

ISLANDS OF PEACE AND JUSTICE

Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Area



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Coordinator of the WG on „women and gender realities in the OSCE area“

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Preface

This publication gives in a 1st part a selective overview of activities and conversations of the „Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Region“ in the last 6 years.

Members of the WG from different parts of the OSCE region and divers affiliations to civil society organisations and networks document materials that they shared with the group and animated discussions. The texts are a rich source of profound general reflection on peace-building and the defence of women's rights as human rights. Some texts are an extract of a longer version or publication. Feel inspired to read more.

Women's stories were born out of direct contacts with local activists on the ground and commented by international experts to target key stakeholders with advocacy messages and keep them informed.

I thank the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their financial support over years of the project, the German civil society organisation "Austausch" (namely Jacob Riemer and Katia Kokorina) for their friendly organisational support, the trust and reliable financial management of my organisation WILPF Germany as project partner (Laura Gaissmeier and Jennifer Menninger), the many individual women and men, groups, networks, friends and activists from the local to the global level.

Heidi Meinzolt, Coordinator of the WG

November 2023



Graphic Fabio Magnasciutti: „beautiful ... how does it work?“

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Who we are:

The **Working Group on Women & Gender realities in the Civic Solidarity Platform of OSCE** discusses since its foundation in 2015 how mechanism of justice and meaningful women's involvement in (peace) negotiations have been influential, what the main hampering factors were, on how successful processes can be replicated, adapted and transferred to different countries and regions.

The WG is an open forum with participants from (inter-) national Human Rights and Peace organisations, women academics, experts, political and grassroots activists representing local and (inter-) national networks from **Ukraine, Austria, Georgia, Armenia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Kirgizstan, Belarus, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia.**

The WG **launched open discussions** on a macro-political level and encouraged permanent dialogues on a micro-political level, with the support of local women and women's organisations who are committed to women's rights and gender justice to promote knowledge transfer and capacity building with visible impact on outcome documents.

The WG **built trust and partnerships** with women from "non conflict" countries that play an important role and responsibility in a geostrategic and economic international dimension, regarding e.g. arms trade, conflict negotiation and mediation, extraterritorial obligations, justice mechanisms and have a strong impact on environmental degradation. It is forum to exchange and share experiences based on a deep feminist analysis of root causes of war and all forms of violence – with a strong focus on SGBV.

The WG **addressed stakeholders** and civil society, focusing on border conflicts as for unrecognized territories such as Nagorno-Karabakh, border conflicts in Georgia, in Central Asia on Kazakhstan's border region with the Kyrgyz Republic. We participated in the transformation of military conflict resolution into peace dialogues in Donbas region and still keep contacts beyond borders in all conflict zones.

The WG approached gender issues in a **horizontal and participatory** way, integrating manifold perspectives without claiming to homogenize and assimilate the different realities, represented by the participants. All activities were accompanied by Social Media Activities and Webinars. The aim is to empower and ensure that women are ready and able to participate meaningfully in **peace building processes**, to act as early warning instances and in preventive action. We formulate in post-conflict reconstruction requests to respect real, everyday based, requesting **gender sensitivity** on all levels of decision making.

The **cross-dimensionality** is a key factor of our approach. It is the logical consequence of the compilation of manifold facts, sound analysis and evidence based knowledge. Therefore, we used a gender lens on the interconnectedness and spill over effects of the three OSCE dimensions:

- **Human dimension**, including underlying social inequalities, exclusive patriarchal structures, protection of women human rights defenders, narratives of violent extremism, (sexist) hate speech against women, consequences of forced displacement and women refugees
- **Security dimension** integrating human security, a strong commitment to turn war-economies into care economies, an active impact in multilateralism in the spirit of sustainable development/SDGs, supporting dissident voices to war and militarism and consciousness objection as a fundamental right, discussion on EU peace facilities, asylum and refugee politics, rights wing authoritarianism.
- **Economic and Environmental dimension**, using theory of feminist economy to analyse the conditions of care work and the root causes of female poverty; focussing on the reduction and prevention of social distress, promoting policies for gender just climate change, fostering a transnational social security system (based on CEDAW and ILO), and protecting women migrants exposed to exploitation and precarious working conditions.

What we did:

1. Regular **online meetings** especially in pandemic times to exchange information, to raise awareness, hear and share stories and discuss possible feminist interventions
2. **Active participation in conferences** of the CSP (parallel conferences and Ministerial conferences, CSP coordination meetings, seminars, CSP plenaries, substantial contributions to civil society declarations from a gendered view point, e.g. on conflict cycles).
3. **Active cooperation online and offline with OSCE bodies** (in dialogues with OSCE Gender Unit, ODIHR), **advocacy** at the UN, EU and Council of Europe. Participation at HDIM (including specific contributions in related side-events), comments to the Gender Equality Review Conference, migration policies and contributions to **cultural events** such as the Kirgiz human rights film festival.
4. Organisation of seminars and participation in conferences with teams of the WG in different places in the OSCE area. (Vienna Peace Forum, Young Women Peace Award in Armenia on „displacement of women: gender implications and search for viable solutions to protect human rights“, annual conference of Women in Black in Serbia, Future Factory/Transform, seminars in CH of the organisation of „Peace women across the globe“, 10 Years of Albanian women's network, Berlin Peace dialogue a.o.)
5. **Delivery of statements and briefings** e.g. to OSCE chairpersonship, on International Women's Day, Armenia, a.o.
6. Individual **participation** in the name of the WG in university seminars (Rome, Padova, Murcia), regional support work in trainings of youth and with media (Armenia, Italy), in the establishment of (new) NAPsUNR1325 (Albania, Armenia, Ukraine, Italy), support for the Istanbul Convention, cooperation with other networks such as GGPAC, WIDE, WAVE and ombuds persons (Armenia), UN .
7. Publications, such as „A day in a life of women Peacebuilders in the time of Covid“ 2020, „Women Peace and Security in Armenia – a resource book“, „Women in the Army – research“, OUR HOUSE – Support Belarus and Ukraine (news.house),

Heidi Meinzolt

Stockholm 2021



Looking Back and Envision the Future

CSP Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE area

The Working Group/WG has met regularly to discuss ongoing conflicts, to analyse the situation of women in conflict zones and exchange possible and adequate answers to intervene in ongoing crisis and stand up for more peace and against violence (including SGBV) and war.

Our expertise and richness relies on our diverse academic and institutional backgrounds, linked to long-term grassroots activism in the whole OSCE region. Our interconnectedness and mutual trust, built over years of cooperation, resulted in a strength that allows us to inspire other (feminist) networks, NGOs, activists to participate meaningfully in negotiations, peace building activities and as human rights defenders.

We did this in the spirit and on the ground of the WPS Agenda on protection, participation and prevention. We contributed based on peer reviews, seminars, online learning and training tools to discuss possible gaps and chances, to further develop and defend respective NAPs according to needs and new challenges (e.g. Albania, Armenia, Belarus). Based on our critical and joint analysis, we continuously discussed transnationally further steps for political interventions also with stakeholders, donors and institutions.

After some years of cooperation, we have to recognize a growing deep disappointment and frustration that our expertise on the ground, our connections, locally, regionally, cross-border and internationally, our respective trainings and activities have not effectively contributed to prevent violence, to heal othering and hate, to re-conceal, to stop armed aggression and militarisation – in all our countries and neighbourhoods. The unclear future of OSCE as an institution and the political ignorance and dismantling of an important system and body of comprehensive and common security, bridging historic gaps between East and West, contributes to some negative vibes.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that there is still space and even urgent need to continue what we created and support:

- We broadened space to tell and listen to individual and collective stories. We raised awareness of ongoing political and geo-strategic threats, growing authoritarianism, discrimination and reinforcement of patriarchal hierarchies. We developed alternative strategies and strengthen confidence on the basis of our feminist analysis, our experiences and some joint optimism to believe in solutions and ways out of dilemmas.
- We put „care-work“ in the centre of our activities, caring for the people, for the most vulnerable in the society such as women, elderly and children – especially if they are exposed to forced displacement and extraordinary vulnerability.
- We described and discussed „Pathways to Peace“ at different occasions, workshops, side-events, (international) meetings and conferences, training with youth, in academic and (local) grassroots environments.
- We shared the conviction that peace starts from peaceful islands and small steps that we initiate, share and improve through intensive learning processes.
- We took examples, ideas and courage from history and our foremothers. We tackled present challenges with innovative approaches. We developed visions for the future: women never have given up. They intended to stop WWI. In 1915, they organized “the fundamentals for Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in opposition to the triangle of patriarchy/militarism/capitalism for „permanent peace. They pleaded for universal disarmament, women’s (political) rights and international conflict solution mechanism through the League of Nations (predecessor of the United Nations). Engaging against fascism, many of them went to exile or died in concentration camps for their conviction to build democracy and equality.
- Women continuously committed until the year 2000 when the WPS agenda was adopted at the UN level. Since then, women and women’s organisations worked on the implementation of NAPs on the local, regional and national level, with a major focus on conflict-affected areas.
- Women are connected cross-border, such as Women in Black in the Balkan region who kept their links even in the darkest moments of their history – this made them strong. Their confidence based interlinkages and the networking capabilities of women’s organizations are features of the last decades of feminist struggle for peace.

We are united on the fact that our security, our safety, are based on „human security“, involving all sectors of life, from education, health service, social security, decent housing, human rights conform work conditions as well as environmental

sustainability and climate justice. As the logical consequence of the compilation of manifold facts, life stories, sound analysis and evidence based knowledge, increased gender lenses on the interconnectedness of the three OSCE dimensions and its spill over effects brought us to emphasize on the need of a cross-dimensional approach.

In times of a not gender-neutral shrinking space for civil society, of growing authoritarianism and patriarchal dominance, of new dividing nationalisms, we are convinced that our voices – based on an intersectional feminist analysis and experience – are utmost important to be heard and listened.

The WG on women and gender realities in the OSCE area will remain connected and continue together following the vision of a more peaceful world, based on justice and equality!

November 2023

Heidi Meinzolt



Meeting of the Working-Group with OSCE Gender Unit in Bratislava 2021

GENDER COMPONENT IN NATIONAL POLICIES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN GLOBAL ECONOMY

Expert commentary by the Working Group on Women's Rights and Gender Realities within the OSCE Platform for Civic Solidarity

Key speakers:

Ms. Katerina Levchenko, Governmental Commissioner on Gender Equality, Ukraine

Ms. Erika George, Samuel D. Thurman Professor of Law, Interim Director, Tanner Center for Human Rights, Presidential Leadership Fellow, S.J. Quinney College of Law, University of Utah, USA

Ms. Heidi Meinzolt, Member of the Board of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom / WILPF, coordinator of the Working Group on Women & Gender realities in the Civic Solidarity Platform/CSP of OSCE, Germany

Ms. Annemarie Sancar, Board Member of WIDE-Women in Development Europe Switzerland, PeaceWomen Across the Globe

Ms. Ani Khachatryan, Armenian Environmental Front, Armenia
Ms. Marina Kapustina, Lawyer of the international law firm bnit attorneys in CEE, Bratislava, Legal expert of the public organization Sme Spolu, Slovak Republic

Ms. Olena Uvarova, PhD, Associate Professor, Heaci of the International Lab on Business and Human Rights in Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Ukraine

Moderator:

Ms. Mariya Yasenovska, President of the Regional Foundation Charkiw „Public Alternative“

The Working group sees its analysis in line with its cross-dimensional approach (see documentation from 2018) which connects security aspects with the human dimension and economic and environmental issues.

Structural inequalities and Human rights violations in the unjust global (neoliberal) economy remain widely unaddressed. The connection with military expenditures and the economic (and environmental) impact of a growing militarisation on social security in a cross-dimensional sense of the concept are lacking.

New trends in business and markets are alarming and many feminists are worried about the possible new forms of discrimination. There are many reasons to worry: The rationalization and digitalization of modes of production, the dismissals in certain sectors, the increasing expenditure for the army and high tech security technology, the destabilizing impact of austerity programs in the social sector: All these developments and trends have a strong gender dimension.

Women will not be affected the same way as men are, and their chances will not increase in the same way as men's will – especially also as economic actors. Individual stories give insights into these discrepancies. However, to understand them, we should not reach for explanations such as individual responsibility, incapacities or even laziness, but analyse the social economic causes of discrimination.

Human rights abuses by corporations are not gender neutral. Including a gender perspective will address an essential dimension of human rights violations and help to ensure that States take serious their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil women's and girls' human rights. A gender perspective is not about treating women as “vulnerable group”, but analysing how business may have different, disproportionate, or anticipated impacts on women or men because of their different gender based social, legal, cultural roles and rights.



Business oriented politics both causes and replicates the underlying patriarchal structure because it corresponds with the logic of the profit-oriented market and finally benefit from economic advantages - regardless of the number of women as business leaders. The organization of the private sector is based on its productivity and the maximization of profit. There are different ways to increase productivity: Rationalization of production, investment in new technology, or simply by influencing the costs of the labour force such as staff redundancy, flexibilisation of contracts, informalisation of certain jobs etc. The costs for the staff should remain low, is even decreasing while the annual profit is increasing. Otherwise, the business would collapse; unfortunately, all companies are organized according to this logic.

Women are specifically affected by gender-based corporate abuse: low-paid (pay gap until 25%), undervalued jobs, vulnerable employment (until 43%), unpaid care (aggravated by imposed austerity measures), forced labour (25%)

as domestic workers, in clandestine factories, on farms, in the sex industry. Women – especially in rural communities – are victimised by pollution, when companies monopolize water for their operations and thus reduce access for human and animal consumption.

The claims for “equal wage for equal work” or the importance to have more women in economic and political leadership positions were largely accepted. In many European countries, gender equality is enshrined constitutionally. However, in real life, it is different. Gender is still used as a category of non-justified discrimination, reflected in Statistics, which shows that women earn less than men do for equal work. Women provide significant part of the unpaid care work. The numbers are not random though, but a product of economic dynamics and political power relations. A sound understanding of the interfaces of different stakeholders. These are the private sector (market), the government (public sector), the civil society and the households.

Based on the above, we CALL:

Consider that the integration of women into the market does not automatically lead to empowerment. New dependencies can emerge, social networks may break down or women may experience exclusion due to lack of time and lack of access to resources and assets. Many programmes pushing women into business may end up with personal indebtedness and mental stress. Despite the good intention of such “business for women programmes and incentives,” the pressure to succeed will go at the expense of the consideration of social complexity and small-scale dynamics and therefore may even undermine the initiatives for gender justice;

Conduct Human rights based gender impact assessments including full and active participation of women from all affected communities and take into account impact of all operations on gender roles and gender based discrimination (sexual and reproductive health, SGBV, division of labour on family and community level and access to and control of economic resources. On preventive measures, due diligence procedures must include HR risks assessments;

Pay due attention Women human rights defenders, particularly in contexts of armed conflicts and post-conflict situations, face greater risks of violence, criminalisation, stigmatisation and harassment. Perpetrators include state and corporate actors, as well as state and private security forces. States must recognise women human rights defenders in all their diversity, cease criminalisation and other violations of their human rights, adopt protection mechanisms and make all perpetrators accountable before the justice system;

Remove obstacles to women’s access to justice and effective remedies. Rights holders affected by business activities should be in the centre of remedy mechanisms (risk of discrimination, barriers). Rights holders should incur no harm or fear of harm but instead strive for a transformative potential;

Conduct an analysis of the impact of migration on the labor market allowing a growing number of slavery working conditions. These people get less than a minimum wage or even no pay, no social insurance, suffer of pressure and (SGB) violence: a vicious circle of lack of rights, exploitation, homelessness and social distress, violence. They often work in slaughter houses, the transport or the care sector.;

Recognize the importance of care work. The effective creation, regulation and funding of care services can increase the access, affordability and quality of care and reduce time burdens placed on unpaid care-givers. Parental leaves, family allowances and other transfers can be financed through taxes or social insurance programmes, thereby socializing some of the costs assumed by unpaid caregivers. From a feminist perspective, the focus lies on the relation between the market value of labour in relation to the time used for it on one side and the resulting productivity-gap between paid and unpaid care work on the other side. The findings show it clearly: there is a strong gender bias, where women turn out to be the losers, especially those providing hours of care work unpaid and invisible. Their productivity is not valorised as such. In addition, the government also misses to compensate for it, be it in form of a fundamental rights based public services or through subsidies for non-profit organizations and services deliverers of care services.



Women at Peace Table – More Justice for All

7th International Conference: Yerevan June 13th- June 15th 2019

Panel: Voices of women must be heard. Strengthening civil society cooperation in the OSCE region with regards to security, human rights, conflict resolution, and gender equality

Annemarie Sancar, WIDE Switzerland.

WIDE is a forum, a space and a network for and with women's NGOs, civil society organizations individual experts working in a democratic manner on burning issues concerning women's rights and gender justice. WIDE uses a feminist approach and fosters transnational cooperation, analysis and practical work by means of a strong exchange with trans-border networks and actors.

Forced migration has been identified as one of the most sensitive issues. It threatens human and women's rights by enhancing all types of discrimination and opening space for multiple forms of violence preventing any form of safety and security. The reasons for leaving home are multiple: On the road, many new risks come up; and when women finally arrive in one of the rich and so called democratic, rights based and safe countries of the Western hemisphere they face new forms of discrimination and obstacles on their way to get settled.

What happens to all the women on the move and after arrival at a place or new home? What do they expect in the "receiving countries", what about their safety, their wellbeing and security? What about their right to have rights? What does a peaceful life mean to them?

As a network well linked to researchers we collect data, information, testimonies from "grassroots", practical experiences from daily life, we open spaces for subaltern voices to make them audible. The challenge is huge, since many of these women lose not only their voices but also their rights, once arrived. The feeling of discrimination and powerlessness blocks their energy and courage. The possibilities to mobilize their experiences, competences, resources are marginal.

Therefore, this raises the big question of state responsibility. Switzerland is a good example: One of the goals of its national action plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP WPS 3, 2018-2022) is the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). However, the field of intervention is limited to international interventions such as the Global Compact (GC) on Safe Orderly and Regular Migration and GC on Refugees ("migration-foreign policy"). The countries of origin fail to protect, and on the road, no country feels responsible to protect women from violence and disruption.

When women lose their clear legal status, defined by national belonging, they lose many of the basic rights essential to live a decent life. Lacking a legal status, they thus lose their voices and their power of complaint. They are exposed to any kind of discrimination and exclusion. The access to health care, work, education or even public space is limited; states are not even under pressure to explain themselves. Why? Aren't they responsible to guarantee the human rights to all people living in their territory?

The big question: What does this mean for feminist activists, women's rights organizations? Where are the fields of action? What kind of strategy is there to improve the wellbeing and safety of all women living in a state like Switzerland? In spite of the fact that the governments have signed all different conventions and resolutions, they seem to look for the easiest way to avoid their responsibilities as duty bearers in their own country. The discrimination along the line of national belonging seems to be legitimate. However, Switzerland does not miss any opportunity to reclaim their (international) role as the guardian of a humanistic tradition. Is this the way a rich modern democracy like Switzerland understands human rights? Moreover, how should we deal with this field of tension between a hyper-acceleration in the process of technologization of security facilitating the militarization on one side and the humiliating policy of administrative order to wait under precarious conditions?

For feminist action, it will be essential to redefine security in terms of a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing and safety. This means not only safe from SGBV, but also providing a social security system with services for the care of one's and the others' wellbeing. It is about a security system, which is based on human and women's rights taking into account all the invisible work of women for the daily survival. It is about a new understanding of "value". Infrastructure in human wellbeing, in women's safety, in social infrastructure instead of investing in neoliberally structured profit sectors.

Feminists ask for an interdisciplinary approach including a sound economic analysis as a starting point for a gender just security policy centered on care conditions. The evaluation of the implementation of UNSCR such as 1325 (ff) are disappointing. The impact corresponds in no way with the enthusiasm of civil society when the whole process of Women,

Peace and Security (WPS) started. It is even worse, since many key concepts and roles of WPS have been undermined, their protagonists – often unnoticed, and unintended – have been coopted. Feminists striving for sustainable gender justice must therefore really struggle for more power of definition, to change the meaning of security and... of peace. Only then, it will be possible to (slowly) move from (capitalist) war economy to peace and care economy.

Coming back to the situation of forced migrant women in Switzerland: Platforms and networks committed to women's rights, have invested a lot in advocacy and empowerment policies, a big challenge. Currently, receiving states are tending to authorize new forms of discrimination, which do not correspond to the human rights, and even less to women's rights and security. Of course, it is easy to trace the domestic problems back to the "alien cultures of immigrants" and identify the root causes of violence in the "patriarchate of whatever countries of origin", when it comes to SGBV. The dissemination of narratives, which reinforce the idea, that forced migrants are rather parasites than right holders allows the governments to treat them as second-class human beings, which offers a broad spectrum of exclusion and deprivation practices, even when it is just a matter of basic needs.

Gender Mainstreaming is never enough for Women, Peace and Security to be gender just. Therefore, we need a holistic approach that includes a sound macroeconomic analysis to understand the root causes of violence.



Working group on Women and gender realities in the OSCE region

Coordinators: Heidi Meinzolt/WILPF, Tolekan Ismailova/Birduino



It is time to use a gender lens on FREEDOM and PEACE, to engage for a transformative agenda in a multilateral system:

From fear and violence, let's move to a culture of mutual understanding and respect, equal and meaningful participation on all levels of democratic decision-making and space to discuss and train best ways to defend a just environment.

From hate and discrimination, let's move to the respect of diversity and the right to criticize political and societal mainstream if fundamental rights and needs are in danger.

From a traditional understanding of security, let's move to a complex understanding of Human security, which cannot be guaranteed by more control, surveillance and „securitisation“ (including military means), but just by commitment of people for the benefit of all in the perspective of a peaceful, sustainable and democratic society.

From growing threats of different types of disasters and wars, let's move towards prevention of risks and give priority to peaceful assemblies and dialogues to study the best ways out of crisis and exploitation of human beings and nature.

Our concern today is about concrete exercise of this right, particularly in the following areas:

1. Increasing radicalization and influence of conservative groups, which are at the core of backlash against gender equality. These groups are exercising their right for assembly, but often their meeting become violent. These groups also are the key actors in preventing and excluding other groups from meeting.

Recommendation to States, communities and international institutions:

Exercise your “responsibility to protect”, encourage civilian participation and avoid shrinking space - including equal and meaningful participation of women vital for democracies and a tool for accountability.

2. Space of public expression for minorities is shrinking, particularly when it comes to gender issues, i.e. women's rights and LGBTQI, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, youth, and others. Police and law enforcement often do not exercise their duties in a proper way due to internal misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia and other stereotypes.

Recommendation to States, communities and international institutions:

Pay special attention to ensuring the right for peaceful assembly for marginalized groups; conduct trainings for police on LGBT rights, gender equality, diversity, etc.

3. Lack of physical spaces for vulnerable groups to gather safely (such as shelters for battered women, community centres for queer youth, youth centres for Roma, and others), and those that exist are under threat of being closed down.

Recommendation to States, communities and international institutions:

Support necessary infrastructure, access to public services and the use of public spaces (schools, libraries, community centres) in line with needs of the communities.

In light of these 3 concerns, we appeal to OSCE to:

- integrate these concerns into monitoring in all areas of OSCE activities in a cross-dimensional way
- Strengthen gender sensitivity and peace impact assessment in all areas of OSCE activities and protect Human rights defenders.

Warsaw 30.9.-3.10.2022

Heidi Meinzolt

Meetings took place around and linked to the **HDC** and respective side events – partly co-organised by WG and CSP members on: Ukraine – “practices of women’s solidarity in response to the Russian invasion”, “Central Asia border conflicts”, “future of OSCE”, “climate justice-HR”, “index on torture and victim approach” and others.

1. WG Meeting in Warsaw

(Nina, Irina (both living in exile in Poland), Anki (member of the Swedish OSCE network, Aida and Tolekan (both Birduino Kirgistan), Mariya (Public alternative Ukraine, actually in Brussels) and Polish feminist activists (Rut Kurkiewicz and Nina Sankari)

a) We discussed with Ukrainian members about their actual situation, their needs and challenges, how they interpret the situation especially for women and how they continue working politically: Nina (WILPF) spent some weeks at several occasions this summer in Ukraine in contact with different partners, family and friends. She reported about fear, insecurity with ongoing alarms and the will not to accept war as a normality. There is no consensus within the group and friends how to position themselves towards the war – some more in a geostrategic way of support for the nation and victory against the aggressor – others looking for perspectives towards a cease-fire and how to deal with the massive difficulties/problems organising daily life, with loss of friends, jobs and resources, surviving in improvised and unclear (legal and social) situation. Nina mentioned her feeling running growing personal security risks due to her work and connections as well known and connected peace builder, her ongoing relationship with women from occupied territories, from Belarus and Russia. She decided to renounce in the upcoming months to go back to Ukraine. The major focus will be on her commitment for solidarity, humanitarian and social support activities and open debates on failures to let this war and Putin’s aggression happen after all experiences of Russian involvement and invasions in the region. Nina is in contact with academic think tanks to support a respective questionnaire and possible retreats to make dialogue happen.



Informal meeting of WG members with ODIHR and OSCE Gender Unit

Mariya Yasenovska talked about her life full of insecurities (despite a job in Brussels based on her expertise in dealing with women and their specific vulnerabilities / disabilities partly in the context of already started re-construction processes for Ukraine). We heard her deep sorrow about lost home and family, unclear status for the next year or future, the suffering of ongoing war, destruction and terrible human rights violations. Sascha Romantsova - Centre for Civil liberties - and Ukrainian colleagues of CSP - not member of the WG reported their commitment regarding lack of accountability, rule of law, documentation of HR violations and war crimes that they are dealing with in the country.

b) **The WG had an informal meeting with OSCE senior gender adviser Lara Scarpitta, Vera Strobachowa also GU, Izabela Hartmann/ODIHR** and ODIHR staff members on respective experiences and political evaluation from a feminist perspective of ongoing developments on the ground in the OSCE region. We exchanged activities (e.g. Meeting in Sarajevo with Syrian and Bosnian women on lessons learned and exchange organised by the OSCE secretariat, field visits and the overall gendered aspects of conflicts also in Central Asia). We started to exchange ideas and chances of better highlighting gendered approaches in the OSCE area in the future and how to improve mechanisms to avoid structural failure to prevent war.

c) **the WG discussed future plans:** upcoming meeting in the Balkans, with discussion with Serbian, Albania, Kosovar and Northern Macedonian women, in connection with a WPS conference in Prishtina, a conference on 10 years of 1325 association in Albania, a project meeting of 1000PWaG and women from Northern-Macedonia for the next OSCE presidency. See attachment.

2. Participation in the CSP General Assembly

The General Assembly/GA brought together about 100 women and men from all over the OSCE region and numerous organisations with a major participation from post-sovietic countries. The big question in the room was about the failure of the OSCE to avoid war and the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The confrontation with growing authoritarianism all over, criminal regimes, corruption, torture, illegal treatments and procedures, imprisonment are followed by members in their respective context and interlinked with neighbouring regions. The wording of "East and West of Vienna" was often mentioned regarding the dimension of the development.

There is an idea – still to be developed – of a big Civil Society Conference in 2025 in Finland. No country has shown interest to hold the 2024 presidency yet. The OSCE has no agreed budget for this year because of Russia's veto and absence due to the consensus principle and Russia blocking.

First, member organisations and CSP WG presented their activities and plans. The CSP secretariat exposed its difficulties to deal with communication issues and organisation of the platform (the rotating secretariat went last year to CCL in Ukraine!). They complained about lack of ownership, of a clear mandate and common vision. There is a clear political will and needs to cooperate as civil society from mostly human rights organisations in the tradition of the Helsinki Citizen Assembly and a cross-dimensional perspective (3 dimensions of the OSCE: security and cooperation with less organised CS participation, human dimension and economy/ecology also lacking CS participation).

The new SG of OSCE, the German Helga Maria Schmid has a feminist approach – but her activities depend also of the respective OSCE presidencies. In the CSP, our WG was considered as one of the most active and effective and has gained "territory" over the last years. There was a great interest - new members are potentially interested to follow our agenda: Mariam Antadze/Georgian centre for Psychosocial and Medical rehabilitation of torture victims, Marie-Ursula Kind, Swiss Helsinki foundation, Kirsten Meijer, executive director NL Helsinki Committee, Elena Rodina, Civil Rights defenders. I will add them to the group for the moment – if they agree!

3. Contribution in a side event on the future of OSCE

OSCE – hopes and recommendations towards the future of an important multilateral institution

The founding principles of the OSCE, laid down in the Helsinki agreement from 1975 and the Paris Charta from 1990 are based on „democracy, peace and unity“. OSCE and its common security architecture was built on neighbourhood policies in a vast and diverse area especially after the end of the cold war. It was the time when leaders – such as Gorbachev – talked about a common European house which was never realised adequately and as a safe and just heaven for all. The enlargement and new justification for the western military alliance NATO, cold-war rhetoric, and the end of neutral corridors contributed to split the continent.

The promotion of gender equality has been crucial since the beginning as an institutional principle and in praxis. GAP met a lot of difficulties due to the consensus principle but was continuously developed in missions and documents. Of course the question remains: has it been sufficiently implemented on the ground? Certainly not! The lack of equality (elections, participation, protection, prevention of violence) in many states is visible and an indicator for the lack of democracy and of creating sustainable peace!

Recent and really threatening developments of re-nationalisation, the growing installation of authoritarian regimes (and their increased cooperation between themselves), aggressive, patriarchal and militarised imperialism, militarised masculinity, democratic backlashes showed their faces - also through de-gendering and suppression of diversity as identity politics. As a visible result, space for civil society is shrinking, peace builders, HR defenders are at risk. The general development has massive implications on the safety of women and marginalised vulnerable groups of the society. We witnessed their voices at the conference on massive HR violations, lack of impunity and risks for their safety.

All in all this development put the comprehensive security architecture in danger. The heaviest attack is the Russian war against Ukraine. The consensus principle is blocked by Russia and its allies, the chairpersonship of 2024 is still unclear, the budget, to continue the numerous missions and programs, is not voted. Only a trick of the Polish presidency could save the traditional Human Dimension Meeting as a conference organised by the chairpersonship. The word of failure

of the institution is running through the corridors while the OSCE remains the last bridge actually between East and West. Who has failed, why and when? Early warning, early action, missions, CS participation? Why the war could not be prevented?

Finally, we observe that the comprehensive OSCE security architecture is shifting to more and more national interests and geo-strategic positions, is losing its human dimension and trust in the multilateral capacities. The entry points for civil society and for a transformative agenda seem to change too. Is this „Realpolitik“ why some member states play down the ambition of the founding mothers and fathers of OSCE and violate the chances of precious instruments for mediation, gender equality, (electoral) missions, high level diplomacy.

If we discuss our failure as committed civil society organisations on the basis of lacking implementation of principles and good practices, we nevertheless need to emphasize the unique value of multilateralism to cope with the challenges.

