

**WHERE ARE ALL THE WOMEN?  
U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325:  
Gender Perspectives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

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*Kayan*—Feminist Organization, whose name means “being” in Arabic, is an organization created for and run by Palestinian Israeli women. Founded in 1998, Kayan works to improve the status of Palestinian-Israeli women by changing the traditional role of women in society and promoting the social and economic empowerment of women and girls.

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## Introduction

The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 in October, 2000, to define armed conflict's impact on women and girls in many of the following ways: rape, domestic violence, denial of necessary services, lack of political influence, poverty, under-representation in the media, survival sex, trafficking of women, STDs, etc. The resolution also acknowledges the importance of bringing a gender perspective into all peace agreement negotiations and stresses the important role of local women and women's organizations in all conflict resolution efforts. The resolution reaffirms the Security Council's obligation to protect women and support their representation in peace processes as well as in local and global politics.

The resolution was adopted as a result of a long-term campaign on the part of international women's organizations and peace movements demanding that the U.N. bring a gender perspective into all peacekeeping operations and all levels of conflict resolution negotiations as well as guarantee the protection of women and girls. The Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 reflects an international commitment to the representation of women's perspectives and needs and the recognition of women's unique role in achieving peace and justice.

*Isha L'Isha*—Haifa Feminist Center and *Kayan*—Feminist Organization organized the first national conference addressing Resolution 1325 in Israel, titled "U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 and its Relevance to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," held in April, 2003. Conference speakers included academic scholars, attorneys and activists for women's rights, human rights and peace from both Israel and the Palestinian Authority. *Isha L'Isha* and *Kayan* organized this forum with the cooperation of the Human Rights program in the Academic College of Law, Ramat-Gan, which hosted the conference.

This collection of essays is based on the lectures that were given during the conference. It is meant to supply information regarding the resolution, its relevancy to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the attempts of Israeli and Palestinian organizations to call for Security Council implementation of Resolution 1325 in this region. This collection exposes the gender aspect of human rights violations and refers to the particular effects of regional armed conflict on the lives of Palestinian and Israeli women. By this, we wish to raise

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awareness of the connection between women's rights and human rights and the possibility of adding a human rights perspective to the feminist struggle. Thus, we stress the responsibility of women's rights organizations in Israel and Palestine to demand full participation of women in all negotiations and conflict resolution attempts.

The fact is, all decisions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both at the political and the military level, are handled by high-ranking officials, where women's voices and perspectives are not represented. Today, as in the past, there are almost no women present in the forums that determine the most crucial issues that affect all of our lives. However, the absence of women from centers of political power does not seem as pressing an issue due to the ongoing emergency situation and is viewed, instead, as a natural or technical matter. The demand to integrate women's voices must not be perceived as luxury but rather as a fundamental condition for understanding the conflict and the ways to resolve it. Resolution 1325 provides the normative basis for comprehending the necessity of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all conflict resolution efforts—now it is up to us to make these principles a reality.

The inaccessibility of international law makes it difficult for grassroots organizations to understand the potential it contains. Thus the first step is to simplify the text of the resolution and to explain its meaning and implication in order to give women a tool to claim their responsibility for the region's political reality. We, the feminist organizations, bear the burden to create a practical political strategy that will enable both sides to reach a sustainable peace while assuring full representation of the voices and needs of women and girls.

— *Sarai Aharoni and Rula Deeb*

**U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325**  
Refugee Women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory—  
UNRWA's Efforts

*Elna Sondergaard and Trude Strand*

## I. Introduction

The humanitarian situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has witnessed steady deterioration since the current conditions of strife erupted in 2000. Israeli-imposed closures and curfews have severely restricted movement, making it difficult for Palestinians to sustain their livelihoods. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is deeply concerned about the impact of the current conflict on the civilian population in general and the refugee population in particular. UNRWA is acutely aware that women in the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) are shouldering immense burdens.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1235 highlights the impact of armed conflict on women and children. It calls for all international parties to respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls and emphasizes the importance of women's full participation at decision-making levels in relation to conflict resolution, peace processes and peacekeeping. Thus Resolution 1325 sets a new standard for action by governments, the Security Council and the wider U.N. system.

This paper seeks to emphasize the impact of the ongoing conflict in the OPT on Palestinian refugee women. Presenting a humanitarian perspective, the paper places its focus on Resolution 1325 in the context of international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, juxtaposing the provisions of the resolution with the current realities in the OPT and UNRWA's efforts to address some of the most pressing difficulties. After outlining UNRWA's mandate, the registered refugee profile and a snapshot of the current situation

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in the OPT, the paper discusses the *Intifada* and its impact on women, particularly in reference to personal security, health provisions, education, housing and economic opportunities. Finally, the paper addresses the women's voices in the decision-making process and women's participation in operational levels of UNRWA.

