

## *1325 And Beyond – Essay Contest*

FIRST PRIZE

### *UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda: A Feminist Response to Authoritarianism*

Ana Laura Velasco Ugalde

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has reached a new generation. Feminists who were children and teenagers when UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was approved are the new young voices upholding the responsibility to guard its accomplishments and commit to its advancement. These are particularly challenging times for such a quest. In the last five years, the world has seen the return of authoritarian, xenophobic, misogynist, and racist leaders in many countries both in the “Global North” and “Global South.” In addition, a pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of traditional security approaches, even as these authoritarian leaders capitalize on it to further their grasp on power. We know authoritarianism grows in crisis. This is the world WPS is encountering, and this is the challenge for my generation.

Having learned about the history, accomplishments, and struggles of the WPS agenda while working on my master’s degree and from my experience as a reporter and activist in Mexico, I write this essay to propose ways that civil society, journalists and UN Women can advance the objectives of UNSCR 1325 over the next decade. Underlying my proposal is the understanding that the pandemic provides empirical, powerful proof of the failures of the current system to keep every person in the global community safe. The return of authoritarian masculinist—and at times militaristic—figures represents an enormous test for the pursuit of an inclusive, feminist approach to peace and security, but a strategy that

fails to encompass 2SLGBTQQIA, indigenous, disabled people, immigrants, refugees, and environmental protection in the “Global North” and “Global South” will fail to deliver justice.

#### *What is at stake?*

Feminist critiques of traditional approaches to international security were right all along. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, director of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security, rightly asks, “Why are we awash in weapons and military equipment but short on medics and masks?”<sup>1</sup> The rapid spread of COVID-19 is pushing the debate on the prioritization of military policies over public health services. The risk of a pandemic was foreseen, but the general unpreparedness of states reveals the dim attention the threat received. In contrast, consider the resources focused on traditional security debates over European defense and the relevance of NATO. Will the rise of military expenditure to 2 percent of GDP, as agreed by the allies and demanded by the current US administration, make Europeans safer? What actually saves lives? And whose lives are saved? One can only wonder if, after the devastating loss of human life in Spain and Italy during the pandemic, it is smart—and ethical—to invest fiscal resources to reach NATO’s goal instead of investing in health care systems, which women largely shape and staff. It is them, not soldiers, who are saving the most lives.

The supposed division between private and public, questioned by feminists for decades, is also contentious in the current crisis. The emergency measures most countries proposed for facing the pandemic ignore gendered, racialized, and economic violence. In a recent conference, scholar and activist Angela Davis stated, “This whole idea of ‘staying at home’ assumes we can retreat to a safe, nurturing environment, a refuge.”<sup>2</sup> A number of reports from countries around the world warn of the increase in domestic violence, and the UN Secretary General also called attention to the issue.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, the call to stay home has exposed the violence in private spaces. A similar argument can be made about the supposed clear-cut division between peacetime and wartime. We must recognize that these alerts confirm one of the criticisms that the WPS agenda has received during the past two decades: its focus on conflict situations. As is being proved in this global crisis, women face structural violence in a continuum that does not end in “peacetime”.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the need for a different approach to security, authoritarianism is not in retreat. At the moment of this writing, there are indications leaders are abusing the crisis to acquire increased powers, as in Israel and Hungary. Another troubling outcome since the detection of the virus has been the harassment and crackdown on whistleblowers and journalists who question official narratives, as in China. Furthermore, some responses to COVID-19, especially in the “Global North,” have included eugenic approaches by discriminating against disabled and racialized bodies. Similarly, indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable, given the systemic discrimination they suffer from health care systems. Therefore, it is important to contextualize the goals of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda in this pivotal moment. I urge a change of paradigm in the next decade. My two proposals aim to strengthen the first line of responders to authoritarianism: those responsible for the accountability mechanisms of society and for transnational advocacy of the WPS agenda.