4. Perspectives

1. Strengthening the role of CS involvement also beyond the Human dimension, especially the security sector and the interlinked 3rd dimension in an intersectional approach. Cross dimensional work is, not just from a feminist point of view, the only way to affront the named challenges. We are prepared through our local experiences and regional/ international networks to ring alarm clocks in the whole conflict cycle. And to re-strengthen a human perspective to prevent and care. based on dialogue.
2. Progress must be made in the sector of arms control and disarmament in the renewal of the common security as proposed also in the recent Olof Palme report in preparation of the planned review conference of the OSCE in 2025.

There is not yet a reason to be purely optimistic but multilateralism is crucial to overcome our divides.

No care – no peace!!

Report on the Meeting in Lodz

Heidi Meinzolt

The WG on “women and gender realities in the OSCE region” met in Lodz/Poland from 29.11.-2.12.2022, before, during, and after the parallel conference/PC of the Civic Solidarity Platform/CSP and the Ministerial Conference of the Polish OSCE presidency.

The PC conference was held under the impression of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Human suffering and the failure of the international community, especially OSCE, to prevent the war. This led to a broad discussion about the future of OSCE. Our WG put a focus on the “Common Security 2022: For our shared future”- report of the Olof Palme International Centre as a key issue focusing on a stronger discourse for Peace. This report had been already discussed widely in the Armenian Women’s Peace Conference. A strong focus was on Human rights with the traditional human rights report of the upcoming chairpersonship of North-Macedonia done by the Helsinki Committee for human rights from Skopje.

As WG, we exchanged and evaluated our work with CSP and the last meetings in Kosovo/North-Macedonia and Armenia and invested time in a comment on the official “Lodz-Declaration” – to correct some political insufficiencies and add feminist viewpoints. We wrote the following statement which was presented in the PC and in the MC and widely distributed to interested people and officials also to the OSCE SG Helga Maria Schmid. In addition, we enjoyed a zoom meeting with WG members who could not join us in person. We are for sure the most active WG in CSP.



We enjoyed talks on different levels with women representatives of the 3 Peace Nobel awardees (CCL/Ukraine, Memorial/Russia, Viasna/Belarus), to know more about their precious work to document war crimes and crimes against humanity. We expressed our commitment to end war and violence, to push for negotiations and diplomacy to enable all women and men to lay down the arms as soon as possible in the spirit of all people to live free from fear and misery.

Statement of the CSP Working Group on Women & Gender realities in the OSCE region – Łódź OSCE Ministerial Council, December 2022

The feminist dimension of peace

When assessing conflict, a **gender-sensitive perspective is fundamental in understanding underlying, conflict-fueling dynamics**. Women and marginalized groups (such as minorities, LGBTIQ+ etc.) need to have access to **meaningful participation in social and political life** – at times of peace and conflict – as well as full enjoyment of human rights and ownership of their own bodies. At the same time, their specific vulnerabilities because of constant exposure to gender-based violence, and even more so at wartime, need to be acknowledged, without a generalizing victimization of women.

A feminist perspective of peace is first and foremost concerned with power hierarchies within societies. Starting with patriarchal society structures, the analysis of power asymmetries needs to be expanded to an **intersectional perspective** that also considers societal relations based on class, ethnic, racial, or sexual difference. Women and marginalized groups are key actors in post conflict rehabilitation, trauma healing, transitional justice mechanisms and political and economic reconstruction.

Active peace commitment requires a radical will to diminish all forms of discrimination within and between states and societies to create egalitarian structures. For this commitment to expand beyond rhetoric, political will needs to be substantiated not only by the systematic inclusion of affected persons and civil society in political decision-making processes, but also in a critical assessment (and respective action) of, for example, trade relations with third countries. In times of global economic and fiscal connectedness, **political messages need economic leverage to unfold their full potential.** Feminist policies are quickly judged to be insufficient tools to respond to today’s manifold crises and militarist security narratives. If feminist commitment is however paired with a shifting of monetary resources (i.e. investments and funds tied to democratic standards, gender budgeting, ...), it can unfold great powers and disrupt violent patterns of inter-state behaviour.

Striving towards human security

Security describes a common transformative peace agenda combining protection, prevention and active participation in defending women's rights as human rights, and peace. To live in security means a life free from fear and violence. Drawing upon a complex understanding of human security this includes combatting poverty and inequality, struggling for climate justice and sustainable development, preventing violence and caring for peace.

From the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic we have seen an alarming increase in domestic violence. Furthermore, we witness an increased threat to women's safety in the public sphere in States where the prevalence of patriarchal values linked to (institutionalised and militarised) masculinity promotes proliferation of arms, lack of accountability and an environment which enables exploitation, violence and other forms of (political) extremism. Women activists, peace-builders and human rights defenders are disproportionately affected.

To detect dangerous tendencies of extremism or authoritarianism, the experience (or prevalence) of gender-based violence in all these dimensions is part of early warning systems. Gender sensitive information is crucial and can reveal otherwise unseen conflict drivers and triggers. It is important to ensure that women's civil society groups are consulted during the formulation of early warning systems and to establish specific channels for women to report information. **A gender-sensitive approach is key against radicalisation, violent extremism and all forms of discrimination and war rhetorics that promote hate and militarised answers.**

In the analysis why the peace process failed in Bosnia, women described „that it started the day the war ended and a peace agreement between the ethno-nationalist and international elites was agreed upon, with the people of BiH conspicuously absent from those negotiations. Everything that has happened since then – from corruption, militarization and the strengthening of ethno-nationalist projects to massive post-war emigration – is an outcome of how this so-called peace was built and by whom.“ This is a lesson for the international community, civil society, institutions, think tanks and political decision-makers.

The war against Ukraine has accelerated the current revival of militarism. We decisively stand behind the people of Ukraine, and acknowledge the importance to remain open-minded to channels of civil society dialogue towards peace-building and the sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine after the war.

Understanding intersecting global crises and their impact on Women, Peace and Security

Based on facts and figures, the climate emergency and risks posed by nuclear threats are the two biggest dangers for humans and for all life on the planet. Climate change **threatens the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights** including those to life, water and sanitation, food, health, housing, self-determination, culture and development.

In view of the ongoing refurbishing of nuclear arsenals by the so-called Superpowers as well as in view of dangers relating to nuclear power plants, such as the one in Zaporizhzhya, we request OSCE to take the lead in preventing the destruction of mankind and our planet. Progress on nuclear disarmament will significantly assist the SDGs and climate stabilization. To stop nuclear proliferation and use of nuclear weapons we strongly advocate for the signing of the nuclear ban treaty (TPNW) by all OSCE states.

As crises which already today have disproportional impact on women and marginalized groups (particularly Indigenous people), they are to be addressed as highest priority under the Women, Peace, Security Agenda by OSCE in coordination with other relevant international bodies and OSCE participating States. All the billions spent for armament are urgently needed for health, climate protection, humanitarian aid, peace promotion and the fulfillment of SDG's by 2030 as well as the Paris Climate Agreement by 2050.

Including Youth in Peace and Security Discourses

A feminist perspective does not only refer to a gender-sensitive perspective but highlights the importance to include all marginalized and underrepresented groups which are left out in decision-making processes and equal participation in society.

When it comes to peace and security also **young people are often unable to equally participate in conflict resolution and the promotion of peace even though young people are disproportionately affected by conflicts and violent structures.**

The reality of young people is highly gendered especially in conflict situations. Young men are traditionally seen as potential threats and perpetrators while young women are mostly perceived as victims. These stereotypes must be overcome, and it must be listened to the specific demands and needs of young men and women.

In addition to that, young people are not a homogeneous but a diverse age group with for example different ethnicities, cultures, sex or socio-economic status resulting in the need to acknowledge the intersecting differences of youth and their relation to each other. Therefore, **it is important to implement the UN Youth, Peace and Security agenda and foster youth participation as well as building stronger partnerships with young people from an intersectional approach.**

Women's participation in a (coming) peace process in Ukraine

Women and other marginalized groups are often excluded from decision making in armed conflicts as power is concentrated to male dominated institutions as the military. Research shows an increase in the durability of peace when women participate in peace processes. Decision makers must therefore actively contribute to inclusive peace processes with women's organizations and other civil society organizations participating in accordance with the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda by:

- mapping out actors with potential to participate in peace processes and provide support and capacity building,
- using Women's Mediation Networks to identify opportunities for diplomacy and mediation, both on high level and civil society level and
- investigating possibilities to initiate trauma informed reconciliation processes both between the populations in Russia and Ukraine and within each country.





ŁÓDZ DECLARATION

Stop the Aggression, End Impunity, Ensure Justice and Accountability, and Launch a Process to Strengthen the OSCE and Reaffirm Strong Commitment to Helsinki Principles

Presented at the OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference 2022
Łódz, 30 November 2022

Solidarity with Ukraine and a Need for Stronger Support

We are living through a tragic time. This year we are facing one of the most serious security and humanitarian crisis in Europe since World War II and in all the years of the OSCE's existence. Many of us in civil society are acutely aware of the **failure of the OSCE and other international organizations in their ability to prevent the criminal full-scale aggression of Russia** – an OSCE participating State, a member of the UN Security Council and a nuclear power – against the sovereign state of Ukraine, accompanied by massive war crimes and crimes against humanity, bearing the character of genocide of the Ukrainian people. Driven by archaic imperial ideas, Russian leaders deny the very existence of the Ukrainian nation and seek to end the existence of the independent Ukrainian state.

We feel anger and indignation at the **terrorist actions of the Russian state**, which kills civilians, purposefully and systematically destroys civilian objects and critical infrastructure of Ukrainian cities and does not hide its criminal goal to make life unbearable in them. Russian missile strikes have no military meaning and their main purpose is to increase the number of deaths and suffering of Ukrainian people. Abductions, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture of detainees in filtration camps, forcing millions of people to flee to other countries due to bombing and unbearable living conditions, the forced deportation of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to the territory of the aggressor country, the removal of children from families – this is not a terrible story of the past centuries, but crimes committed today by orders from the Kremlin.

We unequivocally **condemn the criminal and hypocritical policy of the usurping Lukashenka regime**, which has provided the territory, airspace and infrastructure of Belarus for Russia's attack on Ukraine, continues hosting Russian troops and arms, has supplied Russia with tanks, armoured vehicles and ammunition, **openly supports the criminal aggression and has become its direct accomplice.**

We are disappointed by the **lack of a clear position in respect of the Russian criminal aggression of several states in the OSCE region** which abstained or did not take part in the voting on the UN General Assembly resolutions in March and October and have not taken an unambiguous stance on the issue.

At the same time, we feel admiration for the people of Ukraine, its men and women, who heroically defend their right to life, freedom and human dignity in the most difficult conditions. We express our full solidarity and support to the people of Ukraine in their fight against criminal aggression. **Ukraine and Ukrainians are at the forefront of the struggle for world peace, for our common freedom and security, and our common values, proclaimed almost 50 years ago in the Helsinki Final Act.**

We thank all States and all people in different countries who support Ukrainians, including civil society members, volunteers and everyone who gives their energy, time and money to support Ukraine. In particular, the government and the people of Poland have made tremendous efforts to facilitate help to Ukraine and have provided generous assistance to refugees. We call on everyone not to stop but to increase the necessary support for Ukraine, not to succumb to the Kremlin's economic and nuclear blackmail and propaganda, and not to give up, despite the high price of this war and its grave consequences for neighbouring countries and the whole world. The most urgent tasks are to protect the country from daily bombing by supplying anti-missile systems and to safeguard the physical security of Ukrainians

during the winter by engaging in international efforts to support Ukraine with capacity to repair energy infrastructure and with electricity generating facilities. **We all, everyone in their own place, must do everything in our power to ensure that the lives of Ukrainians are protected, criminal Russian aggression is stopped, all occupied territories of Ukraine are freed from the aggressor, criminals are held accountable, justice for victims is ensured, Ukraine is restored after the destruction, and conditions are created for such criminal actions never happening again and that Russia no longer threatens anyone. We call on all OSCE participating States to actively engage in these efforts.**

Ensuring Justice and Closing the Accountability Gap

Today, when we deal with the unprecedented Russian aggression, we urgently need to **ensure justice for the victims and accountability for perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity**, committed in Ukraine by Russia and its accomplice, the Lukashenka regime – **and equally importantly, for the crime of aggression**. We are highlighting the importance to recognize, document and prosecute sexualized and gender-based violence as weapon of war.

Russian officials and those who implemented their criminal orders have not been punished for previous war crimes in Chechnya and various countries; therefore, impunity pushes the Russian government to continue its aggressive foreign policy and commit new crimes.

The task of ensuring justice and accountability is daunting: the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office has already documented over 50 thousand cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts constituting the crime of aggression. There will be many more, as numerous atrocities committed by Russian troops are being discovered on the liberated territories. Documentation of crimes has been pursued by a number of actors, including Ukrainian and international NGOs, OSCE expert missions under the Moscow Mechanism, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine established by the UN Human Rights Council, joint investigation group established by several states, etc. **Problem is not with documentation of evidence; the overarching problem is a jurisdiction gap. Existing national and international justice systems do not have necessary capacity and jurisdiction for effective delivery of justice in respect of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the crime of aggression in Ukraine.**

Speaking of war crimes and crimes against humanity, **the Ukrainian justice system will not be able to cope alone with the massive number of cases**. Also, it cannot be perceived as fully impartial as it represents the country which is the victim of aggression. **National justice systems in other countries are also not capable of prosecuting many perpetrators of international crimes in Ukraine on the basis of universal jurisdiction**. Moreover, leaders in top positions are protected by immunity from prosecution in national courts of other countries. Only an international tribunal may overcome this barrier. However, **the ICC is able to pursue only a few cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine**, hopefully of high level officials in command positions. The European Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice may also play their roles but these will be limited to interstate complaints and holding the Russian state accountable, not individuals in the chain of command.

Therefore, various proposals are being discussed to initiate **the establishment of a special tribunal for trying war crimes and crimes against humanity** committed in Ukraine. **The best option appears to be a hybrid (mixed international-national) mechanism for Ukraine** established by an agreement between the government of Ukraine and the UN based on the UN General Assembly recommendation.

Equally importantly, **a separate ad hoc tribunal to try the crime of aggression in Ukraine is needed**. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, aided by Belarus, does not just represent the blatant violation of international law; it represents a threat to the foundational principle that underpins the modern legal order: a ban on the use of force in international relations, with the exception of self-defence and by decision of the Security Council. The crime of aggression is the international crime from which all others flow: were it not for the illegal aggression against Ukraine, there would be no crimes against humanity, no war crimes, and no genocide. This is why the Russian invasion must be followed by the criminal prosecution of those most responsible for the crime of aggression.

However, **there is no international court with jurisdiction over the crime of aggression against Ukraine**. The ICC has no jurisdiction in this case. Thus, international accountability for the crime of aggression against Ukraine **requires creating a new international tribunal**. One of the most promising proposals is creating such a tribunal **through an agreement between Ukraine and the United Nations, on the recommendation of the General Assembly**.

Proceeding through the UN General Assembly would help overcome a deadlock at the Security Council and make good on a promise that 141 States implied when they voted in favour of a Resolution deploring the aggression

by Russia in March 2022. An international criminal tribunal recommended by the UN GA **would carry the greatest legitimacy** as opposed to a tribunal established by ad hoc coalition of states or a European institution. While the UN GA does not have the power to impose a tribunal on Ukraine (because it lacks such enforcement powers, which reside in the Security Council), it can authorise the Secretary General to work with Ukraine to establish a tribunal to which Kyiv voluntarily consents through an international agreement with the UN.

This tribunal should be narrowly **focused on the crime of aggression alone and only on those in leadership positions**, based on the definition of the crime of aggression in the Rome Statute, which limits the scope of the prosecutable offences to “manifest” violations of the UN Charter and to crimes committed by those in a leadership role, specifically “the planning, preparation, initiation or execution, by a person in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State.” **A narrow jurisdiction has budgetary advantages** as well: the preparation of a case concerning the crime of aggression is based on a different set of conduct and evidence than a case concerning war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide.

It is the responsibility of states to take the lead in taking effective action to end impunity and hold perpetrators accountable. **Jurisdictional gap is not merely a legal issue; it needs to be addressed at the political level by states to ensure strong majority in the UN General Assembly and financial and political support to the tribunals.** We need courage and leadership by states who care.

From a broader perspective, the UN and its member states should undertake the work on **reforming the international peace and security system** in order to create guarantees from aggression for all countries regardless of their participation or non-participation in military blocs. First and foremost, this **concerns a reform of the UN Security Council, including changing its composition and tackling the problem of the veto power** in decisions concerning situations involving permanent members.

Connection between Repression and Aggression. A Need for Effective Instruments of Reaction to Human Dimension Crises

We currently observe a narrow understanding of security which is focused on the military-political dimension, almost completely disregarding the dimension of human security and ecological-economic security as cross-cutting issues. Recent years have shown that the trend towards increasing disregard for human rights, including suppression of civil society and independent media as mechanisms of public oversight over government actions, is a source of instability and creates conditions for state violence, both internal and external. We reiterate: **States that grossly and massively violate human rights within their national borders sooner or later become a threat to peace and international security.** Continued internal repression which is not effectively stopped by the international community, breeds impunity and leads to external aggression.

War and military conflict are based on power asymmetries and the connection of repression and aggression. On the basis of the tragic experience of World War II, a system of international cooperation and international organisations, including the OSCE, was built over decades and was supposed to prevent a repetition of a war in Europe. **Lack of timely and concerted international reaction to a democratic backslide, massive human rights violations and aggressive foreign policy by a number of states, which civil society has pointed at for a long time, paved the way for the current catastrophic development.**

Therefore, **any human rights violations documented by actors such as marginalized groups should serve as early warning signs of not only a human dimension crisis but also a potential security crisis.** As the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur pointed out in her recent report on Russia, the international system of human rights control, has instruments in place to detect these early warning signs and ring the alarm, and in respect of Russia “alarm bells were ringing constantly. But there was no reaction that would have substantially improved the situation. Since all systems of co-operation and supervision are based on goodwill, they cannot work if there is a lack of goodwill.” **The problem is that instruments of international reaction to stop violations and bring perpetrators to account are very weak or absent.** This problem should be in the centre of discussions about the future of the OSCE and the whole system of international organisations.

The “Russia case” is illustrative and should serve as a lesson for the international community. The Putin regime has evolved from systematically stifling fundamental freedoms, eliminating independent media and civil society, including through laws on “foreign agents”, “undesirable organisations”, and “extremist activities”, practicing repression and politically motivated persecution of government critics and various minorities, first of all religious minorities, diminishing women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights, building a massive propaganda machine, abusing counter-terrorism measures in Chechnya and across Russia, escalating conflicts near and far, invading Georgia and Donbass, annexing Crimea, committing war crimes in Syria – all merely observed with “growing concern” by the international community which

continued lucrative trade relations and allowed export of corruption – to finally invading Ukraine at a massive scale, committing war crimes at the level unprecedented since WWII, and finally becoming a threat to global security. **This is a tragic lesson of how the system of international organisations has failed to act timely and effectively.**

In at least two other OSCE participating States, Turkey and Azerbaijan, we observe the same pattern of continuing internal repression and waging wars in Syria, Nagorno Karabakh, and at the borders of Armenia. The continuous Turkish aggression against regions in Northern Syria and Northern Iraq needs to be monitored and stopped. **The difficult situation in Central Asia also underscores a strong connection between problems in the human dimension and security threats.** Due to the geographical remoteness from Europe, the attention of leading international organisations to this link in the region is not always a priority. Continued repression of government critics and peaceful protestors, a large number of political prisoners, enforced disappearances in prisons, persecution of journalists and bloggers, internet censorship, renewed pressure on civil society, and the growth of religious fundamentalism, related to the influence of the Taliban regime in the OSCE partner state Afghanistan, brew instability in the region. Emerging public statements in support of Taliban policies in the states of Central Asia are a threat to girls and women and to security of all citizens and may further destabilise the region. OSCE institutions and participating States should urgently discuss serious problems in the human dimension as a security factor in the region.

At the same time, **repression on the inside and war on the outside are connected in another way: waging an aggressive war requires a higher level of a crackdown to suppress any anti-war expression.** The Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur used a metaphor of a communicating tube: “To start a war with another country, the elite must be sure that there will be no two-front war. Therefore, restrictive measures are considered necessary in order not to be disturbed during the preparation for war or after it has started. This explains the wave of repressive measures in Russia immediately before, but, above all, after 24 February 2022.” After starting its aggression against Ukraine, the Putin regime has further escalated its repressive policies: adopted numerous new restrictive laws, doing a final blow to freedoms of expression, assembly and association; persecuted thousands of people protesting against the war; shut down the remaining independent media, further restricted access to internet, brought toxic propaganda to a new level, and created an atmosphere of fear reminiscent of the times of Stalin terror.

Against the background of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the self-isolation of Russia from international human rights mechanisms, changing the Kremlin’s repressive policy is a matter of tomorrow, not today. But it is important to **urgently help victims of human rights violations in Russia and those who help them and fight against repression and propaganda** – civil society organisations and activists, independent journalists and lawyers, so that they can continue their important work abroad or in the most difficult conditions in Russia. Likewise, **active support to Belarussian civil society and democratic forces both in exile and inside the country should continue.**

The case of Belarus is similar in many ways. Holding on illegally to power since 1996, usurper Lukashenka has engaged in regular cycles of **systemic and systematic repression, which often caused limited and inconsistent reaction of the international community.** Since August 2020, Lukashenka and his associates have once again proved that they are criminals responsible for electoral fraud, mass torture, killings of protestors, incarceration of more than a thousand and four hundred political prisoners and detention of more than 45 thousand of people, forcing of hundreds of thousands to flee the country, eliminating civil society and independent media, spreading hatred against critics of the regime and neighbouring states in propagandistic media, manufacturing the migration crisis to destabilise the EU, and assisting Moscow in evasion of economic sanctions.

Putin rescued the Lukashenka regime at the critical moment of popular revolution in 2020. Lukashenka’s actions to retain his power by responding to the massive popular protest in the second half of 2020 by unprecedented level of repression with direct Russian support in exchange for signing the “integration programs” brought the country to the brink of losing sovereignty. The crackdown in Belarus allowed Putin to deploy his troops there and attack Ukraine from the North.

The Lukashenka regime has become a direct accomplice in the aggression. Its actions qualify as an act of aggression according to article 3 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 on the definition of aggression. UN GA Resolution adopted on 2 March 2022 deplored the involvement of Belarus in the unlawful use of force against Ukraine. Therefore, if an international tribunal is ever established to try those responsible for the crime of aggression against Ukraine, **Lukashenka should be indicted and tried by this tribunal, along with Putin and his associates.**

While the fate of Belarus largely depends on the situation on the battlefields in Ukraine, it is also clear that developments in Belarus are very important for the outcome of the war and the future of the whole region. If international actions to stop repression and support democratic transition in the country are side-lined, Belarus may soon become completely absorbed by the Russian authoritarian Leviathan and turned into a springboard for aggression not only against Ukraine but against its Western neighbours.

These lessons make it necessary to critically reflect on the OSCE role in ensuring human security. **Strengthening the OSCE's work in a cross-dimensional vision, developing tools of effective reaction to warning signs of a human crisis which can lead to a potential security crisis, must be seen as a key goal.**

Other key challenges

While the top priority now is to stop the Russian aggression, ensuring justice and accountability, and restoring Ukraine, there are a number of other key challenges that the OSCE, its participating States and civil society need to work on. This includes vigorously addressing **climate change** and its consequences for the human condition – hunger, migration, and human rights abuses; effectively combating **torture and enforced disappearances** in line with OSCE MC Decision 7/20 ; eliminating **gender inequality and gender-based violence**, including through implementation of UN Women, Peace and Security agenda; strengthening youth participation by implementing the, UN Youth, Peace and Security agenda; exposing and combating **abuse of media freedom, including in the form of propaganda, hate speech and war propaganda; combating racism, intolerance, hate crimes and all forms of discrimination; addressing migration challenges on the basis of human rights, and fighting trans-border corruption and human trafficking.**

Last but not least, OSCE's vast **expertise in conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation should be used more effectively**, given recurring conflicts and violence in South Caucasus, Central Asia and Western Balkans which have become more acute in the last year. We call on OSCE structures to more actively engage in conflict zones, including by deploying a permanent monitoring mission to Armenia and Azerbaijan, actively engaging into stabilisation of Georgia which is threatened by destabilisation due to the Russian occupation of 20 percent of its territory and by social tensions caused by the massive influx of immigrants due to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and setting up a contact group for the Tadjik-Kyrgyz border conflict.

Civil society space

Shrinking space for civil society remains our strong concern. We are witnessing today a war against civil society waged by governments of a number of OSCE participating states, aimed at the complete elimination of independent civil society. This attack is an important part of a global backlash against democracy, human rights, woman rights, and rule of law. It is not surprising that NGOs and activists are targeted, because they are key actors in promoting and defending these cornerstones of comprehensive security. Without them, it would be much more difficult if not impossible for governments of democratic states, diplomats, and experts in the OSCE and other international bodies to do their work on human rights and democracy, not speaking of people in these societies who may be deprived of legal assistance, vital information, social support, and many other services provided by NGOs .

Award of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize to three active members of the Civic Solidarity Platform – Centre for Civil Liberties (Ukraine), “Memorial” (Russia), and Ales Bialiatsky, founder and chair of the Human Rights Centre “Viasna” (Belarus) – is a recognition of the important role civil society plays in upholding peace, human rights and democracy. Our colleagues are an inspiration to us and thousands of others around the world. The courage and dedication of the laureates, who continue their work in the face of severe repression in Belarus and Russia and the aggressive war carried out by the Putin regime with the complicity of the Lukashenko regime, demonstrates the readiness of human rights defenders against all odds to resist attempts to illegally restrict activities of civil society. The liquidation of one of the oldest and most respected human rights organisations in Russia, Memorial, as well as hundreds of non-governmental organisations in Belarus, including Viasna Human Rights Centre, testifies to the **existential threat to the survival of civil society in both countries.**

Human rights defenders and NGOs in Ukraine face unprecedented challenges as a result of criminal military aggression against their country and massive war crimes committed by Russian troops. Ukrainian human rights activists document thousands of war crimes and crimes against humanity, help millions of victims, work to inform the world community about what is happening in Ukraine, and take action to bring those responsible to justice. **This selfless work requires recognition and support.**

Actions of civil society during the Russian aggression have made it a key player in crisis management. Whether organising defence or social welfare for war victims in Ukraine, caring for refugees in the EU, documenting war crimes or acting as a key source of expertise, opposing propaganda, spreading truthful information about war crimes, and protesting against the aggression, civil society has demonstrated its essential role, especially in situations when States or international organisations cannot do it. OSCE should actively work with civil society groups across the OSCE area to build their capacity in documenting war crimes and conflict resolution work. A special fund to support civil society work on war crimes documentation has to be established which like-minded States could contribute to.

The OSCE and its participating States should take new effective measures in respect of Russian and Belarusian authorities for the systematic use of repressive measures against civil society and for persecuting people who peacefully and legally express their anti-war and human rights positions, and demand that they immediately cancel illegal decisions to liquidate Memorial, Viasna and other NGOs. **Ensuring release of Ales Bialiatski, his colleagues from Viasna, and all Belarusian and Russian political prisoners should be a top priority for the international community.**

The OSCE should review its cooperation with civil society, including specifically women, marginalized groups and women's organisations in a meaningful way, and enhance civil society engagement in all OSCE activities. A Cross-dimensional approach would be best ensured through enabling adequate participation of civil society in contributing to security and economic-environmental dimensions, , along with the human dimension. Civil society must be a vital actor in diversifying security narratives and contribute a human-centred understanding of security, particularly at this moment of imminent violent crisis. States and OSCE institutions should use information and expertise of NGOs and treat them as key actors in ensuring implementations of OSCE commitments. **Attempts by some States who demand that civil society participation in OSCE events should be restricted** based on the approval by governments, contrary to the existing commitment, **should be strongly opposed.** To ensure meaningful participation of civil society, diverse representation of marginalized and discriminated groups needs to be fostered.

We reiterate our **key recommendations on civil society space:** all OSCE Chairpersonships should include cooperation with civil society and protection of civil society space in their programmatic priorities; Chairpersonships should establish a position of a Special Representative on Civil Society, whose mandate should be extended annually and include protecting civil society space and mainstreaming civil society engagement in OSCE activities; concerned States should establish an informal Group of Friends of Civil Society to develop joint strategies on reversing the backlash against civil society and expand civil society space in the OSCE; Chairpersonships and ODIHR should develop a system of prompt reaction to the most important cases of pressure on civil society and persecution of activists with a specific attention to vulnerable groups; ODIHR should set up an expert panel on freedom of association and security of human rights defenders to assist in implementation of relevant commitments and guidelines.

The problem of shrinking civil society space, the backlash against civil society in a number of States, and persecution of human rights defenders, environmental defenders, peace activists, women activists, anti-corruption activists, activists working to protect minority rights and migrants, and other civil society members should be put much higher on the OSCE agenda.

The Future of the OSCE: A Need for Change

The failure of the OSCE to fulfil its mandate and the central purpose of its existence, ensuring security and preventing conflicts, has become painfully clear. Therefore, we must recognise that changes are needed in the OSCE activities, and develop a plan for these changes. We are not calling for the dissolution of the OSCE which would be in the interest of repressive and aggressive regimes, but it is obvious to us that its fundamental reforms are required.

We need to reflect on what we should preserve and strengthen, what we possibly want to get rid of, and what we want to develop instead. One thing is clear to us. Almost 50 years ago Andrei Sakharov formulated a **key principle: peace, progress, human rights are three inextricably linked goals,** and humanity cannot achieve one of them while neglecting the others. The Helsinki comprehensive security concept has three interrelated dimensions, and they correspond to the Sakharov triad. **The comprehensive security concept, the importance of multilateralism, and the unique place the OSCE provides for civil society are as essential today as they were 50 years ago. We need to uphold this and develop new instruments that would allow the Helsinki concept to be effectively put to work** for peace, progress, and human rights in the time when many States are not like-minded anymore.

The Helsinki concept worked well only in the period when States shared the founding values. As divisions were growing in the last two decades, OSCE instruments of dialogue, monitoring, educating, mediating and assisting States in the implementation of their commitments have become increasingly challenging, due to the consensus rule. Especially in a situation of expanding non-compliance, maintaining a platform for dialogue is more important than ever, to ensure a way forward towards peace. We acknowledge that non-violent tools are under threat in the current military climate, but that does not render them insignificant. Instead, civil society has a tremendous responsibility to maintain a platform for dialogue to help prevent - or at least document - security breaches.

When the OSCE became often paralysed due to the abuse of the consensus rule by violating States who do not share the founding values anymore and are not interested in the effective work in the human dimension, we called for a more active use of non-consensual tools as a timely reaction to early warning signs of a human dimension crisis which may lead to a security crisis. This includes a more regular application of the Vienna and the Moscow Mechanisms and seeing them not as a "nuclear option" undermining trust but as a living implementation of the key Helsinki principle: human rights problems are not an internal matter of States but a matter of legitimate concern of all other States.

