



*How*  
**FEMINIST**  
*is Sweden's*  
**FOREIGN POLICY**

**2017**  
ENGLISH SUMMARY

## **SWEDEN IS THE FIRST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO HAVE A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY.**

When Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström launched the feminist foreign policy in 2014 it was a brave move and a very important political statement. Since then, we have witnessed several backlashes for women's, girls' and LGBTQ-rights across the globe. This has made Sweden's feminist foreign policy more important than ever.

In this report 19 civil society organisations, all members of CONCORD Sweden, analyse the implementation of Sweden's feminist foreign policy in 2016-2017. The report highlights a number of areas where the feminist foreign policy has led the Government to take action which has made a real difference for women's and girls' rights globally. The report also points to areas where policies have not only failed to live up to the goals and ambitions of the feminist foreign policy, but in some cases directly counteracted them.

**The following organisations, all members of CONCORD Sweden's Gender Working Group, have contributed to the report and the recommendations within their respective areas of expertise:** Afrikagrupperna, IM, Kvinna till Kvinna, MyRight, MÄN, Operation 1325, Plan International Sweden, PMU, PRO Global, RFSL, RFSU, Save the Children Sweden, the Church of Sweden's international work, The Swallows India Bangladesh, the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, Union to Union, WaterAid, We Effect and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Sweden.

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# CHAPTER 1

## SWEDEN'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN AID



**PART 1 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:** In the last couple of years, the Swedish Government has given greater attention to women's economic empowerment within its development cooperation. This area has been prioritized both in Sida's action plan for gender integration 2015-2018 and in the action plans for Sweden's feminist foreign policy 2016 and 2017. More resources have also been allocated to support social security systems with a focus on women's economic empowerment. This is welcomed. However, there is room for improvement to ensure that women of all ages are covered, including women who have reached retirement age. More also needs to be done to support the empowerment of women in rural areas who depend on farming and food production, and to strengthen women's rights in the workplace including those who work in the informal economy.



**PART 2 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS:** Sweden has continued to be an important defender of women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the last year. The area has also been prioritized in the action plan for Sweden's feminist foreign policy for the second year in a row. Sweden was one of the countries who took responsibility and leadership for the She Decides initiative in reaction to the US administration's reintroduction of the Mexico City Policy (the Global Gag Rule), and increased its support to SRHR in the 2017 aid budget. There is however room for improvement within Sweden's humanitarian aid, where strategies on how to integrate SRHR in the work is missing.



**PART 3 THE SHRINKING DEMOCRATIC SPACE FOR LGBTQ- AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDERS:** Strong feminist movements and space for them to act are essential in order for gender equality to thrive in a society, whereas shrinking democratic space results in the opposite. This is why the shrinking democratic space is an urgent issue for Sweden's feminist foreign policy. Sweden has a longstanding tradition of supporting civil society through its development cooperation. In the last year the issue has been given a greater priority due to Sida's new communication on the issue and the inclusion of the topic in the 2017 action plan for Sweden's feminist foreign policy. The Government must now be consistent in raising the problem in its political dialogue and improve the support for rights defenders in the most challenging contexts.

## CHAPTER 2

# SWEDEN'S PEACE AND SECURITY POLICY



**PART 1 SWEDEN IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL:** With Sweden's place on the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 2017-2018, the Government has been given a unique opportunity to carry out its feminist foreign policy in the highest decision-making body within the UN. As Sweden took its place on the Council the Government announced that it would push for the implementation of the agenda for Women, Peace and Security. In January, when Sweden acted as chair, the Council adopted a resolution which established that sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) can be seen as a cause for sanctions. SGBV has never been accepted as a legitimate cause for sanctions before and the resolution was therefore groundbreaking. In January, Sweden also used its chairmanship to invite women's rights defenders from Somalia and Nigeria to speak before the Council. To give women's rights organisations the opportunity to voice their concerns before the Council is an extremely important act, and something that Sweden should try to establish as a practice during its two-year term.



**PART 2 SWEDEN'S SUPPORT TO WOMEN IN PEACE PROCESSES:** Soon after Sweden launched its feminist foreign policy, a network for women peace mediators was set up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In the last year the members of the network have carried out important work such as training and supporting women's representatives in conflict areas to prepare them for their participation in peace processes and ahead of negotiations. In order for the network to be able to develop and reach its full potential, the Government needs to allocate resources to its work and ensure that a secretariat to support the network is set up as soon as possible.



**PART 3 SWEDEN'S ARMS TRADE:** Sweden continues to sell arms to non-democratic countries. In 2016 and 2017 Sweden has also continued to sell arms to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates despite the fact that they are carrying out airstrikes against Yemen. These attacks have been described as war crimes by human rights organisations and as much as 80 percent of the population in Yemen is now in urgent need of humanitarian aid. In early 2017, just as Colombia's new peace deal was coming into force, Sweden signed a military agreement with the Colombian Government which paves the way for Sweden to sell its fighter jet "Jas Gripen" to the country. The new agreement with Colombia and the continued export to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are examples of actions that are in complete contradiction to a feminist foreign policy.

# CHAPTER 3

## SWEDEN'S POLICY ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES



### **PART 1 THE SWEDISH MIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY:**

In 2016 Sweden's policy on migration and refugees changed radically. The biggest change was the adoption of the new temporary legislation on asylum rules, which essentially makes it impossible for persons who have received asylum in Sweden to reunite with their families. Without the possibility of family reunification, women and children are left behind in conflict areas, in refugee camps or are forced out on transit routes. In these environments women and girls are not just risking their lives, but are also highly vulnerable to becoming victims of sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking. In the 2017 action plan for Sweden's feminist foreign policy, the Government includes "strengthening the human rights for women and girls who are refugees and migrants" as a prioritized area. This is very welcomed. However, with the new legislation on asylum rules the Government is actively obstructing this goal.



**PART 2 SWEDEN'S VOICE IN THE EU:** In 2016 there has been a lot of changes to the EU's migration policy, both through the revision of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and through a series of new agreements with countries outside of the EU. In early 2017 the EU started a new migration cooperation with Libya with the aim to hinder migrants and refugees to get to Europe via Libya. This cooperation, which the Swedish Government has approved, includes EU support to the Libyan coast guard. Thus, the cooperation risks contributing to the grave human right abuses which migrants suffer at the hands of Libyan migration authorities and in Libyan detention centers, such as torture, sexual and gender-based violence, kidnapping and trafficking. The Swedish feminist government cannot continue to support this cooperation that risks contributing to sanctioned violence against women and children.



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