

**UNSC RESOLUTION 1325: WOMEN & CONFLICT**  
**(FROM A SOUTH ASIA PERSPECTIVE)**

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South Asian region shares a rich culture and reflects multiculturalism, intermingling of various religions and ethnicities. At the same time in the past half century we have witnessed many conflicts. These conflicts have been ethnic, communal, linguistic, development related, fight for a representative government, border disputes, intra-state, inter-state and inter-caste. The most persistent of these have been armed struggle for self determination by the LTTE in Sri Lanka & by separatist groups in Kashmir, Struggle for democracy in Nepal, where as Chakma uprising in Bangladesh, hostilities between the Bodos in Assam, the Muhajirs in Sind have established identity politics. South Asian countries given it's social structures and institutions suffer from structural violence which is killing people slowly preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Therefore, Security in South Asia not only involves freedom from violent/direct conflicts but traditional security issues as well such as individual dignity, water security, environmental security, food security, security from arms, ethnicity and religion. At the same time South Asia is dominated by a strong patriarchal value system which ignores the voices of thousands of women. Women based issues are not considered "important" and they are not even considered "fit" to be a part of policy formulation.

**WOMEN AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA**

In no society women are secure or treated equally to men. From childhood through adulthood they are abused because of their gender. In many parts of the world women and girls are fed less than men and boys, have fewer opportunities to secure an economic livelihood not because they are less capable but the societal structure is such. They receive less education; have no access to proper healthcare which increases their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other life threatening diseases.

Various case studies of some selected South Asian countries:

**AFGANISTAN:** Afghanistan is still in an unstable situation after the attack on Taliban by the US government. There is a grave concern that the initial positive efforts supporting reconstruction in the country are diminishing with the new international focus on Iraq. There are tensions between the Pashto- and Persian-speaking communities. Persian women are being encouraged and included in the peace process, yet the majority of Pashto-speaking women continue to be marginalized. This discrimination is also seen as being linked to religious affiliation, since the Pashto-speaking community is also part of the more extreme Pathan groups that are based in the majority rural areas of the country.

**Burma:** The militarization of Burma continues to intensify. In the last decade the regime has increased the size of its military which has led to a direct and violent impact on women in Burma - sexual violence by the regime is an integral part of it's strategy to subjugate Burmese people and to control and. Ethnic women are targets of a military strategy against the population which involves the rape, torture and murder.

**India:** The rapid growth of fundamentalism, combined with 'communalism' and other factors in India, has led to an increasing number of human-rights violations targeting specific ethnic or religious sectors of the population. Caste was identified as an obstacle to effective mobilization, Caste also affects all religious groups, so promoting and observing human rights involves challenging this social system, which in practice is still the foundation of inequality in India.

**Nepal:** Exclusion, discrimination and marginalization based on ethnicity, gender, caste, class, religion and geographic location underpin the conflict, resulting in unequal access to resources, opportunities, justice, citizenship, basic needs and rights are the major issues.

Nepal is also heavily influenced by international aid that has also created some dependency, contributing to the demise of traditional community support systems. Human rights violations are in the form of: Extra-judicial killings, Disappearances, Rape (with increasing impunity), Torture, Illegal detention  
Absence of, or limited humanitarian support (government and international) Increased militarization and the war on terrorism, which have impacted on the collapse of national and local justice systems and democratic institutions  
Women therefore have few 'safe spaces' for talking, venting and healing

**Pakistan:** Concerns centre around the rise of fundamentalism and militarization. In Pakistan, the military regime is opposed to democratic forces resulting in religious fundamentalist parties coming to power. The impact of this is an increase in religious-motivated Killings (honor killings), along with greater marginalization of women and restrictions on their mobility. Currently parliament is 17 per cent women, but grass-roots women are largely underrepresented.

**Sri Lanka:** Priority issues affecting women include:

The lack of participation by women in the formal peace process, Human-rights abuse such as custodial torture, disappearances, state killings, custodial rape, continued recruitment of child soldiers ethnic and religious conflicts, violent and discriminatory patriarchal practices, resolutions and the Five-Year Development Plans do not reach the grass-roots, lack of inclusion of widows, the lack of commitment to gender specific needs was generally reflected by the lack of allocation of resources. There is also prevailing wage discrepancy for women, especially in the agricultural sector. Women's wages are half that of men when they work as laborers during harvest time.

