



20 Years of UNSCR 1325 – A Trojan horse for the women's movement?

WILPF Germany on the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the 20th anniversary of the resolution

The National Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security agenda is often still understood as an “add-on” to Germany’s foreign and security policy measures. The objective of the agenda, however, is much more far-reaching, and requires coherent, holistic, and structural integration into the work of the federal government. While strategies and policies will continue to be implemented as planned, more attention is now being paid to the distribution of gender in terms of the number and special needs of women. The Women, Peace and Security agenda can be used as a transformative instrument to link expertise and knowledge from different actors, and thus facilitate wide-reaching gender justice.

This not only means finding solutions for women in the existing gender-inequitable system, but also redesigning the whole structure in a gender-just manner, adapting it to accommodate for human rights.

Disarmament

Germany exports more weapons than most other countries¹. Especially since the financial crisis in 2009/10, the approval rates of exporting arms to third countries have increased. These deals are made by the federal government behind closed doors, excluding the voices of civil society. We demand more transparency in the negotiation of arms export licenses and consistent action against the violations by companies producing arms and their recipients. In the follow-up UNSCR 2467, initiated by Germany, the importance of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) was confirmed. Accordingly, the federal government should do more to ensure that the international standards set out in this treaty are adhered to. The irresponsible German arms trade simply leads to more violence, including sexual and gender-based violence and human rights violations².

In 2019, Germany and France ranked sixth³ in the world in terms of military spending. The steadily increasing expenses, including the planned acquisition of aircraft carriers for the U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in Büchel, are incomprehensible in times of a global pandemic.

Instead of relying on outdated models of security policy such as nuclear deterrence, the federal government should reduce the expenses for military purposes and invest more money in health, education, and measures against climate change, both domestically and worldwide. Women* and other marginalized groups are, in general, more dependent on state infrastructure and welfare systems due to having lower private assets. A comprehensive restructuring of the federal government budget, for example through gender budgeting, would improve the quality of life of the population as a whole and thus lead to enhanced security. For years we have been campaigning to ensure that money is no longer used for the militarization of states, but rather for inclusive opportunities to participate, gender equality and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals⁴. The national and local

¹ https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs_2003_at_2019.pdf

² <https://www.wilpf.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Cedaw-State-Report-Germany.pdf>

³ <https://www.sipri.org/research/armament-and-disarmament/arms-and-military-expenditure/military-expenditure>

⁴ <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/You-Get-What-You-Pay-For-Web.pdf>



implementation of Resolution 1325 should focus on human security and, accordingly, realign security policies to the needs of society, bearing in mind particularly vulnerable groups.

Conflict Prevention

Peace policy is more than the (indispensable) endeavour to end armed conflicts. Peace policy can never be justified by a logic of “dissuasion” regarding weapons of mass destruction. A policy that is committed to implementing UNSCR 1325 must first and foremost avoid war and the violence against women that this entails. People, specifically women, can never be protected solely through military action, but through an active peace policy – ideally represented by a Ministry of Peace (that should be created). Prevention of conflict or violence cannot simply be relegated to foreign and development policy, as it is a factor facilitating the maintenance of a society’s peacefulness, and therefore requires a complex understanding of human security. This is enshrined in the WPS agenda, and is valuable to all areas of social coexistence.

Peace policy in Germany includes the prevention of all forms of violence and extremism in its early stages. Misanthropic ideologies institutionalized in radical right-wing parties, groups and movements are increasingly attracting public attention and mostly target women and migrants. Prevention of violence in Germany requires an intersectional approach and greater vigilance in combating right-wing ideologies, hate speech, racism, anti-Semitism, and (gender-specific) discrimination.

In addition to threats from the right, Germany’s prosperity gap is widening and commitment towards public welfare is decreasing. Therefore, in addition to a more equitable distribution of income (also between the sexes), an approach is needed that defines care as a task for society as a whole, in the spirit of a feminist economy and that does not continue to depict neoliberal growth as a necessity. Creating peace within society requires a preventive approach and should include an active integration policy that involves people, especially women and girls, in decision-making processes that affect their future lives, such as ensuring adequate gender-appropriate housing and protection. Gender justice can best happen when war is absent, and men must also increasingly show their support of the fact that an equal society can more effectively prevent conflict.

