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Women, peace and security: implementation, challenges and limits in Palestine

The UN Security Council's approval of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000 marked a turning point in the adoption of the gender perspective in the international peace and security agenda. The resolution recognises the specific and disproportionate impacts of armed conflicts on women and girls while also confirming the decisive role that women can and should play in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations and all areas related to peacebuilding. Along these lines, the resolution underlines the importance of women's equal participation in all activities related to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and establishes a political and legal framework for women around the world to claim a space to make their voice heard in these spheres for the first time (Anderlini 2007). Obligatory for UN member states, the resolution was the result of long-term work by civil society organisations and uses two instruments of the regulatory and political framework on gender equality and women's rights as important precedents: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), approved in 1979, which acknowledges that the strengthening of international peace and security contributes to full equality between men and women, and the Beijing Platform for Action of Beijing of 1995, which identified women and armed conflict as one of its issues of special concern.¹

UNSC Resolution 1325 gave way to the approval of another series of resolutions (eight to date) that currently make up what is known as the women, peace and security agenda.² In general terms, these resolutions have developed aspects of Resolution 1325 and strengthened the mechanisms for its supervision and implementation, turning the women, peace and security agenda into a programme of action for the UN, governments and civil society. However, almost two decades after Resolution 1325 was approved, it is still not possible to make a positive assessment. Although some progress has been identified, several challenges remain for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda at the global level. Various reports, including several prepared for the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325, noted several challenges due to the great gap between the commitments made and reality.³ Among other issues, some critics have warned of the bureaucratisation of the agenda, its co-option by militarism, which has used it mainly to boost the number of women in the armed forces, and the need to adopt more comprehensive approaches that may include a gender perspective that questions the roles of men, violent masculinities and the relationships between militarism, patriarchy and armed conflict (Villellas 2015). Others have said that the framework provided by the women, peace and security agenda has not changed the focus on traditional security, squandering the transformative potential with which the agenda was originally conceived by civil society (Swaine 2019). Evaluations have also stressed that women remain marginalised in areas such as formal negotiations, despite the provisions of the women, peace and security agenda; regardless of the evidence from recent

1. For further information, see the quick Catalan-language guide "Resolució 1325 sobre dones, pau i seguretat" available on the website Dones, pau i seguretat: <http://donespauiseguretat.cat/>

2. UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015). Considering the approaches that emphasise the need to apply the gender perspective more comprehensively and taking into account the diversity of roles, expectations, experiences and priorities in peace and conflict issues, various actors working in this area use the expression "gender, peace and security" (with the understanding that "gender" is not equivalent to "women"). This report employs the term "women, peace and security" because it is the one that is most widely used when referring to the related resolutions approved by the United Nations. When addressing this issue, some organisations such as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) have chosen to use the double variant: "gender/women, peace and security".

3. See Radika Coomaraswamy, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Security Council Resolution 1325*, UN Women, 2015.

studies confirming that their participation is positive for the success, effectiveness and sustainability of peace efforts (Coomaraswamy 2015; Paffenholz et. al 2015); and even though it should be obvious that women, who represent half the population, must play a significant role in all decision-making as a matter of fundamental rights.

The implementation of the women, peace and security agenda seems particularly important in a context such as that of Palestine, where women face multiple forms of violence as a result of the policies of the Israeli occupation and a long-lasting conflict that involves countless human rights violations against the Palestinian population, with specific and disproportionate consequences for women and girls.⁴ This is a context in which it is essential to take women's voices into account to address key issues related to peace and security. In this scenario, how has the gender, peace and security agenda been applied in Palestine? What are the main achievements and persisting challenges for its implementation? This guide aims to offer an approach to the situation of the gender, peace and security agenda in Palestine, addressing issues such as its reception and implementation in the Palestinian context, the development of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 and the persisting challenges to and limits on the implementation of the agenda, especially with regard to the meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and efforts towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

The approval of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security by the UN Security Council in 2000 was a turning point for the integration of the gender perspective in the international peace and security agenda

Resolution 1325 in Palestine

The reception and acceptance of Resolution 1325 in Palestine is part of a more general context of Palestinian distrust and mistrust towards the international

community due to the lack of commitment and mechanisms to challenge and put an end to decades of Israeli occupation, as well as to enforce international resolutions, provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights standards in Palestine.⁵ Moreover, Resolution 1325 was approved in 2000, the year of the Second Intifada, a particularly critical period after which the challenges for the Palestinian population and especially for women worsened. Given this situation, various people see a weakness or shortcoming in Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda in Palestine by not specifically citing the occupation to reflect its impact on Palestinian women and girls. Along these lines, some feminist pacifists stress that “Palestinian women think that the women, peace and security agenda has not been entirely inclusive of the occupation and its disproportionate impacts on women living under this system, whether in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip, as well as the consequences and burdens it places on Palestinian women with Israeli citizenship”.⁶

