WWP: Women, War and Peace

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In 2016, it is time to overcome redundant deliberations over an evident fact: women play a crucial role before, during and after armed conflict. Very often, the descriptions by the survivors and war witnesses are unthinkable and inconceivable atrocities. However, it is also time to take distance from over-simplistic or "princess syndrome" viewpoint, asserting that women are intrinsically more inclined to peace and love and men are innately war prone. It is time to better understand what Feminism says and does not say, as well as to identify its theoretical lacunas. It is time to take WWP seriously: Women, War and Peace is a cross cutting triangulation that is fundamental to any discussion of democracy, conflict management, natural disasters as well as security, development, social justice and good governance policies. Women and girls' vulnerability is latent in any stage of armed conflict. 80% of the word's refugees are women and children (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, Addou, 2006). They are survivors, widows and the responsible for recovery, either by counting the bodies of the deceased, helping at the nurseries or seeking food for the orphans. In many countries, despite the mass atrocities and a lack of the necessities of life, women are not eligible to inherit the goods of their fathers or husbands.

Conflict studies shows that the nature of war has changed. Nevertheless, a few issues are similar across wars: "Women have become the worst victims of war – and the biggest stakeholders of peace" (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). Independently of the place, time, and *leitmotifs* of the conflict such as ideology, religion or ethnicity, the stories and the pain are the same. In the war zones of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, Kosovo, Cambodia, the occupied Palestinian territories, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Angola, Sierra Leone, Somalia and East Timor, thousands of women live with generalized violence, such as abduction, rape camps and forced impregnation, being purposely infected with HIV/AIDS, and having their uteri mutilated by AK47s. On the battlefield, violence against women's bodies is often used to break and humiliate women, men, families, communities, no matter which side they are on.

"International Women's Day" is not a futile nor useless celebration that is being imposed worldwide on a spectrum of different cultures, religions, ideologies, beliefs and political systems. Every year, March 8th is meant to link the past, present and future of women's rights. Even two decades after the 1994 Rwanda genocide, it is important to consider that anywhere from 250 000 to 450 000 women were estimated to have been raped (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). For them, the war meant the loss of everything by the invasion of their bodies, annexation of their being and amputation of their dignity. UN reports estimate that 5000 women were raped on a single offensive by the rebel forces in Congo Brazzaville in 1998 (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). It is worthwhile to mention that worldwide, much of the violence was perpetrated by those who are supposed to protect them such as fathers, brothers, uncles, as well as UN peacekeepers as the cases of Kosovo and recently Mali, Sudan and the Central African Republic demonstrate (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, UN News Centre, 2016).

Women, War and Peace is no panacea. Conflict affects men and women differently. Women are victimised three times. First, by the offense and second, after the crime with no access to justice or health and psychological assistance. Thirdly, by segregation within the local community and shame for families and a loss of dignity (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). Mostly within an environment of collapsed or failing states, poverty and violence prevail. Beyond all the primary daily needs, there are few opportunities to seek justice. In addition, these opportunities come at an extreme cost which is too much to bear for many. Alternatively, to stay alive and silent is to recall a constant nightmare. Most of the Syrian refugees or displaced persons from Mali are women and children (UNHCR, 2015). Democracy and

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security go hand-in-hand: female voters are four times as likely as men to be targeted for intimidation in elections in fragile and transitional states (Brock et al., 2012, Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002). According to UN Women (2016), 27 countries have legal provisions that prevent mothers from conferring their nationality to children on on a basis equal to fathers, which can lead to children being stateless. More than half of the world's maternal deaths occur in conflict-affected and fragile states, with the 10 worst performing countries on maternal mortality all either conflict or post-conflict countries. 40% of individual convictions at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) include sexual violence charges (UN Women, 2016). Reports from the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the extent of conflict-related sexual violence estimate that up to 40% of women and girls have been victims (UN Women, 2016). At the negotiating table, only 9% of peace agreements from 1990 to 2010 contained any references to women. Between 1992 and 2011, fewer than 4% of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10% of negotiators at peace tables were women. Studies show that women's participation increases the probability of peace agreements lasting at least two years by 20% (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, UN Women, 2016). It also increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years by 35%. Women's leadership is fundamental. In conflict-affected countries, women's share of seats in parliament is four percentage points below the global average of 22%, and women occupy only 14.8% of ministerial positions (UN Women, 2016).

The UN must also adjust its resolutions. Since 2011, UN field missions headed by women oscillated somewhere between 15% and 25% of all missions, including those in Sudan and East Timor (UN peacemaker, 2015). In 2015, 97% of military peacekeepers and 90% of police personnel were men. Besides significant improvements in considering the 1325 resolution in UN missions such as in Liberia –UNMIL (2003), Sierra Leone –UNIOSIL (2005), Kosovo –UNMIK (1999) and East Timor –UNMIT (2006), there is still a lot of room for improvement (UN peacemaker, 2015). Some UN Missions have a gender affairs department and there has been a noticeable increase in female UN police officers. However, few resources are directed to physical and psychological health, economic development and access to justice. In the context of peacebuilding and recovery programmes, only 22% of funds from cash contributions were directly disbursed to women in 2013 (UN Women, 2016). In 2014, women only received 35% of benefits from temporary employment activities in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes (UN Women, 2016). HIV is intrinsically related to Woman, War and Peace: besides the sexual transmission, the virus is also transmitted through blood transfers in poor sanitary conditions, which most commonly result from war and poverty. In Burundi (2002), 80% of the hospital patients with HIV were women, not including those who died before hospitalisation because they did not receive medical treatment in time, or because the treatment was unaffordable.