## II. UNRWA's mandate

UNRWA has provided humanitarian assistance to the Palestine refugee community since its establishment pursuant to U.N. General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of Dec. 8, 1949. UNRWA was established as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly "to prevent conditions of starvation and distress" among Palestine refugees and to "further conditions of peace and stability" through "direct relief and works programs." UNRWA's mandate fully expresses its humanitarian character. Organized to address the conditions facing Palestine refugees after the 1948 war, UNRWA embarked on efforts to provide short-term emergency relief and longer-term human development-oriented programs such as education and health services. The Agency's humanitarian responses recognized the hardships faced by female refugees, addressing these issues through the development and execution of gender sensitive program activities, including a pronounced emphasis on women and child health care and equal access to education. UNRWA's regular programs include education, health, relief and social services and microfinance.

## III. Refugees registered with UNRWA

A registered Palestine refugee is a person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of June 1, 1946, to May 15, 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict. Descendants of such persons in the male line are also included. As of Dec. 31, 2002, more than 4 million refugees were registered with UNRWA. UNRWA registered 893,141 refugees in the Gaza Strip, more than 70 percent of the region's population. UNRWA registered 639,448 refugees in the West Bank, about 30 percent of the population. About half and one-third of refugees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively, live in refugee camps. Palestine refugees living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip account for



about 38 percent of all registered Palestine refugees, with the remainder living in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

#### IV. The current situation in the OPT

Resolution 1325 expresses “concern that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons.”<sup>1</sup> The current situation in the OPT represents a humanitarian emergency. A telling indicator of the crisis is the level of poverty among the Palestinian population. According to a World Bank report, 60 percent of the Palestinian population live on less than U.S. \$2 a day. In the Gaza Strip, the same source estimates the poverty rate to be as high as 75 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Constituting the most vulnerable population subgroup in the OPT, the refugee community has experienced dramatic deterioration of household welfare and food security in the wake of ongoing violence. Restrictions on movement and the conditions of strife have negatively impacted people’s social and psychological wellbeing. The situation in the OPT poses serious challenges and places heavy burdens on Palestinian refugee women. Areas of particular importance to their welfare include personal security, health care, education, housing and economic opportunities.

#### V. Protection of civilian women

Resolution 1325 reaffirms the “need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflict.” Moreover, it calls upon “all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the additional Protocols thereto of 1977.”

1 U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325. Oct. 31, 2000.

2 The World Bank. *Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis*, draft report, March 2003, p. 3.

Resolution 1325 specifically refers to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory, under which women and children benefit from all the basic principles of humane treatment. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provides that civilians shall “at all times be humanely treated and shall be protected especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof.” Since September, 2000, a number of incidents reported to UNRWA demonstrate that the protection of women has been seriously compromised and the notion of humane treatment has been severely violated.

## VI. Health

Health care is an important focus in conflict situations and in relation to refugees. Since UNRWA commenced operations in 1950, the Agency’s Health Program has systematically intervened to improve the health of registered Palestine refugees. UNRWA’s current health intervention focus is to protect, preserve and promote the wellbeing of the refugee population and meet their basic health needs.

The Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates that the wounded, the sick and infirm and expectant mothers shall receive particular protection and respect. It also provides that medical personnel of all categories shall be allowed to carry out their duties and that immunization programs shall be able to continue without disruption.

Women’s health care has been compromised by the current conditions of strife. Due in significant measure to restrictions on movement, women have on many occasions been prevented from reaching hospitals or medical personnel. A number of UNRWA clinics have been closed for a considerable period of time as a result of closures and curfews, causing the loss of thousands of workdays. In the West Bank, the rate of women giving birth at home has witnessed a 61-percent increase, and the percentage of infants younger than 6 months completing immunization programs between 2000 and 2002 has dropped 35 percent. In the Gaza Strip, the rate of miscarriages has risen by 135 percent.<sup>3</sup> A reported 50 percent of women slated for appointments at the UNRWA Rafah clinic have failed to attend antenatal care due to movement restrictions. UNRWA’s Health Program is also facing increased demands due to the injuries, stress and psychological trauma caused

3 UNRWA, *Emergency Appeal 2003*, January-June 2003, page 13.

by the conflict. In order to address the difficulties faced by Palestinians when seeking medical assistance under such circumstances, UNRWA has provided mobile health units, hired extra personnel and procured extra medical supplies. The Agency has also initiated a new psycho-social support program.

## VII. Education

According to the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying power is under an obligation to facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and the education of children. Education is of utmost importance for full participation in society and has been a key focus area for UNRWA during the last five decades—encouraging and indeed achieving gender parity in enrollment and ensuring equal skill and knowledge bases between boys and girls.

Over the course of the *Intifada*, UNRWA has witnessed severe disruptions to its education activities as a result of closures and curfews. From 2001 to 2002, more than 70,000 teacher days were lost in the West Bank. From 2000 to 2002, about 160,000 teacher days were lost in the Gaza Strip.<sup>4</sup> Female pupils and teachers appear to have been particularly affected by the increased problems of access to education facilities and the dangers involved in travelling to and from school as well as within schools. Parents fearing for their daughters' safety have prohibited the girls from attending classes, and female pupils and teachers walk long distances in deserted areas to avoid Israeli soldiers and settlers.<sup>5</sup> The root causes of the anxiety expressed by parents and schoolchildren are illustrated by several cases where children have been injured in or on their way to school in the OPT.