Some common issues which effect South Asian women, in times of peace and conflict are:

- Trafficking (in weapons, humans, drugs)
- Sexual and other types of violence in conflict, especially violence against women
- Vulnerability to the spread of HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases, especially during conflict
- Religious fundamentalism
- Arms race
- Domestic violence
- Lack of financial assistance to working groups/NGOs

Conscription of men resulting in a double burden on women during conflicts and peace times.  
Survival prostitution  
Isolation of women's organizations from each other and from other groups  
Protection needs of victims, refugees, migrants and witnesses  
Lack of justice for women  
Honor killings  
Women being used as religious subjects  
Lack of recognition by the government

Various UN security reports show that 90% of war casualties are civilians and amongst them majority are women, children and old people. Entire communities suffer from the consequences of war but women and girls are particularly affected because of the status that they are granted in our society. During the time of conflict their bodies become markers of their religion/ethnicity/caste and gender, a battleground. They are raped, forced to undergo sterilization, other forms of violence include sexual slavery, forced pregnancy & are forced into prostitution.

Post Conflict, in refugee camps, women are very vulnerable and abuse against them is common. Women relating to personal hygiene have special needs and need proper sanitation in the forms of cleaning areas and sanitary pads.

**Rape as a powerful weapon:** During ethnic cleansing, rape is sometimes used as a war tactic either to produce children particular of an ethnic origin or to prove to the enemy men that they cannot protect their women. Rape is a serious crime against humanity and it is now prohibited by international law. But it is still occurring. Women who are the victims of rape or other kinds of trauma during war need help to process their traumas to avoid long-lasting psychological problems. In many cultures, rape is seen as shameful and the victims are ostracized. Rape is used to intimidate, conquer, expel, humiliate or control women and their communities in times of war or internal conflict. Rape is committed by all parties to a conflict, although in some conflicts, AI has found evidence that rape was overwhelmingly committed by one side against the other.

After war, many women are left as widows and single parents. Often their houses have been destroyed. They need help to continue their lives, special support to rebuild their house and job training to support their families. Women are often not offered the scarce jobs in war-torn societies because employment opportunities are reserved for de-mobilized soldiers. Widows should also be allotted priority as they need income to provide for their children.

At the same time, during times of conflicts women also assume the role of ensuring livelihood of their families amongst the chaos and destruction but it is mostly short lived because once the war is over they are forced back into their traditional roles as "mothers" and "wives" and continue to face the brunt of a post conflict society which makes them even more vulnerable to violence inside their homes and

outside. They have no agency to voice their opinions because they are viewed simplistically as camp followers, wives and mothers of combatants. Not as active participants in peace process.

There are six categories of women in a conflict situation:

Women as relatives of armed activist, the wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, partners of those in struggle either by choice or compulsion and targeted by the state or the opposing side.

Women relatives of state armed forces and state officials who have no choice in the matter who remain invisible and forgotten.

Women militants of combatants are women who are actively involved in the struggle, either by choice or coercion or who are participating because of force of circumstance (In case of LTTE, Kashmir and ULFA, there are many women militants because of very few able men left in the year long wars)

Women as shelter providers to combatants either as sympathizers or through coercion and are extremely vulnerable.

Women as victims of sexual and physical abuse could be innocent, uninvolved civilians and belong to any age group and are caught in the crossfire between armed militants and armed forces.

Women as peace negotiators who take initiative in violence prone and actively violent conflicts who may or may not be supported by the community.

(Paper by Roshmi Goswami "women and armed conflict: ground realities in the north east" WISCOMP & KVINNA TILL KVINNA: WOMEN' EMPWOERMENT PROJECT)

#### **ARE WOMEN INHERENTLY PEACEFUL?**

National security, military and war have traditionally been male domains. The policies pertaining to these have been executed and narrated by men. Does that mean women are inherently peaceful and they are always the victims and never the perpetrators of violence? Not really. As we have seen in the case of many conflicts in South Asia such as Sri Lanka, North East, Kashmir where women have actively taken part in perpetrating violence either by choice or coercion. Also if we take the examples of women as communal subjects as in case of Rashtriya Sewaika Samiti in India, and female suicide squads of LTTE? It is seen that some of these women are co-erced into violence but also enter the arena out of "choice" which is initially liberating, it frees them from the traditional constraints of marriage and domesticity and enables entry into a male dominated public space which still confirms to the patriarchal values. Societies are too often characterized by traditional and patriarchal values that accentuate the belief that women are incapable of taking part in political power structures and decision-making bodies. Often, men are not aware of their own oppressive methods that have been fine-tuned for generations and the structural inequalities are not visible. Women are not peaceful by nature, but tradition casts women and men in completely different roles. Women can equally be war prone as men and men can be equally peace loving as women.

