard to post-conflict planning and financing, the rule of law, and post-conflict economic recovery.

The European Parliament is one of the most active and engaged European institutions on the issue of women and armed conflict. Several MEPs consistently drive the issue forward and seek to pressure the European Union and the European Commission to do more on the issue. Mainstreaming gender equality within EU policy frameworks such as development and humanitarian aid, security and defence policy and missions, and human rights more generally, should be comprehensive.



GOOD PRACTICE

- The EU Delegation to Rwanda currently supports civil society both through the EDF geographical program "Voice and Accountability" and thematic programmes such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and the non-state actors and local authorities. The EIDHR is focused on strengthening the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in supporting the peaceful reconciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation as well as representation.
- The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court requires states, in electing judges, to take into account the need for "fair representation" of female and male judges, and requires that the prosecutor and registrar do the same when hiring staff.

CHALLENGES

- According to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), in recent years there has been an increasing number of states spending profusely on military activities; they continue to foster a culture of militarisation by maintaining their military budgets with secrecy, minimum transparency and limited accountability. In 2013 alone, the total of global military expenditure surpassed 1700 billion USD. The same year, containing and dealing with the consequences of violence cost the world 9.8 trillion USD, which accounts for 11.3% of global GDP.
- The increasing use of new technologies in conflict, such as armed drones or other dangerous chemicals, pose a clear threat to women's human rights and human security and dignity in general.
- Domestic responsibilities of women and their burden of caring for children, the elderly and the injured, generally increase during conflict. Women also frequently lack control over productive resources or economic assets, even when they themselves are generating them. Post-conflict discussion rarely takes into account the role of women during conflicts and doesn't include appropriate compensation for them.
- When demobilising child soldiers, equal attention and benefits should be awarded to the girls as well as the boys.
- When conflict ends and displaced populations return to their home communities, there can be competition over scarce resources, land and property; if women's rights are not protected by law, they can be left without access to the resources needed for livelihood generation, and become more vulnerable to violence and sexual exploitation.



OUR DEMANDS **A culture of peace and respect for women's human rights.**

- **Improve gender balance at decision-making levels of the European External Action Service.**
- **Appoint a gender focal point in all EU delegations and all Common Security and Defense Policy missions.**
- **Adopt a binding "Code of Conduct" on the standards of conduct of military and civilian peacekeeping and humanitarian national and EU staff while on mission in areas of armed conflict. Such codes should include an unequivocal condemnation of all forms violence against women, including prostitution and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.**
- **Place women's human rights at the core of donor policies for reconstruction and development; and invest in women's organisations as a means of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.**
- **Guarantee access to justice (including transitional) for all women, as well as access to reproductive and sexual health services and support programmes, including for women victims of sexual violence.**
- **The EU and its member states: cease to promote this culture of increasing militarisation and redirect their military-first budgets towards gender-aware budgets that consider the multiple needs of women and address gender equality as a priority.**
- **The EU and its member states: grant asylum to women who flee their country by recognising sexual violence and gender-based violence as legitimate grounds for asylum.**