Noting the gravity of the situation and the need for supportive structures for pupils and teachers alike, UNRWA has designed a program of remedial education to support children who are in need of additional tutoring. However, the long-term effects of the situation will likely necessitate a broader and more systematic approach in the future.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., page 16.

<sup>5</sup> U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. *Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women: Report of the Secretary-General 2003*, Page 4.

## VIII. House demolitions

Resolution 1325 “calls upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian nature and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements.” This is compounded by the Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying power from destroying any real or personal property, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations.

Refugee camps constitute the areas that have been most adversely affected by Israeli military assaults and incursions as well as closures and curfews throughout the *Intifada*. On many occasions, there have been clashes between the Israeli military and armed Palestinian groups in refugee camps or in their vicinity. Moreover, a number of families have had their houses demolished by the Israeli army, a practice that has severely affected Palestine refugee women.

In the Gaza Strip, by the end of March 2003, the IDF had demolished 990 houses, including 834 refugee housing units that accommodated 7,466 individuals—around 60 percent of whom were women and children under the age of 15. House demolitions have typically taken place at night and often without any warning that would allow occupants to remove their personal belongings. A tragic example of house demolitions and their impact on civilians can be drawn from the March 3 incursion into Bureij camp in the Gaza Strip when a pregnant mother of 10 was killed under the rubble of her house as neighboring houses were demolished. UNRWA offers reconstruction and rehabilitation assistance to select households.

## IX. Economic opportunities

The conditions of the *Intifada* have effectively limited the economic opportunities of Palestine refugees. A long-standing economic system, characterized by male migrant labor flows from the OPT into Israel, has led to low female participation rates in the labor force. When planning and implementing humanitarian responses, it is important to view women as active agents and not primarily as victims, thus obscuring their capabilities.

The Solidarity Group Lending product (SGL) of UNRWA’s Microfinance and Microenterprise Program targets loans to female entrepreneurs. The product is devised to strengthen business activity, create jobs, generate income for participants, contribute to and complement poverty alleviation efforts, and encourage women’s economic participation. The results have proven very

successful and resilient despite the *Intifada* and the prevailing limits to economic opportunities. Women involved in economic activity under the scheme tend to be the primary breadwinners of the family and typically have seven to eight dependants. Several impact studies of the loan scheme have reaffirmed its role in empowering women to utilize their entrepreneurial abilities in an economic setting dominated by men.

Currently there are more than 2,700 women holding loans under the program. In February, 2003, alone, 354 new loans were disbursed. Despite the economic difficulties associated with the *Intifada*, the repayment rates of the SGL product remain high, reflecting the dynamic nature of Gaza's economic sector.

## X. Humanitarian operations and gender perspectives— UNRWA

Resolution 1325 stresses the need for integrated gender perspectives and women's full participation in humanitarian operations. Given the many ways in which humanitarian and development concerns interact and affect one another, and given the long-lasting social and economic impact of conflicts, it is crucial to ensure that gender perspectives are systematically integrated into the full range of long-term development oriented activities and short-term emergency responses. UNRWA's emphasis on human resource development in programs and operations has been imbued with a gender sensitive outlook since the late 1950s.

Many of UNRWA's policy initiatives have recognized the vulnerability of Palestinian refugee women and sought to address the issue by empowerment strategies. Through its initiatives, UNRWA seeks to achieve gender parity in its educational programs and focus on gender issues in its endeavors to ensure adequate primary health standards. In addition, the group is working to alleviate the suffering of the poor and female-headed households and enable the entrepreneurial capabilities of refugee women through financing micro-level enterprises.

To be effective, humanitarian responses must focus on a wide range of issues and seek the active involvement of those uprooted throughout the stages of program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. UNRWA employs 3,500 and 7,000 Palestinian staff members in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, the vast majority of whom are

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themselves refugees. Gender balance in various occupations has an important bearing on the Agency's human resource policy. The percentage of UNRWA female staff in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is approximately 40 percent, taking sectoral differences into account. In the areas of education, and relief and social services, employment figures demonstrate gender parity.

In the West Bank field, 25 percent of personnel hired for food distributions are women. On the beneficiary end, in the Gaza Strip, female-headed households constitute 19 percent of all families (124,241) receiving food aid. Thus, its current emergency program, UNRWA has sought to ensure the full participation and input of women both in organizing and receiving aid.

## Everyday Life of Palestinian Women

*Sama Aweidab-Liftawi*

Since Sept. 28, 2000, the world has been watching through different TV channels Israel's escalating repression of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the ensuing human rights violations. Israeli occupation authorities and their supporters, the settlers, have imposed a policy of collective punishment that includes an economic and military blockade on Palestinian towns and villages, as well as the following measures:

- Murder and injury, by shooting people and bombarding towns
- Uprooting of trees and olive groves
- Demolishing houses
- Restrictions on freedom of movement
- Imposing curfews on cities, towns and villages
- Arresting people

But despite the Israeli authorities' constant excuses to justify these measures, putting them all under the umbrella of the "security of Israel and Israeli civilians," the international community still condemned Israel for its actions against the Palestinian people. The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1322 on Oct. 7, 2000 condemning Israel's "excessive use of force against Palestinians."