However, because women can be regarded as potential bearers of peace building activities it is worth experimenting with more and more women on the negotiating table.

(Peace Work, ed. Radhika Coomaraswamy & Dilrukshi Fonseka; Women Unlimited: 2004 - Doing Peace: Women Resist Daily Battles in South Asia by Ritu Menon & Is feminity inherently peaceful?: The construction of feminity in war, Inger Skjelbaek)

### **WHY ARE WOMEN NECESSARY IN A PEACE PROCESS & WHY DO WE NEED A RESOLUTION TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS?**

In many parts of the world women seldom have sufficient resources to actively organize nor the time to care about anything else than daily survival (there are a number of women headed households in South Asia). This is particularly evident during and after war and armed conflict when families lose the men. Women get caught in an endless circle where the lack of time, money and self-reliance makes change close to impossible. In order to break this pattern of exclusions and domination, women must be given the opportunity to participate in, and take responsibility for, shaping societies. Women are particularly vulnerable during and after armed conflict, but the situation also creates a unique opportunity for them to take part in creating new societies from the ruins of the old. Women possess valuable knowledge of the needs that exist based on their own experience, which must be utilized if justice and stability are to be achieved. Men must be taught to understand women's reality, learn to see and make use of the expertise that women possess and acknowledge their right to participate in decision-making. Even now when women are being widely recognized as effective agents of peace, they still have little access to power and peace negotiations.

Sustainable development and lasting peace are not possible without cooperation between women and men. It's has been observed that societies where women are relatively equal to men are less prone to violent conflicts. It's not possible to achieve development targets or for peace processes to succeed without the equal participation and full involvement of women.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 is the basis for international agreements about human rights. As time passes, it has become evident that this instrument does not treat women and men in an equal fashion and that it lacks provisions needed to protect women from discrimination. In the Declaration, there is no guarantee for women to vote or to own property, and there is no protection against discrimination in the work-place. Nor is there protection against abuses such as rape, genital mutilation, or the burning of widows. In the old fashioned language of the Declaration, it says that people shall live together "in a spirit of brotherhood," which explicitly excludes women. Due to these shortcomings, the Declaration needs to be strengthened with respect to gender equality.

(KVINNA TILL KVINNA: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECT)

### **WHAT IS RESOLUTION 1325?**

Women are routinely overlooked when formal peace negotiations begin. In **Bosnia** the 1995 Dayton peace talks marking an end to three years of civil war that brutally affected women did not involve women. The 1996 peace accord in **Sierra Leone** after five and a half years of civil war with high levels of violence against women didn't mention women's rights or their interests. During peace negotiations in 1998 women were prohibited from joining these talks. Despite contributions by women in the Pacific, in particular Bougainville, Fiji and the Solomon Islands during these countries recent conflicts, women remain outside of the formal decision arena on peace and security issues.

Security Council resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted during the Namibian Presidency of the Security Council on 31 October 2000. It is a watershed political framework that makes women - and a gender perspective - relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies. Resolution 1325 is a validation of over 20 years of women's struggles, advocacy and persistent lobbying.

The resolution talks about Participation, Prevention and Protection of women at all levels. 1325 is particularly important in regions that have a history dominated by conflict, local, national and international societies and become powerful participants rather than powerless victims.

If we are able to implement it fully, it will be one of the most holistic resolutions covering a wide range of issues: Inclusion of women in political process, Inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes, against Rape, against caste based violence on women, Displacement, state sponsored torture, disarmament, trafficking, religious based violence, border disputes, impact of small arms and small weapons on women,

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Resolution 1325 is seen as "water shed" that makes a gender perspective relevant to any peace process. The resolution builds on a number of global policy documents. Among them are resolutions that focus on refugees, children and armed conflict and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, as well as the Geneva Conventions, the Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**CEDAW:** The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly. Often described as an international bill of rights for women it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination

To incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women  
To establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination

To ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises.  
The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life - including the right to vote and to stand for election - as well as education, health, reproductive rights of women, employment, family relationships and marriage.

(For full text refer to:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>)

**Beijing declaration and platform for action (1995):** It seeks to promote women's contribution to foster a culture of peace. It provides protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and to the women of the colonies and non self governing territories. It also calls for a reduction in military expenditure and incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.

