

## **Submission Under Pillar 2 Participation and Representation of Women in Decision Making.**

Despite the existence of UN Resolution 1325 mainstream and social media channels who engage in the reporting or documenting of conflict situations continue to overwhelmingly prioritize the testimony of men. This situation, contrary to the aims of UN1325 reinforces the invisibility of women's voices as stakeholders to the outcome or conduct of any conflict. This ensures that women are represented most often as victims rather than fully fledged humans whose expertise, knowledge, professionalism and experience is as essential as the male point of view.

If this this government intends to genuinely implement Pillar 2 of Women Peace and Security there are actions immediately available to it:

Due to the history of under-representation of decision making women in all media channels media consumers have become accustomed prioritizing a male point of view. This means that women who enter into decision making positions face further obstacles that concrete steps can be taken to remove: If their views and opinions are not given equal access to channels of public debate they can often remain invisible, this therefore can leave such women in situation where they are less effective in the decision making processes than they would have been if given equal platforms for their opinion. Under these conditions women's participation can easily be portrayed as tokenism. In order to meet the enormous potential inherent in UN1325 the Irish Government must take steps to ensure that actions taken to comply with it avoid this type of tokenism and act strongly to combat this:

1. The Irish Government can immediately begin an active and vigorous campaign to educate media practitioners (including social media) on the existence and implications of UN 1325. This submission requests that the government conduct a public research project with all media channels to establish what level of awareness of UN1325 exists amongst them and further requests that the results of this survey would be made public and thereby lead to debate in the public sphere.
2. Government press offices themselves should seek to use whatever channels they have to raise awareness of the work of women in decision making fora both inside government and in the civil service.
3. The Irish Government could take a leadership role in identifying women journalists reporting from conflict situations and ensure that Irish media channels are aware of their existence, and that in line with UN1325 that they utilize them to the full in their reporting.

My experience in conflict zones including in the 1970s and 1980s in the north of Ireland have demonstrated clearly to me that no real change can happen until women are fully and visibly involved, as examples of this firstly I would remind you of the contribution towards a lasting peace made by Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams who took to the streets in an unprecedented cross community peaceful action that was eventually hugely significant in leading to the good Friday Agreement, secondly the Women's Coalition for Peace which was

set up during the formation of the Stormont Assembly and played a crucial role in keeping channels of communication open between the DUP and Sinn Fein, thirdly the group Women Against Imperialism of which I was a member who challenged the leadership of the IRA insisting that women in Armagh prison must be given equal status within the republican movement. It has become clear that these actions began the feminisation and the embracing of liberal humanitarian values that eventually lead republicanism to revoke violence and engage through democratic means. You will see from the date of this submission that as I write Gaza is once more the target of blatant horrific war crimes. To me, from my lifetime's experience as a women engaged in public life the parallels between the early patriarchal and male dominated Catholic IRA which saw women only as support for their actions rather than being equal humans engaged in and affected by the conflict, and Hamas are evident. It comes as no surprise to me that the lack of effective action by the International Community in the face of repeated illegal onslaughts by the Israeli Military has served to bolster and increase support for Hamas. It is my firm hope that the Irish government, and indeed the UN are serious enough about UN1325 to seek to engage with the huge range of work being done by Palestinian women to end the siege instead of allowing these vital voices to continue being sidelined. Equally is clear to me that the Irish Government must seek out and take on board the views of the many women's groups within Israel who are working for peace and are opposed to their governments actions (such as the Coalition of Women for Peace).

It is my firm belief that when women's participation is visible that this serves to encourage and mobilize more women towards action. For this reason the actions of media channels and whether they decide to sideline or promote women's expertise is crucial, in many ways in our complex world the media can be the best channel to effect changes of mindset. A small non military state such as Ireland would be well advised that concentrating on improving media representation from conflict zones could be just as effective as sending peace keepers or providing military expertise.