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and a number of other international and local human rights organizations have documented Israel's systematic abuses of power and violations of standards of conduct in its policies attacking, intimidating and collectively punishing the Palestinian people. The U.N. Commission on Human Rights determined in its Oct. 19,

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2000 resolution that Israeli actions against Palestinian civilians constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Despite all this, we the Palestinian women believe that the whole picture and the impact of such measures on Palestinian women has not been made clear enough for the international community. We as Palestinian women have seen, and continue to feel, not just the short-term impact but the long-term implications of these measures. Two years ago, women from the Women's Studies Centre in Jerusalem and the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling jointly decided to assess that impact by visiting the affected regions. There we met with women, documenting the changes in their daily life and recording their feelings regarding what is happening to them and their families.

Through these visits, we compiled dozens of stories and assessed the short-term impact of such measures on their lives. However, I have to mention that we ourselves are among these women: thus we've been assessing the impact on our own lives and recording our own stories as well.

During this process, the following stories came to light:

We saw the impact of loss. What does it mean to a mother to lose her son, her daughter or her husband? What does such a loss mean in terms of her daily life? In a society as conservative as Palestinian society, the major role of a woman is to be a wife and a mother. We saw mothers who refused to throw away their dead children's boots or let anybody use their beds.

We saw mothers who suddenly found themselves forced to be the family-bread winner, a role for which they were not raised, not trained and have no qualifications.

We saw female students who were forced to quit their college and university studies because their families could no longer bear the expense of their education. For them, their entire lives' dreams had ended.

We could see mothers and sisters whose sons and daughters became handicapped, whose entire lives, as well as those of their families, changed. I can tell you about Nicola's mother after Nicola had lost his hand and Jessica's mother after her daughter had lost one of her eyes. These two women's lives changed completely, becoming a new, unending tragedy.

We saw mothers who had to give birth at various checkpoints. Sometimes the mothers were lucky, and their babies lived. In most cases, they lost their babies, sometimes even their lives.

We saw Diaa's mother. For years, she visited doctors to try to conceive. While she was returning home with Diaa to celebrate his birth with the village, settlers shot him at the village entrance.



We saw tearful children waiting at the checkpoints to be allowed to go to school or home, with soldiers detaining them for hours or throwing tear gas at them. We saw their confused mothers who were not sure whether to send them back to school or to keep them home.

We saw families from places such as Beit Jala and Beit Sahour who left their houses in order to protect their lives and move to a safer location. We could see the housewives trying to do their utmost to maintain their children's living standards in these new, unequipped and unfurnished apartments or hotels such as in Al-Bireh City near Ramallah.

We saw children living in Nablus, Tulkarem and Hebron, for whom going to school is becoming a dream due to long curfews. Meanwhile, their mothers are burdened by having to keep them enclosed at home for days.

We saw mothers in Jenin refugee camps looking for their children's clothes and kitchen equipment in their demolished houses, searching for anything that could help them to take care of their children. Meanwhile, the children hunted for their books, pencils and toys in order to maintain some sense of life's continuation.

We noticed the increase in numbers of battered women, doubly victimized in such a patriarchal society, paying for their male familiars' unemployment and for all the humiliation the men face daily at checkpoints.

And we saw families who could no longer feed their children, mothers who could not reach their children at hospitals or could not meet with their relatives for months as a result of the closure policy.

When I was asked to prepare this paper, I intended to look for statistics. But I changed my mind. You can get numbers from any human right organization. While numbers are an important indicator, it's not really a matter of numbers. It's human life that we should care about, something that cannot be described in numbers.

## **Israel's Policy in the Occupied Territories** Ramifications on Women's Health

*Miri Weingarten*

When Israel assumed control over the Palestinian population in the territories occupied in 1967, it also assumed limited responsibility for managing the Palestinian health system. This was done via the military government in the occupied territories, which existed until 1981. Between 1981 and 1993, when the interim accords between Israel and the Palestinians were signed, Israel continued to manage the Palestinian health system through IDF medical officers, employed by the civil administration that governed the territories under the authority of Israel's Ministry of Defense.

By subordinating health services in the territories to the Ministry of Defense, the Palestinian health system was separated from its Israeli counterpart. It was managed according to two clear principles: preserving tranquility and order within the occupied population and reducing financial expenses to a minimum by running the system as a "closed market" financed chiefly through taxation of the Palestinians. Israel's evasion of its responsibility for the Palestinian population's health became even more poignant following the signature of the Oslo Accords. The signing parties completely ignored the legacy of the occupation and "turned a new leaf" on health issues; the deficient and unbalanced health system existing in the occupied territories was promptly handed over to the Palestinian Authority, which had only a limited capacity to manage it. The PA also assumed responsibility for the cost of managing the system—some 12 billion shekels annually.

