

THE A-B-C TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN AND PEACE AND SECURITY

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On October 31st, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. On the face of it, this is just another Resolution which may or may not be implemented. But for women's groups involved in peace-building in war zones world-wide, it is a historic statement, with significant implications. For one thing, the resolution is effectively international law. It can be quoted and used in all related contexts, and it is language that can be strengthened and built upon in the future.

In the resolution, the Security Council spells out actions that need to be taken by states and the UN to improve the protection of women in conflict zones. But more significantly, it is the first time that the UN's most powerful body officially endorses the inclusion of civil society groups — notably women - in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements. It is indicative of the 'evolutionary' winds blowing through the UN system.

The resolution calls upon the Council, the UN Secretary General, member states, and all other parties (ie. non-state actors, militias, humanitarian agencies, civil society) to take action in four inter-related areas: **1) Participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; 2) Gender Perspectives and Training in Peacekeeping; 3) The Protection of Women; and 4) Gender mainstreaming in United Nations reporting systems and programmatic implementation mechanisms.**

I. Participation of women in decision-making and peace processes

There are two strands to this theme. The first relates to increasing the numbers of women in institutions and field operations. The second relates to consulting and including women's groups in actual peace processes.

Building A Critical Mass

This is a firm endorsement of the need to increase the numbers of women in decision-making positions relating to peace and security issues. The Council urges member states to increase the numbers of women in all levels of decision-making (national, regional and international), relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. It also calls on them to regularly update their lists and provide suitable candidates to the UN Secretary General (SG). In parallel it calls on the SG to not only increase the number of women in decision-making within the UN system but also to appoint more women to high level positions such as special envoys and representatives, in field-based operations, especially amongst military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel. Finally, the Council states that it will 'ensure' that its own missions take gender issues and the rights of women into consideration and calls for the inclusion of gender perspectives in all field operations.

What are the implications?

It provides new opportunities for senior and qualified women to enter into positions hitherto dominated by men. **However**, The absence of actual quotas for the numbers of women in high level positions, benchmarks and timelines is of concern. No mention is made of how ‘gender perspectives’ will be incorporated into field operations. There is a danger that no substantial action is taken by the parties involved. *It is imperative for effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to be implemented (by NGOs, UN agencies, governments) to ensure that these actions are taken.*

Actions to be taken...

- *NGOs can and should monitor the UN and governments to press for effective implementation.*
- *Governments should press the UN for increasing the numbers of senior women.*
- *Governments and NGOs should contribute names to the roster.*

Consulting and Including Women’s Groups in Peace Processes.

The Council pledges that its own missions will consult with local and international women’s groups. It calls on all actors (ie. state, international *and* non-state) in negotiations and peace processes to adopt a gender perspective that includes attention to the special needs of women and girls during repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; measures that support local women’s peace initiatives and indigenous conflict resolution processes, and involve women in all implementation mechanisms of peace agreements

What are the Implications?

This endorsement of women’s groups and civil society participation in peace processes and particularly the implementation of peace agreements is unprecedented. It opens new windows of opportunity for people’s participation and traditional non-state actors in these processes.

Actions to be taken...

- *NGOs in conflict zones can and should use this resolution to press for greater involvement, bringing it to the attention of national and international negotiators at all times. They should monitor and evaluate the actions of negotiators at all times.*
- *Governments, multi-lateral bodies and UN agencies should also ensure that consultation with and the inclusion of local civil society groups becomes integral to all levels and aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and management programmes.*

Gender perspectives and training in Peacekeeping

The Council calls on the Secretary General to provide member states with training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and needs of women, and the importance of involving women in peacekeeping missions; and to ensure that all UN civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training. It requests member states to include HIV/AIDS awareness training into programmes for military and civilian police in preparation for deployment. It also *invites* them **to increase their funding** for financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts undertaken by the UN.

What are the Implications

This is clear endorsement and demand for gender training for peacekeepers and civilian personnel in peace support operations. **But** without the commitment of governments to provide additional funds — these measures can be ignored or not implemented adequately.

Actions to be taken...

- *NGOs can lobby their governments to contribute resources and funds for this purpose.*
- *NGOs in troop-contributing countries can help monitor the inclusion of gender training and participate in the provision of training.*
- *UN agencies can advise and encourage governments to draw on local and international NGOs for the provision of training.*
- *NGOs in conflict areas where peacekeepers are present should monitor and document their actions vis-à-vis women and girls.*
- *UN agencies (DPKO, OCHA, UNHCR, DAW, UNIFEM) should encourage and support consultation with local and international women's NGOs regarding the monitoring of peacekeeping operations.*

The protection of women

The Council calls on **all actors** in negotiations and peace processes to adopt a gender perspective including measures that protect and respect the human rights of women and girls, especially those relating to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary. It also calls on them to consider the different needs of women and male ex-combatants when planning disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration; to give special consideration to the potential impact of sanctions on civilian populations, and consider humanitarian exemptions; and to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict, especially rape.

