



International Conference

8 December 2016 Beirut

Implementation in Syria of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

OUTCOMES



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The international conference *“Implementation in Syria of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security”* took place on the 8th of December 2016 at Crowne Plaza Hotel in Beirut. It was organized by the Euromed Feminist Initiative and the Embassy of Sweden in Damascus in the framework of the program *“Supporting transition towards democracy in Syria through preparing for an engendered constitution building process”* funded by Sweden and EU. This program supports the Syrian activists’ demands for women’s full participation in the negotiations, for installing women’s rights and gender equality as full part of the negotiation agreements and at every step in the transition, and institutionalizing them in the future constitutional arrangement. The conference featured two panels. The first panel discussed the UNSCR 1325 perspectives and the complexity of its implementation in Syria in the present violent context. The second panel discussed lessons learned from the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in other countries and widening the process in Syria.



The international conference was an important step in increasing the support to the advocacy work of the Syrian women’s rights activists. It provided them with expanded space to strengthen their discourse, collective action and demands for stopping the military violence in Syria and for women’s full participation in peace negotiations, using UNSCR 1325 as a resource and a political tool.

The conference shared regional challenges and achievements in implementing UNSCR 1325, notably in Nepal, Iraq and Palestine, and debated how it can be operationalized in Syria, in order to support women’s participation in all phases of negotiations and transition, while highlighting the link with the ongoing constitution building process. The event was attended by over 100 key stakeholders, including Syrian women’s rights defenders, human rights and civil activists and lawyers, as well as international and regional actors, UN agencies, international organisations, diplomats and embassies.

In the opening panel, Ms. Lilian Halls-French, co-president of the Euromed Feminist Initiative welcomed the participants and underlined that UNSCR 1325 represents an essential instrument to advance Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda globally, reminding that even if its adoption is not sufficient to guarantee gender equality and inclusion of women’s rights in conflict and post conflict contexts, its implementation is a basic request to reach these.

Ambassador Peter Semneby, Chargé d’Affaires of Sweden to Syria affirmed the commitment of the Swedish government to strengthen women’s rights, representation and access to resources. He highlighted the aims and objectives of the Sweden’s feminist foreign policy and its role in ensuring women’s rights and improving women’s participation in decision-making processes.

Mr. Simon Bojsen-Möller, Acting Chargé d'Affaires at the EU Delegation to Syria emphasized the importance of women's participation in all aspects of society. He underlined that political solution is the only way to achieving stability and just peace, even though, in the present context of increased violence, the political solution seems to be in a "stand still".



From left: Ms. Lilian Halls-French - Co-President Euromed Feminist Initiative, Ambassador Peter Semneby - Chargé d'Affaires of Sweden to Syria, Mr. Simon Bojsen-Möller - Acting Chargé d'Affaires, EU Delegation to Syria

The first panel discussed the UNSCR 1325 perspectives and the complex context in which it should be implemented in Syria. Mr. Ibrahim Draji, professor of international law in Damascus discussed how this resolution is linked to the gender sensitive constitution making process and gave suggestions on how to integrate a national plan for the implementation of "1325" in the terms of the future constitution. Ms. Lama Kannout from Syrian Feminist Lobby discussed the necessity of women's participation in politics and negotiations to reach a political solution based on justice and elaborated what elements are needed for it. She announced the work of the Syrian Feminist Lobby in developing guidelines for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Syria with the support of Euromed Feminist Initiative with concrete suggestions for actions and measures during three phases: the ongoing conflict, the transitional period and for the rebuilding and reconstruction process. Ms. Roberta Guerrina, professor at University of Surrey pointed out the principles of the UNSCR 1325 and role of the EU in supporting its values and implementation.