This perception has led some activists to consider Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions as irrelevant to the Palestinian case due to the unique aspects of the context. From their point of view, the women, peace and security agenda is useless because the situation in Palestine cannot be classified as one of conflict or post-conflict, as Palestine has not managed to establish itself as a fully functioning state and many Palestinian women's needs and priorities in terms of economic and social rights are not included in this agenda (Rayman, Izen and Parker 2016). Some authors have even argued that in the Palestinian context, Resolution 1325 would be used to “discipline”, rather than to strengthen, women's political activism within a specific international feminist agenda for peace (Richter Devroe 2011). However, other

4. See the first report published as part of this project, entitled *Occupation, conflict and patriarchy: impacts on Palestinian women*, available on Escola de Cultura de Pau's website: <https://escolapau.uab.cat/informes-2/impactos-mujeres-palestinas/>

5. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions, emblematic resolutions such as UN General Assembly Resolution 194 on the Palestinian refugee population's right of return (1948), UN Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) on withdrawal from the occupied territories, the resolutions condemning the illegal annexation of Jerusalem by Israel and, more recently, UN Security Council Resolution 2334, which condemns Israeli settlements (2016), among others. Regarding human rights violations, in its most recent statement (22 March 2019) on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the UN Human Rights Council expressed its concern “because Israel, as an occupying power, continues to commit violations of international humanitarian law and systematic violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, such as those resulting from the excessive use of force and military operations that cause death and injury to Palestinian civilians, including children and women, as well as non-violent and peaceful protesters and journalists, even using live ammunition. It is also involved in the arbitrary detention of Palestinians, some of whom have been detained for decades; the use of collective punishment; the closure of zones; the confiscation of land; the construction and expansion of settlements; the construction of a wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that strays from the 1949 Armistice line; the forced displacement of civilians, including Bedouin communities; policies and practices that discriminate against and disproportionately affect the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; the discriminatory distribution of water resources among Israeli settlers illegally residing in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Palestinian population of that Territory; the violation of the fundamental right to adequate housing, which is integral to the right to an adequate standard of living; the revocation of residence permits for Palestinians from East Jerusalem and their expulsion from the city; the destruction of property and infrastructure, such as Palestinian homes; the obstruction of humanitarian assistance and the destruction, among other things, of structures provided as part of humanitarian assistance, contributing to a coercive environment that leads to the forced relocation of Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including when applied as an act of collective punishment in contravention of international humanitarian law; incidents of harassment and attacks on students and educational facilities by Israeli settlers and as a result of Israeli military actions; as well as other types of actions aimed at changing the legal status, geographical nature and composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem”.

6. Interview with Laila Alodaat, programme director for the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 30 August 2019.

Palestinians have argued that the resolution and the agenda are useful for addressing the various forms of oppression suffered by Palestinian women, as they offer a framework for the fight against the Israeli occupation, the social struggle against patriarchy and the full enjoyment of Palestinian women's rights. Along these lines, it is considered positive that the agenda is an international tool and offers a common global language to address issues related to gender, peace and security, and it is recognised that Resolution 1325 generally connects with the concerns and challenges faced by Palestinian women (Rayman, Izen and Parker 2016, MIFTAH 2017). In a context in which the term "peace" can be understood by some groups as "surrender" or "concessions", Palestinian organisations have welcomed the fact that the idea of peace in Resolution 1325 is associated with issues such as the rule of law, social justice and equal opportunities (MIFTAH 2018).

While stressing the shortcomings of the women, peace and security agenda in reflecting the particular aspects of the Palestinian case (for example, Palestinian women's organisations complained that the global report on the 15th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 will include references to the situation of Palestinian women under occupation (MIFTAH 2017)), various Palestinian actors have incorporated Resolution 1325 into their speeches and agendas and have been involved in its implementation in the last two decades. "Resolution 1325 refers to conflict situations. We had an internal discussion about how we could describe the situation, if we could describe it as a conflict (...) We tried to analyse the situation assuming that we are experiencing a protracted conflict and, therefore, that our situation and the violations imposed by the occupation can be covered by Resolution 1325 (...) To a certain extent, we Palestinians are not 'happy' with the resolution. We think that it does not really apply to the situation of women under occupation, but we have tried to analyse it further and, in terms of accountability, find ways to make Israel responsible", they acknowledge at the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), an organisation with a long history of documenting and reporting violations of the occupation from a gender perspective.⁷ Other Palestinians agree: "The women's movement agreed on how to use the resolution to demand that Israel be held accountable for all violations against Palestinian women (...) The adoption of this resolution has also been promoted and influenced in the context of the government, proposing