Participation

Formal peace processes have largely failed to involve women, as various peace activists around the world from the NGO Working Group on WPS have iterated in their *Open Letter*⁵ in October 2020. Signatories argued that inequality and discrimination, as central causes of conflict and violence, are either neglected or perpetuated. After 20 years and many political declarations of intent, this is a wake-up call showing that participation at all levels has not yet sufficiently “entered the DNA” of political decision-makers (quote by Michelle Müntefering, State Minister of the Foreign Office).

Women's participation is not about quantity or numbers, nor is it about their roles as observers or mediators. Participation indicates their substantial influence on the outcome of negotiations and, thus, on the initiation of transformative processes. Decisive influence would enable repeatedly addressing critical issues at all levels of negotiation, such as demanding the

⁵ <https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/resource/open-letter-un-wps-anniversary-october-2020>



political will to take concrete steps for disarmament as a prerequisite to a profound and long-term, successful peace process – even in opposition to all (allegedly) economic or geo-strategic reasoning from mainstream politics.

A significant increase in peacebuilding capacities – in Germany and within the framework of German alliance commitments and European cooperation⁶ – is what WILPF terms necessary policy coherence and must be further developed within the WPS agenda. Participation demands the intensification of the protection of human rights defenders and peace activists against the aggression of different warring parties and political warmongers, taking into account the special protection of young women and (internally) displaced persons in conflict regions, and the inclusion of vulnerable groups and migrants in Germany in decisions regarding their future.

Participation requires greater media attention regarding activities in all areas of "human security," as (small) examples of success. To open up prospects for internal and external peace, substantial changes to the federal government's procurement and spending policy are needed, including reallocating military sector funds for improved access to education for all, opening schools and health centers, organising cultural offerings for bridge-builders, and supporting journalism that resists fake news.

Political participation of women in Germany requires improved instruments such as quotas and parity laws and, above all, NAP funding to support civil society participation (according to clear recommendations from the Global Study on UNSCR 1325, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the NGO WG on WPS, and best practices from neighbouring countries), which has so far been provided on a voluntary basis.

Security through Climate Justice

When we think about climate change and women in the context of peace and security, we often think of two distinct categories. To the detriment of many, the German government, with its NAP, supports this compartmentalization. The current NAP fails to mention the word 'climate' even once, yet is supposed to recognize interlinkages and support sustainable livelihoods for women. It is high time for Germany to recognize the intersection between climate change, peace and security and act to prevent the looming climate catastrophe and its ensuing dangers on the security of women*.

According to estimates of the World Bank, more than 143 million people will lose their homes in the future due to rising sea levels and an increase in environmental disasters, the majority of which will be in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America⁷. Asylum, however, is not granted under the UN Refugee Convention to people fleeing due to extreme weather conditions⁸. Women* and other marginalized groups suffer enormously from this ongoing ecological degradation. Women* are disproportionately affected by the environmental disaster and suffer major losses when it comes to their health, economic conditions, and physical security. This becomes especially clear with the acute danger of women being exposed to sexual and other gender-based violence in new, precarious living situations. In terms of

⁶ <https://www.wilpf.de/jetzt-ist-die-zeit-da-europas-kapazitaeten-zur-friedensbildung-zu-staerken/>

⁷ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>

⁸ <https://ecdpm.org/great-insights/complex-link-climate-change-conflict/cross-cutting-agenda-gender-climate-change-conflict>



Germany's involvement, military production is damaging to the climate and the environment and has devastating consequences on the peace and security of women⁹ both at home and abroad.

Countries in the global North are responsible for most of the impending climate catastrophe, yet it is the civilian population of the global South, especially women*, who bear the brunt of the burden. That is why we demand from Germany, in agreement with organizations such as Fridays For Future¹⁰ and Greenpeace¹¹, to demonstrate strict compliance with the Paris Climate Agreement, prioritize securing our natural livelihoods over other economic interests and rapidly phase out of coal and invest in renewable energies, instead. The effects of these demands are particularly in line with protecting women* and other marginalized groups. Germany must highlight these interlinkages and include the issue of climate change into its next National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security.