## **Proposals**

Reconnecting UNSCR 1325 with its constituency must be a priority for the next decade. My first proposal is to significantly expand efforts to put civil society at the center of the WPS agenda.<sup>4</sup> Civil society organizations (CSOs) were vital to UNSCR 1325. Yet they are often unrecognized, marginalized and undervalued.<sup>5</sup> Women cannot only be represented or viewed through a gender lens, since their struggles also include other dimensions of the violence they may suffer. This is where CSOs come in, by embodying intersectional identities. But in order to execute this function, they cannot be left alone. It is precisely where they are most needed that they are most vulnerable. That was the case, for example, of queer activist Marielle Franco in Brazil,

murdered in 2018, and women’s rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, who has been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for almost two years. The persecution of human rights defenders is an ongoing global crime and a threat to the WPS agenda. I propose to powerfully expand the network of grassroots NGOs, with a deeply intersectional approach that creates platforms for endorsement and support between the “Global North” and the “Global South.”

In this regard, it is imperative not to perpetuate the focus on the “Global South” as “case studies.”<sup>6</sup> The agenda must recognize that CSOs are doing indispensable work in the “Global North,” which has vulnerable populations as well, as in Canada, where they fight to end femicides against indigenous women and girls. The objective is not to further restrict the characterization of CSOs only as watchdogs, but to open channels for them to have the resources to fulfill this role effectively. This effort must be led by UN Women offices around the globe, since can reach a wider range of intersectional, grassroots CSOs. Importantly, UN Women should be a facilitator, not a sponsor. Also, this emphasis does not replace National Action Plans, or Regional Action Plans, as public policy instruments. Rather, it aims to provide an opportunity for CSOs to fully exercise the dimensions of accountability, expertise and ownership and to step up the pressure in countries that have not yet implemented the instrument to fulfill their promises.

The next decade is the moment of truth for the WPS agenda in more than one sense. The developments of the past years indicate that it is urgent to address the spread of misinformation. The hard-won gains that the agenda has achieved must not be taken for granted. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently pronounced, “Our common enemy is the virus, but our enemy is also a growing surge of misinformation, so we need to urgently promote facts and science.” This warning could not be more appropriate, both in the context of the current crisis and to explain the larger picture. For example, in Mexico, religious groups are blaming the surge of the COVID-19 on feminism and queer people. This is not a new tactic. In Germany, the terrorists who attacked Halle’s synagogue last October blamed feminism for the lack of births and the arrival of immigrants. Furthermore, it is well known that many of these authoritarian, masculinist leaders are openly against equality, the core value of the agenda, and that they also thrive, and even actively engage in misinformation.

Therefore, my second proposal is to tap journalists as protagonists of the WPS agenda. This responds to two issues: Feminist stories are still framed as women’s issues, not as justice and intersectional ones, and, journalism continues to be a high-risk profession in many countries. Just like CSOs, they are directly responding to the threat of authoritarianism. Over the next decade, proponents of the WPS agenda must

ally with journalists around the globe to create a mechanism for sharing information related to the objectives. The focus of the alliance must be investigative journalists, small newspapers, and community radios that are concerned with intersectional justice, violence and conflict. UN Women offices around the world can lead this effort as a parallel project to that with the CSOs. Here, too, its role would be as a facilitator for enabling contacts between journalists and CSOs but also as a source of data related to the agenda. The latter would help open channels of communication that allow for quicker verification of information. Ensuring the flow of transparent, objective, verified information is essential to counter false news and other information that is used to spread fear and confusion.

## Conclusion

The implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda in general has largely been through traditional security approaches, with actors such as police, military and UN Peacekeeping Operations reinforcing the centrality of the use of force and armed personnel in working for peace and democracy.<sup>7</sup> The limitations of that approach, long emphasized by critical and feminist research, are impossible to ignore in the current crisis.<sup>8</sup> As Ann Tickner argues, true security cannot be achieved until unequal power structures of gender, race and class are eliminated or at least diminished.<sup>9</sup> This is why it is so relevant to privilege intersectional, decolonial approaches in the next 10 years. In order to achieve this, the agenda must reencounter its constituency and close ranks with those first responders who are not only in an unmatched position to push for inclusive change but are also most exposed to the attacks of authoritarian leaders. We need courage to embrace this moment, and we need radical alternative.