Palestinian activists believe that the international women, peace and security agenda has not properly captured the phenomenon of occupation and its disproportionate impacts on Palestinian women and girls

how the Palestinian government could use it or be held accountable for it, and how to connect the resolution with legal reforms aimed at protecting women's rights and fighting domestic violence".⁸

One of the first steps was therefore to adapt the resolution to the Palestinian context and recognise it as a useful instrument to hold Israel accountable for the occupation. In this sense, despite criticism of the international community for its lack of involvement in ending the Israeli occupation, Palestinian authorities and social actors have pursued strategies to internationalise the conflict, use international instruments and denounce the Israeli occupation in international forums in order to make their demands visible and at least partially circumvent their profound asymmetry of power vis-à-vis Israel. "Despite the lack of significant international achievements, turning to the international community is still considered one of the main strategies of the Palestinian struggle, including the struggle of Palestinian women" (MIFTAH 2017).

In this scenario, some analysts have highlighted how women's organisations have incorporated Resolution 1325 in their work and defined their strategies. A recurring example in the literature on this subject is the experience of the International Women's Commission (IWC), created in 2005 by Palestinians and Israelis with the support of UNIFEM for the purpose of guaranteeing the implementation of Resolution 1325 and ensuring women's ability to influence any peace negotiation between Israelis and Palestinians (Farr 2011). In order to gain visibility and recognition, women from the Palestinian and Israeli social and political elite who had already been connected to and involved in peace initiatives since the 1980s chose to use the language of the resolution to build a space that would promote a fair and sustainable two-state solution (Anderlini 2007, Farr 2011). The commission was tripartite in nature, as it also incorporated prominent international female leaders and made an effort to introduce a gender and feminist perspective, defend women's rights and increase their participation in formal and informal negotiations. As part of the Annapolis Conference in 2007, officially convened with the intention of reactivating the peace process between Palestinians and Israelis, the IWC lobbied to obtain a seat at the conference. Despite their demands and the efforts of senior UNIFEM officials, they were not represented there (Bennet 2018).

7. Interview with Amal Abusour, programme director at the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), 10 September 2019.

8. Interview with Riham al Faqih, development and communication director, and Lamis Shuaibi, programme director for the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), 19 September 2019.

The IWC ended up dissolving years later, in 2011, due to the profound differences between the Israeli and Palestinian representatives. Difficulties in finding common ground within the IWC were compounded by the brutality of some Israeli actions, especially after Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, which killed 1,400 Palestinians in 2008, most of them civilians. However, the estrangement was also influenced by different interpretations of Resolution 1325. In his analysis of this case, Richter Devroe (2012) writes that “the Palestinian members of the IWC faced serious problems in challenging the mainstream Israeli interpretation and a narrow feminist reading of 1325. They were not able to make their interpretations of 1325 prevail from a rights-focused perspective in three main areas: participation, protection and empowerment”. The author stresses that “access to” was prioritised over an approach committed to the “transformation of” an unequal status quo and that gender was not enough to overcome the most important division, that of “occupiers and occupied”, between Israelis and Palestinians. Therefore, the dichotomy of experiences and positions ended up being a serious obstacle for the IWC.

In addition to initiatives between Palestinians and Israelis such as the IWC, other Palestinian organisations have incorporated 1325 into their work. For example, the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), which is not exclusively for women, but has extensive experience in empowering and promoting the political participation of Palestinian women (Farr 2011), has worked extensively on gender, peace and security issues in Palestine. This has included the preparation of materials to give women ideas on how to incorporate Resolution 1325 in their work, the promotion of spaces to discuss and identify priorities in the implementation of Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda from the Palestinian perspective, evaluations of its implementation and other activities. In a report published in 2018, MIFTAH identified three stages in the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Palestine. The first, which ran from 2000 to 2009, focused on knowledge of the resolution and reflections on its applicability to the Palestinian context. The second, which spanned from 2010 to 2012, was associated with the beginning of organised action, referring to the creation of networks and coalitions and work on documenting abuse for purposes of accountability. The third, active from 2012 to 2018, was more focused on building alliances and official efforts, including the establishment of a high-level committee for the

Turning to the international community is still considered one of the main strategies of the Palestinian cause, including in relation to the struggle of women

implementation of Resolution 1325, the formulation of a national strategy and regional and international activities. One of the milestones of this last stage, and of the process to implement the women, peace and security agenda in Palestine, was the approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325.

