

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



Written Statement by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for the 57th Commission on the Status of Women (March 2013)

Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence against women is a manifestation of the workings of power. The two are intrinsically linked and are experienced through both direct physical coercion and the material basis of relationships that govern the distribution and use of resources, privileges and authority within the home and society. Such dynamics shape the institutional and ideological formations of society and hence dictate gender norms, relations, and identity.

Militarization, and cultures of militarism, exacerbate gender roles, further reducing equality, and enabling the legitimization and continuation of violence. Militarized societies and structures reinforce patriarchal control and power, all of which are incompatible with equal rights and peace. The toxic mix of militarized domination and exclusion of women's rights has severe consequences on the human security of all.

In observation of the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) once again stands together to reaffirm our position for a sustainable peace based on justice, equality and disarmament. For 98 years WILPF members and national sections have rejected militarization, domination, and exclusion in all its forms, and exposed the interlinkages among these phenomena. Our objectives challenge the root causes of violence as a means to effectively discuss prevention. Regarding this year's theme, WILPF addresses the undeniable intersections between international order, militarization, disarmament, and the implications of each on *Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls*.

Military spending is one aspect of cultures of militarism, and remains out of control. In 2011, world military spending was estimated to be over \$1.7 trillion dollars. This is the equivalent of over 600 years of the core annual UN budget. Globally just six countries export 74 % of the world's weapons: US, Russia, Germany, UK, China and France. The US sells 35% of the global total. This cannot be silenced or ignored. Such emphasis on military spending and arms production is not the path to a culture of peace for which we have been striving.

After the conclusion of this year's CSW, a second conference on a possible Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) will take place. WILPF has consistently called upon Member States – exporters and importers – to negotiate a strong treaty text that includes legally binding gender provisions. The international arms trade treaty should not become a tool to facilitate the arms trade but rather a mechanism to aid in the prevention of armed conflict, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and significantly reduce the culture and economy of militarism.

Drawing attention to the intersections of these themes, WILPF cases from our national sections are highlighted below, exemplifying the complexity and range of challenges facing our peace activists.

In the case of Colombia, a highly militarized and patriarchal society, WILPF women are calling for disarmament, ending impunity for violence against women, and the equal participation and inclusion of women rights in the on-going peace negotiations that began in October 2012 between the government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). This is a key moment for women and peace in Colombia where the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are needed, as a means to establish a solid foundation for advancing the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women.

We have heard these demands echoed during recent WILPF consultations with women of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). For decades WILPF has stood in solidarity with the women of Palestine. The structural violence and systematic discrimination experienced by women living under occupation is in itself of great consequence. Palestinian women are denied their human rights; citizens are shot on sight, their people are imprisoned without trial, their homes are demolished and land confiscated. The Palestinian woman who stands at the centre of her family and cultural life will remain unable to offer any quality of life for herself or future generations as long as the current status quo of occupation is viewed as acceptable. Occupation is a direct form of violence against women and must be ended. The UN and international community must implement all agreements, including resolutions protecting the unalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as to ensure a path to peace in the region.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the suffering of Congolese women living amid the daily realities of conflict highlights that the use of violence towards women is being used as a part of military strategies as rape is used as war weapon to terrorize, threaten, silence and humiliate. WILPF-DRC calls for strategies confronting violence against women that address root causes including the exploitation of natural resources, the proliferation of weapons and the lack of justice.

In Costa Rica, a country without an army, women experience increased displays of police action that resemble more military oppression than police work. Protection of the culture of peace, which Costa Ricans have identified with, is fundamental in the effort to prevent violence against women.

Economic interests and the international arms trade continue to fuel the massive slaughter of civilians in many contexts today. In Syria, States and the international community have failed to protect civilians, while some continue to profit from selling arms and weapons without accountability. This has deliberately fuelled the conflict while directly impacting civilians, where women and girls face the devastating consequences of conflict, displacement and violence. Women and girls are suffering a range of violations including horrendous acts of torture in the name of "honor". Preventing violence against women must address these acts and arms must not be sold where such heinous acts are being perpetrated with impunity.

In Pakistan, WILPF members are actively protesting the heinous attack against Malala Yousafzai, while also demanding girls right to education, and the right of women and girls to live free from

violence. Education, including peace education, is fundamental to the prevention and elimination of violence against women.

The Elimination and Prevention of all Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls requires a multifaceted and integrated approach. WILPF members are united in urging States, the United Nations and all relevant actors to support us by prioritizing the prevention of violence and conflict, while also challenging militarism and its negative impacts.

WILPF recommends the CSW and international community:

- *Protect women's human rights and promote the full implementation of all obligations.* We demand the participation of women and gender equality, particularly through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). WILPF also call for the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.
- *Prioritize the prevention of conflict and invest in peace by developing programmes for economic, environmental, political and social justice.* This can be achieved through prioritization, support, and funding of nongovernmental organizations and their efforts including: prevention of sexual and gender based violence, guaranteed access to justice, and strengthening a culture of peace.
- *Reduce Military spending and promote full implementation of Critical Area E of the Beijing Platform for Action* which links gender equality and the call for the control of excessive arms expenditure, and Article 26 of the UN Charter calling least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.
- *Stop selling arms* that inherently violate human rights at home and abroad and support renewed negotiations for an international Arms Trade Treaty, including mechanisms to ensure criteria preventing sale of arms where gender-based violence is perpetrated.
- *Make disarmament a reality and strengthen and implement disarmament agreements* including: the Firearms Protocol, the Programme of Action on small arms, and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. This should include efforts to work on gender, peace and security (SCR 1325 & 1820), by ensuring that action plan monitoring and evaluation efforts incorporate gender-equity in decision-making bodies, draw on gender-experts, provide for women to be involved in the process, and compile sex-disaggregated data on provisions, management, use, and impacts of small arms.
- *Integrate Human Rights, Women Peace and Security, and Disarmament frameworks and mechanism* so that prevention can work more effectively. Strengthen work to prevent violence against women and work on gender and women's rights, in all mandates.
- *Ensure and support women's full and equal participation* in all peace negotiations, and processes. It is imperative to increase the number of representative women with all parts of security reform processes and disarmament initiatives, as dictated by SCR 1325. WILPF urges States to refuse to support any peace negotiations that do not have women as legitimate participants around the table.