All parties (including member states, non-state militias, UN and humanitarian agencies) are urged to respect the civilian nature of refugee camps and settlements; take into account the special needs of women and girls; and include women in the design (management) of the camps.

Member States in particular are called to end impunity and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including sexual and other violence against women; and exclude sexual and gender-based crimes from amnesty provisions in peace deals.

What are the Implications?

All state and non-state actors in conflict can be held accountable for violations against women, and all have a responsibility to protect them, **but** unless there are effective means of monitoring actions, and creating incentives for compliance, it is likely that the violations will continue.

UN and humanitarian agencies providing relief to refugees and IDPs can be held accountable for the lack of adequate protection for women and girls, and they must ensure gender sensitivity in all their planning, programmes, and implementation processes. **But** without an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism that draws on the concerns of the refugees and IDPs themselves, it is likely that the necessary changes are not made.

No party in peace negotiations can or should agree to amnesty for sexual and gender-based crimes.

Actions to be Taken...

- *A system of 'carrots and sticks' should be devised to encourage compliance with the refugee protection laws.*
- *NGOS can and should monitor the actions of all parties vis-à-vis violations of women's rights.*
- *NGOs can and should also monitor and lobby for increased involvement in the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes in camps.*
- *UN and humanitarian agencies must consult with local and international NGOs when developing relief, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. They must also collect gender-disaggregated data to provide greater accuracy and understanding of the needs of refugee and IDP populations.*
- *All UN and humanitarian agencies' personnel must be trained in gender issues. Lack of compliance with existing policies on the protection of women and girls must be penalized.*
- *Donor governments must allocate specific funds to UN Humanitarian and aid agencies for the protection of women and girls. (At present the guidelines exist but they are rarely implemented due to lack of funds and lack of gender awareness and prioritisation of gender issues amongst agency staff).*
- *NGOS should monitor and evaluate UN agencies compliance with the policies, and disseminate their findings internationally.*

Gender mainstreaming in United Nations Reporting and Implementation Mechanisms

Although the Council will review progress in this area, it is passing responsibility for the implementation of this resolution to the Secretary General. The SG is mandated to carry out a study and report his findings on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls; the role of women in peacebuilding; and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. He is also responsible for providing progress reports on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions and other related areas to the Council.

The Implications

By and large, issues relating to women in war zones are receiving attention at the highest levels, but much more needs to be done for this rhetoric to translate into concrete action. The lack of timelines for the production of the SG's report threatens effective and immediate follow-up to the Resolution. The lack of consultation with local and international women's groups and NGOs for the production of the report could result in the omission of critical issues.

What was left out?

As a first step this resolution does offer a great deal. But, there are gaps and weaknesses that must be addressed. **1)** The development of a **database of experienced women peacemakers**, drawn from the recommendations of NGOs and governments, would be an effective means of bringing the voices and experience from the field to the UN, and identifying appropriate individuals for high-level appointments. **2)** To allow for effective implementation and monitoring, it is essential that **the mandates** of all peace-keeping and peace support operations routinely specify the protection of women and consultation with them when designing humanitarian programmes. **3)** It is important that **senior gender Advisers** who have **decision-making powers** are sent on field operations and fact-finding missions. **4)** The development of **gender specific data** and **early warning indicators**, and the **collection of gender-disaggregated data** to enable a better understanding of the impacts of conflict on different sectors of society is essential for effective planning of all peace support operations. This is not mentioned in the resolution. **5)** there is no overt mention of effective **accountability mechanisms and disciplinary actions** for peacekeepers that violate and exploit local populations. **6)** There is no mention of consultation with, or the participation of civil society and women's groups in the follow-up processes to the resolution, or the preparation of the expert reports. **7)** There is no call for the development of mechanisms that would **enable** senior headquarters staff at UN to hear **the voices, concerns and opinions of the recipient/beneficiaries** of the peace support, relief and rehabilitation operations, so that these operations could be improved both from head-quarters to field level and from the field up.

Action to be taken...

- *Governments could request the SG to consult with an NGO advisory committee in the production of the report and/or the development of the framework of the report.*
- *NGOs can produce shadow reports based on regional concerns.*
- *The UN system (particularly the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNIFEM) could initiate an NGO advisory committee and undertake a global consultation with women's groups (using e-mail, local UN offices) to gather views and perspectives for inclusion into the report.*
- *NGOs should continue monitoring implementation of the resolution at national and international levels, and advocating for stronger action.*