The application of the Moscow Mechanism and the production of a report should not be an ad hoc reaction, only documenting a crisis situation in a certain country and the attitude of other states towards it, but a part of systematic and regular work in the OSCE. The process should not end with the publication of the report. The most important thing is follow-up actions to implement the recommendations of the report, continuous monitoring of the situation, appointment of new rapporteurs when needed, etc. A report should become the basis for developing a strategy and a concrete plan for further international action in relation to the country under assessment.

We reiterate this call now as well as our calls for creative interpretation of the mandates of OSCE institutions, Secretary General, and the Secretariat, allowing them to be more effective; more active use of the powers of OSCE Chairpersonship to organise events (as demonstrated by Poland by hosting a full fledged HDIM substitute this year), make public statements, appoint Special Representatives; stronger political follow-up to conclusions and recommendations in reports; a stronger role of the Human Dimension Committee; use of the principle of leading by example – such as by Chairmanship States going through the scrutiny of self-evaluation of their own implementation of commitments; and last but not least – enhancing cooperation with civil society in all three dimensions.

Finally, we are calling for a shift from fruitless efforts to restore trust where it is absent and where dialogue is only imitated by autocrats, to the **active use of expert assessment and recommendations by OSCE bodies in foreign policy of democratic states**. When progress through multilateral action in the institutional framework is blocked, democratic States should take responsibility for addressing key problems through their foreign policy and collective action both outside of and inside the OSCE.

Remaining committed to the OSCE **we have a strong sense of urgency for major changes in the way the OSCE operates. The approaching 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025 provides a good occasion to elaborate proposals on reforms of the OSCE and start implementing them**. But we cannot wait until 2025. A process of critical reflection about failures and gaps, and about what needs to be strengthened and what needs to be left behind, which new decision-making and implementation tools and mechanisms should be developed must start now so that by 2025 we have a set of concrete proposals to decide upon .

This reflection must include the common security strategy in the spirit of the founding principles of the OSCE, the Helsinki concept. "Now more than ever we need a stronger discourse for peace" . Looking towards our shared future within the OSCE, we wish to call for an ambitious Common Security Framework with an active peace commitment based on human needs.

Other intergovernmental organisations are ahead of the OSCE in a process of critical reflection. For example, the Council of Europe established a High Level Reflection Group composed of prominent former politicians and announced holding a CoE Summit in May next year to adopt decisions on reforms. We need a similar process in the OSCE. A reflection process should be not confined to deliberations by diplomats but involve broad circles of civil society, academia, parliamentarians, and active citizens. This would ensure stronger ownership of the OSCE by States and societies, make it grounded in real life.

On our part, we in the Civic Solidarity Platform and broader civil society are ready to make a contribution to this process and are willing to work with the incoming Chairpersonships, interested States, and OSCE institutions towards making the OSCE more effective and capable of adequately responding to the current crisis and new challenges.

How to implement the WPS Agenda

Narrative Report WG Women and Gender realities in the OSCE region: Albania, Kosovo, North-Macedonia

Social context: highly patriarchal, with high rates of SGBV, fear and discrimination – especially in rural area – of social depression (feelings of helplessness- powerlessness), economic difficulties (high prices, inflation, lack of qualified employment – especially for women), problems in the educational sector with partly ethnic separation, language problems in a broader sense linked to various disadvantages and discrimination, (ongoing) traumatising through experiences during the war with deportation, bombing, losses, destruction, refugees, hate. Partly the people are exposed to re-traumatisation through the Ukrainian war and many more difficulties to manage daily life. Young students in Kosovo told us that ½ of their comrades with good education would love to leave the country.

We met strong women's organisations and well developed feminist civil society for a transformative agenda, active in numerous fields: giving space and voices to women, defending rights and freedoms (e.g. as lawyers, social workers), working on NAPs 1325 and their localisation – but complaining about lack of implementation, dissociation of existing laws and practice, and the danger of being co-opted more and more by institutions and States). Intersectionality, inter-generational commitment are key elements and the exchange with women's groups and (international) organisations from neighbouring countries as well as in a specific way of Europe are crucial to hear different narratives and experiences, hopes and challenges, to find common ways, solidarity and support.

Political context: Very different situations in the 3 countries but also similarities and interconnectedness – everywhere women working hard locally, regionally, internationally connected and cross-borders – but don't see real changes for their roles, rights and freedoms.

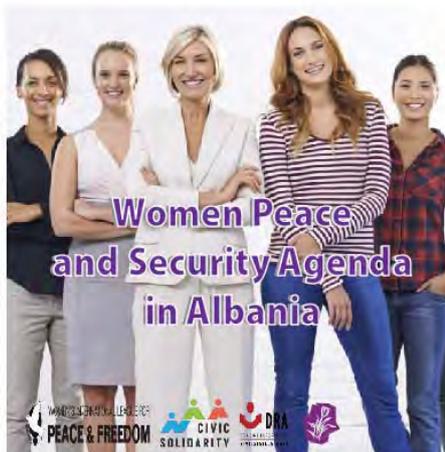
The biggest problems lie in the difficulties and frustrations with the EU accession process. There is a great interest to strengthen and re-animate the Berlin process- and not the "open Balkan" concept - by politicians and people from Think Tanks that we met. There is influence from a lot of players in the region for their specific and very problematic interests : Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia ... There is continuous fight against corruption and not sustainable foreign (and partly diaspora) investments (in all areas but very visible in the construction area in Pristina) and lack of support for sustainable development which is a critical issue in countries of more than 90% of dependence from coal (3rd biggest reservoir in Europe, 5th world-wide!) – Very competent and committed politicians and NGOs (with still not enough support from the international movements – climate activists, ecologists to follow the line of "leave it in the ground" and instead support renewable energies).

There is also constant fear of new tensions and disputes about borders, ethnics, fuelled immensely by the Russian war against Ukraine and old/new players such as Turkey, Russia,

Artistic context: The Manifesta in Prishtina accompanied artistically many of the challenges in Kosovo: How to (re-) use public space for creative action, awareness raising of problems from the past , present and future, support for commons, meetings and initiatives for the society as a whole and women in particular. How to deal with violence and violent experiences in a constructive way was a great ambition realised by local and international artists – many women artists and performers and feminist views. How to spare energies and resources and use and create more sustainability in thinking and acting was another major issue.

Tirana und Dures 20./21.10.22:

Annalisa Milani/It, Mina Damnjanovic/Sr, Heidi Meinzolt/D participate in a meeting with the Albanian Women's movement



Policy document on Women Peace and Security Agenda in Albania Association "Gender, Peace Security" (AGPS)

Achieving gender equality in all areas is one of the main objectives of the Albanian government. To achieve this goal, many important policy documents have been drafted and adopted, improvements to national and local policies and plans aimed at planning and implementing concrete actions to empower women and progress towards gender equality. Among the policies on gender equality, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Its Action Plan 2016-2020, one of its strategic goals is to ensure the equal participation and commitment of women in political and public life and decision-making, although it does not focus on the issue of the inclusion of women and girls in the field of security and peace. The first National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 "On Women, Peace and Security", 2018-2020, is approved by the Albanian government, with the Council of Minister's Decision no. 524, dated 11.9.2018, reflecting the commitment from the line ministries, including MoHSP, MoI, MoD and MoFA. For years, civil society has played a significant role in the advancement and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The Coalition "Women, Security and Peace (CWSP) established by a group of CSOs- from all over Albania aiming at promoting the work.

on women's issues, peace and security in Albania, has been an essential part of the national efforts complementing the governmental mechanisms at the central and local level as relevant to the National Women, Peace and Security Agenda. From an initial assessment in 2017 of women's involvement in peace and security-related structures, data showed that in 2016, Albania had around 6300 unexploded weapons, 109 cases of trafficked victims, 95 cases of trafficked victims, 21% of women were included in the Assembly, 14.7% were mayors, 10% were female in the Armed Forces and only 6% were female in the Police Force. After the 2017 elections, there was an increase in the participation of women in the Assembly with approximately 28% of women MPs. Currently, the cabinet has 8 women ministers out of 14, or 57%, making it one of the European countries with the highest gender representation in central government. The tendency to increase the participation of women is also present in public institutions of the civil service: In the vacant positions during 2018 results that 54% of the nominees are female and 46% of them are male. In 2017, in the Armed Forces, by female military personnel, the total number of women was 210, of which 50 officers, 46 unauthorized officers, and 98 soldiers. Over the years, the Minister of Defense's annual directive and the instructions of the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces have set the goal of achieving the inclusion of female professional military personnel in uniform in recruitment and promotion in the Armed Forces of up to 15% of the number overall, but also their contribution to missions and tasks at the required operational levels. It seems that this intention remains the same, as long as the Minister of Defense Directive 2019 has included the same objective.

at the occasion of “22nd Anniversary of women’s rights protection and women’s empowerment”. We were deeply impressed by the continuity of their commitment in so many fields – from local handicraft support to women’s spaces and political discussions. We profited of the occasion to exchange different practices and challenges of the implementation of UNSCR1325 in a local/regional context with women from the region and talk about support and solidarity. A short exchange with the Swedish and French ambassadors was interesting accompanying the great presentation and exhibition of women’s work on the ground.

Prishtina 19./22.-26.10.22

a) Civil society meetings: Participants: Annemarie Sancar and Rut-Gaby Vermot/CH, Edlira /AI, Heidi Meinzolt/D, Mina Damnjanovic/Se, Annalisa Milani/ It meet with different NGOs: Kosova Women’s network (Igo Rugova and team), Partners Kosova (e.g. Shukrie Gashi, Nora Ahmetaj), Forum for Civic Initiatives (Dajana Berisha), u.a., Studentinnen, Anwältinnen, young women human rights defenders and peace builders.



Topics: Learning from History, challenges of women’s life and realities, exchange of different narratives, solidarity actions, political activities from local to global, and reporting, how to channel Track 3 initiatives to Tr2 and Tr1, planning of assessments on the situation of women, needs and specific challenges in the field of human security, safety, collecting stories for a kind of living library, information on conflict cycles and a preventive role of women in early warning, early action, development of a common feminist strategy for Kosovo and a new peace architecture, changing mind sets of decision makers, working on toxic masculinity, creating safe spaces , organising local dialogues and developing a common language for the participation in “peace tables”.

b) Participation in the high level WPS Forum “Building alliances for Sustainable Peace” – organised by the president of Kosovo with numerous very inspiring contacts local, regional, national, international. HM participated as coordinator of the OSCE WG in a plenary session on “Foster participation. Empower women - Build peace”.



Discussions with governmental representatives of Kosovo, a short conversation with Anna Lührmann - German state secretary – and other politicians from the region and Think Tanks completed the presence on the European enlargement process - chances of strengthening the Berlin Process, launching sustainable development initiatives. Presentation of the book 1325 - facts and fables by the team of Igo Rogova.

Participation on official invitation in the feminist workshop on women and peace processes, resilience and empowerment. How to build support mechanisms in all conflict settings. How to implement better the WPS Agenda, based on human security processes and feminist transformative agendas, disarmament, prevention in a multilateral framework and organize better dealing with the past – learning for the present and envision the future.

Skopje 26.-27.10.

Meetings with young women from the Think Tank “Institut for democracy” working mostly on research and projects in the field of democratic and sustainable development and European processes. They are also part of the women’s network Stella for mentoring and awareness raising for young women interested in feminist perspectives; they open spaces – townhall discussions - collect books for rural libraries, support rights and needs with solidarity and empowerment activities. At the end I presented the CSP WG in preparation of the upcoming OSCE chairpersonship and eventual useful connections to position a feminist agenda in the framework of the CSP and OSCE. The WG will contribute to detailed analysis, assessments, using OSCE chairpersonship and a greater awareness in the region and supported by the international group on gendered issues.

“WOMEN’S SHARED SECURITY IN OUR MODERN WORLD”

10TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – Yerevan 19.-20.11.2022

“Women’s innovative methodologies in preventive diplomacy, social justice and treaty ban the use of Alarms “

Heidi Meinzolt

The event coincided with the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the International Young Women’s Peace and Human Rights Award and organization of parallel conferences dedicated to implementation of UN SC Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, and Security.



Background:

Today, more than ever, humanity faces numerous existential threats with the heightened risk of a nuclear war, increased militarization with the introduction of unauthorized use of autonomous weapons, climate change, pandemics, rise of authoritarianism and fundamentalism, and inter-state confrontations.

With ongoing modern wars, humanity pays an increasingly higher price. The proliferating use of weapons of mass destruction—banned under international law—have become methods of achieving and establishing power and control over seized lands—often, without impunity. Additionally, the violators of international laws and agreements have unleashed mercenaries and trafficked people as

soldiers. Use of banned weapons and weaponized sexual violence breach the civilians’ most fundamental human rights. The horrific loss of life, millions of refugees and displaced people, has led to global economic shockwaves, food shortages, and hunger. Moreover, there is a diminishing space for democratic governance and human rights protection. The revival of traditional practices has decayed the achievements in the areas of women’s rights protection, which is exceptionally concerning. Women and girls are at heightened risk of violence during the wars and conflicts, sexual and gender-based crimes, as well as raise of horrendous crimes against women have become practice during the recent wars. Under such conditions, women and children are critically vulnerable and unprotected. Protection of prisoners of conscious has become exponentially more difficult. In many situations, these crimes stay unpunished, leaving space for recidivism.

The conference holds a tradition of introducing innovative thinking from the women’s perspective, investing in transforming contradiction to collaboration for our shared future security.

Actual challenges:

It is a critical time and a matter of urgency to develop and implement a new thinking and security approach and to introduce an agenda of transformative peace and common security that invites everyone to be responsible for our common, shared future security. The recently released “For Our Shared Future. Common Security Report 2022” developed by the international commission led by Olof Palme Foundation, is a pivotal document. The report demonstrates how security is created jointly. By taking the concept of Common Security as its starting point, the Common Security 2022 initiative analyzed the world we live in today and some of the greatest challenges we face. It was presented by Anna Sundström, Secretary General of Olof Palme International Centre.

The report states: "Now, in 2022, it is time to consider whether Common Security can help bring us back from the brink. All people have the right to human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want. Building trust between nations and peoples is fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence. There can be no common security without nuclear disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons, and reduced military expenditure. Global and regional cooperation, multilateralism, and the rule of law are crucial to tackling many of the world's challenges. Dialogue, conflict prevention, and confidence-building measures must replace aggression and military force as a means of resolving disputes. Better regulation, international law, and responsible governance also need to be extended to cover new military technologies, such as in the realms of cyberspace, outer space, and "artificial intelligence".

Panel 1: Gender equality in accessing human security, freedom from fear and from want



The panel discussed different dimensions of human security including economic, social and environmental aspects. The participants focussed on inequalities, and how to build a more inclusive, resilient and peaceful society. They confirmed with their respective societal commitments that women play a critical role in building safe societies.

Panel 2: Women's critical role in negotiations on all levels and trust building



With a key note address of Lara Scarpitta Senior Gender adviser of the OSCE (online) and WG members Dunja Khalil/Austria and Dayana Berisha/Kosova and Julia Kharashvili/Georgia. They focussed on conflict-affected settings where inequality, exclusion, lack of respect for human rights humanitarian and refugee laws often impede meaningful participation. "We have the knowledge we need space and courage to raise our voices!"

Panel 3: Gender and (nuclear) disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons, reduced military expenditure and new military technologies moderated



Panel 4: Developing viable instruments in protection of human rights defenders

YOUNG WOMEN PEACE AWARD – and Training

The conference was accompanied by a wonderful award ceremony for young women peace builders: 1 international guest from Cameroun and 3 individuals or local organisations and a training of young people from the Armenian borderline on WPS, YPS organised by Democracy today with Dajana Berisha/Kosovo, Shirin Jurdi/Wilpf and Heidi Meinzolt. It was fascinating to see the mature arguments, living in dangerous and partly traumatising environments of ongoing conflict. What a courage and enthusiasm of the young people who had issued the day before a great declaration of Youth:

Youth Declaration



Today, the international order is at an inflection point that cannot be ignored and demands addressing. The challenges and crises posed by concerns around global health, destabilizing wars and conflicts, the changing climate, the refugee crisis, and the threat of nuclear weapons and proliferation prove that our world desperately needs competent leaders to prevent these and many other crises from reaching a tipping point. The next century may prove to be the most volatile our world has seen in generations and it is the inherent duty of our leaders to preserve and improve upon what we are fortunate enough to currently have. As today's youth, We, the youth—coming from diverse ethnic, religious, academic,

and professional backgrounds—attending Democracy Today NGO's 10th International Conference: Women's Shared Security in Our Modern World, we demand the following issues be addressed so as to preserve our collective future.

1. Strengthen the global architecture for peace

In a rapidly changing world, our old systems and structures, which have long promoted peace and prevented world-wide conflict, are eroding. Multilateralism is essential to address the real threats facing our world and to ensure global peace.

2. A new peace dividend—disarmament and development

The energy and resources which have long been spent on war and destruction must be redirected towards the creation of a vested interest in peace. International collaboration, not military force, will solve the challenges and threats facing humanity today.

3. Revitalised nuclear arms control and disarmament

A nuclear war cannot be won and therefore must never be fought. The extinction-level threat posed by nuclear war must unify the international community in pursuit of general disarmament.

4. New military technologies and outer space weapons

The fourth industrial revolution will bring about new technologies whose destructive potential has yet to be fully grasped. It is imperative for all states to unite and create structures to prevent such technologies from becoming tools used for unethical and illegal actions.

The crises and challenges, as well as opportunities confronting humanity today, must be addressed in multilateral formats that both respect the interest of every state while also demanding cooperation. This Yerevan Youth Declaration has laid clear our demands for a more peaceful and prosperous century. Please join us in demanding world leaders to act now.

Yerevan Declaration on “Women’s Shared Security in the Modern World”

Democracy Today NGO calls on global leaders to adhere to the Yerevan Declaration on “Women's Shared Security in the Modern World” and to make its 2023 mission to:

- Secure all peoples right to human security regardless of their gender, race, religion, and socio-economic standing.
- Recognize women's critical role in building safe societies and strengthen the international agenda for Women, Peace, and Security by ensuring 50% women's participation at all levels of international peace and security undertakings for a safer world.
- Build an inclusive, resilient, and peaceful society to provide security of all.
- Work on a trust-building mission between nations and peoples as fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence.
- Build a global common security by signing nuclear disarmament, limit conventional weapons, and reduce military budgets.
- Build global and regional cooperation, multilateralism, and a strict rule of law to tackle our modern world's most critical challenges as climate change, poverty, inequality, hunger, right to education and insecurity.
- Resolve territorial and political disputes with dialogue, and conflict prevention and confidence-building measures—NOT aggression and military force.
- Better regulate international law, and responsible governance of new military technologies including the realms of cyberspace, outer space and “artificial intelligence

Militarism is the elephant in the climate room

A subjective report about the International Peace Conference for Ukraine in Vienna by Heidi Meinzolt

There was the elephant on the stage when several hundred committed peace fighters and human rights defenders – among them at least half women and a notable presence from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom from Europe – met recently in Vienna. The goal was to illuminate ways to end the war in Ukraine from a civil society perspective. Norwegian League women had brought the elephant to visually demonstrate to all the devastating consequences for people and the environment – dangers that are so readily ignored in the current debate: Destruction of infrastructure, laying of mines, contamination of whole (agricultural) regions, massive CO₂ input into air, soil and water by military actions. Massive military exercises of the alliances increase the damage and destroy all previous climate efforts with already now transboundary dramatic effects. In addition, the global supply situation is extremely endangered by failing grain supplies for areas where climate change is already destroying livelihoods and producing famines with the consequence of new conflict hotspots.



Nevertheless, the killing continues, the military – also sexualized – violence produces immeasurable suffering, fears, all too justified anger at the brutal aggressor and war criminal. This massively affects the mutual understanding of those who work for peace, complicates the cooperation of civil society and hovers over all encounters of peace-moving anti-militarists. The loss of home and the forced flight became a brutal reality for many women and children, which can only be absorbed in a fragmentary way by „storytelling“.

However, the „Voices for Peace“ still exist, albeit rather quietly and discredited. To hear this voice, to ask critical questions and to strengthen solidarity is a mission that the Vienna Conference had also set itself in order to stand against the brutalization of social dialogue: the loss of human lives is checked off as collateral damage – whether they drown in the Mediterranean, die on the Balkan route, starve to death or are victims of war. The militarization of minds and hardening of hearts are felt far beyond the borders of Ukraine and neighbouring states and must be addressed.

War, in addition to the danger of climate collapse and human suffering, creates enormous economic damage by focusing on ever higher levels of destruction and the accumulation of weapons. Money, on the other hand, is lacking everywhere for health, climate protection, education, social measures to ensure the provision of basic necessities for a life in dignity. At the same time, arms giants make astronomical profits that are not skimmed by any excess profits tax. The neoliberal agenda for reconstruction and post-war is fully in planning at the donor conferences – practically excluding civil society – as it was after all wars in the last decades. New conflict potential and injustices are thus programmed.

WHERE ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

Where are actually recognizable diplomatic interventions, where are the processes that could initiate a stop to the killing, prepare for a ceasefire, plan for negotiations also about the withdrawal of the aggressor? The UN, the Pope, the OSCE, international think tanks, smart thinkers and experienced diplomats in all parts of the world have ideas – who is taking them up? For the civil society that met in Vienna, this is an absolute must! Unfortunately, the proposals and initiatives are largely lost.

Instead, we have to deal with a clearly perceptible paralysis of all political circles nationally, European, transatlantic, orchestrated by fatal interest haggling about spheres of influence, old and new enemy images and the focus on purely military self-defense. „Helplessness,“ as was already the official motto of the Munich Security Conference in 2022, combined with an explosive mixture of rejection of pacifism as a new realism, unilateral calls for a „victory peace“ against Russian imperialism as the supposed only way out of the catastrophe. The media mainstream orchestrates this helplessness and thus discredits, slanders and endangers existentially pacifists, activists of civil resistance especially from the post-Soviet space as well as conscientious objectors, human rights defenders, peace activists. It divides and increases militancy: Peace researchers develop and explain military strategies and speak of an „exceptional war“, which causes the change of times and makes armament necessary, cynically in the name of the redefinition of prevention. Germany is drawing up a „national security strategy“ that purports to secure the fortress of prosperity. Military alliances are booming with the recent NATO expansion in Northern Europe, right-wing political circles are contending as apostles of peace and jumping on the bandwagon.

PRE-DISCUSSION OF WOMEN'S VOICES FOR PEACE IN VIENNA

In Vienna, WILPF Austria had organized a dedicated pre-discussion of peace-moving women in the „Frauenhertz“. The meeting brought together League women from Germany (from the Munich group), Norway, Denmark, Belarus/Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Afghanistan, including the international League president from Cameroon together with friends from the OSCE/CSP group from Georgia, Kosovo, Serbia, Armenia and Ukraine and partners of the 1000 Peace Women worldwide. In addition to the undisputed condemnation of the Russian war of aggression and the emphasis on the Ukrainians' right to self-defense under international law, the central demand was that everything possible be done to work towards an immediate ceasefire, which would have to make negotiations possible. The consensus was clear: peace from a feminist perspective is based on a root cause analysis of war and violence and is a way to work for de-militarization, a process worth fighting for. At the center is the concept of human security, which brings together committed people locally, nationally and in an international context, and brings women to the negotiating table on an equal footing.

INSPIRATIONS FROM THE WOMEN'S MEETING

How difficult and controversial ceasefire negotiations and agreements are or can be, the representative from Armenia made clear again with the current experiences in the Karabakh conflict, and how important it is at the same time to co-determine the conditions for negotiations and to correct them through objections. How dangerous the proximity of the Ukraine war can be for neighboring regions and war-traumatized populations for re-traumatization, we learned from Georgia, where precisely for this reason young people are sustainably committed to their future. Serbian and Albanian women from Kosovo described how long-lasting tensions between groups can be and how important and purposeful civil society bridge-building can be on the ground. At the same time, however, everyone shared very enriching experiences of rapprochement processes, conversations with ombudspersons, letters to the international community, work based on the women's peace security agenda from local to regional and internationally networked.

We discussed the right to self-defense from both a legal, international law perspective that goes beyond the issue of weapons and military to empowerment, documentation of violence and war crimes, social support, solidarity measures, care. New feminist-pacifist motivations for becoming fit for national defense were also addressed.

Our Belarusian friend made everyone think when she said she understood the pain and despair from the context of war: „We are not perceived by everyone around us as people who consistently stand up for peace and against violence, who are helpless victims who beg for mercy from the aggressor who does not listen to them and continues to torment“. But she also stressed that those who advocate for peace are also too easily ridiculed and ridiculed by others. They have become the target of bullying and harassment, she says, because everyone thinks you are powerless. She ends with an appeal, „I believe it's time to show the strength of our nonviolent movement and our ability to save lives and overcome this crazy world of violence.“

PATHWAYS TO PEACE

So, after this pre-meeting, we were strengthened and sisterly motivated to walk the difficult path of „Pathways to Peace“ together. Teams were formed for the entire conference, which in working groups dedicated themselves to questions about experiences with ceasefire, de-militarization, negotiations, and in a second step discussed perspectives towards peace and presented them in the plenary.



The final declaration of the conference is a mosaic stone for a process, which we cannot and do not want to escape, especially from the more than 100 years of experience of the International Women's League on the cause of our feminist analysis of the causes of war and violence worldwide and our priority of prevention and „caring“ for the people.

„Peace is a gift to see the future“ emphasized a Ukrainian participant – a beautiful and at the same time sad sentence for coping with the present. It does not relieve anyone of the responsibility to be guided by the vision that peace is possible. We do not see ourselves as pacifists in a dead end, as an Austrian newspaper disparagingly wrote, but we stand on the shoulders of giants of the women's peace movement. On our agenda remains the unifying commitment against militarism, patriarchy and capitalism. I was glad to have been there.

Inspirationen für Wege zum Frieden

Heidi Meinzolt, Bern, 23.09.23

“Usual women in unusual times“ – über ver-rücktes Frauenleben im Konflikt!



Begegnungen mit Aktivistinnen aus Belarus, Ukraine und Kosovo in einer Reihe zu Abrüstung, Demilitarisierung und genuiner Sicherheit von „Peacewomen across the globe“ in Bern – im September 2023.

Gewalt und Krieg beschäftigen uns alle – so unterschiedlich wir sind, so nah und weit wir persönlich von einem Angriff auf unsere körperliche und seelische Integrität entfernt sind, wo und wie wir auch leben. Krieg geht immer unter die Haut – für die Einen in der direkten Konfrontation mit Kriegsverbrechen, Übergriffen, Trennung und Verlust, Not, Flucht und Exil. Aber auch dann, wenn waffengestützte Sicherheitsarchitektur (wieder) zur neuen Norm wird und pazifistische Haltungen und Überzeugungen diskreditiert werden („Verhandeln statt Schießen“-Pazifist*innen werden zu „gefallenen Engeln aus der Hölle“ – lt. Kanzler Scholz). Wenn friedensbewegte Aktivist*innen wegen ihrer Unterstützung von Wehrdienstverweigerern und Dissident*innen, oder weil sie insistieren von „Frieden“ zu sprechen, in reale Gefahr kommen, wie Frauen aus der Ukraine, Belarus, Georgien, dann werden eklatant Grundrechte verletzt um damit Stimmung zu machen.

Im offenen Austausch mit Frauen aus Belarus, Ukraine und Kosovo waren sich die Teilnehmerinnen des Symposiums uns einig, dass die medial gestützte Dominanz geostrategischer Feldanalysen der Politiker*innen und Think Tanks boomed patriarchale Machtpolitik (auch unter Bezug auf feministische Außenpolitik) untermauert und die allgemeine Orientierungs- und Ratlosigkeit angesichts der scheinbaren Unausweichlichkeit der Gewaltexzesse wachsen lässt. Solange die gesellschaftliche Stimmung kippt und Krieg von einer Mehrheit getragen wird, sind Waffenstillstand und friedliche Entwicklungen nicht absehbar, das Konzept von Frieden wird zur Legitimierung von Aufrüstungsentscheidungen instrumentalisiert, die Wehrebereitschaft verselbständigt sich – leider nichts Neues in Kriegszeiten.

Feministische Ansätze zu Konfliktregelungen, die die Menschen und ihre grundlegenden Bedürfnisse in den Mittelpunkt stellen, werden an den Rand gedrängt und der spezifische Bezug der Frauen-Friedens-Sicherheitsagenda und ihrer NAPs zu **Abrüstung** ausgehöhlt. Es ist mehrfach widerlegt, dass mehr Waffen im Umlauf die Sicherheit für die Menschen/die Zivilbevölkerung verstärken und zum Schutz vulnerabler Gruppen beitragen. Olga K. in der Veranstaltung: „Immer mehr Waffen werden geliefert, dennoch fühlen wir uns alle zunehmend unsicher!“

Wir erleben im Alltag, wie sich Geldströme und Investitionen ohne allzu große Gegenwehr dramatisch verschieben: Gelder fehlen überall für sozial- und gesundheitspolitische Aufgaben, für Bildung, menschenwürdige Asylpolitik, Kultur, Entwicklungspolitik und Klimaschutz. Währenddessen fahren Rüstungskonzerne und Überwachungstechnologiefirmen astronomische Profite ein. Das erschüttert die Grundfesten jeder Gesellschaft nach innen und zerstört Vertrauen in zukunftsorientierte Handlungsfähigkeit der Politiker*innen. Schlimmer, es spielt der extremen Rechten in die Hände, fördert „nationale Sicherheitsstrategien“ gegenüber Multilateralismus und schottet Außengrenzen ab, statt Flucht und Asyl unter menschenrechtlichen Gesichtspunkten neu zu verhandeln. Die Rückwirkung auf eine Brutalisierung und Gewaltbereitschaft der Gesellschaft als Ganzes, ist offensichtlich und brandgefährlich. Dazu nur ein Zitat: „sobald die Befindlichkeit, durch Migration bedroht zu werden, in die psychische Innenausstattung vordringt, lässt sich das Leid derer, die entlang der Migrationsrouten umkommen, leichter verdrängen oder verarbeiten“ (aus „Hinter Mauern“, Volker Heins und Frank Wolff, S.99ff).

