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Women, Peace and Security: Resolution 1325

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Women, Peace and Security

RESOLUTION 1325

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is an eighteen-point resolution that develops an agenda for women, peace and security. It calls for the prosecution of crimes against women, increased protection of women and girls during war, the appointment of more women to UN peacekeeping operations and field missions and an increase in women's participation in decision-making processes at the regional, national and international level. Further, 1325 outlines actions to be taken by the Secretary General, the Security Council, UN departments and member states to 'mainstream gender' into peace and security policies and practices. NGOs initially drafted a version of the resolution as part of their advocacy efforts, working in close collaboration with a number of UN agencies and Missions to formulate clear, concrete recommendations that were also open to cultural differences and operational flexibility. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000.

SC 1325 is highly significant because it is the *first* time the Security Council has devoted an entire session to debating women's experiences in conflict and post-conflict situations. As noted by Angela King, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender and the Advancement of Women, 'It has taken the United Nations fifty-five years to have a full debate in the Security Council on "Women, Peace and Security"'. Its passage is also a formidable testimony to the efforts and skills of the NGOs responsible for its existence. Indeed, it is the only Security Council resolution that has an anniversary celebrated by a growing constituency of practitioners and advocates.

IFJP brought together six people from NGOs, the UN and academia to reflect on the importance and implications of 1325. Felicity Hill, Maha Muna and Isha Dyfan were all involved in the campaign to pass the resolution as part of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security¹; both Felicity and Maha now work at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Carol Cohn, a researcher at the Center for Gender in Organizations and at Wellesley College, has been a participant observer in 1325 implementation efforts as part of a study on gender mainstreaming in international peace and security institutions. Helen Kinsella is a doctoral candidate at the University of Minnesota researching gender and international humanitarian law, and Sheri Gibbings, a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, is a graduate student at York University in Toronto researching transnational advocacy networks around 1325. The roundtable was conducted over e-mail from early spring to late summer 2003. It was organized and facilitated by Carol Cohn, Helen Kinsella and Sheri Gibbings. The opinions expressed in this piece are of the individual participants and do not necessarily represent the institutions with which they are affiliated.

Carol – Maha and Felicity, can you tell us something about the NGO network that was formed to promote the passage of Security Council resolution 1325?

Felicity and Maha – The NGO network began to appear informally at the 1998 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was examining the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action chapter devoted to Women and Armed Conflict. With many women from a number of different conflict zones attending, it was here that the idea to advocate for a Security Council resolution was first raised. In 2000, the CSW continued to pursue this idea at various meetings and events.

For the first time, the President of the Security Council addressed the International Women's Day proceedings and raised the need for the Security Council to examine intersections between gender, peace and security. The NGOs participating at the CSW acted upon this and immediately organized two dialogues between NGOs and Security Council members. In March 2000, at the CSW meeting, an NGO network formalized and began to strategically organize around the goal of a Security Council resolution. Subsequently, organizations with a presence in New York, as well as one based in London, formed the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

In May 2000, the Government of Namibia and the Lessons Learned Unit of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations organized a seminar on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations' in Windhoek, Namibia, and the resulting Windhoek Declaration and the Namibia Plan of Action helped inform the resolution. In addition, individual members of the Working Group interacted with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI) and Missions of the Security Council members. Communication among these actors increased over time, and personnel at UNIFEM and OSAGI provided insight on the political strategy that was adapted to support passage of the resolution. Ultimately, Namibia took the lead during its presidency of the Security Council. And the Missions of Namibia, Canada and Jamaica were particularly important in keeping the process on track.

Sheri – What goals were the NGOs seeking to achieve through their advocacy for 1325?

Felicity and Maha – The first was to make gender a routinely considered component in the full range of work undertaken by the Security Council – to ensure that when the Security Council is dealing with a particular country, the Council members have adequate information and motivation to include gender provisions in the mandates of a UN mission. They also wanted the SC to include gender expertise as part of fact finding missions, to visit women's groups when delegations travel to the field and to ensure that all peacekeeping operations have gender units. Second, NGOs sought to reinforce existing mechanisms for protection (e.g. Geneva Conventions, the Convention to

Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), and to break new ground in bringing gender perspectives to issues such as development of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programmes, and early warning and conflict prevention. Third, they sought to raise the visibility of and attention to women's grassroots local and national peace building efforts. The strategy was to shift the focus from women as victims (without losing this aspect of conflict) to women as effective actors in peace and peace building.

Helen – And now?

Felicity and Maha – Security Council resolutions are binding on all members of the UN – the primary audience and the most relevant implementers of the resolution. Some member states, a number of donors and those involved in the Friends of Women, Peace and Security, a governmental initiative, are eager to get into the implementation phase.

