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Women in armed conflicts and their role in post-conflict reconstruction

European Parliament resolution on the situation of women in armed conflicts and their role in the reconstruction and democratic process in post-conflict countries (2005/2215(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women, peace and security (hereinafter: UNSCR 1325 (2000)), stressing the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security,
- having regard to its resolution of 30 November 2000 on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution¹,
- having regard to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, and the Vienna Declaration and Action Programme, which resulted from the World Conference on Human Rights from 14 to 25 June 1993,
- having regard to the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13),
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women of 20 December 1993², and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979, and the Optional Protocol thereto,
- having regard to the UN Convention on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 10 December 1984, and the UN Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict of 14 December 1974³, particularly paragraph 4 thereof, stating that all the necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the prohibition of persecution, torture, punitive measures, degrading treatment and violence against women,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1265 (1999) on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, of 17 September 1999, and particularly paragraph 14 thereof, whereby UN personnel involved in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace building activities have appropriate training, particularly in human rights, including gender-related provisions,
- having regard to the UN Resolution on Women's Participation in the Strengthening of

¹ OJ C 228, 13.8.2001, p. 186.

² UN General Assembly resolution 48/104.

³ UN General Assembly resolution 3318 (XXIX).

International Peace and Security of 15 December 1975¹ and the UN Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Cooperation of 3 December 1982², and particularly paragraph 12 thereof on specific measures to be adopted to increase the involvement of women in promoting peace,

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Action Platform which emerged from the UN World Conference on Women of 4 - 15 September 1995, and particularly Section E on Women and Armed Conflict, and the outcome document adopted by the UN's special session Beijing + 5 and Beijing + 10 on new action and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, of 5-9 June 2000, and particularly paragraph 13 thereof on the obstacles to the equal involvement of women in peace efforts and paragraph 124 thereof on equal representation of men and women in peacekeeping missions and peace negotiations,
- having regard to the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court adopted in 17 July 1998, and particularly Articles 7 and 8 thereof, which define rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and forced sterilisation or any form of sexual violence as crimes against humanity and war crimes and equate them with a form of torture and a serious war crime, whether these acts are systematically perpetrated or not during international or internal conflicts,
- having regard to the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols of 1977, which lay down that women are protected against rape and all other forms of sexual violence,
- having regard to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly's Resolution 1385 (2004) and its Recommendation 1665 (2004) on 'Conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women', both adopted on 23 June 2004,
- having regard to the resolution adopted at the 5th European Ministerial Council on equality between women and men, held in Skopje on 22 and 23 January 2003, entitled 'The roles of women and men in conflict, prevention, peace building and post-conflict democratic processes - a gender perspective',
- having regard to the Declaration on 'Gender equality: a core issue in a changing society' and the corresponding Action Programme adopted at the abovementioned 5th European Ministerial Council,
- having regard to OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No 14/04 of 7 December 2004 in Sofia on the OSCE 2004 Action Plan for promoting gender equality,
- having regard to OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No 14/05 of 6 December 2005 in Ljubljana on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation,
- having regard to the Recommendation 5 (2002) of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to Member States on the protection of women against violence, as regards violence during and after conflicts,

¹ UN General Assembly resolution 3519 (XXX).

² UN General Assembly resolution 37/63.

