



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



No. 04 · February 2020



© D.Khamissy /UNHCR, 2012

WOMEN'S EFFECTIVE INCLUSION IN PEACE PROCESSES AS AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL TO ACHIEVE A LONG-LASTING PEACE: The case of the challenges for achieving gender equality at the Syria Peace talks

Dr. Ana B. Perianes¹

Introduction

Gender inequality is a global challenge for millions of women and girls around the world, but their situation in armed conflict and postconflict situations is much worse. The discrimination they suffer increases several times over because the structural gender-based inequality they experience (access to education, health care, decent work and lack of

¹ Associate Research Fellow, OSCE Academy in Bishkek and Postdoctoral Researcher at the Instituto Universitario General Gutiérrez Mellado in Madrid



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IE Med.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



representation in political and economic decision-making process) cumulates with their situation as armed violence victims. Armed conflicts tend to take place in countries that are not considered as good places to be a woman or girl due to their high rates of gender-based violence, human rights violations or the endemic poverty.

In order to recognize the additional suffering of women and girls in violent contexts, armed conflicts and postconflict situations and to state the essential role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000 (United Nations Security Council, 2000). It also urges all actors to factor more systematically gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts and calls to all parties in armed conflict situations to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and others forms of sexual abuse. But there is still a lot of work to be done.

Women as active agents of change and leaders of positive peace

Gender inequality in power structures reduces women to victims or passive spectators of decision-making. This perception of women must be challenged and replaced with the recognition of women as active agents of change and leaders of positive peace.

Women's civil society organisations play a critical role in realising positive change for women, in trying to make decision-making inclusive and in advocating for the achievement of gender equality in conflict and post-conflict contexts (PeaceWomen).

However, their role is frequently unrecognised, marginalised and under-valued. Women are often excluded from peace talks, formal conflict resolution processes, political dialogue, post-conflict peacebuilding systems as are the mechanisms and institutions responsible for the implementation of peace accords and post-conflict planning processes. When they are indeed involved in such processes, they are often not taken seriously. Women have been historically absent in formal negotiations and peace processes, although they are active in advocacy, informal and grassroot processes that hide behind formal negotiations. As of 2015, women made up only 2% of mediators, 5% of witnesses and signatories and 8% of negotiators in peace processes (Dayal, 2018).

The involvement of women in peacebuilding is both their own right because of the disproportionate impact of conflicts on their lives but also a driver in increasing the chances of conflict resolution and a catalyst for the sustainability of peace. In this sense, robust data shows that women's participation in peace negotiations makes the resulting



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IEMed.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



agreements 64% less likely to fall and 35% more likely to last at least fifteen years (O Reilly; Súilleabháin; Paffenholz, 2015, 16). Mediation in particular is a powerful tool to change the dynamics of peace negotiations. Mediators can convey the concerns and ideas of women peacemakers who are excluded from the formal peace processes to the warring parties, empowering women's voices and supporting them for their better representation in final agreements (Dayal, 2018).

The silenced voice of Syrian women

The Syrian conflict exacerbated gender inequalities and the risk of suffering violence for both women and men, but disproportionately for women and girls (including its impact for their access to public space, education or health services).

Conflict affects women differently than men mainly because women's bodies are often used as battlefields and as tools (Makar, 2019). Sexual violence has been an issue of serious concern since the conflict began in Syria, where perpetrators of violent conflict use sexual assaults to undermine the enemy's ethnic identity. The conflict may also have catastrophic consequences for girls because they are more likely to become child brides (Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth) in conflict zones. With this regard, a growing number of Syrian refugee girls are being married because in some communities, marrying daughters is a desperate response to extreme circumstances (Bailey-King, 2018).

While Syrian women have been involved in all aspects of the conflict, from fighting, documenting war crimes, establishing ceasefires, providing humanitarian aid, to politics, traditional gender roles often prevent women from playing a role in peace talks (Alrifai and Dore-Weeks, 2018). If Syrian women are not included effectively in peace talks, the possibility of creating a truly positive peace in Syria is not real (Coulouris, 2018). Female local civil society leaders and activists must be present at every level of negotiations not only because they deserve equal representation as men but also because their knowledge allows them to address solutions to conflict and to attempt to cover women's specific needs as result of the war. Moreover, the effects of the conflict on Syrian women must be recognized and addressed. In addition to empowering women, it is imperative that Syrian men first recognize how significant it is for women to be at the peace talks to build an inclusive peace process.