The Palestinian National Action Plan

National Action Plans (NAPs) are instruments adopted by state governments that specifically support the national implementation of the commitments made as part of the women, peace and security agenda by developing concrete strategies, policies and measures to facilitate the same in each country. These plans should ideally be designed and carried out with substantive participation from civil society. They should also clearly define objectives, responsibilities and a timetable for implementation and they should have resources that allow for its effective implementation and provide for clear follow-up mechanisms to facilitate the evaluation of said implementation and accountability. In terms of

content, it is proposed that the NAPs be developed along the four lines of action of the WPS agenda: Prevention, Protection, Participation and Relief and Recovery.⁹ As of mid-2019, a total of 81 states (42% of UN member states) had developed a NAP on gender, peace and security and in some cases second- or third-generation versions of these plans were already in force.¹⁰

The Arab region has very recently joined this group of countries: it was not until 2014 that Iraq became the first state in the area to approve a NAP, followed by Palestine, which at the end of 2016 launched its plan for the period 2017-2019. Jordan later launched its plan (2018-2021), Tunisia approved its plan in 2018 and Lebanon’s plan was still in the process of being drawn up in 2019. In 2015, the Arab League also approved a Regional Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325. Some studies confirm that there is some scepticism in the region about the usefulness of these plans, either because of the possibility that they will merely be a statement of intent if the appropriate procedures for their development are not committed or because it is thought that the context of conflict in certain countries reduces the possibilities of prioritising these kinds of plans (Fellin 2018). However, some analysts defend their positive impact. According to data from Inclusive Security, countries that have adopted NAPs had become more peaceful and had seen their

9. For further information, see the quick Catalan-language guide “Plans d’Acció Nacional sobre dones, pau i seguretat” at the Dones, pau i seguretat website: <http://donespauseguretat.cat/>

10. Data available until August 2019, Peacewomen, (viewed 12 September 2019).

levels of gender inequality drop (Holt Ivry and Jacevi 2017). NAPs can also serve as useful tools for local women's organisations by offering the possibility of involving them in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of plans and the opening of dialogue with their respective governments on conflict and peace from a gender perspective (Mesa 2016).

The development of the NAP in Palestine was coordinated by the Higher National Committee for the Implementation of Resolution 1325, which was created by the Palestinian cabinet in 2012. Led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, this committee included government and civil society actors, representatives of various ministries, the national statistics office, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)¹¹ and NGOs such as the WCLAC, A-Haq or MIFTAH, which held a series of talks on important aspects for the plan.¹² The NAP was preceded by the approval in 2015 of a strategic document for implementing Resolution 1325 and also includes the guidelines of a framework document on gender, peace and security designed in 2015 for a coalition consisting solely of civil society organisations, the National Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325. The NAP drafting process, which enjoyed the technical and financial support of UN Women, UNFPA, ESCWA, the European Union and others, led to a document that establishes three strategic objectives on protection, accountability and participation. Thus, the first objective of the NAP is to strengthen the protection of Palestinian women and girls, mainly from violations resulting from the Israeli occupation. The second is to hold the Israeli occupation responsible for violations against Palestinian women and girls and the third seeks to improve Palestinian women's participation in decision-making processes locally and internationally.

Therefore, one of the unique aspects of the plan is the attempt to deal with the impacts of the occupation. In this sense, women's organisations involved in formulating the plan welcome the fact that the document captures this situation and addresses accountability on both sides. Indeed, not only does it give visibility to Israel's obligations as an occupying power and the ways in which the occupation directly and indirectly shapes the lives of Palestinian women and girls, but it also provides an opportunity to focus on the responsibilities of the Palestinian authorities, for example in relation to services for women affected by gender violence in the

context of the conflict.¹³ Civil society representatives also praise the participatory process used to develop the plan, the alliances that were established between governmental and civil society actors and the fact that both the joint committee and the one made up exclusively of civil society organisations are involved in monitoring it. Palestine's pioneering role in work related to Resolution 1325 compared to other countries in the region is also lauded (MIFTAH 2018).

However, when assessing its implementation, critics point to a lack of official political and financial commitment to its implementation. Thus, for example, although the costs of the plan were estimated during the preparation process, they were not finally included in the document and civil society warns that there are serious problems due to the lack of resources allocated

for its implementation (MIFTAH 2018).¹⁴

In this context, some assert that it is mainly civil society organisations that are taking responsibility for its implementation (for example, with regard to the documentation of abuses of the occupation and the presentation of evidence to international organisations to make Israel more accountable).