Feministische Konfliktanalysen sind auf dem Boden jahrzehntelanger Erfahrungen gewachsen, aber müssen immer wieder aufs Neue auf ihre Realitätstauglichkeit überprüft werden. Dazu braucht es lebendige Begegnung – auch wenn das Sprechen und Zuhören manchmal weh tut und wenn Trauer, Angst, Wut angesichts von Minen, Bomben, sexualisierter Gewalt und unmenschlicher Fluchterfahrung leicht die Überhand bekommen. Wenn frau die eigene Unzulänglichkeit spürt, offen (und erfolgreich?) Widerstand zu leisten gegen Hass und Feindbilder, wenn sie der Macht von Fake News ebenso ausgesetzt ist wie physischen Angriffen als Zielscheibe von Kriegsverbrechern, hilft nur Solidarität gegen die Lähmung. Es braucht die kritische Wahrnehmung, wie sich im Konflikt die Schwelle der psychischen (oft) patriarchalen Unterdrückung verschiebt: Frauen, die (die ansonsten ganz normal empfundene) Verantwortung für das Wohl und Weh der Familie, der Freunde und Nachbarn, die Schule und das Essen für die Kinder, die Gesundheits- und soziale Versorgung der Umgebung, mit dem eigenen Überleben irgendwie zusammendenken und bringen. Dafür brauchen

sie Räume, Gehör, Zeit, Netzwerke. Nur gemeinsam lässt sich Provokation der banal als „Zeitenwende“ bezeichneten Kriegslogik und der damit verbundenen Alltagsmilitarisierung verarbeiten und allenfalls gemeinsam neue Wege hin zu friedlichem Zusammenleben zu entdecken

In diesen „ver-rückten“ Zeiten werden nur in der solidarischen kollektiven Anstrengung die Stimmen lauter für eine Gesellschaft, die sich kümmert und nicht umbringt.

„Storytelling is like Bodybuilding but better!“ – Räume für Geschichten öffnen!

Die **Ausgangsfragen** sind definiert: Was ist uns wichtig für ein menschenwürdiges Dasein, wie fühle ich mich sicherer, wie verkräfte ich mein Leiden, wie gehe ich mit der immer wieder in Frage gestellte Logik der präventiven Friedensarbeit konstruktiv um? Wohlwissend, dass Antworten, Wege und Lösungen die je nach Kontexten, Moment des Geschehens, Örtlichkeiten immer nur Annäherungen sein können, die der regelmäßigen kritischen Analyse unterzogen werden sollen.

Der **Weg** führt über die konsequente und kontinuierliche Bereitstellung (sicherer) Räume für Geschichten, die die Gegenwart erzählen, das Überleben beschreiben, die Chance bieten, (irgendwann einmal) die Vergangenheit aufzuarbeiten und das gesamte Paket für die Zukunft aufzubereiten. Gemeinsame Denk- und Schreiborte sind kein



Einige der Teilnehmerinnen: Margareta Kiener-Nellen, Nora Ahmetaj, Toni Mächtlinger, Olga Karatch, Annemarie Sancar, Olena Zinenko, Cecile Druet, Heidi Meinzolt, Blanca Maria Lagunez – nicht auf dem Bild Deborah Schibler, Gaby Vermot-Mangold ...

Kurzzeitprojekt; sie brauchen Vertrauen und schließen auch die Dokumentation ein – so wie das die Frauenbewegung seit Anbeginn tut. Nur in der offiziellen Geschichtsschreibung fehlt dieses Material weitgehend bzw. wird ignoriert, obwohl darin der Humus gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung liegt.

Die **Voraussetzung** für den Austausch erlebter Geschichten ist die Pflege und Stärkung (feministischer) Netzwerke – transgenerationell, grenzüberschreitend und international verknüpft. Das ist eine der wichtigsten Lehren aus den Balkankriegen und der erlebten Post-War Zeit dort. Die Nachkriegszeit erleben viele Frauen schmerzlich nicht als Friedensperiode, nur weil die Waffen schweigen, sondern als Spannungsfeld, das nach Brückenbauer*innen ruft. Der Austausch ist lebenswichtig, denn immer wieder stehen transitional justice und restorative Gerechtigkeit zur Disposition. Neoliberale Wirtschaftsinteressen, die den Aufbau prägen, sabotieren alternative Friedensprozesse. Eine eng verknüpft (starke) Zivilgesellschaft, insbesondere solidarisch agierenden Aktivistinnen und vernetzte Frauenorganisationen

sind nicht wegzudenken, wenn es um den Einfluss auf staatliche Institutionen, auf Justiz und Rechtsprechung und die gerechte Umsetzung von Gesetzen sowie um die Verteilung von öffentlichen Geldern geht.

Das **Ziel** der Geschichten und des Austausches ist die Stärkung eines gemeinsamen Grundgefühls für Gerechtigkeit und Gleichberechtigung, das im gesellschaftlichen Miteinander die drei Ps veranschaulichen: Protektion, Partizipation und Prävention – also die Grundelemente der Frauen-Frieden-Sicherheitsagenda. Die Geschichten nehmen auch die Forderungen nach institutionell begleiteter Strafverfolgung von Kriegsverbrechen und Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit auf, um den verhängnisvollen Kreis der individuellen und kollektiven Gewalt zu durchbrechen, um letztlich das (patriarchal-kapitalistische-militärische-technologieaffine) Mainstream-Narrativ zu verändern und zu durchbrechen durch den starken Bezug auf das Leben an sich und die „menschliche Sicherheit“.

„Gardening for the future!“ – Chancen nutzen zum alternativen Denken

Mitglieder der Internationalen Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit hatten sich bereits im und nach dem 1. Weltkrieg dem Ziel verschrieben „permanenten Frieden“ zu erreichen. Das bleibt ein Auftrag, der eine **präventiven Agenda** für genuine Friedensbildung ins Zentrum aller Überlegungen rückt. Große Schritte zur **radikalen Abrüstung und De-Militarisierung** und damit der Abschöpfung und Umwidmung der Profite aus der Waffenproduktion und dem

Waffenhandel, gehen aber nur gemeinsam mit kleinen Umgrabungen und Pflanzungen im Garten der Menschheit: „**Building islands for peace**“, nannte dies eine der Teilnehmerinnen: ein Mosaikstein für verantwortungsvolle Sorgearbeit.

Die Stärkung des individuellen und kollektiven Widerstands gegen jede Form der Kriegstreiberei und gewalttätiger Konfliktlösung schließt ausdrücklich auch die Unterstützung von **Dissident*innen und Verweiger*innen** ein und die Forderung, **Friedensstimmen nicht zu kriminalisieren**. „Steel the army from Lukaschenko!“ spitzt die belarussische Aktivistin Olga K. mit einem humorvollen Augenzwinkern ihre diesbezüglichen Aktivitäten zu.

Eine präventive Agenda definiert **Selbstverteidigung** (als berechtigte Forderung z.B. der Ukrainer*innen) nicht vor allem als eine militärische Dimension. Sie schließt die Förderung und Unterstützung zivilen Widerstands, das Training gewaltfreier Kommunikation und Konfliktlösung, Diplomatie und professioneller De-eskalation ebenso ein wie die Absage an binäre Freund-Feind-Schienen und das Reden von Sieg oder Niederlage.

Es gibt in der aktuelleren Geschichte unzählige **Beispiele der kleinen Schritte**, die tröstlich sind trotz z.T. geringer Reichweite: Albanerinnen und Serbinnen die im Nord-Kosovo Dinge des Alltagslebens und der Gesundheitsversorgung gemeinsam regeln, Zypriot*innen die Wasserversorgung über Demarkationslinien sicher stellen, Israelinnen und Palästinenserinnen die im Land und in der Diaspora im Dialog über die Besatzung bleiben, Russinnen und Ukrainerinnen, die sich dem Hass entgegenstellen und sich stark machen für eine gemeinsame Sprache und Verständnis von Wegen zum Frieden, Jugend aus dem Kaukasus, die aus der Geschichte für die Zukunft des friedlichen Zusammenlebens und autonomer Lebensentwürfe lernt, Menschen die die Tafel und Suppenküchen versorgen, weil sie ein Auge für die aktuelle Not und im Kopf ein anderes gerechteres Wirtschaftssystem haben u.v.m.

Zurzeit toben **über 50 Kriege in der Welt** und fordern ihre Opfer. **Menschengemachte Krisen und Naturkatastrophen** vergrößern dramatisch individuelle Not und Leid. Kreative Initiativen und alternative Herangehensweisen gibt es in der gesamten Welt – sie müssen ausgetauscht werden und ermutigen. Darüber müssen wir reden. Wie Sylvie Ndgomo, internationale WILPF Präsidentin aus Kamerun, zum weltweiten Antikriegstag am 21. September anregt: „We are marching for peace in Cameroun, marching for peace in Africa and for peace in the world, for a just and peaceful planet – grounded in the idea that there is no solution without peace, no just development without peace.“

Wir müssen „**europäische Werte**“ dekonstruieren, bzw. neu beleben und ihre Wieder-Verankerung im Kanon universeller Menschenrechte verlangen. „Europäische Werte sind eine Leerformel, die alles Mögliche und das jeweilige Gegenteil bedeuten kann ... sie kann Frieden ebenso rechtfertigen wie die Produktion von Unfrieden, die Öffnung von Grenzen wie ihre Schließung ... und führt zu einer Institutionalisierung von Misstrauen und zu einer alles andere als entspannten oder gar harmonischen Lebensform im Inneren der geschützten Räume...“ („Hinter Mauern“ S.124ff).

Wir können, wir müssen uns einmischen, denn lebendige Demokratie ist für Feministinnen kein fixes System im Parteienspektrum. Sie verlangt nach Parität, Erweiterung und neuen Räumen durch Partizipation, die das Mitdenken für andere, die Solidarität im Kopf und im Handeln einschließt.

Unser deutsches Alphabet beginnt mit A: Abwehr, Ausschluss, Abschottung, Aggression, Anders sein, Anti-... Das ist aber nicht das Ende, lass uns weiter deklinieren: Begegnung, Demut, Einigung, Freundlichkeit, Genuss, Halt, Inspiration, Jugend, Konsens, Liebe, Mut, Nähe, Ordnung, Podien, Qualität, Ruhe, Standfestigkeit, Treue, Unschuld, Vorurteilsfreiheit, Wärme, XY Ziele...Es liegt an Jedem/r das Alphabet für sich fortzuschreiben.

„Geh deinen Weg, aber sei dir bewusst über den Preis und die vielen Hindernisse auf dem Weg!“ (mutige/ermutigende Stimme aus Belarus)



Militarization and the Search for a Feminist Peace Policy

by Annemarie Sancar | PWAG - FriedensFrauen Weltweit | source: à propos (swisspeace.ch)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” was regarded as a particular success for women's organizations because it recognized the central role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and in peacebuilding for the first time. However, our work – in association with PWAG (PeaceWomen Across the Globe) – and other like-minded peace organizations on the implementation of Resolution 1325 shows that the number of women involved in peace negotiations is insufficient to be regarded as a measure of success. Furthermore, security is defined in too militaristic terms in the Resolution. The structural causes of gender-specific violence in wars and armed conflicts are not taken into account. Feminist peace policy, on the other hand, looks at the way patriarchal power relationships are structurally embedded. It is based on a broader understanding of security and addresses the causes of gender-specific violence.

Violence doesn't decrease but increases

When men are militarized and armed, it reinforces violent tendencies and toxic male characteristics that are apparent in everyday life but particularly noticeable in times of war. The increasing focus on security, supposedly “to protect women”, misses the point from a feminist point of view. Despite the requirement under Resolution 1325 for women to be protected from gender-specific violence, this kind of violence actually increases in times of war: as a weapon, in the home, and in men's language. These are facts that are barely considered during peace negotiations.

Even during armed conflicts and in the most adverse circumstances, women are concerned for their loved ones and for their community. However, their resilience and skills are not adequately considered in peace negotiations or post-conflict reconstruction. The voices of local women's organizations and networks are ignored when decisions are being made about ending the war and rebuilding. Consequently, any investment is made not in much-needed gender-appropriate infrastructure (health, housing, education) but in profit-oriented and male-dominated sectors such as road-building and industry.

How Resolution 1325 is undermined

Peace policy currently focuses above all on militarization and security as a state of affairs that can be technically and militarily upgraded and taxed. This is accompanied by economic development driven by profit, particularly investment in arms companies, raw materials processing, and surveillance technologies. So, from the point of view of a feminist understanding of peace, the human rights-based UN Resolution is being undermined – at the expense of women, whose work as carers forms the foundation of a secure society.

Security through consistent demilitarization

An effective feminist peace policy would not be based on the idea that security can be created by building up military strength, militarizing and arming the population. Comprehensive security for all, especially women, requires consistent demilitarization and investment in social infrastructure. This is the way to counteract the inequality that is created by structural patriarchal power relationships and to bring about social transformation. If Resolution 1325 – which guarantees that women can participate in all political decision-making processes – is to be consistently implemented, their demands, needs and suggestions must be included. For as long as this is not the case, comprehensive peace can never be achieved.

There is no peace without Care, Care is costly, most of the value generated though Care work does not appear in the official budgets, financial flows, or economic balances of national households.

But Care-works helps to survive crisis, but yes, it is expensive, investment in the care economy does not appear attractive within a capitalist logic since it does not allow accumulation. Investment in it is, however, a must if one looks at it from the viewpoint of citizens' needs and the obligation to respect human dignity, two essential factors of positive peace.

Care work is at the very essence of humanity, only with care-work life is possible, be it the life of our children, mothers, relatives, or neighbours, be it the life of pilots, managers, or bakers, even of soldiers (!). Peace is only possible, if care can be provided, this is especially critical in times of crisis or war.

Care work is one of the most fundamental forms of participation in society. Care-workers, which are predominantly women, keep the tissues of society together and promote peace daily. To reach a gender just form of peace, we therefore must acknowledge care-work as peacebuilding and transform the conditions under which it is performed. The better the conditions under which it is performed, the more likely it is that structures of violence can be overcome.

War must not blind out the fact that security policy is measured in terms of women's and human rights and not in terms of economic added value - and this also, indeed especially, applies in times of war and for formal peace negotiations. We need to think about security in a new way, to place it in a different framework.

Comprehensive security and sustainable peace mean access to good basic services and investment in social infrastructure - it is, in fact, key for any national economy, unfortunately still considered as being part of the female role in society, not to be considered as a public service though. -

Security means that the conditions under which care work is performed must be designed in such a way that all care providers, especially women, have sufficient resources and time at their disposal. It requires a willingness to understand the complexity of care economies, even in times of war, when this work is particularly difficult. It is crucial how the financial flows look like when it comes to reconstruction. There needs to be a political willingness to design the legal framework in such a way that the post-war period fully respects fundamental rights and ensures access to carer services for all.

It is equally important to challenge the militarized understanding of security with effective counter-discourses. For it is precisely in times of war and crisis that a collective fear arises that all too quickly leads to indignation. And this holds great political potential for increased legitimization of rearmament spending in the name of the security of „our nation,“ while the pressure to invest in social security diminishes.



Peace policy debate in Switzerland:

Richness of Topics, Enthusiasm for Discussion, but the Resonance?

Annemarie Sancar, WILPF Schweiz und WIDE+ | November 2023

The discussion on peace and security in Switzerland is characterised by a lack of clarity, which is certainly due to a lack of orientation. Many processes defined as „crises“ produce a cumulative insecurity (pandemic, migration and flight, climate change, new wars in supposedly safe areas, threatened historical narratives). These collective insecurities cause polarising and polarised discussions, which have their reflection in peace work.

Nonetheless, groups such as WILPF, Women for Peace, Frieda (formerly cfd) and PWAG are attempting to set new priorities in peace policy which, in addition to disarmament and demilitarisation, focus on the patriarchal structure of institutions with socially relevant tasks such as education, health or labour market organisation.

As part of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, feminist peace activists are analysing and commenting on the connections between care, gender-based discrimination and militarism. Criticism of Switzerland's neoliberal economic policy and the profit and profit-orientation of the private sector supported by the State - often at the expense of public services - is also a key issue. The feminist approach to peace policy is challenging and requires transnational and trans-disciplinary approaches, which means time, space and a lot of knowledge, which - from a market economy perspective - is not very profitable and therefore means a lot of „voluntary commitment“, but not „security“ in the sense of comprehensive social security. Feminist peace work also means a variety of methods:

- supporting and publicising civil society projects that are relevant to peace,
- listening to everyday stories and systematically including them in the analysis,
- economic analyses that provide information on how money flows affect militarisation, gender-specific violence or sustainability for civil society environments.

Meanwhile, approaches focus on economics and care work in the context of a peace-oriented degrowth strategy that places care for all at the centre of „profit“. This ambitious concept can only be implemented if these organisations work closely with other organisations that are active in areas such as commodity trade, financial markets, gender equality, peacebuilding, ecology, mobility and human rights. This results in alliances that discuss the following topics, among others:

- Peace policy is only possible with consistent disarmament and a gradual reorganisation of the arms industry into civilian industries.
- The budget for the army must be reduced and the production of dual-use technologies strictly regulated. This also applies to science, which produces knowledge that can potentially be used for violent conflicts and wars. Tax policy plays a central role in regulating and determining financial flows.
- Financial policy is crucial for the development of the care sector, including the health sector, services, education, social insurance and medical technology. The challenge is: peace can only be created by those who do not profit from war, peace is only of interest to those who care for the well-being of all people.
- Security policy needs a change of strategy away from military-generated „national security“, which also adds fuel to the fire of patriarchal social structures, towards collective, sustainable care security, a discussion that embraces the concept of the commons.

The impact of the war in Ukraine on women and men in the region

Olga Karatch Belarus / Lithuania, Our House./ Nash Dom

The war in Ukraine, along with the closely related processes of romanticizing war and the rapid growth of militarization in the region, has led to an increase in the perception of toxic/brutal masculinity (in essence, the identity of an abuser) as the only correct role model. As a result, male identity is experiencing a serious crisis that affects a large number of men.

The crisis of male identity and role models has also led to an imbalance in entire social segments, resulting in a sharp rise in patriarchal narratives and attitudes in our region, even in the most unexpected spheres, including, for example, independent Belarusian media.

Men's groups, who have been impacted by this process, are often not perceived as „real men“ and face the pressure of public opinion. These groups include:

1. Men who refuse to take up arms and join the military or who have served in the military and wish to leave for various reasons.
2. Former combatants who have been wounded and are unable to continue fighting, both Ukrainians and Belarusians serving in various units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They face challenges in social integration and readjustment to civilian life. They experience guilt, resentment, and disappointment for various reasons, and some of them suffer from mental health issues, all highly tabooed painful issues
3. Former male political prisoners from Belarus who left the country are facing pressure from the protest diaspora community demanding their participation in military actions in Ukraine, however, they are unwilling or afraid to do so.
4. LGBTQ+ individuals who, once again, do not conform to the traditional gendered role of being the protector of the family and „their women“.

This reinforcement of toxic masculinity as the only correct role model for men affects women also:

1. We are witnessing an increase in domestic violence in families where the man is perceived by society as a hero (for Ukraine, these are former combatants, for Belarus - political prisoners and combatants fighting on the side of Ukraine). Consequently, this problem is being silenced because families do not know what to do about it and how to deal with it. It is difficult for any woman to admit that the man who is acknowledged by society as a hero is abusing her at home due to post-traumatic stress disorder. Her hands are tied because she also lacks the experience to stop it. She fears social condemnation and victim-blaming.
2. Safe spaces for migrant women from Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine have practically disappeared. Radically inclined right-wing men are engaging in persistent acts of aggression and hostility towards migrant women. In the whole region, women leaders at grassroots level need strong support.
3. The widespread objectification of women and the systematic exclusion of women from decision-making processes is a pressing concern. The voices of feminists are either unheard, distorted, or manipulated for political purposes. Women, influenced by patriarchal militaristic propaganda, compel their men to go to war. Therefore, it is crucial to amplify the voices of women who work through a feminist approach and have a sensitivity towards gender issues.
4. We have lost focus on the most crucial level – grassroots, which is traditionally female-dominated, working with refugees, with children, marginalized groups or people in extreme poverty. Due to the lack of attention, it is slowly dying from burnout and chronic fatigue.
5. Women who have been traumatized by the war in Ukraine or terror in Belarus find themselves in a marginalized position with a lack of public attention to their social, economic, psychological, and other issues.
6. Talking about peace has become toxic. Women who talk about peace or participate in peacebuilding face new threats and risks like harassment, threats of physical violence or death.

The last trend is shrinking space for Belarusian female peacebuilders and human rights defenders in exile are happening due to their participation in conferences, such as the International Summit for Ukraine in Vienna, June 10-11, 2023) and actions devoted to e.g. pacifist actions, issues rejected by the ultra-right wing men in Lithuania and the Belarusian KGB.

7. The competencies and knowledge accumulated by the international peacebuilding movement are only used to a very limited, uncoordinated extent, even though there are numerous opportunities to use their skills by providing assistance to conscientious objectors, supporting traumatized people, or strengthening local communities – a gap to be filled by transnational feminist movements.

Recommendations:

- Activation of UN Resolution 1325 for an effective involvement of women in decision-making processes in peacebuilding activities.
- Support to men who are facing significant challenges due to the spread of patriarchal narratives, particularly conscientious objectors and deserters.
- Focus on conflict prevention and peaceful conflict resolution, including assistance in organizing trauma work for former combatants and their families.
- Focus on combating all forms of violence against women, whether it be wartime sexual violence or domestic violence within the families mainly of former political prisoners or combatants.
- Visibilize and stepping up trauma work focusing children and women.
- Empowerment of women peacebuilders who work in high-risk situations, even within EU countries, at the grassroots level with local communities.
- Strengthen the feminist approach and feminist narratives as an ideological counterbalance to the dominant militaristic patriarchal narratives and toxic/brutal masculinity.

«Das wäre das schlimmste Szenario»

Samstagsgespräch Die Friedensaktivistin Olga Karatch engagiert sich für belarussische Dienstverweigerer – und macht sich Sorgen, dass ihr Land in den Krieg gegen die Ukraine eintreten könnte.

Bernhard Ott

Frau Karatch, Sie erhalten kein Asyl in Litauen, weil Sie eine Gefahr für die nationale Sicherheit seien. Was heisst das?

«Gefahr für die nationale Sicherheit» ist in der litauischen Gesetzgebung nicht klar definiert. Ich bin Pazifistin und Friedensaktivistin. Ich unterstütze mit der Organisation Unser Haus seit 2014 belarussische Flüchtlinge in Litauen und belarussische Kriegsdienstverweigerer aus Gewissensgründen. Die Zahl der Verfahren gegen sie betrug letztes Jahr 400. Nach weiteren 5000 Verweigerern fahndet die belarussische Polizei.

Die Ablehnung des Asyls wurde damit begründet, dass Sie Kontakt mit russischen Geheimpolizeagenten in Russland gehabt hätten. Was ist davon zu halten?
Es kann sein, dass bei den dortigen Konferenzen auch Agenten zugegen waren. Ich hätte also Kontakt haben können. Der Hauptgrund für die Verdächtigungen ist aber eine Art nationale Panik, die in Litauen um sich greift.

Was für eine Panik?

Litauen hat 2,8 Millionen Einwohner und gegen 200'000 Flüchtlinge. 92'000 davon stammen aus der Ukraine, 58'000 aus Belarus und 20'000 aus Russland, die übrigen aus anderen Ländern. Im März 2022 starteten wir die Kampagne «Nein heisst nein» zugunsten der Dienstverweigerer aus Belarus.

Warum gelten belarussische Dienstverweigerer als Gefahr für die nationale Sicherheit in Litauen?

Sie werden wie die Menschenrechtsaktivisten auch als potenzielle Spione betrachtet. Aber es gibt keinen Fall eines Dienstverweigerers, der als Spion aufgefliegen ist. Natürlich gibt es welche, die für den belarussischen Geheimdienst arbeiten. Aber ihre Arbeit ist gegen uns Friedensaktivisten gerichtet und nicht gegen den litauischen Staat.

In belarussischen Medien werden Sie bedroht. Nehmen Sie das ernst?

Durchaus. Ende 2021 mussten ich und meine Familie siebzehn Tage lang von der litauischen Polizei an einem geheimen Ort versteckt werden, weil es Hinweise auf ein Attentat gab. Bei der Geburt meines Sohnes 2014 gab es Bestrebungen, mir die Kinder vormundschaftlich wegzunehmen, weil man glaubte, damit meine politischen Aktivitäten stoppen zu können.

Fühlen Sie sich heute sicher?

Nicht wirklich. Aber wir leben in einem kleinen Dorf auf dem Land mit zahlreichen älteren Frauen in der Nachbarschaft, die sofort merken würden, wenn jemand Fremdes in der Gegend wäre. Zudem gibt es Videokameras ums Haus, die von der Polizei installiert wurden.

Warum machen Sie weiter?

Wegen der Menschen. Viele Belarussen im Exil sind verzweifelt.



«Ich frage mich manchmal, was schlimmer ist: Krieg oder Regime-Terror?»: Olga Karatch. Foto: Raphael Moser

Wenn wir aufhören, verlieren sie die Hoffnung. Ich frage mich manchmal, was schlimmer ist: Krieg oder Regime-Terror? Das Leiden des ukrainischen Volkes ist beispiellos. Aber für die psychische Gesundheit könnte es unter Umständen besser sein, wenn der Bruder ein Held in der ukrainischen Armee ist als ein Denunziator. Der Arm des Geheimdienstes reicht bis in die Familien. Eine Kollegin von mir

Hilfe für Kriegsdienstverweigerer

Die einstige Lehrerin Olga Karatch hat vor zwanzig Jahren die Organisation Unser Haus zur Betreuung von Kriegsdienstverweigerern in Belarus gegründet. Seit 2014 operiert sie von Litauen aus. Nach der Ablehnung ihres Asylantrags erhielt Karatch nach internationalen Protesten eine einjährige Aufenthaltsgenehmigung in Litauen. Das Internationale Friedensbüro in Genf will Unser Haus für den Friedensnobelpreis 2024 nominieren. (bb)

musste mit ihren Kindern ins Exil, weil ihre Mutter sie beim Geheimdienst denunziert hatte. Eine andere Kollegin war im Gefängnis. Nach der Entlassung fand sie in ihrer Akte Briefe, in denen ihr Vater und ihr Bruder sie denunziert hatten.

Zurzeit soll es 1400 politische Gefangene geben in Belarus. Stimmt diese Zahl?

Man kann die Zahl schlecht bestimmen, weil Verwandte Angst haben, ihre Angehörigen als «politisch» zu bezeichnen. Zudem gibt es 13'000 Menschen, die des «Extremismus» verdächtigt werden. Jeden Tag werden 10 bis 15 Leute verhaftet.

In Gefängnissen werden Häftlinge markiert. Warum?

Die Zeichen markieren eine Hierarchie: Das höchste Ansehen haben Gefangene mit weissen Rechtecken auf der dunklen Gefangenenkleidung. Es sind «gewöhnliche Kriminelle», die wegen Korruption, Diebstahl oder Vergewaltigung sitzen. Kinder und Jugendliche haben grüne

Rechtecke. Rote Markierungen haben Fluchtgefährdete, Suizidgefährdete oder Unruhstifter. Politische Gefangene haben einen gelben Streifen auf der Häftlingskleidung. Sie sind zuunterst in der Gefängnishierarchie.

Die Opposition ist im Gefängnis oder im Exil. Was kann sie vom Ausland aus tun?

Wir brauchen eine gemeinsame Vision und eine gemeinsame Strategie. Ich möchte die einstige Präsidentschaftskandidatin Swetlana Tichanowskaja nicht kritisieren. Aber sie steht nicht für Veränderung. Sie ist alles andere als eine Feministin und hat nur männliche Berater, die meist aus nationalistischen Parteien stammen. Es gibt eine Stagnation im belarussischen Exil. Es bräuhete neue Ideen, weil uns sonst die Leute davonlaufen.

Ihr Streit mit Tichanowskaja muss Lukaschenko glücklich machen.

Das stimmt. Aber das Hauptproblem ist nicht unser Streit. Das Hauptproblem ist, dass es in Li-

tauen nur wenig Unterstützung für politische Flüchtlinge aus Belarus gibt. Die von mir gegründete Organisation Unser Haus wird sowohl von Lukaschenko-Regime als auch von Tichanowskaja angegriffen. Die Flüchtlinge kommen mit nichts in der Hand in Litauen an. Wenn sie ein Asylgesuch stellen, dürfen sie nicht arbeiten und werden oft bei illegaler Arbeit ausgenutzt. Unser Haus hat mehr als 120 Tonnen Essen und Hilfsmittel unter belarussischen und ukrainischen Flüchtlingen verteilt.

Sie halten es für möglich, dass Belarus auf der Seite Russlands in den Krieg gegen die Ukraine eingreift. Warum?

Dafür gibt es Indizien. Das Verteidigungsministerium hat soeben 20'000 Erkennungsmarken für Soldaten produzieren lassen, die im Fall des Todes die Identifizierung erleichtern. Die belarussische Armee hat 48'000 Soldaten. Lukaschenko kann nicht alle in die Ukraine schicken. Wenn es uns gelingt, 4000 bis 6000 Dienstverweigerern zu helfen, wäre das für uns ein grosser Erfolg.

«Politische Gefangene haben einen gelben Streifen auf der Häftlingskleidung.»

Polen hat Truppen an der Grenze zu Belarus zusammengezogen. Glauben Sie, Belarus wird eher die Ukraine als Polen angreifen?

Für Putin ist es sehr wichtig, dass Belarus ihn im Krieg gegen die Ukraine unterstützt. In Bezug auf Polen sehe ich es nicht so dramatisch. Lukaschenko macht Druck auf Polen, weil er mit Polen an einen Tisch sitzen möchte. Das würde ihm Legitimität verleihen, die er seit der Niederschlagung der Proteste 2020 verloren hat.

Was passiert, wenn Belarus in den Ukrainekrieg eintritt?

Das wäre das schlimmste Szenario. Aber die Armee ist nicht der Geheimdienst oder die Polizei. Die Armee ist nicht involviert in Repression und Folter. Viele Familien von Aktivistinnen haben Kontakte in die Armee bis in hohe Offizierskreise. Die nächsten Proteste in Belarus könnten von der Armee unterstützt werden.

Welche Vision haben Sie für die Zukunft von Belarus?

Belarus muss der EU beitreten. Alle Verträge zwischen Russland und Belarus müssen aufgelöst werden. Es gibt keine Möglichkeit für einen dritten Weg mehr. Ich bin sehr stolz, dass die Proteste im Land stets friedlich geblieben sind. Es war eine Art politische Scheidung zwischen dem belarussischen Volk und Lukaschenko. Was jetzt geschieht, kann man als häusliche Gewalt eines Ex-Mannes bezeichnen.

Sie sagen, Belarus müsse in die EU. Was halten Sie als Pazifistin

von einem möglichen Nato-Beltritt?

Das muss das belarussische Volk entscheiden. Es hängt auch davon ab, wie der Krieg ausgeht und was in Russland geschieht.

Was machen die Wagner-Truppen in Belarus?

Sie bilden zum Beispiel Kindersoldaten aus. Letztes Sommer gab es ein Ausbildungslager für 18'000 Kinder. Viele von ihnen stammen aus familiär und sozial belasteten Familien.

Was soll mit den Kindern geschehen?

Sie werden wohl vor allem für terroristische Provokationen ausgebildet, etwa an der ukrainischen Grenze. Kinder sind weniger auffällig als Erwachsene.