In 2002, two new studies, the Secretary General's Study and the Independent Experts Assessment,² outlined strategies for implementing the resolution. The range of topics covered in both studies is comprehensive – violence against women; displacement; health; HIV/AIDS; peacekeeping operations; organizing for peace; international legal framework; media and communications; prevention and early warning; reconstruction and rehabilitation; humanitarian operations; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).

NGOs, UN organizations and sympathetic governments now need to be collaborating to develop long-term strategies, rather than focusing mainly on short-term tactics. Short-term tactics should be part of a larger sustainable plan that includes research, policy development, advocacy and/or implementation, and is practical and realistic in approach. But a long-term strategy also needs to be framed in the context of building a social movement reaching out to those working on issues of human rights, international law, the environment, globalization and terrorism-related issues. This could facilitate a paradigm shift in thinking about security.

Helen – What does the passage of 1325 mean for women in conflict zones? How will its implementation affect women?

Maha – It means very little to women in conflict zones unless they know about it and have the security, resources and political space to organize and access decision-makers. If they have these things, they can wedge open the doors of peace-negotiations and demand attention from the international community to ensure that humanitarian and other interventions do not harm women. Importantly, they can also demand that any steps taken utilize their skills and information. Furthermore, 1325 may be an important platform or venue that could enable women's organizations to link up with other women's organizations in distinct war zones for advice, lessons learned, etc. Until gender is completely mainstreamed into peace and security, women's advocacy and agency are critical to implementation of 1325.

Carol – I agree with Maha. NGOs, including those in the Working Group, have been getting the word out through various means, including creative use of the Web, and an initiative to translate 1325 into as many languages as possible (I think the number is twenty-seven). One of the most interesting things about how it is used by women who *do* know about it is that they are using it as a lever to get access to decision-makers. In one case, a grassroots women's group working on military reform used it as a basis for their claim that the Generals really needed to talk with them. In another, a women's group had extensive discussions with their government about the resolution; they then found they could use the relationships they had established with government officials to raise other issues of concern.

Sheri – I'll mention a couple things that the UN office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is doing, such as the 'Peace Women project' to facilitate co-ordination and information-sharing among women peace activists and the UN. Through a website, the project disseminates information on the UN system to make it more accessible to local, national and international NGOs. At the same time, it provides information and raises visibility about women's peace building activities across the world for members of the UN community. Every year, in partnership with the Working Group, WILPF issues a review of 1325-related achievements by governments, civil society and UN departments/agencies. I worked with WILPF to create the '1325 PeaceWomen E-Newsletter' that is sent twice a month to over 1,500 individuals around the world, including academics, activists and policymakers and helps maintain the momentum around 1325.

Felicity – Yes, but overall, the community of NGOs focused on women and armed conflict has not consistently engaged the work of the Security Council, but rather pops up at certain times of the year and on certain issues – usually with testimony, but not much strategic input to debates as they unfold or are negotiated. It is true that there are constraints imposed by the culture of diplomacy. However, NGOs still have some way to go in terms of engaging with the Security Council to present their information systematically and strategically. Sometimes NGOs have made mistakes, demonstrating that the SC mandate is not completely understood, which can cause delegates to write off NGO input entirely. There are exceptions, but since 1325 we have seen little increased engagement of women in the work of the Security Council – which doesn't enhance the credibility of our claims to be able and willing to do just that. Nonetheless, 1325 must be *implemented* by member states, UN agencies – overseen by the Secretary General and the Security Council. This places accountability for change squarely where it belongs.

Helen – Considering what Felicity just said, what are the challenges and benefits of working within the UN system to bring the agenda of Women, Peace and Security to international attention?

Felicity – The primary challenge faced by UN departments and specialized

agencies is the translation of the statement of principles and commitments outlined in 1325 into the actual, mundane, daily procedures of the United Nations. For example, the reporting mechanisms of the UN Peacekeeping Operations and of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) need to be changed so that the daily situation reports and analyses of specific country situations prompt for gender-specific information. One way to do so would be to provide those departments, and others, with a questionnaire to be filled in about gender. Already the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA) commissioned two consultants to produce a Gender Action Plan for the work of the department. This plan provides checklists for DDA staff and outlines questions and explanations regarding mainstreaming gender perspectives and including women in their work. It's a nitty-gritty tool necessary for those working on the ground and at headquarters to implement 1325.

