



**UN Security Council Resolution 1325:
Recognizing Women's Vital Roles in Achieving Peace and Security
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on International
Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight**

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In its Resolution 1325 from October 2000, the United Nations Security Council outlined what the United Nations and its member states need to do to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and to promote women's full involvement in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. The resolution is historic not only in that it constituted the first time the Council systematically addressed the manner in which conflict affects women and girls differently from men and boys, but also because it acknowledges the crucial link between peace, women's participation in decision-making, and the recognition of women's life experiences throughout the conflict cycle. As such, the resolution calls for enhanced participation of women in all mechanisms to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts, and for attention to the special needs of women and girls during resettlement, disarmament, reintegration, and other post-conflict processes. As the Subcommittee considers this part of Security Council Resolution 1325, we urge attention both to women's participation and to substantive representation of women's needs and experiences on peace and security agendas.

There is no denying that women and girls suffer particular harms in conflict. Violence targeting women and girls—that is, gender-based violence—has been a horrifying characteristic of all recent armed conflicts and post-conflict situations, whether as a form of torture, as a method to humiliate the enemy, or with a view to spreading

terror and despair. Human rights and humanitarian organizations have reported such violence in Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Chechnya/Russian Federation, Uganda and the former Yugoslavia, just to mention a handful. It is precisely because conflict carries such devastating consequences for women and girls that efforts to build peace and prevent the recurrence of conflict must consider the role of women. Peace processes cannot undo the loss and suffering experienced by women and girls during war, but these processes can provide the starting point for accountability and redress. Indeed, effective peace processes can help prevent future violence through such redress. Moreover, at the crudest level, peace processes will have failed if they do not address the specific harm suffered by women and girls, just as they will have failed if they did not take into account the harm suffered by men and boys.

Research and experience from many countries give insights into the core elements of effective peace processes from the perspective of including women's experiences and needs. These elements include:

- Women must be represented in the drafting, implementation, and application of the rule of law that is created during transitions from war to peace;
- Sex-based discrimination in access to justice must be addressed—this means, *inter alia*, that underlying gender assumptions regarding the design of post-conflict dispute resolution mechanisms must be overcome;
- The role of sex-based discrimination in the causes of the armed conflict must be analyzed;
- The particular way in which the conflict affects women and girls—as civilians and as combatants—must be analyzed;
- The peace agreement must include meaningful political participation for women;
- Post-conflict rule of law must create legal accountability for crimes committed against women and mechanisms to protect the safety and dignity of women victims and witnesses in judicial proceedings;
- Reparations arrangements must be non-discriminatory; specially adapted to women's needs, interests, and priorities; and address the political and structural inequalities that negatively shape women's and girls' lives; and
- Any reconciliation processes must provide a process for including women's experiences in the history of the conflict.

Most of these elements form part of the international human rights obligations undertaken by states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and

girls, and, as such, should not depend on Security Council emphasis—or indeed, on the existence of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction—for their full implementation. However, the international attention directed at post-conflict reconstruction may facilitate much needed action in an area that too often gets ignored.

The United States House of Representatives has a crucial role to play in furthering the implementation of this Security Council Resolution. First, the House should ask the administration to make action on implementation of Resolution 1325 a priority for its membership of the Security Council, specifically during its June 2008 presidency of the Security Council. The United States government is in a unique position to provide leadership on this issue at the Security Council, because of its permanent seat at the Council. In particular, the House should urge the administration to advance systematic data collection and analysis of the effect of armed conflict on women and girls at the Security Council. Finally, the House of Representatives should ensure attention to the mentioned key elements of effective peace processes whenever it addresses post-conflict situations, and should urge the administration to do the same.

The House of Representatives should also build bipartisan support for passage of the International Violence Against Women Act (S. 2279/H.R. 5927), which would enhance US implementation of key recommendations in Resolution 1325. The International Violence Against Women Act would integrate work to stop violence against women and girls into US foreign assistance and diplomatic efforts. It would provide support for programs for legal reform, for females affiliated with the fighting forces, and for women's non-governmental organizations on the ground.