(For full text refer

to:<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/UN1325/Beijingchpt.html>)

**ECOSOC agreed conclusions on Gender mainstreaming (1997):** It called for "Mainstreaming of the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system". It addresses issues of mainstreaming by intergovernmental bodies and the United Nations system and proposes recommendations for consideration by the Council.

(For full text: <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm>)

**Windhoek Declaration & Namibia plan of action:** It called for an equal access and participation by women and men should be ensured in the area of conflict at all levels and stages of the peace process and negotiations. A need was pointed out for more women appointments for peace support operations and mainstreaming of gender issues and construction of gender units. Actions should taken to increase public awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace support operations. In this connection, the media should play a significant and positive role.

(For full text:

<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/pkwatch/WindhoekDeclaration.html>)

#### **WHAT DOES RESOLUTION 1325 SAY?**

Acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflicts on non-combatants including women and children civilians who comprise a vast majority of displaced persons. Women and children are not only caught in crossfire but are specifically targeted by armed groups.

Recognizes the important role of women in prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building and stressed the important of their increased participation in all aspects of the conflict prevention.

Implementation of already existing international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts. Such as:

- Geneva Conventions of 1949 & 1977 which accord women general protection equal to that of men.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Internal Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural rights (1966), Vienna Conference (1993) call for recognition of women's rights as human rights.
- Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) "women's bill of rights" (refer to the previous theme for details)

Emphasizes on mine clearance and mine awareness programmes. Women in 80 countries live daily with the threat of uncleared landmines and unexplored ordnance. Women and girls have particular needs and insights regarding landmine action. Women and girls who lose limbs from mine injuries face social exclusion and there is also lack of treatment.

Recognizes the urgent need to include a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations by taking note of recommendations contained in Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action. (refer to the previous theme for details)

Recognizes that peace is linked with equality between women and men. If women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically, economically and represented at all levels of decision making.

Recognizes the need for institutions and actors to have the right information and understanding in order to protect and involve women in peace processes.

Draws attention to the lack of data available on the impact of conflict on women. Data lacks in monitoring, reporting, evaluation and research on the political, humanitarian and human rights aspects of conflicts. Also role of women at the national and regional level to build peace is not recognized by state parties.

Urges the Secretary General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue offices. Member states should put forward women as candidates.

Urges to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations based operations and especially among military observers, civil police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

Incorporation of a gender perspective in all peace keeping operation which means gender perspective should be considered in analyses, policy and strategy development and planning of peace support operations as well as training programmes.

UN should collaborate with member states to provide supplementary training, for peace building operations, to be responsive to the cultural milieu in which they will function.

Urges the member states to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender sensitive training efforts and support the efforts of UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNHCR with financial, technical and logistical resources.

Peace agreements should take into account some basic issues such as power sharing arrangements, economic reconstruction, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers, legislation on human rights, access to land, education and health and the status of displaced people and the empowerment of civil society. This will lead to transformation of structures and relationships within the society.

Calls on all parties to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender based violence particularly rape and sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation. This makes them vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Emphasize the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to persecute those responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes including violence against women and girls.

Ensure security and protection of refugees in camps and settlements and to look into special needs of women and girls. Women should actively participate in the design of camps and settlements.

Inclusion of women in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for prevention of new violence since their inclusion makes the process function better.

To increase the number of UN's missions to conflict areas to collaborate with the civil society and to gain a better understanding of the conflict.

(For detailed UNSC Resolution 1325:  
<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html>)

#### **TOOLS TO ADVOCATE RESOLUTION 1325**

Key players in adoption and implementation of the resolution are the:

- NGO's
- Civil Society groups
- Media
- UN agencies
- government organizations.

Key tools are:

- **Access to basic resources like:** Tensions often arose out of lack of resources. Basic needs of a section of the population are not fulfilled. water and land, schools, health facilities and transport, electricity and roads, social and political awareness raising on gender issues
- **Education of women and girls:** Education does not only mean basic literacy but empowerment. Women need to be conscious of their own need to be literate and educated so that they can participate fully in brokering peace, decision-making and in post-conflict reconstruction.
- **Economic security:** Women need to be given more economic independence so that they can regulate and be in control of their own income.

