



Security Council Resolution 1325: An Instrument for Peace through Gender Equality

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In October 2010, the 10th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the United Nations conducted a session to review progress in its implementation and the Non-governmental Community organized a Peace Fair, celebrating the resolution, lamenting the failure of member states and the UN itself to vigorously pursue its full implementation, and to consider next steps moving toward achieving its purposes.

In the weeks of stocktaking following the anniversary, and the passage of Resolution 1960, NGO activists, including a number who had been involved in initiating, drafting and adoption of 1325, perceived a trend overshadowing the core intent of the resolution to advance the political empowerment of women to assure gender equality in dealing with all matters of peace and security. While that trend embodied in resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 toward ever stronger measures to overcome violence against women in armed conflict, is in itself a necessary end, it is not sufficient to the fundamental circumstance that makes it so difficult to eliminate all forms of gender violence, especially that which results from the interstate system of militarized security, women's essential exclusion from security policy making.

Certainly sexual violence is (and always has been) among the most horrendous aspects of armed conflict and must be addressed with the most immediate and strong measure possible. But such measures are in a sense palliatives, in the words of Cora Weiss focused on "making war safe for women." Some who undertook the first steps toward 1325 had intended it as a step toward the ultimate abolition of war. Unless and until this goal is clearly articulated, and the essential need for women's equal political participation to achieve that goal is recognized, the need for one palliative measure after the other will continue.

So, too we must recognize that the goal of authentic, sustainable peace is not one that will be met by the cessation of individual conflicts. Peace means the renunciation of armed conflict as a means of achieving the ends or "defending the security" of states or other political actors. It means constantly focusing on the core purpose of the United Nations "to end the scourge of war." As the essential purpose of all disarmament negotiations was declared in 1962 to be general and complete disarmament, a fundamental requirement of peace, so, too the overarching purpose of all steps toward mitigating militarized violence, should achieving sustainable peace. Peace established with the institutional changes required to maintain a demilitarized security system will be sustainable if it is just. It will be just only if it derives from a commitment to universal human rights and (also as stated in the UN Charter) the equal rights of men and women.



These principles are integral to 1325, but their centrality is often lost in the focus on women as victims of armed conflict without equal emphasis on women and makers of peace and participants in deriving and maintaining a system of human rather than state security. Shifting the focus of the security discourse from the protection of the state to the realization of human well-being makes it imminently clear that security is not possible without the full and equal participation of women. These are some of the concerns which lead some in the NGO community to bring renewed attention to the wider meanings of the elements of prevention and participation, now overshadowed by the protection components of 1325. The resolution sought to encourage steps toward the prevention of armed conflict through the participation of women. The purposes of the subsequent resolution are welcome developments in the articulation of the urgency of the issues of gender violence. But the language of those resolutions gives little attention to women's participation, and less to a commitment to prevent armed conflict with a strategy for the abolition of war. It was with the hope of opening further discussion on the equally urgent need to include women and civil society in all peace and security negotiations and in the drafting and discussion of any further resolutions derived from 1325 that a few from the civil society community working with the United Nations drafted an "Open Letter to the Security Council on Resolution 1960." Like 1325 itself, the letter is an example of global citizenship in action and the possibilities for non-governmental agents to take action to influence, even to formulate international standards intended as instruments of peace. It has a place in our curricula.

As a peace educator, I see this Open Letter and Security Council Resolution 1325 to be along the policy documents to be studied along with such others as the UDHR, CEDAW, the Rome Statute of the ICC as the examples of the possibilities for the policy and institutional changes that can move us from a war system to a peace system, by transforming the security paradigm from the state to the human family, and demonstrate the necessity of a gender perspective on these matters. Arms control measures have not produced substantive disarmament. Certainly some such as the land mines treaty have reduced the human consequences of armed conflict, as it is hoped will the vigorous implementation of the resolutions on sexual violence. But neither moves us closer to abolition. These are issues to be addressed in any program of peace education, as they will be by peace educators participating in this year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women, February 21 – March 4.

Important Links for Further Study and Inquiry:

- [Security Council Resolution 1325](#)
- [Security Council Resolution 1960](#)
- [Open Letter to the Security Council on Resolution 1960](#)
- [Comments on the Open Letter to the Security Council](#)

Commission on the Status of Women - a Selection of Panels and Events of Interest to Peace Educators:

- [Implementing SC Res 1325 on Women and Peace and Security – Strengthening the CSW 55 Agenda – 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY, USA \(February 17, 2011, 2:00-3:30 PM\)](#)
- [Implementing 1325 on Women Peace and Security: Strengthening the CSW 55 Agenda – UN Church Center, 777 UN Plaza \(2nd floor\), New York, NY, USA \(February 23, 2011, 2:00-3:30 PM\)](#)
- [Peace Education for the Girl Child: Scientific Competency for Gender Equality and Political Participation – UN Church Center, 777 UN Plaza, New York, NY, USA \(February 24, 2011, 2-3:30 PM\)](#)
- [Women and Education: Peace Education, Empowerment after Disaster and Beyond – Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office, 1 E 42nd Street, New York, NY, USA \(February 25, 2011, 1:50-6:30 PM\)](#)

Source: <http://www.peace-ed-campaign.org/newsletter/archives/current.html>