From a comparative perspective, other analysts have also found that the region's NAPs are mainly focused on institutional needs and priorities over the strategic and practical needs of women and girls. Palestine's action plan focuses 51% on institutional needs and priorities, 30% on strategic needs and 19% on the practical needs of women and girls (Swaine 2018). The plan was designed for the period 2017-2019, so it is still in the implementation phase and final evaluations of its execution and impact are pending, but organisations involved in its development confirm that a second edition of the plan is planned with strategic objectives similar to those of the first NAP.¹⁵

Challenges and limits of the women, peace and security agenda in Palestine

From the perspective of the women, peace and security agenda, the many enormous challenges that persist in Palestine are undeniable if one takes into account the chronic reality of multiple forms of violence that Palestinian women and girls face in their daily lives as a result of Israeli occupation policies, such as indiscriminate violence, segregation, discrimination,

11. The GUPW was established in 1965 as an organisation within the PLO.

12. For further details on the working methodology used to draft the plan and its content, see the text of the Palestinian NAP: *The National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security, Palestine 2017-2019*, available at https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/170515Pin_MoWA_e.pdf

13. Interview with Amal Abusrour, WCLAC, 10 September 2019.

14. Ibid.

15. Interview with Riham al Faqih, development and communication director, and Lamis Shuaibi, programme director of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), 19 September 2019.

apartheid, systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, among other practices, that have direct and indirect, disproportionate and specific impacts on Palestinian women that are also shaped by the patriarchal context. Palestinian women have criticised this situation in international forums. In 2018, as part of the open debate on women, peace and security, the first Palestinian female activist to address the UN Security Council emphasised the gender dimension of the occupation and the resulting humanitarian crisis, confirmed how they exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and strengthen the patriarchal structures of Palestinian society, warned about how violence in the public sphere increases violence in the private sphere and denounced that the conditions created by the occupation had a substantive impact on Palestinian women's access to justice and livelihoods.¹⁶ This situation is sustained and has been aggravated by Israel's ongoing *fait accompli* policies in a climate of impunity, made worse by an international context in which key actors, such as the United States under President Donald Trump, have been explicitly supportive of its narratives and interests. In this scenario, Palestinians emphasise that one of the main concerns regarding Resolution 1325, shared by other women's organisations around the world, has to do with its inability to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable despite the evidence.¹⁷ These problems of application or enforcement are especially indicated by some authors in the case of Resolution 1325 due to their dependence on the goodwill of the UN member states for their implementation (Richter-Devroe, 2012).¹⁸

Another of the key lines where persistent challenges are identified is participation. Studies and experts have highlighted that despite being a key component of the women, peace and security agenda, substantive female participation in peace negotiations and conflict resolution is one of the areas in which the least progress has been made and in which there are more risks of regression. Some of the main factors limiting progress in this area might be the patriarchal system and persistent gender inequalities, the shrinking of the political space, limited recognition of women's experiences and knowledge and other factors (Coomaraswamy, 2015; UN Women, 2018). Palestinian activists have actively denounced

this exclusion. In her address to the UN Security Council, Randa Siniora said that "although women have been at the forefront of the Palestinian liberation movement and the Palestinian Authority worked with women from civil society to create the National Action Plan for 1325, few have been represented in peace talks. Women have been underrepresented both as official negotiators and in technical advisory teams, despite evidence that they have often been crucial in working across political divides, in building grassroots support for peace and in bringing essential expertise in the field of human rights or in issues such as health and access to resources" (WILPF 2018).¹⁹ The marginalisation of Palestinian women from formal spaces has been observed both in negotiations with Israel and in intra-Palestinian reconciliation initiatives aimed at bridging the divide between Hamas and Fatah.

Regarding the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, international feminist pacifists say that although there were several women in the Palestinian delegation in key meetings of the peace process in the early 1990s, their participation has dropped off and women have not been prominent at the highest level since then.²⁰ According to MIFTAH (2018), there has never been more than one woman in successive delegations in the peace negotiations. Negotiations have been at an impasse for years,²¹ but one of the last attempts to reactivate them during the presidency of Barack Obama did not have Palestinian women in attendance. The six rounds of the so-called "proximity talks" (without direct contact between the parties) were held without any Palestinian representative present (Farr 2011). As in so many other contexts, Palestinian women have continued to lack meaningful participation in formal spaces despite the fact that they have been involved in peace work through unofficial channels and spaces for decades.

Women have also not been significantly included in negotiations for intra-Palestinian reconciliation, such as the various attempts to overcome the conflict and political division since 2005. Thus, for example, taking only the presence of women into account, which is not always a factor that equates to a significant female presence or feminist perspective, only two women participated in the talks for unity held in Cairo in 2011,

The Palestinian National Action Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 attempts to hold Israel accountable for the impacts of the occupation, but it also focuses on the responsibilities of the Palestinian authorities

16. See the first report published as part of this project, entitled *Occupation, conflict and patriarchy: impacts on Palestinian women*, available on the Escola de Cultura de Pau website: <https://escolapau.uab.cat/informes-2/impactos-mujeres-palestinas/>

17. Interview with Riham al Faqih and Lamis Shuaibi, MIFTAH, 19 September 2019.

18. It should be noted that Israel has declared its commitment to the principles of the women, peace and security agenda and has turned parts of Resolution 1325 referring to the participation of women in decision-making spaces, including peace processes, into law, but it has not developed a related action plan. For further information, see Fellin 2018.