Migration and Forced Displacement

Like the intersection between climate change and WPS, the connection between the WPS agenda and migration and forced displacement may not be clear from the outset. Yet, this is exactly where problems lie. Since its inauguration, the agenda has been used in Germany as a foreign policy tool in a state-centric, i.e. nationally limited framework. In (post) conflict situations in particular, the resolution fails to recognize the fact that conflicts, uncertainties, and peace are not restricted to national borders.

Forced displacement and migration are not considered within the framework of the WPS agenda because crossing borders reaches beyond the scope of national-level plans. However, even migration and refugee movements that take place within national borders are not considered by these plans. This should change. Refugees – regardless of their (international) legal status – are confronted with a multitude of insecurities of a psychological, economic, and physical nature. Different kinds of challenges thereby arise for women* and other marginalized groups than for men*. Issues such as gender-specific violence and overlapping structural forms of discrimination must be given special consideration. The WPS agenda should play a key role in the context of migration and forced displacement to counteract gendered and racialized forms of discrimination.

Detached from political developments and national policies, the WPS agenda should also be applied to the EU and its own (external) borders. For German and thus European migration policy, this means dealing with the catastrophically inhumane situation and its ramifications at both sea and state borders, and to take on specific responsibility. This task will be tackled through mechanisms such as the *New Action Plan on Migration and Asylum*¹² or an increase in the FRONTEX mandate. Through further outsourcing of the 'problem of migration' to a non-European phenomenon, the challenges for people, especially for women*, will only increase.

In terms of the *EU Action Plan* for the implementation of the WPS agenda, it is important for the plan to take both protective and preventive measures to ensure the rights and integrity of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://fridaysforfuture.de/forderungen>

¹¹ https://www.greenpeace.de/sites/www.greenpeace.de/files/publications/20170213_greenpeace_btw_forderung.pdf

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en



refugees. Preventive measures, however, does not mean the isolation of Europe. What is needed is Germany's commitment to global political responsibility, an awareness in economic, foreign and security policy activities, including arms exports, of the increase of refugee movements, and the recognition of migration and forced displacement as political realities of an increasingly globalized and unequal world.

Perspectives Looking Forward

The new Generation Equality Compact¹³ combines the WPS agenda with humanitarian action and humanitarian assistance. However, beyond all good intentions, this combination can lead to problematic, even dangerous outcomes. There is a risk of side-lining prevention in supposed consensus and focusing instead on cases of direct conflict intervention or care in the aftermath of war. The Compact builds on existing normative guidelines, but quickly loses sight of the root causes of conflict, and thus of disarmament as the central driving force for peace.

In implementing UNSCR 1325, IFFF/WILPF will always advocate for a broad concept of security that sets the standards for economic and environmental terms. Priority in the analysis and in acting as "agents of change" should be given to the prevention of violence and conflict from a feminist perspective. To this end, we are appealing for an intersectional approach that clearly counteracts threatening legal developments and authoritarian political approaches and uses experiences from the COVID-19 era¹⁴ to form a more transformative agenda.

Last year, as a member of Alliance 1325 in Germany, IFFF/WILPF spoke out against inflationary resolutions in the WPS agenda and in favor of more in-depth implementation. The political dynamics in the UN Security Council, global political tensions, and Russia's attempts to pronounce a new resolution on the 20th anniversary of the WPS agenda at the end of October, pose a threat to the successes that have been achieved so far. Within the framework of our cooperation in Europe, in the OSCE framework and worldwide with the other sections of WILPF, we will work to ensure that the basic intentions of the WPS agenda are not undermined and that real 1325 champions are praised, who will proudly and courageously step out of the (no longer Trojan) horse.

¹³ https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/GENERATION_EQUALITY_COMPACT_WPSHA_Concept_Note.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.wilpf.de/covid-19-auswirkungen-auf-frieden-freiheit-und-geschlecht>; <https://www.wilpf.org/covid-19>