- **Civil society involvement:** Workshops, seminars and conferences for journalists, media persons, students need to be organized by civil society groups. Civil society can play an important role in questioning the government and making it answerable. The dealings have to be made more transparent. There is a need for external and impartial monitoring by civil society, the media.
- It is problematic that all **funding** goes through government and international NGOs; with corruption and extortionate use of resources rife, there is a need to develop mechanisms for the disbursement of funds directly to local NGOs.
- The resolution and its implications should be included when **teaching courses on development and aid, international relations and politics** and other relevant issues.
- It should also be added to **policy and research papers** that deal with conflict, its resolution, peace building and related topics.
- **Media:** Media today has immense power to reach out to masses. Radio & television can be excellent mediums to contextualize the resolution to local realities.
- **Translating the text into local languages:** the resolution can be simplified and translated into regional languages.
- **Internet:** In order to reach out to young people, internet can be used as an ideal forum for discussion.
- **Documentation of violations against women.**
- **Legal Control:** There needs to be more stricter control on member states with regard to implementation of UN resolutions.
- There is too much bureaucracy governing funding support for post-conflict response. State governments should decentralize power during peace process.
- **Official recognition or follow-through of Resolution 1325**
- 1325 should open a space for women to act at the highest levels, to fight against marginalization, discrimination, human rights violations and to enable women leaders to enter Parliament, as well as in the local context to work with marginalized women at the grassroots level. We are using 1325 to educate children but also to empower women.
- **Gender budgeting** of expenditure on peace and conflict resolution is an important strategy
- **The quota systems** are important to get a critical mass of women into Parliament. They need to be supported by women at the grassroots who demand that they be accountable. India has a quota system, South Africa has a quota system as do many other African countries.
- We can empower women in other ways by focusing on issues in addition to war and peace, e. g. **inheritance rights and legal rights.**

**Learning lessons from success stories:**

- **Germany:** Collecting and sending brochures from civil society to the German government to push for the implementation and raise awareness.

- **India** has a total of 1 million elected women at local level, more than all other countries in the world together.
- **California** has been requiring political parties to have equal numbers of men and women delegates as representatives at conventions. This has led to women in each of the congressional districts attending conventions and becoming politically literate. There are 53 delegates currently elected from California: 33 are Democrats of whom 18 are women and 15 are men.
- **Pacific region:** A quarterly regional women and peace magazine "Fem' TALK 1325" intended to enhance the advocacy and action towards full implementation.
- **Sri Lanka:** One day workshops for women leaders of organizations, administrative officers, school principals to raise awareness.
- **West Africa:** A radio program with stations in Liberia, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Bissau contextualizing the provisions to address local realities of women.
- UN Member States including the **UK; Sweden and Norway** have created National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325.

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Under the UN Charter Article 25, all members had an obligation to carry out all UN resolutions but there are no formal mechanisms for implementation and there is no formal accountability. To-date, only 5 peacekeeping missions have had staff working directly on gender issues (East Timor, Kosovo, DRC, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone). These gender units continue to be understaffed and weak, as a result of a lack of mandate authority.

We do not have formal accountability and we do not have the money or regular resources to make these things happen in South Asian region or for that matter in many developing nations. In addition, we do not have the expertise due to lack of information within the mainstream institutions to cover these issues and to provide consistent advice at the policy, political and program levels. We lack systematic monitoring and reporting to let us know the progress. In many developing countries (though it's the case of many developed countries as well) issues pertaining to women and children are not concerned as "major issues". Even if the efforts of grass root level workers are recognized they are not implemented at the policy level. The words need to be clearly formulated. Terms like "rights" and "justice" should be spelt out more clearly. Also, Existing mechanisms such as CEDAW are not sufficient for reporting on Resolution 1325.

Only 1 of approximately 50 Special Representatives of the SG or Special Envoys on peacekeeping operations is a woman (Georgia). There are 4 women deputy heads in peacekeeping missions: (Guatemala, DRC, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Specific quotas have not been set up.

Many states have signed and ratified it but a few countries are still outside its purview such as United States, Iran and Sudan to name a few. One way to deal with implementation is to punish the states who

violate these resolutions. Sanctions can be imposed upon the members states.

Talking about some specific issues such how can we implement 1325 to secure justice to women against whom human-rights violations had been committed in Gujarat or honor killings as we see in case of Pakistan and Afghanistan? There had been an attempt in October 2002 to do so in case of Gujarat but it was blocked by the Indian government and other states sympathetic to it.

Resolutions like these should not become mere paper tigers in the hands of a few elite mass or who already have the access to information and resources. More and more grass root level workers need to be made aware of various advocacy roles.

UNSC resolution 1325 can prove to be an important tool since it can work as a legal mechanism to hold the offender responsible in the public eye.

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