In addition, the means through which the civil administration controlled the occupied population's health also changed. The medical officers were replaced by "medical coordinators," employees of the Ministry of Defense, who—unlike their predecessors—lacked any medical training or knowledge. Their job was

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not to provide medical services. Rather, it was to grant or to refuse—in accordance with the considerations of Israeli security forces—freedom of movement for Palestinian patients and doctors between the occupied territories, Israel and neighboring countries; between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; and between the territories and medical facilities in East Jerusalem. Today, the health coordinators also have the power to determine whether a woman is allowed to travel from her house to the neighboring village or must stay home.

Thus, the domain of health became another area in which Israel has evaded its responsibilities toward the population it occupied, turning health services—and access to them—into another means of controlling those who depend on these services. These trends became more and more clear during the 1990s and have climaxed since the beginning of the second Palestinian uprising (the Al-Aqsa Intifada) in September, 2000. In the beginning of the first Intifada, then-Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin punished the Palestinians by canceling all referrals to medical treatment in hospitals within Israel. In the beginning of the second Intifada, the Israeli government punished Palestinians by “showing” them how their access to medical centers that developed during the Oslo years can be almost fully denied, using more than 100 permanent manned checkpoints, and hundreds more temporary roadblocks and barriers. Claims that these are essential security measures seem shabby, considering that while healthy men and women may be able to traverse—albeit with great difficulty—the barriers that are strewn throughout the West Bank, it is the sick, elderly and young who are left behind. Until recently, it seemed that these means were temporary or might be abolished in the future. However, the wall—or, in official Israeli terms, the security fence—that is being built in the western and eastern parts of the West Bank, as well as deep within it, may turn the reality of social and medical fragmentation into a permanent one. Should Israel ever decide to reverse the policy of occupation, the burden of restoring the health system on financial, infrastructural and professional levels will be extremely heavy. The responsibility for it will rest squarely on Israel's shoulders for many generations to come.

In this lecture, I have been asked to speak about the lives of Palestinian women and girls in the present reality, relating to aspects that are linked to the work of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). Clearly when a certain population is in distress, its women pay a higher toll. Palestinian women endure suffering at the hands of the Israeli occupation as well as due to their own society's oppression of women. The Israeli occupation further hampers

these women's uphill struggle, as they pay an unbearable price for the crimes of those in power in both societies.

But as I come to talk about Palestinian women, I am overcome with discomfort—as a woman, as an Ashkenazi Jew, as a citizen of the occupying country, Israel. It would be difficult to detail the long, and still lengthening, list of injustices against female victims of the occupation and “closures.” Where can this detailing in itself lead? Does listing the wrongdoings not perpetuate the status of the Palestinian woman as a passive victim? And who is the person listing these injustices? As an Israeli Jew, doesn't my report about the suffering of Palestinians replicate the unequal relations between us? Can I pretend to be a spectator or speak as a neutral activist naming the wrongs of occupation? I am not neutral. I have to take a stand as part of my society. As a rule, it seems more fitting in my eyes to speak of the victimizing society from which I come, and from which I demand answers, than to speak of the victims. Furthermore, I do not live in the occupied territories. When the field journeys and medical days are over, I return to my home or the PHR headquarters in Tel Aviv.

On the other hand, it wouldn't be correct to say that I don't have a right to speak of Palestinian women. Moreover, to remain silent may be equivalent to evading action. Therefore, it seems to me that I can contribute three kinds of testimonies to the present discussion.

The first kind describes an encounter between myself, as a woman activist, and Palestinian activist women, fighting within their society to take control of their destiny. It also describes their work reflected through my eyes. An example of this is the work of Zaynah Manasreh, from the village of Husan in the Bethlehem district. I met her during one of the medical days that PHR has been organizing since 1988, where Israeli doctors—men and women, Jews and Arabs—meet with Palestinian doctors and operate mobile clinics in besieged or isolated villages in the West Bank. These medical days are acts of aid, but also of protest. They are planned in coordination with Palestinian medical organizations such as Medical Relief or the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

On this particular day we were hosted warmly by the members of the village council and of Medical Relief. Only when the event drew to a close did a woman approach me. She introduced herself as Zaynah and explained that the initiators and organizers of the event were the members of the Women's Center that she had founded in Husan.

We agreed to stay in touch, and eventually I returned to the village with another female worker. We met with the members of the Women's Center—some 150 women, all from Husan or the other villages in the region,

such as Wadi Fukin and Nahalin. Zaynah and her sister-in-law, Faten, founded the center in 1999 out of their own initiative and action. Its goals are to promote women's employment, social justice, and equality between women and men in society and political culture. The women who took part in the meeting informed us that the center's modes and scope of activity have changed since the current Intifada began. Before it began, many meetings took place with similar organizations from the West Bank, Israel and abroad; now activities are limited to the Bethlehem region. On the other hand, many new members have joined; the need for the support and activities of the center has grown, and the number and frequency of activities have increased. Before the *Intifada*, activities included training and courses in arts and crafts, promoting literacy among women, encouraging girls to take the *taujibi* tests (high school final exams), and counseling on sexual harassment and early marriage. Now, however, activities include courses in first aid, support groups for prisoners' mothers, food delivery operations to detainees and prisoners, lectures on depression and anxiety among children, exhibits of Palestinian art, hosting a PHR medical day and even organizing a march in support of the Iraqi people. The women said that now more than ever they draw information and support from their meetings, including ways to deal with the bureaucracy and barriers that separate them from the nearest urban center, Bethlehem. They attested that especially these days, it is the women who take ailing children to town and cross the roadblocks, partly due to the assumption that it is easier for them to cross than for the men. The members of the center enthusiastically welcomed cooperation with PHR.