Isha – There is also just the political reality of the entity we are dealing with. When the Working Group approached Security Council members urging the implementation of 1325 in the situation in Iraq, we were told that the Security Council would not even discuss the gender implications until they determined the Security Council mandate. Simply, Security Council members will only evaluate 'other' issues (gender, children and humanitarian issues) after the fact – once their mandate is already determined.

Helen – It seems as if Felicity, Maha and Isha identified two particular ways of thinking about the challenges faced by the advocates for 1325. Perhaps we can think of the first as structural, simply the reality of working within an organization as large, complex and over-tasked as the United Nations and, as Isha pointed out, with a strong resistance from member states to integrating gender/women into its daily considerations. The second could be thought of as discursive, meaning the challenges inherent in formulating and articulating a definition or agenda of women, peace and security, creating a space to debate those concepts and demonstrate their importance, and ensuring that the link is made between the lives, needs and experiences of women.

Sheri – Since 'gender mainstreaming' is both an organizational policy and now an important part of the discourse at the UN, what is the relation of 1325 to gender mainstreaming?

Felicity and Maha – First, the concept of gender mainstreaming has been defined by the Economic and Social Council (agreed conclusions 1997/2) as: '... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.'

Gender mainstreaming is the tool, and gender equality the goal. Specialized expertise, training and programmatic implementation with regular monitoring, reporting and evaluating of obstacles and progress are key, as are systems of accountability by institutions and governments. And of course, resources. Integrating gender throughout the system, with very little resources and on a puddle-deep level often amounts to including the word 'gender' in reports, proposals or public information and calling the job of gender mainstreaming done.

Sheri - So, once again, there are structural barriers that gender 'mainstreaming' has yet to overcome. Does anyone believe that the concept of 'human security' could potentially have greater success in overcoming these barriers? I ask this because at one level human security and 1325 are similar. Each shifts the debate from state-centric security to human, or women, centred security and both ask: whose security are we talking about?

Felicity - I think you are overstating the human security element. Human security has always been part of the UN agenda - the UN Charter strives for human security and spells this out through valuing human rights, social and economic concerns (dealt with in ECOSOC) on par with the Security Council. Of course, Cold War policy emphasized national security through armament, but in 1999 several UN member states formed the Human Security Network. While governments involved in this network were very supportive, and while UNIFEM had liaised with this network, I do not think that the work of the NGOs was particularly linked to this network, and while this fairly obvious concept was invoked, it was not the sustaining or enabling discourse that facilitated the NGO work on 1325.

Carol - I think that the member state Human Security Network was important in at least one sense, though. Before the Human Security Network existed, so-called 'human security' concerns were seen as analytically and organizationally separate from the Security Council; they were seen as solely within the domain of ECOSOC and the Commission for Human Rights. The Human Security Network legitimized the inclusion of human security into the conceptualization of the Security Council's work; I have been told that without that step, the thematic resolutions (children and armed conflict; civilians and armed conflict; and 1325) could not have happened.

I should add that in Security Council discourse, 'human security' means something different than it does in academia. In the SC, it means making certain aspects of human rights and humanitarian concerns relevant to the peace and security agenda.

I think it is revealing that Sheri's question is essentially one about a potential political space opened by a discourse - would one concept work better than another? But Felicity's answer makes us look at an organizational entity - in this case, the Human Security Network - necessary to transform a concept, or a new discourse, into an institutional force. A rhetorical

commitment to 'human security' in the UN will not translate into changed priorities and practices without a member state network devoted to raising the issue again and again, to infusing it throughout the institution. The parallel to 1325 is obvious. It represents a major rhetorical shift, but it will require organized institutional interest groups to transform the way the UN functions.

Sheri – Yes, the Canadian government in particular was involved in 'humanizing' the Security Council³ prior to Resolution 1325 and during their two-year term on the Security Council (January 1999 until December 2000). According to Michael Pearson (2001), they introduced the concept of 'human security' to the Security Council and pushed three major topics: transparency in the Council's work; applying elements of human security to Council debates and decisions (including resolutions and field missions); and increasing the accountability of the Council.⁴ Here, the Canadian government's campaign on 'human security' was one factor facilitating an institutional openness of the Security Council to the agenda of women, peace and security.

If we could pursue the discursive aspect some more. In 1325, women are essentially victims, peace-builders and peace-makers. What does this categorization mean for women?