Davon liest man nichts im Westen. Warum?

Die Ausbildung von Kindersoldaten begann erst nach Beginn des Kriegs. Die Hauptaufmerksamkeit der Medien gilt seither der Ukraine. Zudem gibt es weniger Leute im Land, die davon berichten könnten. Aber das Regime macht auch kein Geheimnis daraus. Es ist sogar stolz darauf.

Sie haben in der Schweiz Parlamentsmitglieder getroffen. Worüber haben Sie gesprochen?

Die Organisation Friedensfrauen Weltweit hat mich eingeladen und das Treffen organisiert. Es ging darum, wie man den Eintritt von Belarus in den Ukrainekrieg verhindern könnte. Ein wichtiges Thema war auch die Kooperation im Kampf gegen die Gefängnisfirmen in Belarus, die für den Westen produzieren.

Geht es um Möbel?

Nicht nur. Ikea hat in belarussischen Gefängnissen produzieren lassen. Wir wissen nicht, ob es noch so ist. Über die Gefängnisfabriken ist wenig bekannt.

Die Schweiz pflegt nach wie vor Handelsbeziehungen mit Belarus. Sollen diese zurückgefahren werden?

Es ist wichtig, Sanktionen gegen Firmen für militärische Güter mitzutragen. Aber «normale» Handelsbeziehungen sollten weiterentwickelt werden.

Warum?

Weil sie eine Gelegenheit sind, Informationen über die Situation in Belarus zu erhalten. Zudem werden Arbeitsplätze ausserhalb der Staatswirtschaft geschaffen.

Zurzeit steht Juri Garawski vor einem Schweizer Gericht wegen Erschiessungen von Regimekritikern im Jahr 1999. Wie wichtig wäre ein Urteil?

Sehr wichtig. Anhand dieses Falles wird klar, dass die Repression nicht erst mit den Protesten von 2020 begonnen hat. Aber ich glaube nicht, dass Garawski an den Erschiessungen beteiligt war.

Er ist aber geständig.

Er braucht in der Schweiz medizinische Behandlung und muss operiert werden. Eine Rückkehr nach Belarus wäre das Schlimmste für ihn. Dort droht ihm die Todesstrafe.

Dankesrede von Olena Zinenko

anlässlich der Verleihung des Anita-Augspurg Preises von WILPF Deutschland in Verden, 14. 9. 2023

Ich bin heute hier, weil mein Frieden in Gefahr ist.

Russlands groß angelegter Krieg gegen die Ukraine dauert an. Menschen sterben an der Front, Zivilist*innen sterben in den Städten. Im August war ich in Charkiw. Wenn du am Morgen aufwachst, deinen Kaffee trinkst, hörst du Raketen nicht weit von deinem Gebäude einschlagen, die zivile Infrastruktur und private Häuser treffen. Nachts greifen Drohnen Schlafgebiete an ...

Der russische Krieg gegen die Ukraine dauert nicht erst anderthalb Jahre, sondern länger, seit 2014. Historisch gesehen noch viel länger – die Geschichte reicht 300 Jahre zurück bis ins 17. Jahrhundert.

Anfangs dachten wir, wir könnten warten, aber jetzt sehen wir, dass wir niemals warten können, denn das Leben vergeht. Und die Ukrainer*innen versuchen jetzt, unter schrecklichen Bedingungen Frieden aufzubauen. In Charkiw, Cherson, Kramatorsk, Winniza, Sumy, Lwiw und in der gesamten Ukraine ertönt alle zwei Stunden Luftalarm. Die Menschen versuchen zu leben, die Verwundeten zu behandeln und Bildung für Kinder sicherzustellen, die aufgrund der Bedrohung entweder in Luftschutzbunkern oder online lernen, wenn es Strom gibt.

Die Ukrainer*innen sehnen sich nach Frieden und sehen Frieden in ihrer Zukunft. Deshalb möchte ich über eine noch größere Bedrohung sprechen als den Beschuss der Zivilbevölkerung.

Das Konzept des Friedens ist in der heutigen Welt diskreditiert. Es gibt Kontexte, in denen der Begriff Frieden als etwas interpretiert wird, das aufgezwungen, geschenkt oder zerstört werden kann, wenn man sich nicht mit dem vorgeschlagenen Frieden einverstanden erklärt. Dies ist ein deklarativer Frieden, eine Tarnung für diejenigen, die tatsächlich Krieg wollen. Dieser „Kriegsfrieden“ ist mit Propaganda ausgerüstet, der man nur schwer widerstehen kann. Die Ukrainer*innen erleben das jeden Tag – diejenigen, die in den Städten sind und die Nachrichten lesen.

Aber was ist der wahre Frieden? Seit 2018 habe ich Frauen in der Ukraine nach Frieden und Sicherheit gefragt. Ich habe die Antworten gesammelt. Und ich teile einige davon hier mit Ihnen.

Frieden ist, wenn du keine Angst hast, etwas zu verlieren.

Frieden ist Respekt vor der Menschenwürde, Meinungsfreiheit und Willensfreiheit.

Frieden ist, wenn du nicht gezwungen wirst, dein Recht auf Leben zu beweisen.

Frieden – wenn du nicht gezwungen wirst, in der Mitte zu verhandeln ...

Wahrer Frieden ist, wenn du an Gerechtigkeit glauben kannst, weil das Gute als gut bezeichnet wird und das Böse als böse.

Wenn du die Möglichkeit hast, in deinem Zuhause zu leben, bei deinen Lieben zu sein, dich um deine Kinder zu kümmern, zu träumen und Pläne für die Zukunft zu schmieden.

Die Ukrainer:innen verteidigen den Frieden in diesem Sinne.

Dies ist die Art von Frieden, auf die jeder Mensch ein Recht hat.

Der Krieg, der derzeit in der Ukraine stattfindet – es ist nicht unser Traum, wir haben ihn nicht begonnen. Und wenn unser Frieden zerstört wird – was sollen wir tun? Wir versuchen, ihn zu schützen.

„Nein, ich lebe, ich werde für immer leben, weil ich in meinem Herzen etwas habe, das nicht stirbt“, sagte die ukrainische Dichterin Lesja Ukrajinka vor hundert Jahren.

Wir träumen nicht nur von Frieden, wir kämpfen dafür und bauen ihn jeden Tag auf.

Manchmal möchte ich lächeln und glücklich sein, und dann sagt man mir, dass ich nicht wie ein Opfer aussehe. Ich möchte kein Opfer sein, ich möchte meinen Frieden verteidigen, und ich möchte nicht, dass dieser Kampf hoffnungslos ist.

Die Welt unterstützt jetzt die Ukraine, und wir spüren diese Unterstützung.

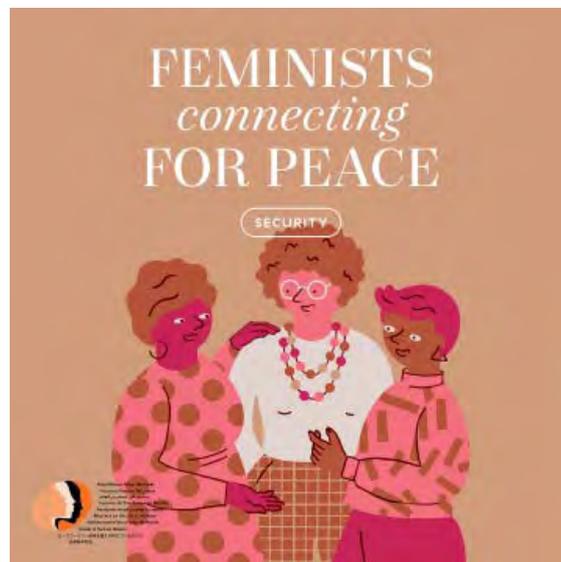
Der Krieg dauert an, und die Ukraine braucht immer noch Hilfe.

Die Welt hat die Chance, Frauen zuzuhören und ihnen eine Stimme zu geben, die wissen, was es bedeutet, in Kriegszeiten Frieden aufzubauen.

Ich möchte glauben, dass die Welt diese Chance nutzen wird, um den Frieden zu gewinnen.



Graphic: Oleksandr Zinenko



Olena Zinenko/Ukraine - How to walk the way from war to peace –

“ War broke into life immediately, so quickly that sometimes was needed to realize what had happened. And realisation came when the last train had left Donezk long time ago... “The risk of not meeting both basic needs (saving life, protection from domestic violence, primary medical care, water food and housing) and others (destruction of life projects, internal displacement) have increased. Additionally, we have witnessed the separation of families, the flight of women in other countries, mostly with children, and the discrimination of men as they were hindered from leaving the country. The risk of multiple discrimination against girls, elderly people and people with disabilities (impossibility of mobility, dependence on other family members, ect.) has also grown, so has discrimination of Black people in Ukraine.

We collected stories of the displacement of women fleeing war. Those who wanted to stay talked about their needs for medicine, personal hygiene products and food. Women who decided to flee the war with their children talked about a long journey under shelling, about their travel in overcrowded trains or cars, and about queues at the border. Some activists had to leave their homes and cities due to the threat of being captured and killed. So it was a journey from point A, war, to point B unknown....

We identified 5 key pillars which described the understanding of their security:

1. Involvement of women in socially relevant activities
2. Education about safety
3. Protection of women's rights
4. Combating violence and trauma
5. Political influence of women

Nora Ahmetaj, Kosovo

...“ Femicides and judicial inefficiency in Kosovo are heavily undermining women's equality and their trust in the legal system...the reduction of penalties reflects a lack of seriousness in addressing violence against women and sends the wrong message to potential offenders. Escalating violence and post-war integration challenges were evident for Kosovar women. Women were particularly affected by the war, suffering not only from sexual abuse but also from profound mental and physical trauma. ... Since the end of the war in 1999, instances from violence against women and femicides have steadily increased. The heightened prevalence of violence and the higher amount of awareness and confidence among women might explain the rise of gendered violence reports ... after the war, Kosovar women from civil society rapidly organised and established five women shelters throughout the country.

Many women face obstacles in exercising their rights – for example property rights – due to their family reluctance and discrimination. Limited access to education jeopardizes women's well-being and perpetuates their dependences on spouses and families ... in this patriarchal society, men often criticize women for „misusing“ the liberties they have obtained ... but the women of Kosovo are no longer remaining silent, they are actively rejecting violence, publicly denouncing injustices and confronting gender inequalities. Education, economic empowerment and justice remain key to the women's dignified well-being.“

The Women of Artsakh Today

By Gulnara Shahinian and Jackie Abramian



For over 30 years, Artsakh women have survived fierce territorial wars for the right to self-determination and to maintain their Christian and Armenian identities. With husbands and sons defending their territory amidst the first Artsakh war, a shift in traditional gender identity began, making women household heads, breadwinners, caretakers of families, and property defenders. With support from Armenia, women also have become peacebuilders, mediating conflicts within their villages and towns, forming NGOs, and developing peace-building and democratic rule of law programs across Artsakh.

On December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan began a blockade of Artsakh. Since then 2,000 pregnant women, 30,000 children, 20,000 elderly, and 9,000 disabled persons have been deprived of critical food and medical supplies. Artsakh women have spent their days searching for food to feed their families and safeguard their security and health. Their lives have consisted of standing for hours on breadlines (the only food available) which start forming at 4 a.m., with many returning home empty-handed to empty refrigerators and pantries. Today in Artsakh, miscarriages have tripled, pregnant women and children faint in the streets, and elderly people and others do not get the medicine and medical care they urgently need.

The blockade of the Lachin Corridor, the only roadway connecting Armenia and Artsakh, was not an isolated act: rather, it was yet another egregious action Azerbaijan and its President, Ilham Aliyev, have committed. Events now are fluid, with the Lachin Corridor "opened" on September 18, 2023, but totally under the control of the government of Azerbaijan which determines who and what (the people and goods) are able to enter Artsakh. Azerbaijan also alleged that the people of Artsakh have not suffered during the blockade and announced that 400 people are on their wanted list.

Azerbaijan's goal remains the same: to starve the population and accelerate the ethnic cleansing of the Christian Armenian community by forcing them to leave their ancestral homeland. And erasing ancient cultural heritage sites to deny the historic relevance and presence of Christian Armenians in the region.

Here are some stories of the women of Artsakh:

- The young single mother of a three-year-old boy and a six-year-old girl was forced to leave her sleeping children at home to walk five kilometers to a nearby town to find food. When the children woke up, they wandered into the streets and, not finding their mother, climbed into an abandoned car and fell asleep under the scorching heat. Their bodies were found the next day after a search of nearly 24 hours.
- Anush, a 30-year-old internally displaced person (IDP) from Shushi, attempted suicide after a miscarriage. She had suffered serious psychological trauma and stress since she lost her younger brother in the 2020 war and her father was severely injured in the first Artsakh war in the 1990s. She was in the fourth month of her first pregnancy when the blockade began, with her husband stranded on the other side. Anush attempted suicide on February 1, 2023, after she miscarried and lost her long-awaited firstborn due to the effects of the blockade: malnutrition and her increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Lusine, a 75-year-old woman with diabetes and a disability, lives alone in Stepanakert and cannot get the daily insulin she needs. In an interview with the Human Rights Ombudsman, she said: "I need to get insulin injected several times daily. I have to do it myself because I live alone and I have no family members by my side. My husband died in the first Artsakh war in 1993, while the family of my daughter currently lives in Armenia. Because of the blockade, she can't come to Artsakh and take care of me now. I cannot obtain my regular dosage because there is not enough insulin in Artsakh. There is also no food available at the stores suitable for my dietary needs. Besides, I am physically unable to queue for food anyway, given my disability. I am extremely weak and exhausted and feel like I am slowly fading away. I can't stand on my feet for a long time, and I want to sleep all the time. Sometimes I think I may die alone in my apartment, and nobody will ever notice."

- Mariam, a 23-year-old, and her 30-year-old husband Ruben are from Stepanakert– the blockade has separated them from their children. On December 12, 2022, Miriam and Ruben left their home for what they thought would be one day to go shopping in Armenia. The blockade has separated them from their 3-month-old son whom they had left with Mariam's mother. Miriam told the Human Rights Ombudsman Mariam that: "I couldn't even imagine in my worst nightmare that I will be separated from my baby for such a long time. Every time I call my mother and she shows me my son, I can't stop crying. I feel so guilty. My mother and son have been freezing due to rolling blackouts and disruption of the gas supply by Azerbaijan. My son doesn't like the darkness, so he starts to cry once the lights go out. My mother is ill and cannot queue for food for hours and also cannot search for the necessary infant formula. I will not forgive myself if something bad happens to my baby. I am having panic attacks and breakdowns all the time. My husband is nervous too and his hair is turning grey. We are deprived of our basic right to go home and hug our own baby. Why do we deserve so much hatred from our neighbors?"
- Larisa, a 45-year-old internally displaced person (IDP) from Hadrut lost her husband and son in the 2020 war. Ever since she has had to cope with a severe psychological disorder and had a mental breakdown during the blockade. Larisa's daughter noted the panic attack her mother had once she learned about the blockade and cried out, "Azerbaijanis will come and kill us all!" Her family members had to have her hospitalized given her hallucinations, deep depression, suicidal tendencies, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Larisa does not recognize her family members, she cries at night, talks to herself, and calls for her deceased son and husband, asking them to take her back home. Larisa gets triggered by the news about the blockade. While she is under the supervision of psychiatrists at the Stepanakert hospital, because the necessary medications are unavailable, doctors are forced to use less effective substitutes.
- Nina, a 63-year-old woman from Stepanakert, suffered a stroke upon learning that the blockade had stranded her beloved grandchildren, 12-year-old Aren and 15-year-old Arina, in Yerevan. They had been on a school trip to watch the Junior Eurovision Song Contest that took place on December 10-11, 2022. In an interview with the Human Rights Ombudsman, Nina said: "Every time I think of my grandchildren being deprived of parental care and their normal life, separated from their family for such a long time for the first time in their life, I start to cry. Not letting children reunite with their parents is one of the most cruel and inhumane things in this world. I can't handle the suffering of children. They are innocent creatures, and they have done nothing to Azerbaijan. The other day, I felt extremely bad, and I had a strange pain in my chest. I didn't even realize I had a stroke. My daughter called the ambulance, and when the doctors examined me, they confirmed the diagnosis. I am just devastated. Why should we suffer so much? Why do we deserve this?"
- Mariam, a 30-year-old mother of three children – including 18-month-old twins, is concerned about the present and future. Like other mothers, Mariam focuses on how to survive given that many families do not have anything and mothers are sharing the last bits of food they have. Like other mothers, she has participated in all the demonstrations that were organized to make their voices heard but fears that she, like other mothers, no longer can be their families' problem-solvers and that: "I do not see [a future here]. Artsakhi mothers are strong and expressive. Their deep connection with their homeland is historic and multi-generational. But I also do not see a future elsewhere. After the war [of 2020], we had the opportunity to move, but we stayed. I do not know if it is love for the motherland or something else, but I cannot imagine myself living anywhere else."

Gulnara Shahinian is the founder of the NGO Democracy Today in Armenia, an international independent expert on human rights, slavery, and human trafficking, and a former UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

Jackie Abramian serves on the board of Democracy Today, Armenia, and is a social enterprise advisor, committed to amplifying the work of women peacebuilders, change makers, and social entrepreneurs. She also is the founder of Global Cadence.

This letter arrived recently: Women live their lives with open hearts to embrace storms and make peace , with open hearts to love the world and make it safe home for al and wisdom to take pain and give love.

„I thought about setting my house on fire, but my heart didn't work – I washed the dishes, arranged them on the shelves, laid the table, as if I was expecting guests ...” Women cannot hate"

These are the words of an elderly woman, from rural community in Nagorno Kharabach shared during our meeting . In her age of 86, she was forced to leave her community and her home where her family lived for generations nourishing and prospering it, taking with her some small items she could carry and her memories .

Living for nine months under blockade with no food, no medicine, no heat and communications this old lady had to walk long distance to stand in line to get bread and expecting in vain that Russian peace keepers will allow the medicine to



be delivered as she relied on it daily.

She continued: "This year the harvest of (dates) is very good but it will be used by those who will come to live in my house."

I decided to write them a letter: "This is home of honest people and loving family, who coped with the sweat of their faces, to keep it clean and happy. I begged them to water the flowers and not to burn books as even they are not in the language they understand, books contain generational wisdom and not only of one nation." She concluded her letter "I wish you peace in my house and hope to return and see it one day."

Democracy Today NGO

“Democracy Today” is working to support democratic developments in Armenia by transforming attitudes about the importance of citizens’ participation in building the country, specifically women and youth. We strongly believe there cannot be democracy and peace unless women are allowed to take responsibility for their own lives and the lives of their country, specifically in the areas of building peace and preventing war. Meaningful participation of women can make the important difference between failure and success. We work across the border with allies thought the world to make peace and democracy a reality.

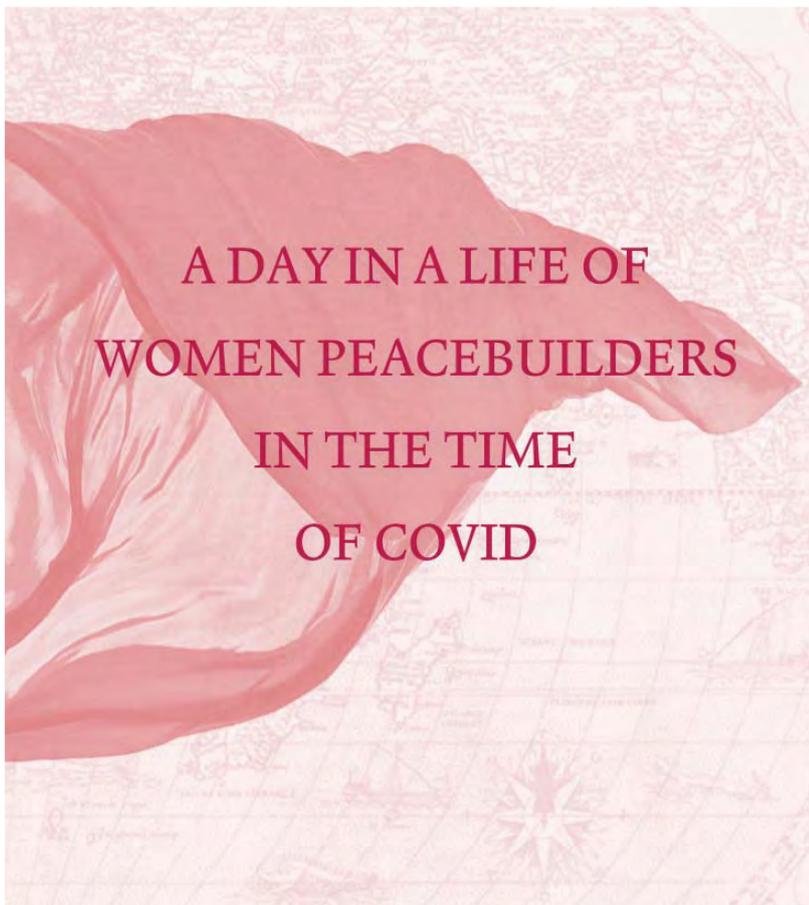
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This resource book is aimed to be a practical tool for all those state organizations, CSOs, international organizations that are involved in Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The volume comprises manual itself, the glossary of terminology and the translation of the UNSCR on WPS.

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Young women in the military sector

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Authors: Democracy Today NGO experts Gulnara Shahinyan, Liana Torosyan, Lusine Torosyan, Anna Ishkhanyan, "Equal right, equal responsibility"

Abstract:

the aim of the research is to understand the motivations of women to be inrolled in military education, military service, as well as to act as volunteer doctors on the frontline during the 44-day war. The study brings up the specific issues and challenges women are facing. A publication also presents the comprehensive package of recommendations which aimed at providing solution to address better integration of women in the military sector.

Introduction

Throughout different periods of Armenian history, Armenian women have demonstrated their courage and dedication to the homeland, be it by willingly participating in battles of self-defense, or the national liberation struggle. Celebrated examples of unbreakable will and spirit are present within such historical women as Mother Sose and Aguline Khanchyan-Tatulyan, among others.

Women also strongly invested in both the first and second Artsakh Wars: some as soldiers, some as medical workers, and some who fought on the front lines and at the rear to protect lives and ensure a peaceful future. Women fought side by side with their husbands, brothers and sons and the loved ones to defend their right to live in their own country. In addition to being the mothers and wives of families, they proved that, in dire situations, they strongly stand for peace, freedom and protection of their own country if necessary, overshadowing the view that they are weak. In recent years, women have demonstrated exceptional interest and desire to be involved in the defense sector. "Equal Rights, Equal Responsibilities" was carried out in order to understand women's motivations, the experiences they gained, the challenges they faced within the defense sector and formulate recommendations based on these results.

This study was conducted in 2022 with the aim of studying what motivated women to serve in the armed forces (AF) and evaluate how prepared the system is to accept women. This research also seeks to understand the challenges women face in the army, how these challenges are addressed, and the attitudes of their families, communities, and fellow army colleagues towards women's involvement in the army.

Analyses of the legal status of army women in the Republic of Armenia (RA) legislation, international law, and international best practices were also studied and are presented herein. Women feel equally responsible for the defense of the state, and it is this sense of equality that helps them to continue serving the state with confidence and dedication; they serve as a model for the other women. As a result, societal attitudes towards women's involvement in the armed forces pass through a process of a gradual change.

Unlike, for example, in Sweden and Norway, where women and men both undergo mandatory military service, in the Republic of Armenia, women's military service is on a voluntary, contractual basis. This circumstance makes their approach even more unique.

It is impressive and encouraging to see that women are willing to take responsibility for defending the state. At the same time, men's appreciation of women's roles in the armed forces is also important to take into consideration. While opening the sphere of defense to women's participation, the Ministry of Defense of Armenia must take important steps to address the special complex sensitivities on women in army and build policies centered at the protection of women's rights. While many important steps have been already taken, there is still a long way to create gender sensitive and protected for women's environment in the Armed Forces in Armenia. The research looks into the situation in the field and attempts to present the recommendations for the further improvement.

We sincerely hope that the constructive spirit of the recommendations presented within this research will contribute to the strengthened protection of women in the defense system.

Democracy Today NGO would like to give a special thanks to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia for their assistance in conducting interviews with women in the armed forces. This cooperation proves that the state is ready to take measures to improve the conditions created for women in the armed forces.

Aspects of Socio-political Challenges Experienced by Internally Displaced Persons – IDPs in Georgia

Eliko Bendeliani

Introduction

As a result of unresolved conflicts, Georgia faces many challenges, and the cost of these conflicts is quite high. However, it affects in different ways different groups of citizens of the country, and in particular affects strongly those who have been forcibly displaced, had to change their place of residence and environment, and continue their lives in the new reality.

Over the years, the IDP community has had to overcome many difficulties and obstacles, and had to struggle for self-preservation. Today, IDPs are better integrated and more self-sufficient, however, they still encounter specific needs that require different approaches. Studies show that IDPs are still perceived by many in the society as a group of people constantly expecting to receive aid, rather than true socio-political actors.

It is noteworthy that intellectual and civic resources of the IDPs as a community group remain largely unused, which is clearly demonstrated by the fact that they are practically unrepresented in political life; moreover, they do not participate in policy-making even in the area of peaceful settlement of conflicts, and this certainly strengthens among them the feelings of exclusion and marginalization.

The present text aims to analyze the life conditions of IDPs, identify the main challenges facing them, discuss their socio-political activity and their participation in the peacebuilding process.

Current reality

Forced displacement is becoming an increasingly worrying global challenge. According to 2018 data, the number of IDPs displaced by armed conflicts, violence, human rights violations and natural disasters has exceeded a record 41.3 million. Unlike refugees, there is no international humanitarian institution for IDPs. Therefore, the protection and care of IDPs is mainly the responsibility of the governments of their countries of residence.

According to the data of 2020, a total of 90,614 IDP families are registered in Georgia, and 286,811 IDPs in total. Most of them (90%) were forcibly displaced from Abkhazia and South Ossetia / Tskhinvali region as a result of the armed conflicts of the 1990s, while some (10%) were displaced as a consequence of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. IDPs today make up more than 7% of the population of Georgia, which is an unprecedentedly high per capita rate at global scale.

The Georgian state asserts that internal displacement will be considered ended only when the voluntary return of IDPs takes place, or if they are given an opportunity to do so. Until then, all people who have been forced to leave their homes as well as their descendants have the right to receive refugee status and to participate in state-run IDP programs.

Statistical data reveal that the number of IDPs in Georgia is growing from year to year. This happens due to the fact that according to the Law of Georgia on Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories of Georgia, IDP status is granted to children of IDP parents, including those who have only one IDP parent. For comparison, if we look at the data from the last 5 years, at the end of 2015 there were about 268,000 registered IDPs in the country, while according to 2020 data, the number of registered IDPs is now 286,811, i.e. in five years the number of IDPs has increased by about 18,811 persons.

When discussing the issue, one should keep in mind that on the one hand, it is important that the descendants of IDPs are the legal heirs of their parents and have the right to return to their homes; On the other hand, an increase in the number of IDPs implies also an increase in the number of beneficiaries of IDP benefits, long-term accommodation, and other program expenditures. Whether the new generation of IDPs and their families should receive a monthly IDP allowance and housing from the state, and what specific mechanisms should the state develop to regulate this process, is often the subject of debate. However, there are no answers to these questions as yet.

Until now, the issue of registration of the real estate, located in the conflict regions, in the public registry remains a problem, due to which the IDPs are unable to confirm the ownership of the real estate and transfer it by inheritance.

Socio-economic situation of IDPs. The IDP population in Georgia still faces many social and economic problems and challenges, while the authorities do not have a comprehensive policy tailored to the needs of IDPs. Most of the IDPs are socially vulnerable and live in extreme poverty. As various studies have demonstrated, despite many efforts to change that, IDPs are still the most vulnerable category of the Georgian population. The average monthly income of IDP families is twice as low as that of the host population, with the unemployment rate among IDPs about three times higher than among non-IDPs. In addition, a large proportion of IDPs do not have access to any land and financial resources, resulting in fewer opportunities for self-employment or entrepreneurial activities. In its turn, the lack of property ownership restricts access to banking and other financial resources as well.

The society perceives the IDPs as a group permanently expecting to be provided by humanitarian aid, which further contributes to their marginalization. This is aggravated by the fact that to date, various agencies distribute basic food items to IDPs in the run-up to the elections or before holidays, which is often found by IDPs to be somewhat offensive. An example of this happened in April 2020, just before Easter, in the town of Zugdidi where an IDP woman demonstratively threw food products to the ground in front of media cameras. Although this fact has caused mixed reactions within the community, still the main thing has remained unnoticed - IDPs do not want to be constantly on the lookout for humanitarian aid; they need tailored assistance that will create new opportunities and help them finally escape extreme hardship.

IDP Assistance Tailored for Needs: One of the issues that has become the subject of active discussion in recent years is the transition from status-based to needs-based assistance. According to the Law on Internally Displaced Persons, all internally displaced persons – i.e. all persons with the official IDP status - are entitled to a social allowance, the so-called IDP Allowance. According to the amendments to the law in 2014, all IDPs whose monthly income does not exceed 1250 GEL receive these benefits. In the first years the allowance was equal to 7 GEL and it was the same size as the old-age pension at that time; in the following years the amount of the allowance has increased several times, and since 2013 the IDP allowance is 45 GEL. The IDP allowance remains the only source of livelihood for some IDPs. In addition, the existence of a monthly allowance for IDPs brings a sense of stability, which, both materially and psychologically, carries certain significance. However, the value of the allowance does not meet the needs of some IDPs, which is why it is considered important to switch to need-tailored assistance.

The state spends about 121,000,000 GEL per year on IDP allowances. Added to this is the amount that socially vulnerable IDPs receive every month. In total, the amount spent on the allowance is much higher than the amount allocated for IDPs to solve their housing and other problems.

In 2017, the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and IDPs of Georgia published a "Preparatory Document for the Reform of the IDP Allowance". The document outlined five possible options for IDP allowance reform. All five alternatives proposed by the Ministry implied the termination of allowances for certain categories of IDPs, which, in the current social conditions, would be unfortunate for many of them. There emerged a risk that the reform would aggravate the social situation of the IDPs living in already quite dire social conditions. This was especially so against the background that studies have shown that the only family income for some of the IDPs is this 45 GEL allowance, which is mainly to be used for the purchase of medicines and paying utility bills.

Thanks to NGOs and civil society activists, the implementation of the reform has been delayed for a while, although it is still on the agenda. According to the 2019-2020 Action Plan, a needs-tailored assistance model for IDPs should have been developed by the end of 2020. However, it is still unknown at this stage what strategy the state will choose, therefore IDPs have fears that the reform will further aggravate their already difficult social condition.

Long-term accommodation of IDPs

Lack of adequate housing remains a major problem for the majority of IDPs. Consequently, one of the main challenges for the state is to provide them with long-term accommodation.