19. The address was delivered by Randa Siniora, general director of the Palestinian organisation Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), on behalf of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security in the open debate on gender, peace and security in the UN Security Council on 25 October 2018.

20. PeaceWomen, "Country/region profile of Palestine", viewed on 23 August 2019.

21. For more detailed information on the recent developments of the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, see the 2018 and 2019 issues of Escola de Cultura de Pau, *Peace talks in focus: report on trends and scenarios*, Barcelona: Icaria.

though not in leadership positions (Farr 2011). In fact, the MIFTAH data indicate that there have been no women in the delegations for national reconciliation except for the meeting that led to the 2017 agreement in which four women from three political parties participated. Nor have there been significant numbers of women in the technical committees established to implement the reconciliation agreements (Van Levyveld and Al Kafarna 2018).

In this context, some analysts have asserted that the causes of this marginalisation are the gender stereotypes that prevail in Palestinian society and that limit female participation in wielding power and making decisions in practice.²² A recent study on gender relations in Palestine confirmed the widespread belief that the main role of women is to care for the home. And although a significant part of the population believes that women should play a greater representative role among political authorities (59% of women and 42% of men agree with this statement), most men and women think that “women are too emotional to be leaders” (UN Women and Promundo 2017). Thus, women’s roles continue to be limited in sectors such as diplomacy and the justice system.²³

The impact of Israeli occupation policies and the many obstacles it creates for Palestinian women to work together must also be taken into account. According to a study on political participation in the context of Resolution 1325, 72.9% of the women consulted said that checkpoints and separation policies imposed by the occupation had led to a significant decrease in interactions between the feminist movement in Palestine.²⁴ In this sense, and with regard to intra-Palestinian reconciliation, female activists from Gaza and the West Bank have deployed various strategies to overcome these difficulties and maintain contact, promoting various informal initiatives to foster unity among Palestinian political forces. Thus, for example, for two years (between 2012 and 2014), the women of Gaza staged weekly demonstrations in front of the headquarters of the Palestinian Legislative Council to exhort the political forces to work for unity.

The protests were held by the General Union of Palestinian Women in Gaza, women’s organisations and some political representatives to prod the Gazan authorities into action and led to the arrest of some of the participants (Van Levyveld and Al Kafarna 2018).

They also denounced the effects on women’s political participation caused by the political and legislative impasse and the failure to hold Palestinian general elections since 2006. Only 17 of the 132 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council are women.²⁵

Faced with this situation, organisations such as MIFTAH (2017) have raised the importance of continuing to work internally: “Despite the fact that Palestinian women have made progress in the field of political representation (...), the greatest challenge continues to be a lack of representation in national reconciliation and the non-inclusion of women leaders in negotiating teams (...) Internal security cannot be separated from occupation-related security issues” (MIFTAH 2017). Furthermore, some Palestinians recall that the Palestinian authorities have made promises that have still not become firm commitments and have not ratified reforms to personal and family status law and the penal code to improve the protection of women’s rights. Thus, there is some concern that a reconciliation process could lead to a setback in women’s rights (Kvinna till Kvinna 2014).

The marginalisation of Palestinian women from formal spaces has been observed both in negotiations with Israel and in intra-Palestinian reconciliation initiatives aimed at bridging the divide between Hamas and Fatah

Beyond the challenges mentioned thus far, mainly in terms of the protection and participation of Palestinian women, analysts, international feminist pacifists and representatives of Palestinian organisations identify another set of issues to consider in order to assess the implementation of the UNCR 1325 in Palestine. These include issues related to the level of knowledge and the connection of the women, peace and security agenda with the most everyday priority concerns of Palestinian women, the need to address gender, peace and security commitments in line with other regulatory frameworks, the existence of specific challenges determined by the Palestinian context and the need to strengthen international commitments to the women, peace and security agenda with regard to Palestine.

Assessments of the extent to which the level of knowledge and the use of Resolution 1325 and the gender, peace and security agenda have been internalised in Palestine are mixed. Some stress that its use is mainly focused on elites and organisations that work on gender, peace and security issues and that knowledge of it is still limited outside these spheres. This perception

22. *ibid.*

23. According to data mentioned in a study by the Palestinian organisation MIFTAH published in 2018, only 5.8% of the Palestinian diplomatic corps was female. In 2017, 17% of the judges were women, in 2014, 20% of the lawyers were women and only 16 of the 124 prosecutors were women (MIFTAH 2018).