## References

1. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, *Women, Peace and Security in the Time of Corona*, LSE WPS Blog (London: LSE, March 25, 2020).
2. Naomi A. Klein and Angela Davis, “Live: @rising\_majority teach-in with @NaomiAKlein and Angela Davis,” filmed April 2, 2020
3. Antonio Guterres, *António Guterres (UN Secretary-General) on Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19* (New York: United Nations, webtv.un.org, April, 5, 2020)
4. Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand, Women’s Activism and Feminist Analysis*, (London: Zed Books, 2007), p. 141.
5. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, *Civil Society* (peacewomen.org: March 2020).
6. Parashar, Swati. “The WPS Agenda: A Postcolonial Critique”, in Sarah E. Davies and Jaqui True, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security*, ed., (Oxford University Press: 2019), p. 827.
7. Lyndsay McLean-Hilker, “UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: What Has It Achieved,” *AllegraLab* (May 8, 2015).
8. Laura J. Sheperd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice* (London: Zed, 2008).
9. Ann Tickner, “Peace and Security from a Feminist Perspective,” in Sarah E. Davies and Jaqui True eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security*, eds. (Oxford University Press: 2019), p. 15.

## Author

**Ana Laura Velasco Ugalde** (Mexico) is a feminist security analyst and journalist currently studying for a Masters in Gender, Violence and Conflict at the University of Sussex. She also works as a researcher for a Mexican NGO focused on security, justice and the rule of law, and has previously worked for the Mexican Secretariat of Economy with a posting in Germany. She holds a MA in International Law by the Universidad de Granada and did her undergraduate studies at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México.

## 1325AndBeyond – Essay Contest

In the run up to the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325 (2000)) Women In International Security (WIIS) and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC launched an international essay competition *1325AndBeyond*.

WIIS and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC are proud to announce and publish the winning essays. The essays highlight innovative and imaginative ideas and strategies to achieve the objectives of UNSCR 1325 in the 2020s.

### FIRST PRIZE

ANA LAURA VELASCO UGALDE (MEXICO)

***UNSCR 1325 and the WPS agenda: A Feminist Response to Authoritarianism***

### SECOND PRIZE

AGATHE CHRISTIEN (FRANCE)

***Enhancing WPS in the 2020s: Lessons Learned and Strategies for Transformative Change***

ANNINA CLAESSON (SWEDEN)

***Mobilizing a Forgotten Sector: A Case for a New Media Code of Ethics on Gender and Conflict***

### THIRD PRIZE

PAULA DRUMMOND & TAMYA REBELO (BRAZIL)

***1325 and Beyond: Moving Forward the WPS Agenda in Latin America***

MUHAMMAD AMMAR HIDAYAHTULLOH (INDONESIA)

***WPS in Asean: Progress, Gaps and Way Forward***

### FOURTH PRIZE

ESTHER LUIGI (FRANCE)

***1325 and Beyond***

### HONORABLE MENTIONS

CHELSEA COHEN (ZIMBABWE)

***The Third Awakening: The Decade of SHE Politics***

KARLA DRPIĆ (CROATIA)

***How the Private Sector Can Advance UNSCR 1325 in the 2020s***

TABITHA MWANGI (KENYA)

***UNSCR1325 and Beyond: Engagement of Women in Dialogue with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups***

GUDLAUG OLAFSDOTTIR (SWEDEN)

***Promoting Women's Rights: Creating Conditions for Post-Conflict Peace***

ANTHONY ITODO SAMUEL (NIGERIA)

***Dismantling the Structural Prejudices that Promote Gender Inequality***

ANDREA TUEMMLER (UNITED STATES)

***Escaping the Closet: Women, Peace and Security was Already Queer***

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG  
WASHINGTON, DC  
USA | Canada | Global Dialogue



1325 AND BEYOND  
An International Essay Competition

WIIS and the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Washington, DC would like to thank the members of the jury: Fauziya Abdi Ali; Joanna Barelkowska; Chantel Cole; Jessie Evans; Chantal de Jonge Oudraat; Karma Ekmekji; Jessica Grün; Layla Hashemi; Karin L. Johnston; Miriam Laux; Maxinne Rhea Leighton; Kayla McGill; Hannah Neumann; Chiedo Nwankor; Hannah Proctor; Liane Schalatek; Donald Steinberg; Dominik Tolksdorf; Anna Von Gall; Roksana Verahrami; Karin Warner; Ursula Knudsen Latta. Special thanks to Kayla McGill and the members of the WIIS team for organizing the competition and to the Mobilizing Men as Partners for WPS (Our Secure Future) for contributing to the Honorable Mention awards.