The old and new waves of IDPs have had different provisions in terms of accommodation. With the support of the international community the resettlement of most of the new wave IDPs was rapidly organized through by building settlements with cottage-type housing. In contrast, back in the 1990s the resettlement of IDPs was disorganized and largely self-directed. The IDPs took refuge by occupying empty buildings, hotels, sanatoria, schools and other public and private property, while some settled in the private sector with their relatives, or rented space. Thus, the current shares of IDPs provided with long-term accommodation is indeed different for old and new waves of IDPs.

In the early years of the displacement, the government considered the return of IDPs to be the only way for them to settle long-term. Only in 2007 did the government, with the support of international organizations and the broad involvement of the IDP community, adopt a state strategy on IDPs.

The strategy has two stated goals: 1. To create conditions for the dignified and safe return of IDPs; 2. To support the creation of dignified living conditions of the IDP population and to promote their inclusion / integration in the society.

Adoption of the strategy was an important step forward. However, in practice, the main focus and effort was on accommodation, while in other areas – there was less action by far. Consequently, no tangible results could be achieved.

Significant steps have been taken since 2014 to provide IDPs with long-term housing. The amount of funds allocated by the government for long-term resettlement of IDP families is increasing from year to year. In the 2020 budget, 67 million GEL has been allocated for this purpose. Large-scale constructions were carried out by the state in Tbilisi and in the provinces, while dozens of buildings in the condition of dangerous disrepair have been closed down. With financial support from the German government, the Danish Refugee Council has launched a program of building houses for IDPs who own land plots. However, despite the seemingly large-scale resettlement process, still a rather large proportion of IDPs (53%) are awaiting for resettlement, having to live in harsh conditions, in some cases in a life-threatening environment. At this rate, when the state only manages to accommodate ca. 2,000 families a year, it will take more than 20 years to complete the long-term resettlement of IDPs, especially as the number of IDP families increase through natural processes, as was noted above.

Inadequate living conditions have become particularly dangerous in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as IDP households in many facilities have shared bathrooms that do not meet basic hygiene standards. At the same time, as the living quarters are often not well furnished or are in poor state, many IDPs do not have appropriate environment to exercise their right to health and decent education.

It should also be noted that, despite the resettlement criteria developed by the Inter-agency Commission in 2013, which regulate the long-term resettlement, IDPs consider the resettlement process to be insufficiently transparent and experience a constant feeling of injustice.

However, at the same time the existing resettlement system does not give IDPs any incentive to improve their socio-economic and living conditions. IDPs who are awaiting resettlement fear that if they improve their social condition they may lose their entitlement to some social benefits or fail to fit into the resettlement program criteria. Hence, they try not to lose their socially vulnerable status and thus to not extend their waiting time.

Government initiatives aimed at resettlement of IDPs are often planned without proper consideration of accompanying economic and integration opportunities. As a result, IDPs remain dependent on social assistance even after resettlement, and the new IDP settlements tend to turn into new ghettos.

Socio-political activity of IDPs

Although certain progress has been made in addressing IDP resettlement needs, IDPs as a community group are still not fully integrated into the social and political life of the country. Achieving full integration of IDPs in the society remains a serious challenge.

Unfortunately, there do not exist individualized approaches based on the need for promoting IDP integration. It is difficult to obtain information on the state of inclusion of IDPs, as there are no statistical data available on the number of IDPs enrolled in higher education, including the share of IDPs in educational exchange programs, or the numbers of IDPs involved in various social and economic projects. The needs of IDPs are not reflected in the local self-government budgets either.

Even although IDPs still face a number of challenges, both in terms of integration and as related to socio-economic issues, the question of IDPs has lost its public relevance over the years, IDPs' needs and their participation in public life are not a significant priority in the current political discourse. Issues related to IDPs are still kept somewhat relevant only by the efforts of non-governmental organizations.

One of the indicators of the lack of urgency of the IDP question became the abolition of the ministry focusing on their issues that happened despite the persistence of many problems related to internally displaced persons. When the „Small Government Concept“ was initiated in 2018, the Ministry of IDPs was included in the list of ministries to be abolished and thus merged with the already functionally most overloaded Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs. The regional representations of the Ministry of IDPs were also nixed. Shortly after the implementation of the reform was completed, it became clear that in the current reality the existence of a separate structural unit was important, which is why in 2019, on the basis of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, the LEPL Agency for Refugees, Eco-Migrants and Livelihoods was created, and the refurbished regional offices have also resumed work. The abolition of the ministry took place without any consultation with the IDPs and provoked a range of different reactions among the IDP community. With the abolition of the ministry, the

IDPs lost their representation within the government, which would voice the needs of the IDPs and bring their concerns to the decision-makers. This was well illustrated at the presentation of the pandemic anti-crisis plan where IDPs were not represented and any mention of their needs was totally absent. Although information was later spread about the allocation of relevant funds to IDPs, this initiative never got implemented. IDPs have a feeling that the question of IDPs has been forgotten, the main focus remains focused on accommodation, while on the other hand IDPs, their needs, or any required resources are not any more visible.

IDPs are socially quite an active group. IDP CSOs are actively working on mobilizing the community, and as well coordinating their work with government agencies. Over the years, these organizations and IDP activists have gained unique experience and continue to make significant contribution to the development of the IDP community. However, this activity has not been expanded to cover the realm of politics. IDPs are not properly represented in any elected bodies of local self-governments, or legislatures.

When talking about the IDP participation, it is important to take into account the following circumstances: the first refers to the participation of IDPs in the political process through special structures associated with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are considered to be entities that serve the interests of IDPs. The attitude of IDPs towards these structures is quite uneven. On the one hand, these structures carry for the IDPs some symbolic significance, and on the other hand, the existence of these governmental structures in current form is unacceptable to some IDPs that want to have it reorganized.

As the degree of integration of IDPs gradually increases, the possibility of representation in central and local government bodies becomes more realistic. Significant steps have been taken in recent years towards IDP involvement and cooperation at the local level. Nevertheless, to date, IDPs remain under-represented in elected bodies. According to the IDPs, this is due to the fact that when electing representatives for local self-government or in the first-past-the-post mode of voting, the local population would not vote to support IDPs but will give preference to locals.

At the same time, being an IDP is associated with certain stigma, which is why relatively successful IDPs do not want to associate themselves with the IDP community, and therefore do not see themselves as pursuing the interests of IDPs in the political arena.

Participation of IDPs in the peace process

The importance of IDPs' participation in conflict resolution is, on the one hand, seen as an axiom as everyone would agree that a peaceful solution to conflicts is impossible without their participation; however, on the other hand, IDPs' involvement in these processes is rather limited and they do not influence the discourse on peaceful conflict resolution.

The right of return of IDPs is a permanent part of Georgia's official rhetoric and foreign policy. This issue comes to the fore especially when the recurrent UN Resolutions on the Status of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali Region / South Ossetia, Georgia, are once again adopted, and when we celebrate still another symbolic victory due to the simple fact that more countries supported UN General Assembly resolution this time than the last year, this interpreted as strengthening of the Georgia's position. The resolution affirms the right of IDPs, regardless of their ethnicity, to return to their homes with dignity and safety; It also highlights the need to respect and protect their property rights. The UN General Assembly has been adopting this resolution regularly since 2008. In the first years, this resolution created a spark of hope for the IDPs, however, over the year, this hope has faded and become just a purely symbolic token.

IDPs were often portrayed as a uncooperative group that rejected all solutions other than return. They are not perceived as a valuable peace resource, even though IDPs have a direct interest and need for a peaceful resolution of conflicts. In addition, the IDPs have experience of coexistence with Abkhazians and Ossetians, they still maintain social ties with people living on the other side of dividing lines, and the IDP community keep the living memory of Georgians, Abkhazians and Ossetians both living together peacefully and being in conflict with one another. They understand well the sensitivity of the issue. Observations have showed that in places where IDPs live, the awareness among the local population about the conflicts is much higher, and this is especially well seen when working with young people.

Although some members of the IDP community participate systematically in various peace formats, the broad involvement of IDPs in the conflict resolution process is not ensured. The fact that IDPs are not sufficiently involved in the peace process is due to several factors: on the one hand, the involvement of IDPs in dialogue formats creates some discomfort among the other side participants; on the other hand, there is also a fear that including IDPs may endanger the process.

Fully-fledged participation of IDPs in the reconciliation policy development process is not ensured either. IDPs claim that, unlike the work on the IDP strategy, which was developed with their broad involvement, the participation of IDPs in planning peace policies was not made certain. IDPs' awareness and involvement regarding the current formats is

also low, including participation in the work within two official formats, the Geneva International Discussion (GID) and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM). However, it should be noted that the Prime Minister of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazial and the head of the interim administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region participate in both of these formats as representatives of IDPs. Still, they do not consult with the IDP community, which makes IDPs feel that their interests and opinions are not adequately represented in these formats.

It is important to note that within the framework of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and with the support of the UN Women, meetings are held periodically between participants in the Geneva talks, women affected by the conflict, and representatives of the civil society, which to some extent fills the existing vacuum.

Afterword

The protracted conflicts in Georgia are affecting the IDPs the hardest, in the form of various social and economic problems and challenges. That is why IDPs are most interested in resolving conflicts. In addition, IDPs are an important peace resource that is not properly used.

Over the years, the IDP community has become a diverse group with a range of specific opportunities and needs. IDPs are today one of the most mobilized social cluster of the Georgian society.

Although IDPs are today a pipation group fairly well integrated in the local community, they have little opportunity to influence politics. Including the challenges facing the IDPs themselves, as well as to influence the conflict resolution process.

In order for IDPs to get stronger as a community and a civic network, while their resources and participation in the social and political process of the country may be brought to better use, especially with regards to the peace-building process, the paper outlines below the following recommendations:

- It is important that there exists a comprehensive and coherent policy towards IDPs;
- The government should ensure that detailed regular study is conducted of the needs and capabilities of the IDP population that will make it possible to effectively switch to IDP assistance tailored to needs;
- For the long-term resettlement of IDPs to be effective, the resettlement program must be supported and accompanied by social protection mechanisms - access to livelihoods, quality health care and education;
- It is important to speed up the resettlement process and, at the same time, to develop a clear time plan so that each IDP is able to know when his or her accommodation will
- It is important to increase the role of local self-governments in relation to the IDPs, as well as active participation of IDPs in the process of solving the challenges facing them;
- It is important to ensure the adequate participation of IDPs in peace and trust-building processes, both in informal and oficial formats. In order to use the IDP resources effectively, it is necessary to intensify the work towards their wider involvement. Systematic consultations with the IDP community should be held to ensure that IDP issues are the essential part of the dialogue and of negotiations agenda.

The Georgian-Ossetian Conflict

Arina Tavakarashvili, associate professor, 2019. Excerpt of the collection "Through the eyes of women", published by IDP Women Association "Consent", member of the Working Group.

The Georgian-Ossetian conflict, which has been going on for the past 30 years, is one of the main problems of modern Georgia. The conflict began in Tskhinvali in the form of a civil protest against the independence of Georgia and manifested itself in various forms after its announcement. Although this phenomenon is called the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, the conflict developed only in the territory of the former South Ossetian Autonomous Region and, fortunately, did not cover the whole of Georgia. However, several incidents occurred in other places of Georgia, but were soon stopped and did not spread further. Even today, Georgians and Ossetians live in Georgia in a calm atmosphere and there is no tension.

Peaceful and civilian coexistence is especially noticeable in the villages adjacent to the so-called demarcation line of the occupied territories, where there are many mixed families. Their relationships and numerous studies have proven that they live in a usual environment.

This does not mean that people living in these villages have no problems, and the war in Russia did not affect their lives. The rural population is still coping with the consequences of the war. For them, stable peaceful conditions and economic development are very important, which should be reflected in an improved situation for them and for their children. That is why the activeness of the state in the international arena is very important, along with the promotion and implementation of social projects by the authorities and systematic intervention of international organizations to resolve the conflict. Discussion of this issue rarely takes place in the global context. Nevertheless since 2008, on the basis of a bilateral agreement of the governments (between governments of Georgia and Russia), the meetings related to this problem are being held in Geneva Format, even though they are not very stable, with not always consistent results.

Because of its less important geopolitical location, the above-mentioned conflict was not considered as significant and, accordingly, the international community and international organizations have not thought much about the preventive measures, therefore, the strategic vision for resolving the conflict has never been developed in the global context.

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 has revealed the seriousness of the conflict and shown the reality and main goal of the conflict, which is to seize the above territories by war, occupy the silk road and take away Georgias economic resources by war, which has led to the economic weakening of Georgia. Thus, along with the other challenges, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict and the issue of the return of the territories lost to war, still remain as serious problems for Georgia.

The severity of the war fell on the shoulders of the people living there and sowed a sense of insecurity, which is compounded by frequent cases of kidnappings of people wanting to cultivate the land. It sows fear and causes migration of mostly young people.

Therefore, from the point of view of preserving Georgian statehood and afterwards strengthening the country, it is important to study the conflict in the long term, plan a strategic path to restore the trust lost to war between Georgians and Ossetians, and restore the territorial integrity.

The main problem lies in the fact that, until now, the causes of the conflict, the surrounding situation, the stages of conflict development and often inadequate actions regarding artificially inspired processes have not been studied deeply and with historical details. However, studies that reflect only the sequence of historical processes do exist.

The current situation requires quick and prompt action in terms of solving the social problems. Long-term projects and programs are needed that will increase the sustainability of the life of young people in the villages and restore the vitality of these places during all four seasons of the year and not only during the summer and New Year.

We had meetings in Gugutiantkari, Zardiaantkari, Knolevi, Ditsi and Kharapila. These villages are united by the security problem and the fear of the abduction of civilians, and there are also strong fears that the Russian army may once again cross the so-called occupied territory and invade Georgia. Despite the fact that in these villages no damage was caused by the war, the social problems are almost identical. Namely, in the villages there are no shops, where you can buy basic things and bread (in Ditsi there is a shop and the booths), there is no pharmacy or hospital. The first aid medications are three kilometers away. The residents of Gugutiantkari still have problems with drinking water. 10 years after the war, the roofs of houses of the residents of Zardiantkari are still not arranged properly and some of them are still covered with tarpaulin. It snows and rains into their houses. Some of their land plots, the harvest of which provides their only source of income, turned out to be beyond the demarcation line. They were left without income or with a small income, and their socio-economic situation has deteriorated. Unemployment and mass migration of young people

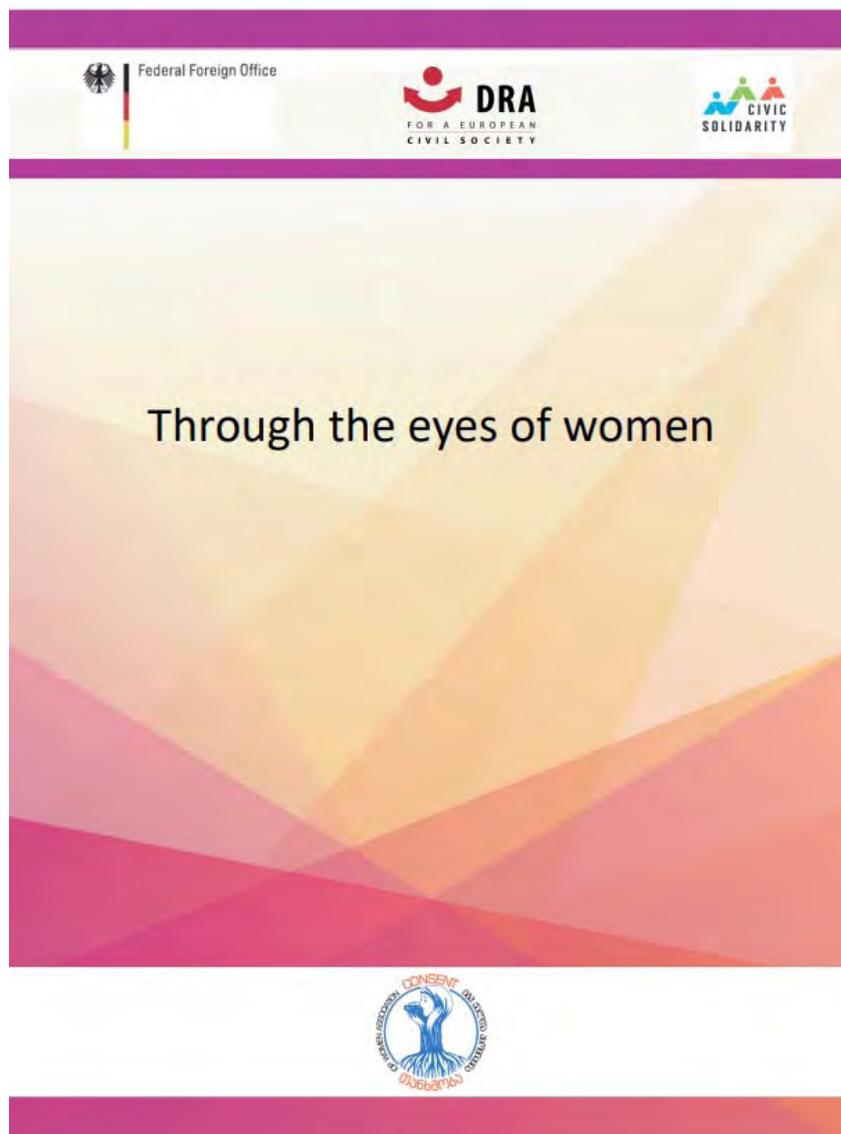
from the villages, which leads to a decreasing number of inhabitants in these villages and their emptiness, adds to all problems mentioned above. It is a clear necessity to put additional efforts that these villages will be not depopulated, as in such case there is a danger of continuation of gripping occupation. This is a general picture of the situation of these villages. It requires the creation of a special commission for a more detailed study of problems and their further solution.

Our main problem is the lack of a long-term strategic vision and a program for which the state and the government should be responsible. Such an approach would once again strengthen trust in the long term, create a safe environment and facilitate the territorial integrity.

...

Conclusion

Presented collection of articles, reports and letters shows a complicated situation in the regions of Georgia, affected by the conflict, and difficulties and barriers which internally displaced women and population affected by the conflict, need to overcome daily. To support efforts of women and the youth for improvement of their lives and realization of their rights, non-governmental organizations and women-civic activists use different frameworks, such as National Action Plan for the UN SC Resolution 1325 and Women, Peace and Security agenda; Local plans, recently created institutional mechanism – Gender Equality Councils at municipality level; conduct monitoring of state obligations and present its results to central and local authorities, cooperate with mass-media; bring the existing problems to the attention of international organizations and human rights defenders and constantly work on raising awareness of women and other community members about their rights, existing laws and mechanisms. Women – civic activists work across the boundary lines, advocate for the improvement of lives of the most vulnerable, and build capacity for peace in communities, affected by the conflict. Regardless of frozen peace process, many obstacles and barriers they continue to volunteer for their communities, peace and better life.



LAMPEDUSA...

Reportage dal principale e tradizionale molo di sbarco dei migranti. Arrivati a migliaia in quest'estate. Ma invisibili per gran parte della popolazione e dei turisti. Con alcune eccezioni...



Nell'isola dell'indifferenza



“**L**a cultura del benessere ci rende insensibili alle grida degli altri, ci fa vivere in bolle di sapone, in una situazione che porta all'indifferenza verso gli altri. Di più, oggi c'è una globalizzazione dell'indifferenza. Ci siamo abituati alla sofferenza dell'altro, non ci riguarda, non ci interessa, non è affare nostro”. Sono parole pronunciate l'8 luglio 2013 da papa Francesco, durante l'omelia allo stadio di Lampedusa.

La vera invasione è quella dei turisti. Luglio 2021, l'indifferenza non è cambiata. Anzi, quando scendi a Lampedusa dal traghetto che la raggiunge dopo 9 ore da Porto Empedocle, non vedi uno straniero, immigrato, extracomunitario, clandestino (il linguaggio mediatico-politico ci ha abituato a questa spersonalizzazione) in giro. La vera invasione di Lampedusa viene oggi dal piccolo aeroporto, che accoglie 10-15 voli di piccoli aerei dai quali scendono solo turisti. Questa scheggia di pietra d'Africa, che si è rifiutata di lasciare vuoto il mare, si è votata al turismo: seimila abitanti, cinque-seimila posti letto dichiarati, più del doppio con il nero, cinquanta-sessantamila turisti all'anno. Via Roma, ora stracarica di turisti ignari che tentano lo struscio con slalom tra motorini e "Mehari", taglia in due il paese e, puntando dritta verso il mare si interrompe al fondo, dopo bar, ristoranti strapieni, negozi di souvenir, in una terrazza. Qui c'è l'Archivio Storico Lampedusa. Antiche carte, antiche foto, pannelli sulla storia dell'isola e video, ma soprattutto c'è Nino, che della storia di Lampedusa ha fatto la sua vita.

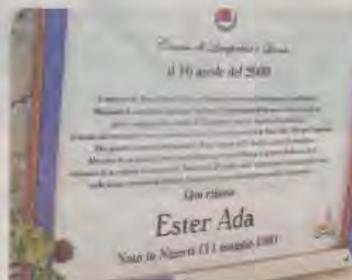
La Lampedusa che accoglie e il molo di Favalaro

Uomo curioso, colto, fa parte di quella piccola minoranza del "forum lampedusano dell'accoglienza". "Isola di passaggio, di sosta, di salvezza. Questa è sempre stata Lampedusa - sottolinea -. Povera fino alla fine degli anni '90, poi è arrivato il turismo di massa, alla romagnola. Questo ha fatto sì che tutti si trasformassero da pescatori a imprenditori, arricchendosi, ma è troppo! Immondizie, rumore, approvvigionamento d'acqua, tutto pesa. Ma i migranti che giorno e notte sbarcano al molo Favalaro ora «non pesano» perché, responsabile anche il Covid, sono gli «invisibili!» E' così

che li vogliamo tutti". Il molo Favalaro, in pieno centro, ora accessibile solo alla Guardia costiera, Polizia, Carabinieri, Esercito, pratica l'"accoglienza militarizzata", così come viene chiamata dopo gli accordi con la Libia del 2017. E' ora accessibile a chi, del forum dell'accoglienza, ha ricevuto l'accredito: suor Barbara, suor Paola, i volontari di Mediterranean Hope, di Caritas. Queste persone entrano e, a chi arriva esausto, offrono una bottiglia d'acqua e un sorriso, perché, per chi arriva, un sorriso conta tanto. Suor Barbara e Marta, di Mediterranean Hope, con piglio sicuro, di chi sa il fatto suo, senza perdere la tenerezza, mi dicono: "Mediterranean Hope è un progetto delle chiese evangeliche, che hanno sempre avuto interesse verso gli ultimi e dopo il naufragio del 3 ottobre 2013, hanno detto basta. Da maggio 2014 qui a Lampedusa esiste un osservatorio sulle migrazioni che porta avanti progetti come quello attuale sulla memoria".

"Pellegrinaggio" al cimitero

In un bollente pomeriggio mi porto con Marta al cimitero lampedusano. Dalle carrette raccolte in mare spesso arrivano anche corpi di chi non ce l'ha fatta e allora si cerca di dare un nome, spesso con l'aiuto di chi era assieme, e se ci si riesce, dove si interra il corpo in cimitero si pone una cornicetta blu mare con la scritta, per esempio, "Pare si chiamasse Eze o Ezequiel Chidi, nato in Nigeria. E' stato ritrovato senza vita in una imbarcazione a bordo della quale tentava di raggiungere l'Europa". Quante storie in questi sbarchi! Sbarco parola che fa pensare nemici, eserciti, ma qui la gente arriva, approda, naufraga, non sbarca. Incontro uno per uno i membri della minoranza lampedusana uniti nel "forum di Lampedusa solidale". Hanno iniziato a incontrarsi dal 2009, quando il fenomeno degli arrivi iniziava a farsi corposo, e a riflettere su che cosa stava accadendo. "Ci troviamo - mi dice Paola siciliana transfuga a Lampedusa da Palermo, ma sempre "la straniera" -, ogni volta che il sistema non regge e parte della popolazione viene chiamata a gestire l'emergenza". Dal 2016, quando la maggior parte dei migranti viene recuperata in alto mare, è a loro concesso di accedere al molo Favalaro. "Quando giunge la notizia di un arrivo, è un



attimo, un veloce giro di telefonate e tutti si ritrovano al molo con bottiglie d'acqua, termos di tè caldo. Per più volte, di giorno e di notte, un avviso di suor Barbara, delle piccole sorelle di Foucault, 50 anni in Algeria, mi ha fatto correre al molo".

I quotidiani sbarchi

3 agosto, ore 19, solito avviso, è il secondo arrivo del giorno: prima 150 portati dalla guardia costiera, ora una barca da sola, scortata, sembra dirigersi al molo, ma poi le onde la spingono a uno scoglio più a monte. Sono le 20.30, è già buio, la polizia illumina con i fari lo scoglio, si crea una passerella provvisoria, scendono in 70 con tre famiglie con bimbi piccoli. Giovani, giovanissimi con ciabatte infradito, zainetto, sono "misti" mi dice l'ispettore, sudanesi, eritrei, siriani, ma molti giovanissimi tunisini. Fatti sedere tutti a terra, ascoltano ed eseguono gli ordini. Occhi stanchi e impauriti, ascoltano suor Barbara che infaticabile li avvicina uno a uno parlando in arabo. Tampone, e subito vengono sospinti nei pulmini della Nova Facility, con la scritta via Selvana 31100 Treviso, vengono anche questi inghiottiti dal buio e portati nell'hotspot, chiuso in una piccola vallata più a monte, circondato dai militari, dove ce ne sono già 1.400, oppure portati nella nave Gnv che staziona alla rada, per la quarantena. Lì ce ne sono altri 300. Alle prime luci dell'alba seguirà un altro arrivo, mentre barche, barchini stracolmi di turisti partono e passano con musica ad alto volume; forse qualcuno guarda, ma l'indifferenza regna sovrana.

La testimonianza del parroco

Incontro don Carmelo La Magra, giovane



parroco dell'isola da 5 anni. Siciliano, di poche parole, dietro la sua barba rossa, mentre risponde alle mie domande, dimostra, come d'altra parte hanno fatto Pilla, Costantino, Lillo, componenti della Caritas, di vivere il Vangelo di Matteo "Ero straniero e mi avete accolto, nudo e mi avete vestito", nella sua radicalità. "Io penso - sottolinea con forza dalla stanza della canonica dell'unica chiesa dell'isola, intitolata a san Calogero, che era tunisino, e a san Gerlando, che era di Besancon - che ciò che possiamo fare è pensare alla vita delle persone, metterci accanto, fare delle cose assieme. Un vizio di noi credenti, praticanti, è di essere buoni nell'aiutare gli altri con l'elemosina, ma di non essere pienamente fratelli, mettendoci accanto, anche senza soluzioni precise, ai bisogni degli altri, cambiando il punto di vista".

La minoranza e l'indifferenza

si incrociano al confine dell'Europa Lampedusa è sì il confine più a Sud di un'Europa sempre più volta a Nord, di un'Italia sempre più indifferente e senza memoria, ma è anche lo spazio di una parrocchia dove il cristiano, il valdese, il laico, si ritrovano, in piccola minoranza, per dare una primissima accoglienza ai giornalieri naufraghi del sud del mondo. Da luglio ad agosto 2021 ne sono sbarcati 2.568 e in questi giorni e notti il flusso continua nell'indifferenza, aggiungendosi all'ingrossarsi, causa crollo dell'Afghanistan, del fiume migratorio della via dei Balcani. Ma il fiume oggi sfocia tra persone il cui orizzonte si fa sempre più ristretto, il domani oscuro, tra gente sempre più insicura, impaurita, indifferente.

“Peace is our victory: now and for the future, in Ukraine and everywhere!”

Heidi Meinzolt , Ljubljana 9.7.2023

“Peace is a gift to see the future” emphasized a Ukrainian participant at the Vienna Peace Conference – a beautiful and at the same time sad sentence for coping with the present challenges. It does not relieve anyone of the responsibility to be guided by the vision that peace is possible and must be organised. We do not see ourselves as pacifists in a dead end, as an Austrian newspaper disparagingly wrote, but I feel standing on the shoulders of giants in the women's peace and HR movement. Our unifying commitment is the triangle in which feminists struggle against militarism, patriarchy and capitalism.

It is not given that peace is “ours”. We see it clearly in the actual debate affecting all our peace organisations, political parties, Think Tanks, NGOs, even in the Left. The Mainstream in war times is overwhelming and alarming- especially combined with the rise of right wing extremism everywhere:

There is no given consensus in our societies for a logic of peace and a rooted culture of non-violence. The major challenge to initiate and continue our focus on stopping the war and get a chance for impact is the mixture of empathy and resistance on the basis of our analysis of root causes of war and violence:

- Bridging this gap, means to combine high sensitivity with solidarity: people living under drones and bombs, their fear and documentation of war crimes, their trauma living under terrible threats for physical and psychical survival and personal losses – our friends and ordinary people in war zones and as refugees and victims of forced displacement. Sometimes it is difficult from outside but extremely important to see the human dimension of war.
- Bridging this gap means also strengthening our resistance against war rhetoric around us, the discretization of pacifism and reduction of self-defence to military means – while we see apocalyptic dangers coming with the war industry and nuclear threats. In a climate of general political mistrust and frustration, we cannot do it alone as political / politicized people but definitively need creative assistance by artists, poets, musicians - not just analysts.

3 EXAMPLES

1. HISTORICAL MEMORY

My organisation WILPF was founded in 1915 in the middle of WW1 when women who saw, how much French and Germans invested in arms production and their leaders heating up nationalism and othering. There were women who opposed war and kept contacts beyond the enemy lines. They analysed root causes of war in the context of violence - including SGBV – and oppression. They visited heads of States to convince them to stop war immediately and invest in prevention: to build a supra-national body (League of Nations), to de-militarize/disarm and to foster equality and meaningful participation of women on all decision making levels through their presence on peace and negotiation tables. Many women – blocked by their governments (but also women's organisations) to participate in the Hague Conference due to the patriotic mainstream which is accompanying all wars, managed nevertheless to come and continue sharpening their anti-militaristic arguments and actions. They continue to put the fingers in the wound of disarmament in the perspective of a caring society: “move the money from war to peace” is more than a slogan but affects industrial production and destructive capitalist growth. Talking about human security and the intersectional approach of real safety needs for the people and a decent life in dignity, humanize politics. The development of civilian conflict solution methods, strengthening dialogues beyond borders, trainings of youth, solidarity actions from a human rights perspective are daily challenges for us – and even in actual war times these women manage to still keep links. The WPS agenda from 2000 is one corner stone combining protection, participation with prevention. There are many instruments such as the Istanbul Convention, NAPs, struggle against arms races, TPNW signatures.