These women's centers exist in villages and towns all across the West Bank. They are local initiatives run by deeply committed and aware women who continue their work even in the face of negative reactions from village men and officials. For PHR, these women's centers are prospective partners and provide an opening to direct work with women activists, who are usually relegated to the status of patients during medical days.

A second kind of testimony involves specific cases of Israeli human rights violations against Palestinian women—violations against which I personally was involved in protesting. This kind of evidence will hopefully provoke not only empathy and tears but also rage and action. The following example demonstrates how not just activism, but survival alone is a daily struggle.

Rasmia Basharat resides in the village of Jaba, northeast of Jerusalem. The only road to the village is blocked with a soil and boulder ramp, several meters high. On Jan. 4, 2003, during the ninth month of her pregnancy, Rasmia felt

contractions. Since she holds an UNRWA refugee card, she wanted to reach the organization's East Jerusalem office in order to be referred to Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem. As she climbed the soil ramps blocking the entrance to her village, soldiers standing on a bridge above it tossed gas canisters towards her, and she fell down. With the help of friends, she continued making her way towards Jerusalem through Shuafat Refugee Camp. At the edge of the camp stood a Border Police jeep turning back anyone who carried a Palestinian identity card. Her explanations were to no avail. A female Border Police officer expressed dismay at the orders but said that they must be followed. Another policeman said, "Have your baby in Ramallah." Rasmia returned home. The contractions ceased and she suffered vomiting and intense pain for two days. Then she stopped feeling the fetus in her womb. On Jan. 7, she again attempted to reach a hospital and this time was successful. A dead fetus was extracted from her womb. The doctor estimated that it had died two days before. The family turned to PHR, which then turned to the IDF and the Israeli police demanding that the case be investigated. The Police's Internal Affairs Bureau opened an investigation; the IDF has yet to respond. The story reached the local Hebrew and Arabic press, and PHR also initiated a damages lawsuit.

The third and final kind of testimony deals with my place as a woman and the place of women in an Israeli human rights organization at a time of occupation—in my case, the PHR non-profit organization.

PHR is not a feminist organization in the sense that it does not see the change of society's gender system as one of its goals. Its definition as a doctors' organization does not suggest a feminist vision, given doctors' and medicine's place in Israeli society and the patterns of power between doctors, society and patients, regardless of gender. Aside from the acting president and founder, PHR's board of directors consisted entirely of men until a female doctor joined in 2003. However, women build the majority of PHR's staff today, some of whom are activists and well-versed in the feminist language. In the wider circle of volunteers, there is a fairly equal number of men and women.

But, perhaps unexpectedly, the center of power today is not in the hands of the mostly-male board of directors but in the hands of the mostly-female staff. It is the staff that leads the public and legal activities of the organization, publishing reports and regularly representing PHR in its various interactions. Furthermore, some women in our organization, such as Dr. Ruchama Marton, PHR's founder, and Hadas Ziv, a staff member who formulated the organization's advocacy policy over the years, have influenced PHR's language

and actions in a way that discourses directly with feminist methods. The staff's management culture is very accommodating, providing support and ample room for action to any person who brings forth an initiative.

Several principles provide the foundation of PHR's methods of work in the occupied territories. These are meant to present an alternative language that undermines the patterns of inequality between Israel and the Palestinians through the following methods:

- Letting the Palestinian voice be heard in the Israeli public without any Israeli mediation. For example, in April, 2000, we broadcasted the words of Mustafa Barghouti and Younis al-Khatib live by phone—without translation, editing or any other means of mediation.
- Working to create joint solidarity and protest by crossing the Green line in order to organize a demonstration or a medical day together with Palestinians. These activities intertwine different languages, definitions and agendas, since they are based on concrete action rather than words. The activity draws together men and women for various reasons, enabling them to undergo a process of learning and radicalization of positions.
- Striving to use unique tools in our ongoing struggle while continuing to utilize tools within the system sensibly. We act not only through contact with the civil administration or appeals to the High Court of Justice (*Bagatz*) but also through acts of protest, such as bringing a bullet-ridden ambulance to the Tel Aviv Museum Square from Tulkarm, and taking part in demonstrations.
- Preserving an anti-sectorial, universal and critical approach through the language of human rights. Thus we visited Chairman Arafat's offices in Ramallah during the siege of the *Muqata'a* in February, 2002, to protest Israeli policy against the Palestinian leadership. But our status as a human-rights organization enabled us to admonish him during the meeting for violations of human rights—such as torture—in Palestinian society.

In summary, PHR uses subversive language to undermine both the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the language of occupation that subjugates women in both societies in hope of promoting a different future for our region.

