

“It Takes A Woman” To Build Peace In Syria

[ReliefWeb](#)

UN Women

“I profess the religion of love wherever its caravan turns along the way; that is the belief, the faith I keep,” says Asmaa Kaftaro, Syrian activist from Damascus, in a new audiovisual storytelling campaign, “It Takes a Woman”, produced by UN Women Regional Office for Arab States.

The campaign featuring Syrian women from diverse affiliations was launched on the margins of the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region. The meeting took place from 4 – 5 April, where UN Women joined major development partners, government and ministerial representatives from 70 delegations, UN agencies, civil society, humanitarian and development organizations, and wider international community to address the situation in Syria and the impact of the crisis in the region.

It Takes a Woman campaign, being launched and amplified through social media, aims to raise the public profile of Syrian women activists who are involved in formal and informal peace processes, and to influence public debate on Syrian women’s right to participate and their value addition in the ongoing peace talks. It seeks to encourage international stakeholders to recognize women’s role in building peace, and to engage Syrian women in peacebuilding.

While entire communities are suffering the consequences of armed violence, Syrian women and girls continue to bear the brunt of the crisis. Pre-existing gender inequalities and increasing poverty places them at elevated risk of violence, exploitation, trafficking and early and forced marriage. Six years of conflict continues to change family structures, with female-headed households on the rise. The women of Syria are on the front line of the conflict, yet, their voices, priorities and activism remains less known and heard, and they have fewer resources to protect and care for themselves and their communities.

As leaders within their communities, Syrian women are inspiring examples of resilience and determination, playing crucial roles in humanitarian response, peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Their early organizing at community levels has not easily translated into a voice at the international level, or among key parties to the conflict. For sustainable peace in Syria, women’s leadership, engagement and full participation in peace talks and peace-building

efforts must be ensured by international actors and development partners. Evidence shows that when women are able to influence the process, the likelihood of reaching a peace agreement and sustaining peace is significantly higher [1]. Reports reveal that when women are included in peace processes there is a 20 per cent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 2 years, and a 35 percent increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years [2]. “We have been working within the refugee and host communities, and supporting the UN System response to the humanitarian crisis. UN Women is also working to support women’s participation in the peace process, bringing together women’s groups to make their voices heard. Today, Syrian women are choosing to send a message of hope that peace is possible and Syria is for all,” says Mohammad Naciri, UN Women Regional Director for Arab States.

“We need to do more to ensure that Syrian women in host communities have access to legal and decent employment in the region,” adds Yannick Glemarec, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme for UN Women. In the new storytelling campaign, Syrian women speak out about how they channel their personal losses to unite for consensus building, also highlighting their important role in peace-building processes and recovery efforts. “As Syrian women, we must rise above any political affiliation and prove that our real allegiance is with Syria,” says Ahtidal Ismail from Lattika. Majdoleen Hasan from Tartous concludes: “Women are the origin of life and freedom. Without women, there’s no freedom. Without women, there’s no future. Without freedom, there’s no democracy. Without democracy, there can be no human rights.” To hear more from the women of Syria, watch this video and join the campaign on social media using the hashtag #ItTakesaWoman

Notes

[1]Thania Paffenholz, Nick Ross, Steven Dixon, Anna-Lena Schluchter and Jacqui True (April, 2016). “Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women’s Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations,” published by Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative and UN Women. Available from <http://www.inclusivepeace.org/sites/default/files/IPTI-UN-Women-Report-Making-Women-Count-60-Pages.pdf>

[2] Laurel Stone (2015). Study of 156 peace agreements, controlling for other variables, Quantitative Analysis of Women’s participation in Peace Processes in Reimagining Peacemaking: Women’s Roles in Peace Processes, Annex II