In conclusion, the voices and interests of Syrian women peacemakers must be heard and respected. Increasing women's effective representation in formal peace negotiations is necessary to fulfilling Resolution 1325 demands for women's full participation at all levels of peacemaking efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace. Without women, there is no possible peace.



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IE Med.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Recommendations:

- Promote the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and other key regional initiatives such as the Regional Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security of the League of Arab States and its strategic framework.
- At the national levels, countries must continue adopting and implementing effective National Action Plans to implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.
- Gender requirements in the context of peace and security priorities must be factored in by international organisations, States and other donors, including in the formulation of calls for grants in peacebuilding processes.
- Build positive masculinities and foster men's involvement in women, peace and security issues. Women must be full partners with men in the decision-making processes about inclusive security and peacebuilding. In this regard, some research centres like the Centre for Women, Peace and Security (LSE) or Women in International Security (including their international affiliates) and the United Nations with its #HeForShe advocacy campaign are working on advancing gender equality at the global level and must be promoted.
- International organisations must nominate and appoint more female mediators to increase women's meaningful involvement at all levels of peace processes and to overcome the current and deep gender gap between men and women.
- Mediators must encourage conflict parties to include women with effective power in their delegations.
- Women mediator networks such as for instance, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, must be supported at all levels (including financially) to identify and empower potential women mediators and to share best practices, lessons learned and contacts.
- Foster cooperation and connection among mediator networks with regional and international networks to maximise positive results.
- The quantity and quality of women's inclusion in peace processes and negotiations must be monitored and data gathered to implement policies to ensure gender equality when required. Special efforts on data gathering are being made by some initiatives,



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IEMed.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



such as the Women, Peace and Security Index (launched by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security in partnership with the Peace Research Institute of Oslo).

- Protecting women from specific security threats (specially those ones playing non-traditional roles in very conservative societies): women participating in peace processes and in the implementation of peace agreements, female civil society leaders and activists are subjected to intimidation, harassment and other kind of human rights violations.



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IE Med.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



References

ALRIFAI, T. & DORE-WEEKS, R. (2018). *Here's Why Syrian Women are Integral to Peace*. UN Women, Arab States. Retrieved from: <http://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/why-syrian-women>

BAILEY-KING, E. (2018). *Child marriage and the Syrian conflict. 7 things you need to know, Girls not brides*. Retrieved from: <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage-and-the-syrian-conflict-7-things-you-need-to-know/>

BIGIO, J. (2018). *Women and the Syrian peace process: A conversation with Mariam Jalabi*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/women-and-syrian-peace-process-conversation-mariam-jalabi>

COLOURIS, R. (2018). *Why Syrian women could be the key to successful peace talks*. News Deeply. Peacebuilding Deeply. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/peacebuilding/articles/2018/06/19/why-syrian-women-could-be-the-key-to-successful-peace-talks>

DAYAL, A. (2018). *Connecting Informal and Formal Peace Talks: From Movements To Mediators*. The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. Retrieved from: <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/connecting-informal-and-formal-peace-talks/>

MAKAR, M. (2019). *Syrian Women and the Peace Process: An Argument for Inclusion*. International Civil Society Action Network-ICAN. Retrieved from: <https://www.icanpeacework.org/2019/01/08/syrian-women-peace-process-argument-inclusion/>

Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. *#YouthStats: Armed Conflict*. Retrieved from: <un.org/youthenvoy/armed-conflict/>

O'REILLY, M.; O'SÚILLEABHÁIN, A. & PAFFENHOLZ, T. (2015). *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes*. International Peace Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf>

PeaceWomen. *Civil Society*. Retrieved from: <https://www.peacewomen.org/civil-society>

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (2000). *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security*. Retrieved from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement>



HIWARBRIEF

1st El Hiwar Summer School on Euro-Arab relations:
new voices, new ideas

IE Med.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



This Brief was prepared by a participant of the 2019 El-Hiwar II Summer School on Euro-Arab relations for training purposes only.

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of its author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

El-Hiwar is a project that supports dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration between the League of Arab States (LAS) and the European Union (EU). It does so through the design and organisation of:

- Training Courses on EU and LAS functioning and priorities
- Policy dialogues
- Sectoral training courses
- Briefing sessions and working breakfasts
- Summer Schools on Euro Arab relations

The project was launched in June 2018 and will last 36 months. It is funded by the EU and implemented by the College of Europe. For more information: elhiwarii@coleurope.eu ; www.coleurope.eu/elhiwarii