## Women and Girls' Daily Life under the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

*Dalia Sachs*

What I am going to say today relates to my own viewpoint concerning the daily life of a group of privileged women in the Palestinian/Israeli conflict—those who live within the Green Line, especially the Jewish women among us, those who await and care for the soldiers returning from the killings, or those who never return because they were killed themselves. My point of view is not of women who live directly under the occupation.

In order to avoid thinking about my daily life, last Friday I opened the “Culture and Literature” section of *Ha'aretz* newspaper, and I read the following poem by Shai Dotan:

### *Two More Days*

I'm on my way. In two more days  
I'll return to your bosom, my wife.  
The raging regiment commander decrees the order  
"fire tracers." Three houses  
ignited, were laid to waste, to rubble. They were ejected out  
from the doors, blinded, in puffy gowns. Wait for me Penelope.  
A woman that fire embraces her dress  
grasps my shoulders, a weight on the chest.  
Wait in the café, where there is sweetness.  
Here the night sticks in the throat, without sugar.  
Thirty three days on the roof of a house  
With smooth walls. My wife, the landscape

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is a painting by Reuven: Between the olive trees  
a woman dips a cup in a jug,  
a man stands on a ladder and harvests, shirtless  
(rises out of his pants like a blade from its handle).  
The platoon commander sights suspicious movement.  
Metal seeds fly through the dry riverbed,  
Between the hip-slopes of the hills. Afterwards, silence.  
I will come. My fingers will slide down your thighs  
like sheep over the slopes of the Galilee hills.  
I will lie under the woven sheet your hair, my wife.  
I will lift the veil of grief from your face.<sup>1</sup>

Dotan is a sensitive poet who presents in his own way the direct connections between war, the occupation and the oppression in our daily lives. We the women wait like Penelope for the soldiers, who return from the war, we receive them after they have killed, and we soothe them. From the thighs of the hills that they have trampled, their fingers roam our thighs. Enough!

Situations of war and conflict that are handled with violence strengthen and preserve chauvinistic military ideology. Here I will address the influence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on our daily lives in the public sphere—the media and in politics, and in the private sphere—the family, the community and our ability as women to work together and to advance our common situation.

In every era, the place of women within the public debate has been marginal. The violent militaristic debate that stems from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict tosses women even farther away from their already marginalized place. What do women have and what do women know about war, of fighting, of military strategies and tactics? In reality, the decision-making processes of the state all take place without women. The only meaning of the word “security” is given by generals, and only they suggest solutions such as battle, war, home demolitions, focused destruction, types of aircraft and types of bombs, etc. As a result of this, the generals and, in their footsteps others who share their outlook, control the thinking process and the language in the Knesset, government, public debates and interpretations given by media commentators. Only they control the decision-making centers and

1 *Ha'aretz*, April 4, 2003.

the public sphere. Men, and the language that they bring with them, define and interpret security issues and decide how to solve problems of security.

And where is our own security as women? I speak of our security to walk in the streets without being raped, to walk outside without fearing for our lives and for our families, our security to travel on public transportation, and our security to live in our homes without violence. When we know that there is a process of feminization of poverty, it means that more women and, with them, more children, live in poverty without minimal conditions for living: Where is our security to live and exist with a roof over our heads, with enough food and health services, welfare and education? And where is the security of the woman interviewed on television who, because of a huge debt and unemployment, was thrown out of her home to the streets? She gave her children to another family so that they at least would have someplace to live, while she herself sleeps outside.

The military conflict and the occupation of the Palestinians dictate a male narrative and nothing else, pushing aside the narrative concerning our security as women in daily lives. Furthermore, no one listens to what we have to say about “the security” that is connected to the national conflict, which is also our own security. There is no forum to present what we have to say on the subject, and the few women whose voices are heard at public places are those who have adopted the male perspective, such as the IDF spokeswoman and the advisor to National Security. The female narrative, which includes words such as listening, empathy and problem-solving processes that take the needs of the other into consideration not only does not exist, but, it seems to me, no one even realizes that it is an alternative. And let us not forget another word—compassion. How did compassion leave this world? In its place, tanks and airplanes are being moved on ridiculous maps, and we are told about the progress of the armies.

To illustrate this, I will give an interesting example from a broadcast that took place last week on Israeli television. Finally, a woman was interviewed, Dr. Vicki Shiran, a Mizrahi feminist, who tried to explain what women have to say on the subject of violent conflicts and to argue that there is an alternative women’s narrative. The interviewer, an intelligent-looking man, simply could not understand what she was talking about; he tried but he couldn’t. It appears that in his conceptual world, our thinking and our language do not exist and therefore cannot be grasped.

Women with whom I have spoken have told me that in this environment they feel desperate and terrified. They spoke of their difficulty living in a violent society, which deals with the national conflict by way of oppression of

another people, a way that is, in their minds, immoral. It is hard for them to live in a society that is characterized by a lack of the existential security and by a lack of morality, a society from which they wish to escape and in which they do not wish to raise their children. In order to deal with this situation, a large number of women report that they try “to ignore the world outside.” They listen less and less to the news, which is being broadcasted in a violent and militaristic language. We women are strangers in our own country, or our country is a stranger to us, and therefore we withdraw inwardly into the world within our homes—that is, if we have homes.