In spite of many instruments of international law, the protection of women's rights remains fragile and the reports monitoring implementation of the international resolutions highlight much inefficiency in these approaches. On the 16th anniversary of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000) there is still the need to reaffirm the increase of women's role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. The UN Security Council has subsequently adopted seven additional resolutions on women, peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and most recently 2242 (2015). The eight resolutions should represent a critical framework for improving the situation of women in conflict-affected countries. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the optional protocol are ratified by 185 states as the "women's bill of rights". In the same vein, this cornerstone of all UN Women programmes needs to move from theory to practice. The implementation of the Beijing (PFA-1995) and Windhoek (2000) Declarations and Platforms for Action (PFA-1995) needs to be accelerated. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the Geneva Conventions (1949) and the Additional Protocols (1977) of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Rome Statute (1998) are also instruments which need to be more effectively implemented. Recently, in September 2015, governments united behind the ambitious agenda which features 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These measures were preceded by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015, to end poverty, combat inequalities and promote prosperity while protecting the environment, all by 2030. In order for these goals to be realised, it is essential that 51% of the population put forward efforts to achieve these ambitious goals.

Positive alternatives are also possible. In Somalia, women had a fundamental role in the ceasefire agreed in

WWP: Women, War and Peace
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Mogadishu in 1998. In Sudan, women overcame ethno-religious difference and were able to participate in discussions surrounding the peace process. Liberian refugees could rebuild their lives in rural areas in Ghana (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002, Addou, 2006). In Afghanistan, many women meet in secret to receive education, to perform some unskilled jobs as well as to receive medical treatment. Fortunately, many suggestions for improvements on issues related to Woman, War and Peace are on the table. Article 26 of the United Nations Charter (UN, 1945) suggests that 5% of national military expenditure should be directed to education, health and employment. Post conflict macroeconomic policies need to take into account adequate consideration of women's needs for job creation, political reform with women's quotas, and helping organize civil society through a gender budgeting mainstream. Resources are needed in eight areas: leadership and political participation, economic empowerment, ending violence against women, peace and security, humanitarian action, governance and national planning, sustainable development and combating HIV & AIDS. For these goals to be realised there are five areas of action, which are critically important: intergovernmental support, intergovernmental coordination, particularly among UN member states, programme and technical assistance, as well as persistent research and data collection for better policy-making.

Gender equality is not a silver bullet. When war ends, peace building requires nations to seek justice, health, education and employment, security and political space. All these goals should put women at the epicentre, as the main victims of international conflicts and the principle agents bringing about post-war recovery, reconciliation and reconstruction. Women, War and Peace is not about a gender war that tries to enhance the female "status", or about considering women superior to the opposite gender. In times of "global civil wars" it is about inserting multi-gender policies and perspectives in decision making, at the local, national and international level. No country can pretend to be on the route to democracy and participatory government without half of its population. Beyond a gender perspective, it is about including "the" perspective that is missing in processes of conflict resolution. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first elected female head of state in Africa and currently in her second mandate as President of Liberia can serve as an example in her non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work.

It is time to take WWP seriously: Women, War and Peace is a cross cutting triad that is fundamental to any discussion of democracy, conflict management, natural disasters as well as development, social justice and good governance policies. To be dead because of the vagina is one of the numerous indescribable carnages repeatedly described by the survivors and witnesses to war. In 2016, it is time to overcome myths and ideologies: women are vital protagonists before, during and after armed conflict. In a time when conflicts are globalized, "International Women's Day" is meant to link past, present and future of a spectrum of different cultures, religions and political systems. However, and most of all, it is about giving voice to half of the world population's rights to have their rights recognized.

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WWP: Women, War and Peace
Written by Izabela Pereira Watts

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UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000) and adoption of seven additional resolutions on women, peace and security: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and lately 2242 (2015).

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Izabela Pereira Watts has been nominated in 2013 "Top 99 Young Professional World Leaders in Foreign Policy under 33" by the global Affairs Magazine, Diplomatic Courier (USA). With a large professional experience in democratic governance, political affairs and international cooperation, she is a lecturer and PhD candidate researcher on International Relations and Political Science at Charles Darwin University (Australia). She holds a Master's degree in International Affairs, Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (Argentina) and Master´s degree in Economics and Political Sciences and undergraduate degree in International Affairs (Brazil). She has experience in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe. She has worked with several International Organizations such UN (DPKO-UNMIT), UNDP, UN Women, Organization of American States, as well as with the private and public sectors as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil. Her expertise includes the fields of international cooperation, elections, humanitarian affairs, political affairs, governance & public policies, strategic analysis in the areas of socioeconomic development and gender in conflict zones. She is also a former Columnist for electronic journals of international analysis with many publications and international awards.

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