

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 2014, Security Council Chamber**

Statement by Ms. Allami, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

I am here for my friends and colleagues Samira Salih Al-Nuaimi and Umaima Al-Jebara, who were recently killed defending women's rights in Iraq; Razan Zaitouneh, who was abducted for documenting human rights violations in Syria; and all activists who risk their lives daily to make women and peace and security not just a resolution, but a reality. Concrete steps are needed to implement the entire women and peace and security agenda in all settings. I speak on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and in my capacity as Founder and Director of the Women for Progress Centre in Iraq.

Displacement is a cause and consequence of conflict. In my daily work I see how displaced women and girls are affected when they are forced to flee. Many are traumatized by the violence. Imagine fleeing because your daughter is at risk of being kidnapped, forced to marry a militant fighter or trafficked into sexual slavery. Today must be about women and girls and responding to their rights and needs, promoting their rights, leadership and voice.

We in civil society echo their voices in reporting to the Security Council that we have seen no significant change in the areas that would have the biggest impact. That includes in the efforts of the United Nations and Member States to end gender inequality, stop supplying arms that exacerbate the damage caused in wars, insist on women's inclusion in negotiations, consult with women and support and invest in women's human rights and civil society.

I want to address three key interconnected ways to overcome this inaction: first, the importance of women's leadership and participation; secondly, the need for gender-sensitive and multisectoral responses to protection efforts and humanitarian assistance; and, thirdly, women's role in conflict prevention and in combating State and non-State violence, including violent extremism and terrorism.

First, women must fully participate and be consulted systematically in decision-making across all displacement settings, in humanitarian programming and, of course, in the broader political, security and peace processes. Supporting women's civil society and human rights defenders is key, both politically and financially. National Governments, international actors and donors must invest in community-led long-term solutions and provide assistance and training to a diverse range of grassroots civil society organizations.

Secondly, it is vital that protection efforts and humanitarian assistance be gender-sensitive and multisectoral, in accordance with international law. Women and girls, including those displaced, must have access to livelihood opportunities, the full range of health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and education to give them greater control over their lives. Much attention is being focused on providing immediate humanitarian assistance to internally displaced people in Iraq. However, there are gaps in addressing the long-term impact on them.

Recently, two young Yazidi women were rescued when they were bought from Islamic State in Iraq and Syria fighters. They had been passed from one group of fighters to another across the country and repeatedly raped. They were returned to their community, where they have no access to health or psychosocial services. Local religious leaders assured them they would not be further harmed, but no emphasis is being placed on addressing their long-term trauma or stigma.

Using a survivor-centred approach, we must also build the capacity of law enforcement agencies to respond to sexual and gender-based violence, including in displaced settings. Women must be recruited to senior policing roles. All perpetrators, including in South Sudan and Somalia, where sexual violence by all sides of the conflict is at horrific levels, must be held to account under national and international human rights and humanitarian law.

Thirdly, conflict prevention lies at the core of the women and peace and security agenda and all solutions must address the root causes of conflict and displacement. That includes addressing disarmament and demilitarization, gender inequalities and investing in women's human rights, equality, economic empowerment and education and women-led civil society. Militarization and arms proliferation fuel conflict by directly and indirectly killing and impacting civilians. We condemn the use of violence against women, girls and all civilians, including in Gaza, Syria and Iraq. The number and conditions of women internally displaced persons and refugees has been exacerbated by both State and non-State actors. In Iraq and the region, violent extremists are deliberately displacing communities. Women must be supported in their efforts to connect formal and informal justice systems and to engage moderate tribal and religious leaders on women's rights.

Iraq's national security strategy, currently being developed, must fully incorporate the role of women within it and reflect the commitments in its national action plan pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). Efforts to combat extremism must address the pre-existing threats to women and girls embedded in laws and social norms. The Iraqi Government must uphold its duty to ensure that the legal framework protects women and girls and ensures their full participation. The Government must abolish every form of discrimination, in line with international obligations, including passing domestic violence legislation and abolishing and criminalizing child marriage and marriages outside of the court. Iraq must guarantee the independence of its institutions, in particular its National Human Rights Commission, and ensure that they can operate free from political influence. Legal aid for marginalized and vulnerable groups must be funded and institutionalized.

All the aforementioned requires international pressure and domestic political will. We call on the Security Council and all Member States to use a gender lens to address the challenges faced by women who have been forcibly displaced, as well as across all peace and security efforts, and to recommit to working towards the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Next year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Let us make 2015 the year for progressive action, for senior political leadership, for strengthened women's participation and leadership opportunities and, once and for all, for the consistent implementation of all women and peace and security commitments. In conclusion, all human beings have the right to be safe and to live a life in dignity.