## RECENT WIIS PUBLICATIONS

## POLICYbrief

Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown, *The Gender and Security Agenda: Strategies for the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, June 2020)

Clodagh Quain and Isabelle Rocchia, *NATO and 5G: Managing "High Risk" Vendors and Other Outsourced Infrastructure*, WIIS Policy Brief (May 28, 2020)

Kulani Abendroth-Dias and Carolin Kiefer, *Artificial Intelligence is Already Transforming the Alliance: It is Time for NATO and the EU to Catch Up*, WIIS Policy Brief (May 2020)

Nad'a Kovalčíková and Gabrielle Tarini, *Stronger Together: NATO's Evolving Approach toward China*, WIIS Policy Brief (May 2020)

Shannon Zimmerman, *The Value of a Feminist Foreign Policy*, WIIS Policy Brief (February 2020)

Sarah Kenny, *Women of the Alt-Right: An Intersectional Study of Far-Right Extremism, Gender, & Identity in the United States*, WIIS Policy Brief (August 2019)

Pearl Karuhanga Atuhaire & Grace Ndirangu, *Removing Obstacles to Women's Participation at the Peace Table and in Politics*, WIIS Policy Brief (March 2019)

Chantal de Jonge Oudraat & Soraya Kamali-Nafar, *The WIIS Gender Scorecard: Washington, DC Think Tanks*, WIIS Policy Brief (September 2018)

Pearl Karuhanga Atuhaire & Grace Ndirangu, *Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Refugee Settings in Kenya and Uganda*, WIIS Policy Brief (June 2018)

Luisa Ryan & Shannon Zimmerman, *Gender Parity in Peace Operations: Opportunities for US Engagement*, WIIS Policy Brief (June 2018)

Velomahanina T. Razakamiharavo, Luisa Ryan, & Leah Sherwood, *Improving Gender Training in UN Peacekeeping Operations*, WIIS Policy Brief (May 2018)

Spencer Beall, *Missing Figures: The Cybersecurity Gender Gap*, WIIS Working Paper (May 2018)

Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown, *WPS+GPS: Adding Gender to the Peace and Security Equation*, WIIS Policy Brief (November 2017)

Hamoon Khelghat Doost, *Women in Jihadist Organizations: Victims or Terrorists?*, WIIS Policy Brief (May 2017)

Jeannette Gaudry Haynie and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism: Understanding Cultural and Organizational Differences*, WIIS Policy Brief (April 2017)

Ellen Haring, *Equipping and Training Modifications for Combat Arms Women*, WIIS Policy Brief (January 2017)

Fauziya Abdi Ali, *Women Preventing Violent Extremism: Broadening the Binary Lens of "Mothers and Wives,"* WIIS-HoA Policy Brief (February 2017)

Jeannette Gaudry Haynie and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism: Policies and Programming*, WIIS Policy Brief (January 2017)

Jeannette Gaudry Haynie, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism: Gendered Aspects of Radicalization and Recruitment*, WIIS Policy Brief (September 2016)

Antonietta Rico and Ellen Haring, *Combat Integration Handbook: A Leader's Guide to Success* (September 2016)

Chantal de Jonge Oudraat and Michael E. Brown, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism: The Missing Links*, WIIS Policy Brief (August 2016)

Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, Sonja Stojanovic-Gajic, Carolyn Washington and Brooke Stedman, *The 1325 Scorecard: Gender Mainstreaming Indicators for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and its Related Resolutions* (Brussels, Washington, DC and Belgrade: NATO-SPS Programme, WIIS and Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, October 2015)

Ellen Haring, Megan MacKenzie and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, *Women in Combat: Learning from Cultural Support Teams*, WIIS Policy Brief (August 15, 2015)

*WIIS Policy Roundtables and Policybriefs are supported by the Embassy of Liechtenstein in Washington, DC.*

*WIIS Next Generation efforts are supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York.*

*The views expressed in WIIS Policybriefs belong solely to the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of WIIS.*

## ABOUT WIIS

Women In International Security (WIIS) is the premier organization in the world dedicated to advancing the leadership and professional development of women in the field of international peace and security. WIIS (pronounced "wise") sponsors leadership training, mentoring, and networking programs as well as substantive events focused on current policy problems. WIIS also supports research projects and policy engagement initiatives on critical international security issues, including the nexus between gender and security.

To learn more about WIIS and become a member, please visit <http://wiisglobal.org/>.



# WIIS