2. LEARNING FROM EXAMPLES

The visibility of activities and good practices is not sufficient – especially in the sector of prevention – despite the fact of so many inspiring examples. In this sense, CS needs the support of political (talking about the radical LEFT) and alternative media support. We can tell about so many examples out of a feminist tradition of peace-building and defence of women's rights as human rights. I focus only on

Belarus: courageous support of conscientious objectors, war-resisters, refugees and fight against toxic masculinities

Armenia: collecting and documenting conditions for cease-fires and negotiations, work with ombudspersons, writing letters, combine institutional contacts and international CS meetings

Kosovo/Serbia: re-organise daily life in cooperation, individual and collective ways out of othering through (small scale) cooperation against ethnic division, description of Bosnia and why peace agreement failed because of neoliberal dominant politics, learning for the future! Re-consider a central and Eastern European perspective and recent historical experiences (slightly) different from the West and traditional North-South discussion.

Ukraine: creating and keeping space for storytelling, development of common perspectives also for re-construction guided by the means, dreams and needs of the people.

3. PEACE BUILDING AS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

- We will not just overcome war by reclaiming peace as "ours", because we know better. But we express our strong will to participate in **de-escalation and cease-fire**. We pressure politicians and Think Tanks to use all their influence for negotiations and diplomacy to stop war and organize prevention!
- We continue to name the elephant in the room which is **climate change** with the terrible impact of militarism with consequences for all of us on earth - of course for the most vulnerable the most. We need to stop profits out of a war industry!
- We need to stop and prevent the immediate impact of war on **refugee politics and asylum laws**, including the development of neo-colonial "national security strategies". Both are not collateral damages.
- We need to re-orientate the question of **self-defence**: it cannot be limited to weapons but to alternative thinking out of the toxic box of masculinity and geo-strategy: it is about solidarity, training of resistance and resilience, maintaining contacts – also beyond borders, struggle against fake news and limited access to non-mainstream media, talk about nature protection, clean water and food.

Draft on gender implications in the CSP outcome document

Heidi Meinzolt / WILPF

Women are a powerful force for peace. They bridge divides between groups, have a unique understanding of societal needs, and access to information that men cannot have. Because of the influence they wield over their communities and families, they have the potential to increase the operational effectiveness of security forces and inspire a culture of inclusion for the next generation. Women's contributions are valuable not only for themselves but for the collective well-being of society. This was the wisdom behind UNSCR1325, which acknowledges that women are not just victims, but agents of peace and justice.

In order to move from rhetoric to action, we want to strengthen the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national action plans and re-load the existing ones with the necessary integration of an economic focus for women, specifically as regards care work. The Women, Peace and Security agenda underlines the need for substantial changes in political commitments towards conflict, which are very well laid out in the logic of the Global Study from 2015. Key elements include the creation of a gender sensitive environment. The structural criticism of patriarchal dominance and integration of gender issues should be taking into account throughout the whole conflict cycle (Prevention: cross-dimensional approach, Conflict: meaningful participation, post-conflict situation has to consider the economic dimension of rehabilitation.) A key element for security change will be raising public awareness of the benefits of increased inclusiveness.

In order to implement a holistic and transformative human rights approach, a progressive gender perspective towards preventing conflict and creating peace by bridging global and local efforts is needed.

Analysis of the root causes of conflicts requires increased use of a distinctive gender analysis, and expanded grassroots NGO participation within Human Rights mechanisms.

Transforming gendered power structures requires states not only to move away from militarism and war but to create and develop economies of peace (including particularly the care economy) by prioritising gender equality and socio-economic justice to achieve economic prosperity and sustainable peace in conflict-affected societies. Experiences in the field (e.g. Balkans) have shown how economic reforms that do not take into account gender or conflict considerations simply sustain conditions which allow for a conflict relapse in the future.

Experience shows also that it is necessary to improve accountability on gendered violence, strengthen government's crisis response and recovery plan and create an enabling environment that addresses the militarised environment. Security issues are often, erroneously, perceived as requiring uniquely military responses whereas issues of human security include women's security and freedom from fear). Therefore a priority goal across the OSCE region must be to develop concrete mechanisms which will increase women's participation at all levels of decision making and negotiation.

In many regions in the OSCE area, the prevalence of patriarchal values that institutionalise militarised masculinity, the proliferation of arms, the lack of accountability and an environment which enables exploitation, violence and other forms of (political) extremism directly or indirectly induce sexual, gender-based and other forms of violence that impact women disproportionately and prevent their effective and meaningful participation.

The WPS Agenda has become increasingly politically-loaded, states are less open to hearing civil society's recommendations and concerns, preferring to present women in the role of victims rather than talking about women as actors for change. This victimisation of women goes against the need for their protection and empowerment as important mediators central to societal transformation.

The obstacles to women's meaningful participation we observe in states across the OSCE include reduced funding opportunities for local civil society ; huge cuts in direct funding for women's organisations; increased military spending and measures of "securitisation" and criminalisation and restrictions of women human rights defenders and feminist peace activists.

Recent counter-terrorism financing (CTF) rules fail to take into account the specifics of organisations led by women and the environments in which they operate, and the potential of women to contribute positively to long term security solutions. In practice, legal and regulatory CTF frameworks often restrict transnational financial flows (e.g., from Western donors to grassroots groups); involve heavy compliance requirements; cause delays in, or block receipt of, funds; favour larger, more-established and often international organisations; require detailed information on civil society's activities, including in some cases about beneficiaries and decrease the appetite of donors and banks for risk - all of which severely impact women's capacity to work practically in conflict situations to achieve peace on the ground in the OSCE area.

In order to combat “shrinking spaces”, women-led organisations must work together to push back against these restrictive policies and carry out a substantive dialogue between themselves. Such discussions must take place across borders and must include donors who see small grassroots women-led organisations not simply as “service providers” but who recognize their true transformative potential. Such organizations must be allowed to engage on their own terms with donors, and can create supportive partnerships allowing them to carry out necessary and effective work on the ground. Equally, the “Friends of 1325” must recognise that they must not give with one hand while taking with the other, and take measures to ensure that any security action taken does not undermine women-led civil society. They should also substantially strengthen political, financial and other support for the important work that the women's peace movement does for accountability and action.

If we fail to provide adequate answers to the growth of fear in most of our societies, we will be increasingly occupied with debates centred on “securitisation” rather than focussing on justice, freedom and rights. Current trends lead to emerging nationalism, populism and exclusiveness where strong (male) leaders are seen as the solution. This way lies conflict and we must act in the name of prevention.

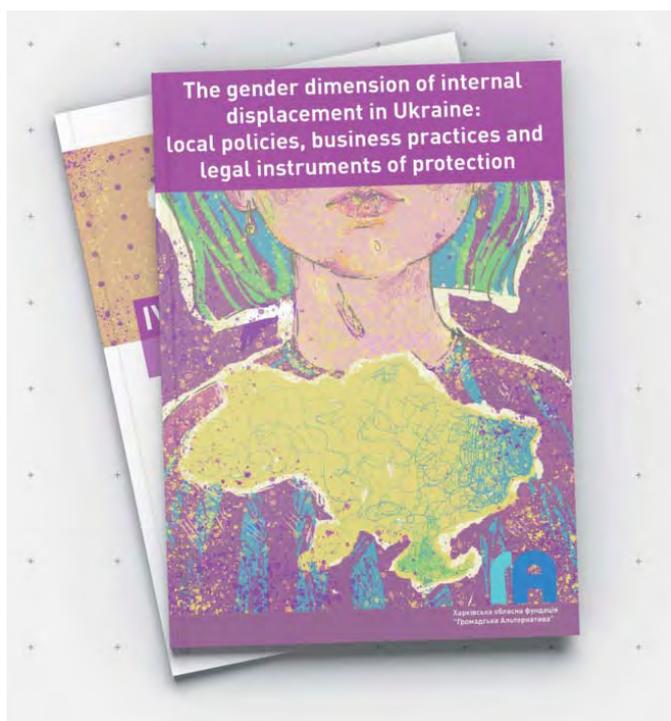
Additions to integrate into the Recommendations:

- 1 Special Representative on CS: preference should be given to a woman (given the non-balanced responsibilities in the roles until now)
Special focus on women HR defenders and their multi-vulnerability and exposure to patriarchal discrimination and sexual violence
- 2 Taking in consideration the traditionally patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the media and the lack of equal participation of women in decision making and representation of gendered issues
Hate speeches have a strong focus on gender and equality, de-gendering political debates
- 3 Meaningful participation of women on all negotiation tables
Space for CS means the equal participation of women, women as field representatives, women liaison officers
Full Implementation of the UNSCR 1325, WPS agenda

Mariya Yasenovska, President, KRF “Public Alternative”.

Introduction. Read more stories: <https://publicalternative.com.ua/en/publications/>

Out of 16 standards set forth in the OSCE Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, there is one concerning the minority human rights defenders. Even though it is about discrimination and the people promoting defense against discrimination, it contains signs of discrimination itself. The standard specifically addresses the matters of violence and hate crime, yet it lacks focus on the risk of a person to stay excluded from the social discourse resulting from the absence of accessibility and/or equal treatment. These are the barriers facing the human rights activists who defend the human rights of the people with disabilities. Such human rights activists are often treated as of minor significance and their activity is regarded as solely focused on acquisition of social guarantees rather than defense of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Moreover, these human rights defenders are often people with disabilities themselves who have to deal with the additional barriers so as to be heard by the society, the authorities and their colleagues from the human rights community. This target group is not an object of hatred in the society but discrimination against such people manifests itself through the common perception of disability in the context of charitable and healthcare model, as well as inadvertent exclusion of the people with disabilities from social life. It should be noted that women with disabilities are facing even more barriers while being human rights defenders and activists: in addition to discrimination by disability, they are also exposed to the gender-based stereotypes that are quite common in our society. According to the UN Guidelines “Women and Girls with Disabilities Human Rights”, disability occurs to 19.2 % of female population aged over 18, compared to 12 % for male population of the same age. Only one-third of women of the active working age are employed. 65 % of women with disabilities visit the doctor less than once a year and 76 % of them are unable to visit their gynecologist, because their offices are usually above the ground floor in a building that has no elevator. Therefore, women with disabilities who are human rights defenders and activists require special support from the society and the human rights community: to improve visibility of their performance, to enhance accessibility of the career enhancement, specifically in the sphere of human rights, protection against violence, abusive treatment and neglect of their needs in the context of their particular vulnerability. This project is an endeavor to make the performance of human rights defenders and activists more visible in the society and the human rights community. For this purpose, we have collected stories of life and work of the women with various disabilities who defend the rights of the people with disabilities so as to demonstrate the importance of their work to the society. Visibility of human rights work of the women with disabilities is the path toward visibility of the problems and barriers the people with disabilities have to deal with and the insight into how these barriers can be removed. It is important to involve women with disabilities in the current human rights classes and discussions, to help them overcome their physical and informational barriers, expanding the public awareness to promote a dialogue with the human rights activists defending the rights of the people with disabilities as equals.



20 Years of Resolution 2035 - a Peace and Security Perspective

Luisa del Turco, Italy, 2020

Conclusions (as an abstract of the article)

The WPS agenda: just a mirror or a powerful tool for transformation? Putting the most shadowed into the spotlight

The previous pages have showed how the international system is mirrored in the bundle WPS agenda, and the challenge of implementation. It is finally worth taking stock, based on previous considerations about the different pillars.

Participation has always been considered the most innovative aspect of the WPS paradigm. Protection is often deemed the most urgent. Still when it comes to reality some ten resolutions after the first two cornerstones (1325 - 1820), there is still a long way to go to fill the gap between norms and practices even for these two.

To overcome the stall in implementation after 20 years, it seems worth trying new approaches, inspired by the one the ground-breaking resolution 1325 adopted: putting into the spotlight what had been in the shadows (in 2000 the active vote of women in peace building).

Today it could mean thinking out of the box of the binary vision based on participation and protection, regardless their relationship – be it confrontational or complementary – and focus on the other two neglected pillars, namely Prevention and Relief and Recovery. This can trigger multiple positive impacts, including endogenous effects on the agenda itself and enogenous effects on the overall system.

Let's just mention the most evident.

Prevention, if intended in the broader original meaning of conflict prevention, is undoubtedly the only effective means to prevent violence of any kind, including gender based (from the domestic level to war rage). Nevertheless within the context of norms affected by a high degree of contestation, it is maybe the most contested provision in practice. There is then no need for policy developments as prevention stands out to be widely accepted as priority in all the sectors of the global agenda (Action for peacekeeping, Peacebuilding Architecture, Agenda for Humanity). And where it is included in the context of a broader agenda it can just be prioritized (eg. Responsibility to Protect).

The effort should be directed at better operationalizing, strengthening peacebuilding effort/action and structures, building a sound political will and accountability system, backed with a decisive culture change, already fostered when the agenda was born in the International Year of the Culture of Peace. The ongoing peace and security reform with the UN system with its new structures (DPPA and DPO), figures (Under-Secretary General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and for Peace Operations), strategies (join vision statement 2019 prioritizing politics as the promotion of political solution to conflict), seems to be pushing the system forward in the right direction. Decisive support can come from civil society whose agenda prioritizes conflict prevention.

Moreover, prioritizing prevention and peace by peaceful means would make the whole-of-pillars approach work properly. The „nexus“ between different sectors (including humanitarian and development action) is definitely a key word in today's international dialogue, and triggers a resounding call for greater coherence among them (including human rights and disarmament and counter terrorism entities and work as well). Concern has been raised among practitioners particularly regarding the recent inclusion of security and peace into the frame, mainly expressed by humanitarian actors, worried about the inconsistency of principles. The use of certain strategies and policies are seen possibly problematic also from a peacebuilding perspective that could play a key role for harmonization. Prevention tools and approach prioritized, built upon shared principles and values, is then crucial for the „new way of working“.

It will be also an added value for the WPS agenda, giving an answer to some of the most frequent criticisms being raised, actually often related to the practices of the international community in conflict areas rather than to the provisions of the WPS agenda themselves (particularly in UNSCR 1325 which only makes reference to peacekeeping as such). The most frequent remarks actually concern the instrumental use of the agenda to support or even legitimize „security practices post 9/11 moment“, „postcolonial interventions“, „war on terror“, and it could then be narrowed if the international action were multilateral, principled, legitimate (fully consistent with the new international law).

Moreover it will allow the inclusion of the feminist argument of limited attention to women's rights (including sexual and reproductive health) and empowerment (including economic) in the WPS agenda, into a proper perspective. Indeed Security Council core business is about international peace and security, and a WPS agenda cannot be considered – as it often is – a legal Instrument for setting new norms on women's rights or on gender crimes or violence per se (it

actually only take notes of the international law developments in this regard). Still, from a prevention/peacebuilding perspective, the human rights of women and prosecution of gender crimes are crucial means and tools as part of an holistic approach to sustainable peace, and perfectly consistent with a human security approach. The same arguments could be used for countries denying the possibility for the Security Council to approach Human Rights issues.

Also the additional pillar, „relief and recovery“ could become crucial if intended in the operational meaning of „gender perspective“ to be mainstreamed in all activities (from relief to recovery, including SSR, DDR, and refugees assistance). It could help to take action and avoid the essentialist paradigm, and related assumptions on women's being by nature more prone to peace or able – with their mere presence – to make men more responsible or peace agreement more likely. From this perspective the reference that in 1325 precisely to „local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution“ looks paradigmatic.

Engendered conflict analysis can make it easier to identify peace constituencies where they can be found effectively, avoiding rhetoric and prejudices (even positive), debunking the myths of women peacemakers by nature/ victims of violence. This will uncover the predominance of man as war victims, men's possible contribution to peacebuilding recurrent among veterans predominantly men as well as their crucial contribution in prevention of violent extremism, and gender equality through the promotion of models of positive masculinity. Furthermore, it opens the way to intersectionality, that can help us to step out of clichés (e.g. „the myth of women solidarity“) and include multiple elements for analysis (also based on race, nationality, age according to international markers).

The transformative potential of 1325 cannot be expressed using the „add women and stir“ approach but with an inclusive, sustainable one involving marginalized groups able to widen the vision and bring a change. In this perspective wider fruitful synergies could be built with the younger analogous agenda dedicated to Youth Peace and Security, and some arguments — raised from the peacebuilding side — could be avoided.

Besides, some other reasons for criticism towards the WPS agenda will remain valid, such as those based on an anti-militarist perspective (for the provision regarding women in the military) or concerning the effectiveness discourse (considering the presence of women useful to strategic communication and the efficiency of peace operations). They will remain unresolved for these aspects are related to the inner nature of the agenda, that was built on different stakeholders' perspectives on peace and security as described in the previous pages, with peacekeeping concerns at the forefront. These concerns are confirmed in the latest resolution on WPS, where women's role is deemed „indispensable in increasing the overall performance and effectiveness of peacekeeping operations“. Without this dynamic, gender issues would probably have never reached the Security Council 20 years ago. Dialogue among actors may sometimes look confrontational, with advocates, practitioners, institutions, civil society, on different even distanced positions: the agenda represents a unique opportunity of dialogue and confidence building among them, that the increased involvement of the academics might facilitate.

The WPS agenda offers a privileged point of view over the international scenario, that looks mirrored in its multilevel multidimensional complexity, with all the sectors and actors involved. Just like in the Overall picture lights and shadows cohabit, but it is a crucial opportunity to see peace work acknowledged as a structural part in the bigger picture on an equal basis. The challenge will then be to avoid the risk to see it de facto diluted or eclipsed by the other sectors, particularly for the magnetism of the humanitarian, that already provoked a shift in Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping (now intended/presented as Unarmed Civilian Protection), disarmament (now labelled as „humanitarian“), and in responding to conflict (often with a humanitarian response for crisis and emergencies deeply rooted in complex often interrelated dynamics such as armed conflicts, terrorism, climate change, migration, pandemics).

There is a need to move from an episodic formal to a more substantial and systematic understanding and use of peacebuilding and conflict prevention tools and culture, acknowledging its political nature as well. Res. 1325 seen under this light can be considered a valuable resource to disclose the full potential of the WPS agenda as a whole, for the benefit of peace and security sector as well, and for the international system at large.

To conclude, to simply address these issues and ask for accountability is not enough anymore: we need to change. And as always, as far as conflict is concerned, we should look at reality from new perspectives, and put what used to be marginalized right in the centre of the picture. That was the original strategy that in 2000 some very committed women (and men) used to make this agenda become a reality. Getting back to two decades ago aim and strategy is be crucial to identify the way ahead.

The 20th anniversary can be seen as a chance to turn the persistent obstacles into steps to look forward to a new, comprehensive and fruitful direction.

March 8, 2023 - International Women's Day

CSP WG women and gender realities



We recall the proclamation of the International Women's day by Clara Zetkin in 1911 to support women's freedom, equality and peace. The celebration of March 8th in 1914 turned into a demonstration against the arrest of Rosa Luxemburg who spoke out against weapons and imperialist wars. In 1975, the United Nations proclaimed March 8 the „Day of the United Nations for the rights of women and world peace! “

We as women and partners from NGOs in different conflict zones in the OSCE area (from the Balkan, the Caucasus, Central Asia, to Turkey) are fully aware of the complex relationship between women's rights and peace. We are committed to stop economical, physical, psychological and sexual violence that women face every day. We protest against the destruction of our natural environments and the lack of economic security, social and health services. Together, we do our best to investigate and document crimes systematically. We struggle together in our networks and with the support of the international community against impunity for those who discriminate and threaten us. We will not allow that our possibilities to participate actively in building democracies and a peaceful environment are restricted especially through raising authoritarianism, dictatorship and anti-feminism.

We recall that the war of aggression of Russia against Ukraine has started 1 Year ago (for many already 10 years earlier). This war has caused already so much suffering for Ukrainians, for women and children in particular. This war is responsible for (personal, material and ecological) losses, ruptures of families and friends, destruction of infrastructure and environment. This war has terribly affected the life of women living in forced exile and in difficult situations of (internal) displacement, or those women who have no possibilities to leave the most dangerous zones. So many women complain about lost auto-determination, terribly changed perspectives for their life, values and priorities. This causes existential fears, stress, and depression, hate and othering, which must be taken serious.

We women from „safe“ places in the OSCE area share and open spaces for and with women in conflict and war zones to tell their stories and be listened to. We help enhancing empathy and confidentiality to de-construct un-good enemy images. We feel close to each other in the needs of our daily lives. Together we can focus on new – not divisive but unifying - narratives. We build and consolidate our relationship on mutual experiences at a very concrete and personal level. We study together the best ways of women's (economic) empowerment, of resistance, of peacebuilding and civilian and non-violent conflict solutions as part of an intersectional challenge for our safety and security. Moreover, we act in context specific ways to resist and improve living conditions as comprehensive as possible

We base our politics and actions on solidarity and ethics of care, focussing on urgent needs. We raise together awareness for the protection of women and the prevention of further violence. We denounce raising toxic masculinity, changed mind-sets and dangerous militarisation of whole societies, misusing precious resources for economic profits and killing. We design collectively inclusive images of communal life and find locally adapted ways to implement replying projects.

On this women's day 2023, we promise to work in a transformative way challenging the dominant political and ideological borders. We insist that it is high time to start and continue galvanizing voices against war and for a redefinition of what security is from a human and planetary perspective. We insist on the (re-)development of a caring society that must be engaged in active prevention, in peaceful resistance, in disarming our mind-sets. Our safety and security as women are common. This is the link between the struggles for our rights with the struggles for peace.

We put our emphasis in the request that this war must end as quickly as possible – as all wars around the world! Talks, dialogues, negotiations and meaningful participation of women on all levels, are part of our agenda. The aim is to rebuild societies for the benefit of all and a future life in dignity.

“We dream of a world where the sky is no more a place of threat through a carrier of bombs, when the airplanes transport people and not bombs, when birds are singing instead of alarm signs.”

March 8 is our day!

UN Documents used for discussions in the CSP WG:

1. 2023 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security

Dear Ambassadors,

We write to you ahead of this year's annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) to urge you to take action to realize the foundational demand of Resolution 1325 (2000)—ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peacemaking.

For nearly 25 years, the Security Council, the UN and Member States have pledged their support for women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in peace and security. Yet women's rights today are under ceaseless attack in contexts marked by intensifying conflict, rising authoritarianism, militarization and backlash. Women's participation in peace processes remains unacceptably low, and is decreasing even in UN-supported peace processes. Meanwhile the credibility of the UN and the Security Council to protect and uphold these rights has been fundamentally shaken by growing geopolitical divides and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Without principled and decisive action to protect women's rights and ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security, we not only risk entrenchment of patriarchal norms, but jeopardize any chance of sustainable peace.

We therefore call on you to demand, and to support, the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation and leadership of the women of Afghanistan, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Western Sahara, Yemen and all other crises on the Security Council's agenda, in accordance with the standards set by the WPS agenda, in ending conflict and building peace in their countries.

We take this opportunity to remind you of these standards and urge you to uphold them:

"Full": Full participation requires politically supporting and fully resourcing inclusion of diverse women at all levels and stages of decision-making, in all contexts, from beginning to end. ² This means women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including the design and implementation of all peace processes, the development and monitoring of all agreements, political processes, humanitarian delivery, constitution-building, economic development, transitional justice, post-conflict reconstruction, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes and security sector reform (SSR) processes. The Security Council must demand and ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation, in line with Resolution 1325 (2000) and all other WPS resolutions, in all conflicts and crises on its agenda. Further, it should demand that the UN adopt and implement a principled and consistent approach to women's rights and women's participation across all its work, without exception.

"Equal": Achieving equal representation means taking all possible steps to support diverse women's participation in all peace and security processes with the target of 50 percent. While women's participation at all levels of decision-making must be supported, we urge the Security Council, UN and all Member States to publicly and robustly support, and to prioritize, women's equal, direct and influential participation in formal Track 1 or high-level peace and political processes, where it is most glaringly lacking. This must include meaningful representation of women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and feminist movements. Quotas for women's participation must be enforced, non-transferable and publicly advocated for by all actors. Additional specific and targeted measures must be implemented to dismantle structural barriers and ensure that women, in all their diversity, are able to participate on an equal footing as experts and leaders.

"Meaningful": Meaningful participation means direct, substantive and formal inclusion of diverse women and feminist perspectives to influence the design and the outcome of negotiations, across all issues, as well as their implementation. Failure to uphold women's right to equal participation, even in conflict-affected situations, undermines the UN Charter, contravenes international human rights and humanitarian law, and jeopardizes sustainable peace. ³ Superficial, last-minute, informal, advisory or other observer status without the opportunity to directly influence decisions and outcomes is not meaningful. We urge Member States to demand that the equal, direct and influential participation of women is a standard requirement across all UN-supported peace processes or convenings. No Member State nor the UN should endorse, facilitate or support peace processes where women are not meaningfully represented. This would send an unequivocal message to conflict parties that international backing is not possible without respect for women's rights.

“Safe”: Participating safely requires enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any form of attack, intimidation, retaliation or reprisal against diverse women for their political participation, human rights and humanitarian work, peacebuilding activities or cooperation with UN mechanisms, including the Security Council. Member States and UN leadership must, first and foremost, ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society in which women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society leaders are protected, supported and their legitimacy is recognized, and eliminate any restrictions or barriers to their work. Further, Member States and the UN must swiftly and publicly condemn any attacks against women human rights defenders, peacebuilders and civil society, hold perpetrators accountable, and, most importantly, take all necessary measures to protect the lives of those at risk. The UN has a critical role to play in this regard—we urge you to call on the UN system to not only thoroughly monitor and report on attacks and violence against women activists, but also provide systematic and scaled-up support to prevent and respond to such violence; so should all peace operations, in accordance with their mandates to protect civilians and promote human rights.⁴ Risks and protection must never be used to limit women's participation or undermine the independent selection or views of civil society, and resources and explicit political support must be mobilized to enable women to participate safely.

In all conflicts and crises, the international community's uncompromising support for women's human rights must be matched by unequivocal demands for women's meaningful participation.

Women's rights cannot wait!

2. HYPOCRISY AT THE SECURITY COUNCIL IS STALLING PROGRESS ON WPS October 31, 2023

Every year, the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security takes place within a context of persistent violence, instability, and armed conflict. In 2021, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan loomed over the discussions, amidst the failure of the international community to heed the words of warning spoken by the 2020 Afghan civil society briefer, Zarqa Yafali. Last year, the Russian invasion of Ukraine underscored the Security Council's inability to act with the persistent threat of veto.

The backdrop to this year's annual open debate on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (WPS), adopted exactly 23 years ago today, has been horrific, with ongoing violence in Palestine and Israel. During the debate, many briefers and member state representatives pointed to the impacts of this violence on women and girls. The framing ranged from women and girls as “enduring years of Hamas cruelty”, to women and children bearing the brunt of “devastating bombardment, with 1,100 new female heads of household and 690,000 women and children forced to flee their homes” to “victims of Hamas' brutal atrocities and victims of relentless bombing of Gaza” (emphasis added).

Despite the range in framing around the ongoing violence, the blanket consensus of the briefers and representatives alike was that more needs to be done in implementing the WPS agenda. Speaker after speaker repeated calls for parity in representation of women in peacebuilding and politics; countering the pushback on women's human rights; and protecting women and girls who are impacted by conflict. These calls have remained consistently the same for the last 23 years, the life of UNSCR 1325. The representative of Canada summed this up succinctly at the beginning of her statement:

“When we started preparing our national statement, we looked at the one we made last year, and the year before, and the year before. And we were struck by how almost all of the text could be equally relevant today. I fear how far back we would go in years and continue to find usable material.”

The renewed violence in Palestine and Israel and the UNSC's place within it helps to reflect a longer-standing trend. We continue to see the same discussions, the same words of praise and calls for more action on women's participation (in particular) and the WPS agenda amid an environment rife with self-interest and hypocrisy. Many permanent and elected members of the Council wave their support for women, human rights, and rule of law, for example, and emphasize the importance of implementing the WPS agenda, but are simultaneously contributing to violence and insecurity around the globe. The barriers to implementing the WPS agenda are well-documented and clear, reflected in countless civil society reports and reports of the UN Secretary-General. But too few of these calls are heeded, particularly the ones on conflict prevention, demilitarization, and disarmament which would make a world of difference.

This trend was illustrated clearly as the afternoon session of the open debate on UNSCR 1325 was delayed to make space for voting on two draft resolutions relating to the situation in Palestine submitted respectively by the United States and the Russian Federation. Both of the draft resolutions sought to implement a ‘humanitarian pause’ (language used by the US resolution) or ‘ceasefire’ (language used by the Russian Federation resolution) in Gaza. Neither were

successfully adopted. The United States, United Kingdom and France expressed their disapproval of Russia's resolution because it did not include an affirmation of Israel's right to defend itself. These governments have sent billions of dollars worth of military aid to Israel, and many also buy weapons and surveillance systems from the Israeli government. The U.S. is currently proposing an extra \$14 billion in funding for Israel as of October 31st, 2023. On the other hand, Russia – which, along with fifth permanent member China, is an antagonist of WPS and of human rights agendas in the UNSC – put forward language calling for a ceasefire in Gaza while continuing its own brutal bombardment and illegal occupation of Ukraine. During the same day, many members of the Security Council made multiple statements - one on WPS, full of words of support for its importance, laudation for themselves in their achievements, and calls to do more to address the resolutions, and another on these failed draft resolutions on which countless lives of innocent civilians lay in the balance.

To make it plain: UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda have been forced to exist because of the resolute failure of powerful states to stop war and instability. Their decisions actively foment conflict and instability in order to further geopolitical interests, sell more lethal arms and other weapons, and advance ideological motives. This context is the underlying thread with which to understand the very reasons why the WPS framework has been unable to make the transformative difference that it should.

This is further demonstrated in the discourse around disarmament in both the open debate and the meeting on the Palestine resolutions. The representative of Malta made the most substantial comments comparatively on disarmament, noting that it was at the heart of the WPS agenda, but that global military spending is at its highest level. She emphasized the need to stop arms proliferation, as doing so will weaken the connection between militarisation and gender-based violence (GBV). Yet these calls were predictably not echoed by the permanent members of the Council, who are among the world's top military spenders and arms traders.

In an almost identical way, during the open debate many States mentioned the importance of hearing directly from civil society organizations, amplifying their recommendations, and protecting women's human rights defenders (WHRDs). The representative of the United States stated that the United States is committed to amplifying women's voices and following up on their recommendations. In a similar vein, the representative of the United Kingdom expressed a commitment to amplifying women's voices and recommendations, while also noting the need to protect women's rights defenders, as they are subject to particularly vicious reprisals. Like the disarmament discourse, however, the reality is different, as calls from women's organizations to demand a ceasefire in Palestine and Israel are being ignored, and human rights defenders are currently facing pushback across Europe and the U.S. Back in 2018, Randa Siniora briefed the UNSC and called upon Israel to end its military occupation and settlement expansion; commit to a political solution; and immediately cease violations of its commitments under international law. She also called for ending the culture of impunity and ensuring accountability for abuses and violations against women and women human rights defenders that have been committed by Israeli forces and any other actors. These recommendations were not heeded at the time, but remain more urgent and relevant than ever.