- having regard to the Council's 'operational paper' on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), as adopted in November 2005,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Development (A6-0159/2006),
- A. whereas, in times of conflict, woman civilians, like children and old people, are victims of all sorts of ill treatment, including sexual ill-treatment,
 - B. whereas in many cases violence against women in armed conflicts constitutes not only physical and/or sexual abuse but also a violation of their economic, social and cultural rights,
 - C. whereas the underlying causes of the vulnerability of women in conflict situations often lie in a general social undervaluation of women and their limited access, inter alia, to education and the labour market, and whereas the emancipation of women is therefore a necessary precondition for combating gender-specific violence in armed conflicts,
 - D. whereas rape and sexual abuse are used as weapons of war to humiliate and psychologically weaken the enemy; whereas victims are often stigmatised, rejected, mistreated and, in order to restore honour of the community, are sometimes even murdered,
 - E. underlining the fact that history has shown that the making of war appears to be a highly male-dominated activity and that therefore there is reason to expect that the particular skills of women in dialogue and non-violence might contribute in a very positive way to peaceful conflict prevention and management,
 - F. whereas, in periods of conflict, women encounter difficulties in gaining access to the reproductive care that they require, such as contraception, the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, ante-natal care and the premature termination of pregnancy if the woman so desires, childbirth, postnatal care and treatment of menopause,
 - G. whereas voluntary or enforced sexual practices in connection with which women have no access to protection may promote the spread of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and whereas conflicts and camps for displaced persons are critical times and places in this respect,
 - H. whereas women victims of sexual abuse during conflicts are rarely able to obtain the protection, psychological attention, medical care and legal remedies which could enable them to overcome their suffering and secure punishment of those who have committed criminal acts against them,
 - I. whereas the domestic violence which exists in any conflict situation is not reduced in post-conflict periods, when combatants return home,
 - J. whereas, everywhere in the world, women working for peace have used the associative

network to build bridges between the warring parties and seek justice for those of their next of kin who have disappeared,

- K. whereas women's peace movements do not always consciously seek to alter social relations and rules which define power relationships between men and women,
- L. whereas the presence of women at the negotiating table and in active roles in peaceful transitions constitute a necessary but insufficient step towards democracy and whereas such women therefore require support and accompaniment on this political journey,
- M. whereas some exceptional women have made the transition from political resistance to the highest offices of State, such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia and Micheline Bachelet in Chile, but there are still too few such cases,
- N. whereas truth and reconciliation commissions facilitate the reconciliation process in societies emerging from conflict but women still participate in them too little,
- O. whereas the initiatives undertaken by certain countries or international organisations to include this gender dimension should be welcomed and serve as examples of good practice,
- P. whereas women have always been warriors and resistance fighters, but today have become an official part of the armed forces of many countries, this being seen as an expression of sexual equality,
- Q. whereas the kamikaze phenomenon is relatively recent, limited and localised in countries with Islamic traditions and whereas few women become kamikazes,
- R. whereas the frequently desperate situation facing these women politically, personally and socially is a decisive factor in their committing themselves to this path,
- S. whereas today's fundamentalism seeks to justify martyrdom, and women who are involved in resistance movements and militant women in search of social equality are vulnerable to this message,
- T. whereas the extreme focusing of the spotlight of media attention on the phenomenon increases the attraction of suicide attacks to vulnerable young people, because of the honour which will accrue to their families after their death,
- 1. Stresses the need to mainstream a gender perspective into peace research, conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping operations, post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction and to ensure a gender component in field programmes;

Women as war victims

- 2. Recalls the importance of access to reproductive health services in conflict situations and refugee camps, both during and after conflicts, since without these services maternal and infant mortality rates rise and sexually transmissible diseases spread; stresses that the conjugal violence, prostitution and rape which avail under these circumstances make these services even more of a priority, including the need for women to have the possibility of giving birth in hospital without the prior authorisation of a male relative, or terminating unwanted pregnancies, and to have access to psychological help; supports