Helen – I think Sheri raises another significant way of considering 1325 beyond its structural implications, and that is its productive force in shaping conceptions of women and of gender – especially as it seems, even from this conversation, that it is *only* women who mark/have/represent gender. (We slip from gender to women and women to gender but have yet to slip from gender to men). I recognize that the challenges and consequences of 1325 certainly extend far beyond the structural limitations and capacities of the United Nations and the 1325 'network' of advocates – the potential of 1325, in this regard, is really enormous. Considering that potential it is crucially important to consider how 1325 shapes and/or conceptualizes 'women' and 'gender'. For example, one that troubles me is the reintroduction of women, or the justification of women's participation, on the basis of peacemaking ... why does it need to be qualified in regards to the 'use value' of women?

Maha – I am so glad that you brought the question of 'use-value' to our table. We argue that women should be included because they provide a perspective and offer resources that would otherwise not be considered. We say that this is important because it supports the kind of monitoring (by women's groups) that is essential to ensure that peace agreements are implemented as intended. Those arguments have a lot of selling power because they highlight the system's advantages if women are included. Nevertheless, it remains important to ask *which* women are included and are we expecting more from women (super heroines) than we expect of men? But if the discourse is rights-based, then the advocacy is focused on more than not excluding women, or ensuring 'how many women', 'which women', 'why women'; it is about 'why are there so many men around this table?'

Helen – So Maha is stressing, as did Felicity and Carol, broadening the debate from solely focusing on women. Yes, there needs to be critical attention paid to exactly what is to be gained by bringing women as ‘peace-makers’ or as ‘civilians’ into the conversation because it is upon that premise that we validate the presence and participation of women. What is potentially lost with the ‘use-value’ approach is that women should be there because they have a right and a reason as individuals, people, as human, not simply or solely because they are somebody’s vision of a peace-maker. I think it is politically unwise not to recognize that the construction of women as peace-makers and as pacifistic has not exactly ‘liberated’ women as equal participants in policy processes. To accomplish that, the emphasis now appears to be on rights-based arguments.

Isha – Yes, the rights approach will always be there. And, for me, it is an important and powerful ‘when all else fails’ fall-back position – we insist that there are laws that hold us equal. But I do think it is useful to employ the practical ‘use value’ argument: there are these big problems, and we must solve them and this means that we have to bring everyone to the table.

Felicity – Right. I think it is crucial that 1325 advocates learn from the women’s human rights debate. Some feminists critique the women’s human rights movement, arguing that it essentially did not change the underpinning logic and framework of human rights, but simply legitimized the introduction of women. Granted, this is a very simplistic articulation of a hotly debated issue in the women’s human rights movement, but I have some sympathy for both sides. The ‘add women and stir’ approach arose because there was so much hostility to a human rights approach altogether: so a feminist overhaul of the human rights framework itself (although undertaken by many individuals and groups) was even more threatening.

Similarly, in the women, peace and security debate, the discourse could become stuck at ‘add women (as victims/peace-builders) and stir’, with a conceptualization of women as useless or useful to the current mode of operating in the peace and security field. But 1325 is potentially revolutionary as it could transform ways of understanding how security is conceived, protected and enforced. It could make photos of only male leaders at peace negotiating tables starkly outdated. But for this to happen, the focus has to move from women to men, and this still hasn’t happened. Perpetually problematizing women, placing women, their absence or their ‘victimhood’, at the centre of ‘the problem’ of women, peace and security fails to notice the problematic role of masculine identities in security discourse and actual wars, or the systematic over-representation of men – what Maha was referring to.

Helen – Then to push the point, as with gender mainstreaming, 1325 still highlights ‘women’ in a particular way to facilitate their entry into the corridors of ‘power’. This is a significant stride and I think Felicity and

Maha are right to underscore the revolutionary potential of 1325. Yet, simultaneously the power structures that we wish to dismantle are the very structures that set the terms of women's entry. My point is that this revolutionary capacity can also be caught *recycling* rather than resignifying the terms of the debate.

Sheri – Yes, and I'd like to raise an additional concern. I worry that the Security Council could be 'manufacturing the consent' of women and NGOs in general. Even though some NGOs are working to challenge the power structures, the culture of militarization and state security, these might also remain uncontested because Security Council members may only employ 1325 when it is strategically within their 'national' interest. For example, the reference to 1325 in the preamble of Security Council Resolution 1483 (22 May 2003) on Iraq⁵ can be seen as positive, in that it gives legitimacy to advocates' demand for women's rightful inclusion in the reconstruction and nation-building process in Iraq. But you could also see it in another way – that 1325 is being used as a tool to justify military occupation on behalf of 'liberating' women.