Next year, the annual open debate will likely take place amidst a new dimension of a crisis that overshadows most of the discussion. While Palestine and Israel loomed over the debate this year, the civil society briefer was Hala Al Karib, the Regional Director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), who briefed the council on the catastrophic situation in Sudan. Over 1,100 people have now been killed, with 12,000 people injured, but most statements did not substantively engage on the crisis. She outlined the urgency of implementing the WPS agenda, and used Sudan as a stark example of the consequences of failing to do so, citing sexual violence, rape, gender-based violence, repression of protestors, kidnapping and violence against members of human rights and women's organizations, suicide, and lack of livelihoods for women.

The Council, however, must avoid whiplash: jumping from crisis to crisis and engaging at a superficial level with each one, while individual members are contributing to worsening the situation. This mode of action ignores the interconnectedness of each crisis, and omits a deeper, more meaningful engagement with root causes and structural phenomena. The heinous impacts of armed conflict are caused by similar actors, and felt by populations in similar ways. The WPS agenda, by fostering a culture of peace through women's leadership and participation, reducing military expenditures and arms proliferation, and promoting non-violence, has the ability to address this at its core. Ms Al Karib attested to the need to think across contexts at the end of her statement, encouraging a show of solidarity with the women of Palestine, Afghanistan,

Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen and other conflict-affected areas. With the leadership of many UNSC members continuing to shirk their duty in establishing a ceasefire and diplomatically working for international peace and security, the calls and leadership of civil society movements are more essential than ever.

3. Arria-formula Meeting on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

The Secretary-General's annual reports on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) define CRSV as "rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict". The reports say that it "also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict".

The importance of accountability to preventing the recurrence of CRSV is expected to be a key focus of tomorrow's meeting. According to a concept note prepared by Albania, while the Security Council established a robust normative framework condemning and calling for action to address CRSV, sexual violence in conflict persists in many parts of the world. The concept note argues that the fact that "perpetrators are free and unpunished" risks sending a message that CRSV "can be tolerated and can continue to be used as a tactic of war". In this respect, the concept note highlights sanctions as a measure the Security Council can take "to deter such violence and induce behavioural change", as well as the importance of national initiatives to strengthen accountability-focused legislation.

At tomorrow's meeting, briefers and Council members are likely to reflect on the links between accountability and prevention of CRSV. Osmani may highlight measures adopted in Kosovo to strengthen accountability for CRSV and enhance redress and reparations for survivors. Marnay-Baszanger may brief on the work of the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to support national investigations, address impunity and enhance accountability for CRSV at country-level. Tomorrow, some members may stress the importance of strengthening national criminal justice systems and might refer to national initiatives and international cooperation programmes that they support in this regard.

Some Council members may also express their support for enhanced use of Security Council sanctions regimes to address CRSV. For instance, at the July annual open debate on CRSV, Ghana expressed support for treating CRSV "as a basis for targeted sanctions against culpable actors", maintaining that periodic briefings to sanctions committees by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict "would be useful in sustaining interest in the progress of implementation of such sanctions".

Noting that more than 70 percent of the parties listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report on CRSV are persistent perpetrators, Malta argued that "[t]hose verified cases should be aligned with the work of the sanctions committees and their panels of experts, who should have access to the data and expertise" on CRSV, adding that briefings by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to sanctions committees "can greatly facilitate" this work. Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten was last invited to brief a Security Council sanctions committee, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, in December 2021.

Tomorrow, the briefers and some Council members may refer to CRSV in specific country situations. In this regard, the concept note refers to CRSV "in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo" as contexts where "[p]erpetrators have successfully evaded justice for 27 years", as well as other situations such as Ukraine, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some members may stress the importance of a prompt Council response to early indicators of CRSV in situations of concern. Several members are also likely to underline the adoption of a survivor-centred approach in responses to CRSV and may highlight the need to enhance access to services, including sexual and reproductive care, for CRSV survivors. (Resolution 2467, which was adopted in 2019 and is the most recent Security Council outcome on CRSV, recognised the need for a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.)

Some members might also identify the proliferation of small arms and light weapons among the factors that compound security risks and can exacerbate CRSV. A recent UN Institute for Disarmament Research report concluded that, while arms control and disarmament measures alone cannot prevent CRSV, they can contribute "to both long-term structural prevention and short-term operational prevention".

The concept note poses several questions to help guide the discussion at tomorrow's meeting, including:

- What are the additional measures that the Security Council, as the leading organ with a binding role in the maintenance of international peace and security, could take in preventing and responding to CRSV?
- How can the international community help in identifying and bringing to justice the commanders and senior decision-makers responsible for the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war?
- Considering the direct link between impunity and the persistence of CRSV, what can be done to ensure that transitional justice measures address the full range of violations and abuses of women's human rights and the differentiated impacts on women and girls?
- What measures could states take in order to ensure that survivors of sexual violence in conflict have access to legal aid, health and psychological care and lift the sociocultural stigma to facilitate rehabilitation efforts?

While notable implementation gaps persist, Council members are generally supportive of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and their views converge on the need to eradicate CRSV. Nevertheless, Council dynamics on WPS remain difficult and have been further complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

During the negotiations in June of resolution 2686 on tolerance and international peace and security, while some members considered including language from resolution 2467, Russia apparently opposed this proposal on the grounds that resolution 2467 had not been adopted by consensus, with China and Russia having abstained. As a result, the proposed language was not included in resolution 2686. Furthermore, Russia has objected to briefings by Patten in sanctions committee meetings and opposed her participation at the annual open debate on CRSV in July.

Council dynamics on Kosovo may also come into play at tomorrow's meeting, given that Osmani is one of the briefers and that Kosovo is referenced in the concept note. While some Council members recognise Kosovo's independence (and tend to be supportive of its government), several others, including China and Russia, do not.



The Joint Appeal to OSCE Chairmanship from
WWG|CSP

On the New Risks, Threats and Disasters to the Human Dimension of the OSCE from Afghanistan

4.10.2021

Dear Ms Ann Linde Chairwoman of OSCE
Ms Helga Schmid, Secretary General of OSCE
Ms Katya Andrusz, Spokesperson OSCE Office for democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)
Heads of the OSCE participating States,

We, Members of the Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Region under the Civic Solidarity Platform, are alarmed by the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where civilians continue to suffer from cruel persecution and disproportionate punishments, where girls, women, national minorities and human rights defenders are at risk.

The OSCE's Helsinki Final Act is a political commitment of the heads of Governments of all 57 signatory States to build security and cooperation in Europe on the basis of its provisions.

Taking into consideration the systemic conflicts and problems related to the Third Basket of the Human Dimension: human rights, democracy, promotion of gender equality and justice for peaceful settlement of all conflicts in the Central Asian countries, we are concerned about the security issues for the citizens of the Central Asian region, in which there are unregulated, unresolved border problems. As you all know, the invasion and armed conflict in the border areas of the Batken region in Kyrgyzstan initiated by Tajikistan claimed the lives of civilians, including children^[ii], so far the perpetrators have not been found and punished.

You are also informed of the fact that in recent years the situation with the rights of girls and women has worsened due to the growth of religious fundamentalism in all Central Asian countries. The Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan has worsened the situation with the rights of girls and women, deprived them of the right to education, participation in public and political life, and holding public positions in Afghanistan. The ongoing processes and changes in Afghanistan are a threat to the security of citizens of the Central Asian region, and can cause a large-scale humanitarian crisis in the OSCE region as well.

The latest news from the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is sounding the alarm: Over 18 million people rely on humanitarian aid to survive. Some 664,000 people have been displaced by the latest violence since January, bringing the total number of internally displaced people to more than 3.5 million. 1 in 3 Afghans are acutely hungry, according to the World Food Program. Over 93 per cent of households consumed insufficient food in the past week, according to the latest WFP phone surveys. Fighting across the country has claimed the lives of over 40,000 people since 2009. The United Nations flash aid appeal for Afghanistan calls for nearly US\$606 million to help people in need but has only been 20 per cent funded.

Dear OSCE Members,

The Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Region requests you to urgently discuss the new risks and disasters for the CA region related to the humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan in the format of the Human Dimension, in three dimensions, to prevent new risks and disasters, both in the CA region and in the OSCE region as a whole. The heads of the Central Asian countries should be demanded that they should adhere to the international obligations and humanitarian law in matters of refugees, granting visas and promoting the safety of women human rights defenders and activists. It is necessary to conduct outreach to representatives of state bodies and the population about the importance of supporting Afghan refugees, representing the civilians, create volunteer groups and hotlines to work and assist them. On the World Refugee Day, Michael Georg Link, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reminded the OSCE participating States of their commitment to ensuring the dignified treatment and human rights of all men, women and children wanting to cross borders.

We recommend that the OSCE participating States, such as the USA and the European Union countries, promote security and provide assistance to activists and women human rights defenders in the format of the OSCE ODIHR Leadership on protection of the rights of human rights defenders.

We urge UN Human Rights Council in close cooperation with OSCE/ODIHR to set up without delay a robust investigative mechanism into all violations and abuses by all parties, including the Taliban, with a gender-responsive and multiyear mandate. The mechanism must be also mandated to report regularly, including intersessionally, and be adequately resourced.

We urge the EU and all member states to strengthen human rights protection gender equality in their migration and asylum and humanitarian policies. The CS working in the camps in Greece and on the Balkan road cannot carry the burden alone. EU and EU member states should immediately start to advocate for an inclusive peace process that encourages and strongly supports Afghan women and girls and other marginalized groups. All resolutions relating to the „Women, Peace, and Security“ agenda must be fully implemented.

In the name of the members of the Working Group on Women and Gender Realities in the OSCE Region under the Civic Solidarity Platform.

Heidi Meinzolt, Board Member for Europe “Women's International League for Peace and Freedom”
Gulnara Shahinian, UN Special Rapporteur on slavery (2008-2015), Chair of Democracy Today Armenia
Tolekan Ismailova, Vice-President FIDH, Director, Human Rights Movement „Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan“

Where did the movement for women's voting rights come from: It did not just come from nowhere or was a present by nice politicians, but out of a hard struggle with no guarantee for the women to be also elected – for which women were killed, had to go to prison or in exile. And women are still struggling for meaningful participation.

How did the struggle start?

1. Women analysed and denounced the lack of rights in patriarchal dominated societies (no access to higher education and universities, no property rights, no right to work without permit of fathers or husbands, exploited in fabrics especially during war times). An important focus was since the beginning on the connections between patriarchy, militarism and church/or religious fundamentalisms.
2. Women especially of the working class suffered of inhuman conditions in this first industrialisation period (women with children), of sexual abuse by men as servants and wives in households, no right to protest, no right to discuss politics (in Germany forbidden until 1908), no independent living (being prosecuted as prostitutes).

This had to stop! So women got nationally and internationally connected and built in alliances to create visibility, solidarity and strength:

1. in political fights (first party allowing women members: Social democrats) – splits in the women's movements due to patriotic pressure – internationalism considered as betrayal linked to an eternal strong anti-communism!
2. in strike movements and demonstrations (suffragettes), juridical fights (Anita Augspurg), they published numerous articles in many specific newspapers created and directed by women; Clara Zetkin introduced the international women's day 1914. At the end of WWI when men came back, many women lost their jobs and had to go home.
3. in the Peace movement inspired by Bertha von Suttner – 1915 the Hague 1919 Zürich (5) foto of WILPF congress in 1919/re-enactment in 2019 to link history to lessons for the present and inspirations for the future) women meet and send delegations to decision makers in the world, including even the Pope, to stop war, request protection from (sexualised) violence, universal disarmament, participation in decision making in local, regional, national politics as well as in international institutions (League of Nation/UNO-Charta) – we all know without immediate success. They saw quickly fascism coming up, warned in parliaments and in the movements. Many activists ended up on black lists of nazis, had to go in exile, in prison or concentration camps. WILPFers still focussed on non-violence in their activities (continuous discussion relative to revolutionary movements), multilateralism (through the charta of the UN) and to move the money from war to peace.

Despite all backlashes, women's struggle for voting rights was a strategic key element for democratic development. (The initial power came out of a political crisis, a revolution, the end of WWI when it was obvious that men's politics had failed dramatically and women with enthusiasm believed in a historic chance for a change. The first women in parliament (elected only 10% by 90% of women) and in feminist alliances promoted immediately new anti-discriminatory family laws, the right to abortion, equal pay, social roles for survival and care.

Even if their initiatives showed that equality is a pacifying element for the whole society and that community life can be organised better, authoritarian, fascist and nationalistic movements sent women back home and celebrated motherhood as if this would be a cultural must. Several times in history, resistance against women's participation was also carried by women's organisations, academics, teachers, artists, military personals, managers such as in the 20th in Germany the "Association against Emancipation" arguing that the feminists would destroy the family and weaken the nation. For a long-term period, they kept the idea of inferiority of women. Arguments that we see slowly come back in very right wing movements all over Europe.

We all have understood that rights are not given, and so the activists had and still have to fight for every single right. And that's why we continue to research on poisonous masculinities, push for structural elements such as quota, parity, international treaties such as CEDAW and the WPS Agenda, fight for gender mainstreaming and the right to abortion and a nuclear ban treaty. We are human rights defenders, we understand security as complex human security and participate successfully in peace agreements. But we are continuously threatened, we have to recall our rights and therefore we need women (and men) in parliaments who are ready to make a change.

As a women's movement, we practise solidarity with the weakest and where women's rights as human rights are the most under pressure – stories that you will hear now. We vote for women because we are not the better but sometimes we know better what are the real needs. Peace is at the core of this struggle. We need to convince men to share, to respect us and vote for women.

Passion alone can never replace experience

Anna Santos Rasmussen, Intern at Operation 1325, 2019

In these tough times, our visibility through communication and advocacy is even more important to spread knowledge and raise awareness, and to engage more people who share our values. And thus create even more commitment and positive change in Sweden and internationally. Surveys show that Sweden wants an active civil society. An active civil society is a sign of a healthy democracy.

Thankfully, there is a lot of passion, commitment and hard-working volunteers and interns in the civil society. For which I and many others are very grateful. However, it is a vulnerable arrangement and unfortunately passion alone can never replace experience, skills and above all working hours to drive society forward. This is crucial to be able to work long-term with our frontline partners. Dedicated individuals involved in local civil society must be able to rely on us to continue their work. Because they make a difference, and we want to continue to support them to make that difference. . . .

It's estimated that 5,000 women are murdered globally each year in the name of honor. Within the three biggest cities of Sweden, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, 6000 young people live under honor-based repression and run the risk of being exposed to honor-based violence (HBV). That is approximately every sixth ninth-grader in Sweden. These results emerged from a study carried out by Örebro University in 2018. Unfortunately, HBV is not a new phenomenon in Sweden nor are the alarming figures. Back in 2009 Sweden's Agency for Youth and Civil Society Issues were able to confirm, through their study *Married Against Their Will*, that an estimated 70,000 young people lived in some form of honor-based oppression. And according to the statistics of 2019 from the country administration of Östergötland (who carries out the national preventative and counteracting work against HBV and oppression in Sweden, mandated by the government) 63% of reported victims are under 18 years old and 80% of cases concern women.

Honor-based violence and oppression is expressed in many and different forms. It is not limited nor bound to a specific cultural, geographical or religious context. Honor killings have been reported not only in India, Pakistan, UK and the US, but also in Sweden, Germany, France, Italy, Turkey and Uganda. However, as our world becomes increasingly globalized and people and cultures migrate, they also assimilate. Such developments challenge both liberal and conservative traditions which runs the risk of creating segregation. Within this context the connection between increased segregation and increased violence has become apparent. Experience shows that countries with high levels of equality and integration leads to more peaceful, prosperous and democratic societies.

Honor-based violence is widespread and affects girls and women as well as boys, men, binary, non-binary and people amongst the LGBT-community. Acts of HBV include female genital mutilation, acid attacks, forced marriage, forced travels to the family's homeland, the pressure or coercion to engage in exercising violence against someone else, as well as many other forms of physical, psychological, sexual, economic and material abuse. The oppression often consists of threats or limitations upon young people's freedom of movement and freedom of choice. The violence and oppression are particularly characterized by its collective nature and the concept of 'honor' being closely tied to the notion of female sexuality and virtue as a vessel of the family's honor and status. Anyone who challenges or defies the prevailing norms is thus considered to bring shame over the family and risks being subjected to harassment, abuse, threats and social exclusion, in order for the family or an extended collective to regain what is perceived as lost honor.

In Sweden, the problem was first raised in 1996 with the murder of the 15-year-old girl Sara Abed Ali. But it was not until the murder of Pela Atroshi in 1999 and Fadime Sahindal in 2002 that honor-based killings, violence and oppression became a recognized state concern for Sweden. The patriarchal violence against women also received international attention, and in the UN General Assembly resolution on the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour (Resolution 55/66), HBV was reaffirmed as a matter of human rights violations. Consequently, states have an obligation to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and offer protection to those who are exposed of HBV. The resolution also highlighted that an insufficient understanding of the root causes of men's violence against women and crimes in the name of honor prevents the possibility of counteracting the violence.

Within Sweden, the government has made comprehensive efforts to prevent and combat HBV and oppression and its' various forms of expression. For example, the issue was addressed in the Action Plan 2007/08: 39 and in the proposition 2013/14: 208, the Government lifted the ban on forced marriage and child marriage. Since then, the Government has also adopted the "Foreign Ministry's action plan for feminist foreign policy 2019-2022" and the "Power goals and authority – feminist policy for an equal future" (2016) which contains strategies to prevent and combat men's violence against women. According to the Government Offices website, the Government wants to carry out a comprehensive, perennial initiative to prevent and combat HBV and oppression. This was reflected in the budget bill for 2018, which

included measures for SEK 100 million in 2018 and SEK 57 million annually during 2019-2020. But despite these large investments, the efforts have had a limited effect within Sweden. And, the country administration of Östergötland has rather seen an increase in incoming cases of HBV in Sweden since 2014.

Yet, the issue of preventing and combating HBV is not included in Sweden's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2016-2020. This reflects a discrepancy between the national and international work for women, peace and security. It may also indicate that Sweden's population and its needs are not reflected in Sweden's national work for women, peace and security. Could this implicate that HBV is not recognized as a national security issue? Would the policy and work against HBV perhaps gain more power and progress if it were viewed as a security issue? And could this be a possible cause and explanation for the limited success of Sweden's policy on HBV at the national level?

In order to strengthen Sweden's work for women, peace and security, it is highly relevant that the National Action Plan corresponds to the actual population's composition and that it considers the security risks and human rights abuses that so many are exposed to within Sweden. The importance of highlighting patriarchal norms and increasing the understanding of its different forms is not only important for the safety of the individual, but a crucial issue for the women, peace and the security agenda. It ultimately concerns the maintenance of our human rights and our democracy. In order to reach a holistic gender equality, intersectional and inclusive analysis based on the victim's experiences, expertise and needs, is not only crucial but a prerequisite for any real progress in preventing and combatting HBV.

The issue of HBV and oppression is complex and requires expertise and integrity if we want to protect and ensure the safety of the individual. Therefore, more knowledge is needed about norms regarding gender, power and sexuality and its interaction with other factors on individual and societal levels. In this context, the quest of integration as equality becomes an important aspect of countering violence and oppression. We need to broaden Sweden's security perspective so that the entire population can live a life free from violence and oppression. This means a strengthened preventative and inclusive perspective with long-term, sustainable and carefully balanced solutions that do not run the risk of exposing the individual. That is precisely the ultimate objective: To guarantee human security. For all.

<https://operation1325.se/en/passion-alone-can-never-replace-experience/>



COMMON
SECURITY 2022

FOR OUR SHARED FUTURE



FOREWORD

Looking at the news in the morning we are faced with pictures showing the terrible cruelty of war, extreme weather events leaving people homeless, and reports on rising poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The international order, which enables us to prevent wars, stop global warming, fight a pandemic and tackle global challenges, simply does not work well enough. We have to fix it. For our shared future.

In times of acute crisis, there must be those who can look ahead and give a vision of a better future. Forty years ago, the relationship between the superpowers was at rock bottom. The risk of a devastating nuclear war was high. In that situation, an international commission led by Olof Palme presented a report showing that security is something we create together. More and more powerful weapons are not the answer. The concept of common security was established. That way of thinking came to play a role in future negotiations for disarmament and detente.

By taking the concept of Common Security as its starting point, the Common Security 2022 initiative has analysed the world we live in today and some of the great challenges facing humanity. When reading this report, I hope that you will feel an increased optimism about the future. It is possible to make the world better, if we do it together.

The idea for this project came from a conversation in February 2020, between myself and Philip Jennings, Co-President of the International Peace Bureau. Common Security 2022 has worked with limited financial and human resources. But because many have shown an enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute their knowledge, we have created this document together. The International Trade Union Confederation, the International Peace Bureau and the Olof Palme International Center

are three organisations different in nature, but we all share a vision of a more peaceful world. When starting this journey, little did we know of the situation we would find ourselves in when presenting this report. Some may say it is naïve to even talk about peace, disarmament and common security when the world is on the brink of a new world war. But on the contrary. Now, more than ever, we need a stronger discourse for peace.

I would like to extend a deep thank you to all the members of our High-Level Advisory Commission, for the time you have spent attending meetings and providing input to the report. The Commission consists of a highly qualified and hugely experienced group of people from all over the world. The collective knowledge within the Commission is what makes this initiative so unique. I would also like to thank everyone who participated in the Common Security 2022 webinar series. The webinars provided us with valuable expertise and insights that are reflected here in the report. To my fellow Steering Committee members, thank you for your time, dedication, and engagement. But there are two people I would like to give an extra heartfelt thanks to: Björn Lindh, our coordinator and Clare Santry, our editor. Without the two of you we would never have pulled this off.

This initiative does not end with the presentation of this report. Rather, it should be seen as the beginning of work that must continue for a long time to come. Our world is in danger, but together we can build our common security.



Anna Sundström
Secretary General,
Olof Palme International Center

COMMON SECURITY 2022: THE PRINCIPLES

Although the world is now in a very different place to forty years ago, the Common Security 2022 project looked back to see whether the original concept of Common Security endured, and how it could be adjusted to

be relevant and pertinent to our times. With that in mind, in this report we established six new principles for Common Security. These principles retain the spirit of Palme's Commission but reflect the new threats and complexities of the modern world.

- 1.** All people have the right to human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.
- 2.** Building trust between nations and peoples is fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence.
- 3.** There can be no common security without nuclear disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons and reduced military expenditure.
- 4.** Global and regional cooperation, multilateralism and the rule of law are crucial to tackling many of the world's challenges.
- 5.** Dialogue, conflict prevention and confidence-building measures must replace aggression and military force as a means of resolving disputes.
- 6.** Better regulation, international law and responsible governance also need to be extended to cover new military technologies, such as in the realms of cyberspace, outer space and "artificial intelligence".

The Role of Women and the Importance of Gender Perspective in Addressing Conflicts

Stockholm 2021

1. We see a growing lack of gender analysis of underlying root causes of conflict and violence, which has a strong impact on protection and participation of women and marginalised groups as change makers and actors in a preventive approach.
2. There is a discrepancy between the states' commitments to gender equality and the actual implementation. For instance, to report the success of the implementation of gender agenda, governments often refer to numerical representation of women in ministries of defense by "counting" women in position with no decision-making power, such as secretarial or technical staff. States are also less open to hearing civil society's recommendations and concerns, preferring to present women in the role of victims rather than seeing them as actors for change.
3. The concurrent shrinking space for women's organizing in the climate of gender equality backlash further calls for protecting civil society organizations, particularly women's rights actors, human rights defenders and feminist peace activists and their engagement in the public sphere. Across the OSCE region, we witness huge cuts in direct funding for women's organisations; measures of "securitisation", criminalisation and restrictions. Moreover, recent counter-terrorism financing (CTF) rules fail to consider the specifics of organisations led by women and the environments in which they operate. CTF frameworks restrict transnational flows (e.g. from Western donors to grass-roots groups) favour larger and often international organisations and impact women's practical work on the ground.
4. In addition to alarming increase in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is also a growing threat to women's safety in the public sphere. In many countries in the OSCE region, the prevalence of patriarchal values that institutionalise militarised masculinity, the proliferation of arms, the lack of accountability and an environment which enables exploitation, violence and other forms of extremism directly or indirectly induce sexual, gender-based and other forms of violence against women. Women activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders are disproportionately affected.
5. Conflict early warning systems largely ignore gender issues, despite both the Beijing Platform for Action and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 calling for increased roles for women in conflict prevention. Gender sensitive information is crucial to early warning systems and can reveal otherwise unseen conflict drivers and triggers. It is important to ensure that women's civil society groups are consulted during the formulation of early warning systems and to establish specific channels for women to report information to the central data collection site.
6. Women are key actors against radicalisation and violent extremism and all forms of discrimination but not necessarily as mothers but as persons and legal subjects with voice and power to act. Therefore, a priority goal across the OSCE region must be to develop concrete mechanisms which will increase women's participation at all levels of decision making and negotiation.
7. Women are also key actors in post-conflict rehabilitation, in formulating post-conflict transition, trauma healing, but also transitional justice measures and political initiatives. Yet, there is a need to address discriminatory economic conditions and support care work as a pillar of women's peace work.
8. In post conflict societies women are often killed by firearms, the gun being the most frequently used weapon. Although the possession of firearms and their presence in the household poses a great threat to security, some of the post conflict societies do not even have a statistical database or records on post-traumatic stress syndrome/ PTSD, or on the number of women exposed to violence at the hands of former participants of wars affected by PTSD.

My Story with Women in Black

Mina Damnjanovich, 2023

I was six when war in former Yugoslavia started. My memories are fragmented. I remember the feelings of my parents. Presence of fear mostly.

My father wasn't in war. My mother was a doctor and she used her position to make a document for my father that said that he is not capable of going to war. My thoughts are: who is? Who is capable of war?

I remember my last action with Women in Black: it was a women's court related to sexual violence in war: case Foca. From the region where I was growing up, men were going to Foca. I remember that after the court finished, we were all sitting together, and one of the women from Foca asked me where I was from. When I told the name of the city, she stopped for a while. I said: my father didn't go to war. But my uncle did. And his best friend. And our neighbor. And also my teacher. And my mother's colleague.

I know it is not about me, or my father. I know that it is about the government. About personal guilt, and collective responsibility. But you know, when the death is so near, and misery of choice and actions committed in your name, sometimes I can only say my father didn't go to the war.

My father was politically active, and when I was six or seven he told me about Women in Black. I remember that I was watching their protests, wondering how these women meet, how you become one of them. 26 years later, Stasa Zajovic, leader of Women in Black, asked me to join the collective. I remember that day and how proud I was.

My first activity was related to feminist peace education. We did 5 training sessions in two regions in Kosovo and 3 in Serbia. I will never forget the testimonies of women from Kosovo. I remember when they spoke about Serbian police and crimes of rape that happened to them, I was listening without breathing, and on every coffee break I was going to my room so I can cry. I didn't want them to see me crying because I was thinking that maybe they would stop sharing. I spoke with other activists about their feelings related to war, and activism. And they all told me that feeling of guilt and helplessness, compassion, rage, is always a part of a process and part of our activism.

Being a member of Women in Black, for me, was an everyday struggle with myself: I was questioning my activism, questioning my role in Women in Black, am I a good activist, do I have knowledge to speak about the war, and if I do, from which position I am speaking. Most of all, I was always wondering if I am a valuable and trustful witness to women who suffer war crimes and to their stories.

From time to time I was losing my energy and was overwhelmed by reactions to state violence. Our activism was a constant struggle and reaction to state violence. The sense of belonging to Women in Black was present from the very beginning. Women in Black were my home. My chosen family. Dona Harvey once said that we should choose our comrades not by blood, but by affinity. Women in Black were always my political choice.

We held protests and performances, against war and conscription, demanding individual, criminal, moral, political, and collective responsibility. One of the most important parts of my peace activism was "visiting difficult places." We travelled to Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo to break apart the national consensus and all forms of ethnic homogenization and to demonstrate our belief in women's solidarity and trust.

Acknowledging the crimes committed in our name, and, looking for forgiveness for crimes and suffering and bringing compassion for others' suffering, solidarity with victims of crimes, and respect for the victims' dignity, were the principles on which I tried to base my activism. These concrete actions build trust and friendship between activists from Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia and North Macedonia

Lessons Learned from Women in Black

One of the first principles of the nonviolent peace activism of Women in Black was public, clear and loud non-violent resistance to the regime that carried out aggressions and waged wars in our name, and in the aftermath of the wars, to all those who deny, diminish, relativize or glorify crimes committed in our name.

With our actions we were requesting the government to take accountability for past crimes. We were critical, firstly towards the government of the country in which we live, and then towards each other. Our feminist ethics is to take responsibility and care for a certain time, context and space: the feminist ethic of responsibility always dictates that we first oppose nationalists, militarists, all the proponents of patriarchy primarily in the country in which we live, and then everyone else.

With Women in Black I learned how to be disobedient: disobedient because we are responsible, we are autonomous, and we are free-thinking women. Always disobedient: to war and all other forms of patriarchy.

I learned how to make a link and analyze oppressive systems such as patriarchy and war. I adopted the idea that patriarchy is the main cause of war and therefore our feminist engagement is necessarily anti-war and anti-nationalistic: because nationalism is one of the most visible and destructive manifestations of patriarchy – by reducing women to the roles of mothers and wives, to birth machines, it deprives women of the right to a choice and self-determination, as basic values of feminist thought and practice. Anti-militarist: because militarism is an armed patriarchy. The costs of war, armies, and weapons hit women hardest. Militarism relies on force and violence to solve all problems and conflicts, whereas feminist anti-militarism is non-violent women's resistance to all armies, military force and violence.

The basis of the Woman in Black aesthetic is the inversion of traditional, patriarchal, and oppressive symbols and forms into anti-patriarchal, alternative, „subversive,“ and rebellious symbols and forms. In our street activities, we wear black in consideration of the deaths of all victims of war and violence, especially those of crimes committed in our name. During the wars in the former Yugoslavia, wearing black was a public act of rebellion against war politics, nationalism, and militarism. After the war, we demonstrated our opposition to the denial and forgetting of crimes. We wear black to remember the crimes committed in our name and to demand accountability. We use black in all street rallies related to wars, crimes, especially commemorations of crimes committed in our name, but also all other crimes. We appear in public as an act of condemnation of all those who create war and violence. We protest in silence because there are no words to express the tragedy, suffering and pain brought about by war and violence. We have chosen to remain silent because we lack the words to express our anger at the state of organized crimes and the denial of state for these organized crimes.

At the end, from and with Women in Black I learned what is the meaning of feminist ethics of care. During our visits to difficult places I remember that Stasa was repeating, we first address survivors, not politicians, not states, but survivors.

We create a solidarity network of witnesses: community of women victims / survivors of atrocities and injustices both in war and in peace; women of various ethnicities, lifestyles, educational levels, generational affiliations by practicing care and empathy towards each other together becoming actors of justice.



Armenia 2018



Warsaw HDIM Civil Society Interventio 2021