- guaranteed immediate access for all women and girls who have been victims of rape to post-coital contraception; considers that measures to ensure full respect for sexual and reproductive rights will help to minimise acts of sexual violence committed in conflict situations;
3. Emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, enforced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable seriousness and to recognize and condemn these crimes as a crime against humanity and a war crime and in this regard, stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible, from amnesty provisions;
 4. Demands that women who are victims of ill-treatment and violence during conflicts be able to lodge complaints with international courts under conditions compatible with their dignity and under the protection of those courts against physical assault and trauma owing to their being questioned in situations which display insensitivity to trauma; demands that in such cases the women concerned obtain redress in both civil and criminal terms, and that assistance programmes be implemented to help them achieve economic, social and psychological reinsertion;
 5. Believes that stopping the use of child soldiers in conflicts, including small girls, who are subjected to full-blown sexual slavery is a priority; urges that long-term psychological, social, educational and economic programmes be set up for these children;
 6. Condemns violence against women in all circumstances but calls for zero tolerance of the sexual exploitation of children, girls and women in armed conflicts and refugee camps; demands severe administrative and criminal penalties for humanitarian staff, representatives of international institutions, peacekeeping forces and diplomats guilty of such exploitation;
 7. Calls for appropriations to be made available to tackle by means of interdisciplinary programmes the drastic increase in domestic violence in the post-conflict phase due to the general coarsening, physical and economic uncertainty and traumatisation of men too; notes that domestic violence in the post-conflict phase is a neglected phenomenon, which is hardly perceived and yet which sets in stone gender relationships which already existed before the conflict and accentuates the trauma suffered by women due to the (sexualised) violence they have experienced;
 8. Stresses that the large number of women and children among refugees and internally displaced persons being registered by international bodies as a result of armed conflict and civil war is a cause for great concern;
 9. Stresses the special needs of women and girls with respect to mine clearance and underlines the fact that, although 'anti-personnel mines' may have been used in military situations, those killed or maimed by them or whose capacity to earn their livelihood was removed were mostly women, children and ordinary men; reiterates the fact that the EU must aim to promote adherence to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, principally in Africa, but partly in Europe and elsewhere; urges the EU to intensify efforts to clear post-conflict areas of mines, and to ensure treatment and rehabilitation of victims

and reclamation of mined land so that people can live and work there in safety again;

Women as peacemakers

10. Highlights the positive role that women play in conflict resolution and requests the Commission and the Member States to ensure adequate technical and financial assistance in support of programmes enabling women to participate to the full in the conduct of peace negotiations and empowering women in civil society as a whole;
11. Stresses the positive role that women can play in post-conflict reconstruction and in particular in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, in particular when such programmes are targeted at child soldiers; calls on Member States to ensure full participation by women in DDR programmes and, in particular, to seek to tailor DDR programmes so as to reintegrate child soldiers;
12. Strongly supports the call made by a powerful coalition of Kosovar women's organisations on 8 March 2006 for the inclusion of women in the international seven-man Kosovar team negotiating the future status of the region; regrets that so far this call has been ignored;
13. Stresses that in post-conflict situations, women's peace movements and women's organisations should receive pedagogical, political, financial and legal support, so as to bring about a democratic society respectful of women's rights as well as gender equality in constitutional, legislative and policy reforms; welcomes the various international initiatives, e.g. those of Australia in Papua New Guinea and Norway in Sri Lanka, which are working to this end;
14. Welcomes the various initiatives to create gender-specific early warning and conflict surveillance indicators, e.g. those taken in the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Council of Europe, the Swiss Foundation for Peace, International Alert and the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response;
15. Welcomes the fact that in 2005, Council tackled the application of UNSCR 1325 (2000) within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and that it deals with gender mainstreaming and asks the Council not to overlook the need to integrate human rights and gender-equality advisers within the civil peace-keeping forces run by the European Union, and to ensure gender mainstreaming training;
16. Reiterates the previous calls for effective parliamentary scrutiny of the ESDP;
17. Emphasises the importance of the implementation and further development of generic standards of behaviour for ESDP operations, due attention being paid to the consistency of those rules with the rules governing other types of EU presence in third countries, as well as the Guidelines on protection of civilians in EU-led crisis management operations;
18. Strongly welcomes the Council's 'operational paper' as adopted in November 2005 on the 'Implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) in the context of ESDP';
19. Calls on the EU to support measures aimed at increasing significantly the number of women at all levels in all ESDP missions, in particular to stimulate the candidature of women and to submit their names as candidates for positions as military, police and political officers in ESDP missions at the earliest stage of the planning of such missions;