From left to right: Ms. Roula Al Rebbie - Syrian Feminist Lobby, Ms. Lama Kannout - Syrian Feminist Lobby, Mr. Ibrahim Draji - Professor of International Law, Damascus, Ms. Roberta Guerrina - Professor of Political Sciences at University of Surrey

The second panel discussed lessons learned from the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and widening the process in Syria. Ms. Bandana Rana, member of Nepal government's high level steering committee on UNSCR 1325 and an expert member to the UN CEDAW Committee emphasized the importance of the UNSCR 1325 and shared the experience from Nepal, notably ways of engaging in the process women and men from local communities and decision makers on local and national levels. She underlined that UNSCR 1325 is also a tool to change the perception that women are merely passive victims. She gave some examples of how women have been involved in negotiating peace on local level, but have never been recognized in the formal peace negotiation process. In this sense developing of a national plan has helped raise their voices and needs.

Ms. Suzan Aref, coordinator of Cross Sector Task Force 1325 in Iraq discussed how Resolution 1325 can be used to reduce and end violations against women. She also spoke about the experience of the Cross Sector Task Force of developing and now implementing the National Action Plan 1325 in Iraq.

Ms. Leila Al Ali, executive director of Najdeh association and co president of Euromed Feminist Initiative shared the Palestinian experience in developing of a national action plan on implementation of UNSCR1325, stressing that even of UNSCR1325 does not include the situation of women under occupation, Palestinian women's movement has used it to address their issue in a context of Israeli occupation.

Mr. Mohammad Naciri, UN Women focused on the role of resolution 1325 in integrating women in peace-building processes and emphasized the readiness of UN Women to continue to support the efforts of the women's rights activists in Syria.

Ms. Sabah Al Hallaq, member of executive board of Syrian League for Citizenship emphasized that the Syrian women represent more than half of Syria's population and they cannot be excluded from drawing Syria's future. At the same time she explained how the totalitarian regime is a challenge to women's mobilization as women's organisations cannot be registered in Syria. She underlined that unfortunately the whole culture now is enhancing and giving advantages to military solutions. However, military solution exacerbates violence, limits women's participation, and cannot pave a just path for Syrian future.



From left: Ms Boriana Johnson - Euromed Feminist Initiative, Ms. Bandana Rana - Member of Nepal government's High Level Steering Committee on UNSCR 1325, Mr. Mohammad Naciri - Regional Director Arab States of UN Women, Ms. Suzan Aref - Coordinator Task Force 1325 in Iraq, Ms. Sabah Al Hallaq - Member of Executive Board of Syrian League for Citizenship, Ms. Leila Al Ali - Executive Director of Najdeh Association and Co-President of Euromed Feminist Initiative

Conclusions

Rich interactive discussions followed the panellists' presentations. It was underlined that the UNSCR 1325 should be seen as a part of the broader Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and as a result of the decades of international feminist lobby and advocacy work. When referring to '1325' it is recommended to refer as well to the other seven resolutions composing the WPS agenda. This helps to mitigate some of the weaknesses in the text of 1325, in particular, the focus on women as victims. UNSCR 1325 should also be understood as incorporating a broader legal and normative framework, and as such it can enable feminist activists to support their pre-existing concerns and agendas as well as a tool to further these objectives.

- On the legal side, this framework includes CEDAW, which the language of UNSCR 1325 is drawn from, and in particular General Recommendation 30 which provides a more nuanced understanding of women as actors and enables accountability.
- On the normative side WPS includes the Beijing Platform for Action that goes a lot further on key feminist issues, including disarmament and macro security issues and calls for a reduction in 'excessive military expenditure, the importance of non-violent forms of conflict resolution and on fostering a culture of peace'.

This makes the focus on the legislative element of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 all the more important, which is why the Iraq experience is of particular use. UNSCR 1325 is instrumental as well for the purpose of achieving transformative changes through working for changing of discourse on women's participation.

The development of a national plan or guidelines for implementation of UNSCR1325 provides an opportunity to hold all parties to account. It helps to articulate a better alternative to the current measures for including women's voices and demand accountability for perpetrators of gender based violence.