Felicity – The issues you both raise are real, but sometimes I can become really impatient with you academics, and I think we need to be *really* careful with these lines of questions. I spent yesterday with women from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Bougainville and Fiji, who were talking about their actual – not theoretical – experiences of war and their efforts to attain any sort of access to decision-making power. Yesterday, women spoke about being reduced to getting on their knees, literally, outside the discussions they were barred from, to beg for the disarmament process to happen in Bougainville. Both policymakers and the women I sat with yesterday have a very 'common-sense' response to the idea of being categorized: *Whatever the code words let us in! Peace-builder, decision-maker, whatever argument works, let us in! Let us in so we can wrestle with the discussion at least; contest the parameters, and react, in real time and not after the fact. Let us into the Security Council, into the decision-making fora, into the rooms of the elusive place, let women in. It is the horror experienced daily which is the reason we want to get hold of the steering wheel of the Security Council. It is because the Security Council sets the contours of political discussion on peace and war on this planet and, significantly, because it mandates actual peace operations.*

Sheri – But, the processes we are discussing (structural and discursive) can, and should, occur simultaneously. Even demanding the inclusion of women in the institutional processes and practices (no matter how distorted that inclusion is) can challenge and alter categorizations and meanings. These processes are not antithetical or oppositional, they are recursive.

Helen – Here the work of the activists is crucial because it is through their work that the 'Trojan horse' becomes dangerous. My interest is actually in that mediation of power that is inherent in activism and in the constant

negotiation of these instruments and resolutions. We need to ask, how is this being negotiated now? What are the parameters of its use?

Maha – Perhaps I am a bit more optimistic about the power and scope of 1325. It may not lead to peace just yet or achieve gender equality, but it is important to celebrate the fact that the European Union and donor governments are harmonizing their policies and positions with the resolution. I am not saying that SC 1325 should make war safe for women, for as Cora Weiss from the Hague Appeal for Peace wisely reminds me this could never be done, but it is one step towards increasing protection and participation of women.

Carol – It seems as though this conversation has been about (at least) two different things: first, the radical potential of 1325 and what it would take to realize that potential; second, some of the tensions between activist and academic approaches to thinking about 1325. Speaking to the latter, I think that we need to be careful not to lose sight of just how extraordinary 1325 is. In fact, perhaps we academics and researchers should slow down, engage in the appreciative aspect of critique and see what we can learn from it, before focusing on its possible dangers or limitations. It is amazing that the world's largest international security institution has now publicly declared that attention to gender is integral to 'doing security'. Even if at this point the Security Council's re-envisioning of security is more rhetorical than practical, it still puts the UN far ahead of any academic security studies or international relations programme that I can think of.

Another tremendous accomplishment of those who constructed the resolution is that they broadened the Council's construction of women and/in armed conflict, detaching women from 'womenandchildren' and making women visible as active agents. Its advocates found a way to simultaneously acknowledge the very real horrors of women's experiences in war and the scandalous lack of attention to women's needs for protection, *and* made women's agency vibrantly visible.

Why Council members signed on to the resolution; whether their thinking about women or about the need to employ gender perspectives in the pursuit of security has actually shifted; what the significance of a Security Council Resolution can be if the UN is not structured in a way to efficiently transform words into actions; whether the 'use value' argument is a sophisticated tactic, a potential trap, or some combination thereof – all of these are open to question. But what is certain is that 1325 is a radical step forward in the language of the Security Council. As such, it offers an important tool to all of us who seek the empowerment of women and sustainable peace, and who believe that the two are interconnected. Actualizing the promise of 1325 will depend upon the actions of activists in international NGOs and in local grassroots women's groups; of committed advocates within the UN system and other multilateral, regional and national institutions; of researchers, writers, translators and media people. Most crucially, we need to figure out

the best ways we can support one another's efforts, the complementary roles we can each play in the strategic alliance that will move 1325 from rhetoric to reality. I think that all of us in this conversation hope that some of *IFJP's* readers will take on that challenge.

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Notes

- 1 The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security initially consisted of Amnesty International, International Alert, the Hague Appeal for Peace, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the International Peace Research Association and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children.
- 2 The Secretary General was invited to carry out a study on Women, Peace and Security. UNIFEM also initiated a report called *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Expert's Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building*.
- 3 Michael Pearson, in an article called 'Humanizing the UN Security Council', traces Canada's role in bringing forth the policy priority of human security to the Security Council.
- 4 Pearson, Michael. 2001. 'Humanizing the Security Council', in Fen Osler Hampson et al. (eds) *Canada Among Nations 2001: The Arworthy Legacy*, pp. 127-51. Oxford University Press.
- 5 In the second paragraph, the Security Council reaffirms its commitment to a 'rule of law that affords equal rights and justice to all Iraqi citizens without regard to ethnicity, religion, or gender' recalling its pledge to promote gender equality as outlined in resolution 1325.

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