20. Is convinced that ESDP mission planning should take into account the inclusion of local women's organisations in the peace process to build on the specific contribution which they can make and to recognise the particular ways in which women are affected by conflict;
21. Encourages the EU to pay more attention to the presence, preparation, training and equipment of police forces within its military missions, since police units represent the principal means of guaranteeing the security of the civilian population, particularly women and children;
22. Welcomes the fact that the new peace keeping missions set up by the UN since 2000 include gender-equality advisers and that in 2003, such a post was created within the Peace-keeping Operations Department;
23. Asks that those brave women who have chosen peaceful forms of resistance not be forgotten, since they have paid, and are still paying, for their resistance by imprisonment, house arrest or kidnapping;
24. Stresses the need to increase the role of women in political decision-making in national reconstruction processes, and also their political presence at the negotiating table; supports the recommendations of UNSCR 1325 (2000) and its abovementioned resolution of 30 November 2000;
25. Considers it necessary to promote the increased participation and presence of women in the media and in public opinion platforms through which women may make their opinions heard;
26. Welcomes the Commission's support for the holding of free elections in countries which have experienced conflict, and the participation of women in such elections; also welcomes the fact that women have been appointed to head certain electoral missions and calls urgently for the number of women appointed to head electoral missions to continue to increase;
27. Points out the persistence of discrimination against women with regard to access to capital and resources such as food and education, to information technologies and to health care and other social facilities, and considers that women's involvement in economic activities, in rural as well as in urban areas, is of crucial importance in order to support their socio-economic position in post-conflict societies; underlines the positive role that micro-credit already plays in empowering women, and calls on the international community to take steps to encourage its use in countries recovering from conflict;

Women and war

28. Condemns the glorification of martyrdom now being aimed at young people, including young women; highlights the fact that calls for suicide bombing missions sow confusion between religious fervour, desperate resistance to occupying forces or injustice, and in the last instance, the targets of suicide attacks, who are innocent civilian victims;
29. Draws attention to the problem of female suicide bombers and stresses that rape used as a weapon of war affects all women, irrespective of ethnic, religious and ideological differences; notes that women who have been raped are socially stigmatised, excluded and even killed;

30. Welcomes the fact that this phenomenon, its spread and its manipulation by the media are now being denounced by some Islamic authorities in the name of the Koran itself, which promotes respect for life;
31. Asks that suicide attacks carried out on the basis of a vendetta tradition and on account of political, social or cultural causes be investigated, and urges the international community to ensure that international law is respected, and to bring about peace everywhere where women have been or are in danger of being recruited for use in suicide attacks;

Recommendations

32. Supports all those recommendations which, since UNSCR 1325 (2000), have sought to improve the lot of women in conflicts, and calls on the Council and Commission to incorporate and implement these recommendations, particularly those made in its abovementioned resolution of 30 November 2000, without further delay into all their policies;
33. Notes that despite all the resolutions, appeals and recommendations adopted and made by various international and European institutions, women are still not fully involved in conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution, peace-keeping operations and peace-building; notes therefore that it is not fresh recommendations that are called for, and therefore calls for the drawing-up of a practical action programme with the identification of the means necessary for its carrying-out, and assessment of the obstacles to and monitoring of the results of implementation; calls for an annual report to be submitted to the European Parliament on the implementation of the programme;
34. Stresses the importance of participation by women in diplomacy and calls on Member States to recruit more women to their diplomatic services and train women within those services in negotiation and mediation techniques, thus creating registers of women who are qualified for peace- and security-related posts;
35. Calls for the concepts of transitional justice to be applied in peace processes and the transition to democracy and the rule of law, while respecting victims' rights, the dignity of female witnesses along with the participation of women in committees of inquiry set up for the purposes of reconciliation, and the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the measures adopted by these committees;
36. Proposes to limit its recommendations to what is essential, namely urging the institutions to seek synergies on the specific action to be taken with other international institutions pursuing the same objectives, and to make the best possible use of the new financial instruments of the 2007-2013 financial framework as incentives and means of leverage;
37. Recommends the Commission, the Council and the Member States to promote the introduction of education for peace, respect for the dignity of the individual and gender equality in all the educational and training programmes of the countries which are in conflict, so as to foment a spirit of peace and an awareness of women's rights within society there and among peace-keeping and peace-making troops, posted EU officials and other international aid organisations; suggests that local women's organisations, mothers' associations, youth camp educators and teachers be associated with this project;
38. Asks the Commission to report to Parliament on the implementation of the 2003

Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict;

39. Recommends the Member States to extend their programmes for welcoming children and adolescents coming to Member States/EU countries from regions in conflict, so as to lift them out of a world of violence and despair which is itself a source of violence, including violence against women; calls on the Council to invite the Member States to facilitate the reception of these young people without raising pointless barriers; urges that agreement be reached with the transit countries not to hinder these humanitarian programmes;
40. Asks the Commission to support the peace initiatives launched by women's associations, and particularly multicultural, cross-border and regional initiatives by providing political, technical and financial assistance to organisations concerned with conflict resolution and peace-building; urges the Council to ensure that there is political follow-through within the decision-making bodies of the countries concerned; encourages the European Parliament and in particular its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality to establish joint committees for conflict zones, comprising women from these networks and Members of the European Parliament;
41. Calls on the Commission and other donors to channel resources to support capacity-building by civil society organisations, particularly of local women's groups engaged in non-violent conflict resolution and to provide technical assistance and vocational training;
42. Believes it is essential that the Commission retain the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights as a specific instrument within the 2007-2013 financial framework; recalls that the instrument has in the past ensured the success of calls for tender and budgetary headings specific to women's rights, without requiring the agreement of the governments in place; calls on the Commission to ensure that within the stability instrument, conflict management includes the gender dimension, so that women's problems in conflict situations can be tackled;
43. Asks that gender mainstreaming be visible and for it to be verifiably extended throughout the financial instruments, in particular the pre-accession instrument, the European neighbourhood policy, the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI) and the Stability Instrument, and form an integral part of the conditionality of association agreements;
44. Stresses that country strategic plans and action plans provide an excellent channel for this gender mainstreaming, and all the more so when there is political will on both sides; asks that all ESDP activities implement UNSCR 1325 (2000) and its abovementioned resolution of 30 November 2000, and be reported to the European Parliament annually;
45. Asks that the right to reproductive health be upheld and deemed a Commission priority in its cooperation activities and in the Stability Instrument, in regions in conflict, which should be reflected in its budgetary headings;
46. Stresses the need to better control the distribution of food, clothing and healthcare items such as sanitary towels during emergency operations and asks the international humanitarian agencies to endorse protection actions inside refugee camps and help improve such actions in order to reduce the risk of violence and sexual abuse against women and girls, and to set up reproductive health programmes in refugee camps and ensure that all women and girls who have been raped have immediate access to post-

exposure prophylaxis;

47. Recommends that the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, the NATO, all competent bodies of the UN including the UNIFEM, the OSCE and possibly other international bodies with proficiency in the field as well, start collaborating on establishing gender-specific indicators which can be monitored during conflicts and which could be incorporated into new foreign policy and development instruments or serve as early warnings;
48. Believes that the involvement of women at all levels of social, economic and political life in a country emerging from a conflict should be on an equal footing with that of men; is aware that, given the cultures and social development of the countries in question, parity cannot be achieved immediately by means of such quotas; asks the Commission therefore to encourage an increase in the level of participation of women in implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) in its action plans, to monitor progress towards parity, and to report on the results to the European Parliament;
49. Supports the due implementation of human rights clauses in agreements with third countries and of the principles of international humanitarian law and related international agreements, with specific reference to women's rights and needs;
50. Believes that making the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports legally binding will make a major contribution to reducing the suffering of women, by reducing the number of armed conflicts around the globe;
51. Recommends that Parliament investigate the problem of suicide attacks by women, and launch a study of the issue culminating in a conference bringing together not only specialists but also other people with a knowledge of gender issues from the countries concerned and Islamic religious leaders;

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52. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and to the governments of the Member States and the accession and candidate countries.