It was recommended to further elaborate the link between gender sensitive constitution building process and implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the awareness raising and advocacy actions for women's participation in all decision making processes.

In other words, UNSCR 1325 has been celebrated as a political tool to raise awareness and mobilize for women's rights, gender equality and women's full participation; a tool for inclusive dialogue, a tool for furthering women's rights demands and agenda.

On the level of prioritizing, one of the lessons learned is that the developing of a national plan to implement the UNSCR 1325 as well as the gender sensitive constitution is a priority today. This does not mean that all other burning issues from the Syrian human rights activists' agendas should be de-prioritized; they should rather be implemented together in parallel. In this sense, UNSCR 1325 needs to be mainstreamed in the constitution by incorporating the pillars and values of the Resolution in the constitution and raising a broader awareness about them. This will support the ongoing work on advocating for a women's rights legal framework in parallel with raising of society awareness about women's rights issues.

Development of national plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325 can be achieved only through a collaborative and inclusive approach that ensures ownership and participation from local to national level.

Euromed Feminist Initiative and the Embassy of Sweden in Damascus will continue supporting the efforts of the Syrian women's rights defenders and civil society organisations in advocating for the implementation of in Syria of the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

The Civil Society

The importance of the integration of UNSCR 1325, women's rights and gender equality into the agendas and actions of all CSOs and political parties was underlined.

Ensuring an inclusive process implies additional focus on networking and sharing of information among coalitions and initiatives working on peace and non-violent transition, in order to broaden the process of raising awareness and effective utilizing of UNSCR 1325 for having women on decision making positions.

Among the means to strengthen the mobilization was pointed out the need to elaborate strategies to reach out to grassroots level and debate women's rights and democracy building at local level, using both 1325 and constitution building process to debate women's rights and gender equality.

A special focus was to be put on engaging and integrating young activists, including among refugees and displaced women.

Engaging and cooperating with progressive and democratic movements and organizations, political leaders and activists both inside Syria and internationally in order to educate on the UNSCR 1325 and its integration in the constitution building process.

Developing of the guidelines for implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Syria by the Syrian Feminist Lobby will help the work on broadening the knowledge and process of implementation of 1325 and its connection with constitution making process.

UN, EU and International Community

It was underlined more than once that even if the violence is escalating the solving of the Syrian crisis cannot be military. The United Nations, the European Union and the international community should increase all efforts to examine all non-violent, political ways of stopping the violence and resolving the Syrian crisis.

UN should strengthen their support to the Syrian actors in words and deeds and use all existing UN tools (and especially UNSCR 1325) to protect women from violence, rape and murder; to promote women's equal representation and participation in all decision-making bodies throughout the peace negotiations, the transitional phase and in the reconstruction phase. UN should demand and ensure the participation of 50% women in all negotiation teams and introduce a women's rights and gender equality perspective into the overall transition process towards democracy, including the constitution making process.

Applying UNSCR 1325 is a needed tool for the international community to encourage solidarity and to support activists who are promoting women's rights as universal human rights.

The EU was recommended to continue to support the creation of a space where all democratic and progressive forces have the chance to meet and discuss key issues on their own, including gender sensitive legislation and developing national plan for implementation of UNSCR 1325.

It is important that EU develops a clear vision for a long-term strategic solution for Syria that supports nonviolent conflict resolution and applying UNSCR 1325 with the accompanying ones in all processes. EU should apply UNSCR 1325 more effectively to pressure the parties to include women in their negotiation teams as well as to place women's rights and gender equality as a priority on their agendas. Ending of arm-trade for Syrian diverse military actors was underlined as crucial. EU and international community should exercise pressure to stop the supply of arms to all parties in the conflict and to provide protection for civilians.

EU should use their powers effectively to provide forums and enhance supportive environment for implementing UNSCR 1325 as well as exercising pressure on all parties to this end.