24. *The Status of Political Participation among Palestinian Women Under UNSCR 1325* (in Arabic) cited in Willemijn van Levyveld and Wafaa Al Kafarna, 2018.

25. Despite the aforementioned limitations, some recent progress has been made due to pressure from Palestinian women’s organisations, such as the establishment of a 20% quota in municipal elections and the PA’s issuance of some presidential decrees on issues of violence and gender equity, including the unreserved approval of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

coincides with some more general assessments of the global women, peace and security agenda that point to limited appropriation at the grassroots level.

Along these lines, therefore, there is the challenge of connecting this international agenda with the daily challenges of Palestinian women, which mostly have to do with daily survival. Moreover, the main priorities of many Palestinian civil society organisations, including women's organisations, include supporting women's basic needs, such as their physical and mental health and providing legal assistance in cases of gender-based violence, and this compromises their ability to devote efforts to other activities of a more political nature. In fact, some authors have drawn attention to what they describe as a phenomenon of "NGOisation" and "depoliticisation" of Palestinian women's organisations in the post-Oslo period (Farr 2010).²⁶ Faced with this scenario, some activists underscore the importance of promoting awareness of Resolution 1325 and its usefulness in the Palestinian context (Reyman, Izan and Parker 2016).²⁷ Others remained convinced that women not only have to influence political agendas, but must also participate more effectively in decision-making spaces.²⁸

Coinciding with other thinking around the world about more effective and comprehensive implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, there is also increasing recognition of the importance of its implementation in coordination with other regulatory frameworks on human rights and gender equality, among them and especially with the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). With Palestine having joined in 2014 and with Israel already a member, CEDAW is valued as a good basis for addressing institutional inequalities and highlighting the patriarchal control of institutions.²⁹ This convention is also particularly important in the Palestinian context, considering that "Recommendation 30", approved in 2013, highlights its applicability in a wide variety of contexts affected by conflicts and political crises and explicitly mentions the situations

Palestinian women have drawn attention to the difficulties that the policies of the Israeli occupation impose on the interactions of the feminist movement in Palestine

Feminist activists and academics are raising the importance of putting Resolution 1325 into practice in coordination with other regulatory frameworks on human rights and gender equality, including CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals

of women in situations of occupation (Swaine and O'Rourke 2015). Recommendation 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict, and post-conflict situations also emphasises CEDAW's connections with the UN Security Council's resolutions on women, peace and security. Together, they constitute a more substantive framework to ensure that gender equality is an integral part of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, post-war reconstruction and accountability (Swaine and O'Rourke 2015). Therefore, an approach that includes these different instruments is considered a useful way to adapt to the unique aspects of the Palestinian context (MIFTAH 2017 and 2018). These instruments also include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those that refer to gender equality and the need for peace and justice, insofar as they also offer a framework that makes it possible to give visibility to the serious violations in Palestine despite the global commitments made.³⁰

Some also stress the need to become aware of some challenges for the implementation of Resolution 1325 linked to the complexities of the context. These include the difficulties stemming from the various situations faced by Palestinian women and girls as a result of the repressive policies, discrimination, segregation and apartheid imposed by the Israeli occupation in Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem, which determine a wide variety of peace and security-related needs and priorities and hamper activists' efforts to articulate a unified agenda (Richter Devroe 2011). The unique status of Palestine in the UN is also mentioned, as are the limitations associated with the fact that Palestine has not been able to establish itself as a state and that it is not fully functional at the institutional level. These considerations seem pertinent regarding issues such as the PA's real capacity to put 1325 into practice and guarantee aspects such as the protection of Palestinian women, as well as what real participation may exist when the institutions are not active, the Palestinian population has not voted for years and the situation is one of occupation.

Beyond these conditions, various people also confirm that feminist organisations and organisations that work

26. Some authors have said that in the post-Oslo period, women's organisations have become more politically diffuse entities. "They no longer identify participation in the Palestinian liberation movement as their priority concern with the promotion of women's equality at the heart of their struggle. Instead, they focus more on survival interventions dedicated to alleviating the sufferings of the women they serve and operate within donor frameworks. The result is that their agenda is both less local and less explicitly political." (Farr 2010).

27. Interview with Hala Riziq, a feminist activist from Gaza, 16 September 2019.

28. Interview with Amal Abusrour, programme director at WCLAC, 10 September 2019.

29. Interview with Vanessa Farr, international consultant and expert on gender, peace and security, 5 September 2019.

30. SDG 5 on "gender equality" underlines the importance of ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls and SDG 16 refers to the need for "peace, justice and strong institutions".

for the rights of Palestinian women must continue to grapple with a lack of political will to honour the commitments made and with discourses and practices that aim to relegate the fight for equality to the background. In this sense, activists acknowledge the importance of the narratives that put the struggle against the occupation front and centre, which sometimes label initiatives that seek to fight for women's rights and equality at the same time as "selfish" or even describe those who criticise the Palestinian authorities as "traitors". Therefore, it is suggested that there is still work to be done to make it understood that the national issue and anti-occupation efforts should be inextricably linked to equity and to raise awareness and engage men in implementing Resolution 1325 and in defying the norms of the patriarchal system in Palestine (Reyman, Izan and Parker 2016). At the same time, female activists and feminist scholars argue that efforts for women's rights and for gender equality cannot be addressed independently of the Palestinian political agenda. In other words, the rights and empowerment of Palestinian women cannot be pursued in isolation, ignoring the impacts of the occupation and conflict on the social, educational, economic and legal status of Palestinian women (Richter Devroe 2011, 2012). Along these lines, it has been proposed that an interpretation of 1325 from a rights-based perspective that acknowledges the historical and political causes of the conflict has the potential to strengthen (and not to "discipline", as has been criticised) the cause of Palestinian women (Richter Devroe 2011). In this context, evaluations by Palestinian organisations themselves have identified the challenge of intensifying collaboration between the different Palestinian actors working on women, peace and security in order to promote actions and project a more unified message internationally (MIFTAH 2018).

Given this scenario and set of variables, various people have raised the need for the international community

Palestinian activists highlight the importance of promoting awareness of Resolution 1325 and its usefulness in the Palestinian context

to contribute more significantly to implementing the different international resolutions and commitments applicable to Palestine, including Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda. Considering the critical economic situation of the Palestinian Authority, continuing efforts to support activities that contribute to accountability and the monitoring of women's rights are especially important and the enormous work that various civil society organisations, and notably women's organisations, have done to document and report the rights violations and violence affecting Palestinian women and girls are taken into account, as are their efforts to give visibility to the gender impacts of the occupation as part of Resolution 1325. At the same time, there is a great need for the occupation to be recognised for what it is in the women, peace and security agenda and it must also be addressed as part of the related commitments made by other countries. Thus, for example, "the impact of arms transfers to Israel and the specific consequences they have for Palestinian women should be taken into account".³¹

Even though many assessments of the situation could be negative or sceptical, some Palestinians highlight the work done on women, peace and security in recent years, aware that sometimes the dynamics lead to a non-linear evolution and to "taking one step forward and two steps back". Positive developments include the coalition-based work and the development of the NAP, the establishment of networks, the questioning of the political parties, the boosting of visibility and awareness regarding the different types of violence affecting women, the extensive work on documenting abuse and the great ability consistently demonstrated by the Palestinian women engaged in these issues. As noted by a feminist activist from Gaza, the issues are now on the agenda: "There is progress, even if it is very slow (...) At least we have knocked on the door and now the door is beginning to open".³²

31. Interview with Laila Alodaat, director of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 30 August 2019.

32. Interview with Hala Riziq, a feminist activist from Gaza, 16 September 2019.

Final thoughts

Twenty years after the approval of Resolution 1325, Palestine illustrates the challenges and complexities in implementing the women, peace and security agenda. However, it also allows us to visualise how this international framework is used and to understand how important it is to connect it with other international instruments supportive of human rights and gender equity in order to move forward more substantively and decisively in protecting and promoting women's rights. Despite the qualms and doubts about the applicability of Resolution 1325 and the women, peace and security agenda in Palestine, which persist among some groups, other Palestinians have chosen to support its mandate and promote its implementation from a perspective that takes the unique aspects of the Palestinian context into account. As reflected in the strategic priorities of the Palestinian National Action Plan, this has involved focusing on the Israeli occupation's impact on Palestinian women and girls, as well as on underlining the importance of female participation in decision-

making and internal peace and reconciliation initiatives.

Various Palestinians praise the work done on women, peace and security and highlight the coalition-based work and the development of the NAP, the establishment of networks, the boosting of awareness of the different types of violence affecting women and the extensive work done on documenting abuse, among other topics

In practice, however, problems remain in protecting and guaranteeing the rights of Palestinian women and girls in a context characterised by the many forms of violence caused by the occupation, with little prospect of getting Israel to admit responsibility or provide accountability. Generally speaking, women are also still marginalised from key decision-making roles regarding peace, security and reconciliation in Palestine. While recognising these difficulties and pending issues, various Palestinian voices praise what they consider to be progress and the work carried out so far on women, peace and security. They are committed to strengthening ties between organisations to boost collective work and highlight the need for the international community to deepen commitments in this area, particularly through support for agendas and organisations on the ground that seek to protect, promote and guarantee the rights of Palestinian women and girls.

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