The difficulty is that the influences of the conflict have crossed over into our homes, into our private domains, which by tradition were considered safe havens for women. Yet home is not a safe place for some women, and with the growing number of poor women, some of us are being thrown out of our homes.

I was involved in a study in which we interviewed women about their daily lives during the past two years. A large number of them described feeling unsafe and staying in the house to ensure their own and their children's safety. A sizeable number of those interviewed stayed in the house more and more, afraid to go out, especially with their children, to public places. They are limiting the ability of their children to leave the house, especially at times of attacks against civil population in Israel. Arab women who were interviewed said that in addition to their fear of an attack, they fear that if they and their children are in the vicinity of an attack and are spared injury, they might be attacked by the raging mob because they are Arabs. As a result of these circumstances, all the women described how they stay at home, spending more hours keeping their children busy and returning to their traditional roles. Their limited time for themselves has disappeared as if it never existed.

The war takes place in the public arena, but at home we are expected to provide laundry services and cooking to the soldiers who leave our homes in order to participate in war. To kill others or to be killed.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict squeezes women out of the public arena and back into the private one. Not only are we pushed there, but when we feel a lack of security and safety, we are sucked into ourselves, into the house, in order to guard our existence, our children, our parents, our spouses and all those who are dear to us.

The last point that I wish to address is how the national conflict divides us. The atmosphere that stems from the conflict causes us to coalesce into our own national and social groups and to be more suspicious of one another. In a

Dalia Sachs

time of national conflict, people have a need to unite around the fire of their tribe and to warm themselves in its light. So, Jewish women organize among themselves, separate from Palestinian women, and each one feels the need to preserve her interests as part of her group. Such re-groupings disrupt personal relationships and harms the ability to cooperate. For example, a Palestinian woman told me how her Jewish women friends now avoid her. Additionally, the need to come together within national groups causes us to be indifferent to the suffering and the hardships of other women. Who has the energy or strength to deal with poor women, old women, Palestinian women, Mizrahi women, Ashkenazi women, unemployed women, handicapped women, single mothers? The list goes on and on.

I hope this conference will allow us to work together and to understand the importance of combining the voices of women and the varied perspectives of women regarding all issues connected to the society in which we live: toward national, economic and physical security; the end of the conflict, the end of violence and the promise of security for women and men in society at large.

## **Protection of Women in War Zones**

### The International Law

*Frances Livingstone Raday*

This issue can be examined in either a narrow or a wider context. Speaking narrowly, the issue is how to protect women against violence and abuse by enemy forces in war zones. I shall indeed open with this issue. However, I will go on to discuss the wider implications of the international regulation: foremost, the need for the inclusion of women in peacekeeping and decision making in order to avoid the outbreak of war and/or to help in advancing the recovery process.

Susan Brownmiller's groundbreaking book, *Against Our Will* (1975), explored the various social contexts of rape in an attempt to demonstrate that rape is not merely the expression of uncontrollable sexual desire but rather a weapon of male supremacy. Most convincingly, she demonstrated the role of rape in war. She showed that the rape of the enemy's women by victorious soldiers has always been an integral part of the practice of warfare. It has taken place in religious wars and revolutions, and the Old Testament and Greek mythology condoned this practice—it was permissible to use captured women as slaves and concubines. The Rape of the Sabine Women, for example, has been a topic in art and religious writings without being roundly condemned by either. The Rape of Nanjing became a metaphor for the cruelty of the Japanese invasion of China.

Although considered “inevitable,” rape by soldiers was condemned as criminal by developed nations, and the U.S. Military Code of Justice deems it a capital crime. But although it was prohibited in theory, in practice soldiers have raped with impunity. A dramatic example of this is the rape of Jewish women by Nazi soldiers in spite of the 1935 Nuremberg race laws' stipulations, which forbade

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Frances Livingstone Raday

German Aryans from raping Jews on grounds of racial defilement. Brownmiller concludes:

Once we accept as a basic truth that rape is not a crime of irrational, impulsive, uncontrollable lust but is a deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation and possession on the part of a would-be conqueror, designed to intimidate and inspire fear, we must look toward those elements in our culture that promote and propagandize these attitudes.

In 1996, the Economic and Social Council appointed a Special Rapporteur to examine the situation of systematic rape; sexual slavery, such as forced prostitution; and slavery-like practices during wartime. She reported that these acts of violence committed by soldiers and custodians have been prohibited by law in many countries for centuries but nevertheless have been given license by some and permitted de facto by others. She summarizes some 20th century abuses: rape by the Germans as a part of racial superiority; the 200,000 Korean comfort women used by the Japanese; mass rape and forced pregnancies of women in Bosnia as part of ethnic cleansing; Rwanda, with its widespread rape and humiliation, with girls as young as five being raped; Sierra Leone; Bangladesh; Peru; the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. As we speak, thousands of women and girls are being raped in the war in Congo. She concludes: "Rape is used as a weapon of war—used as an instrument to punish, humiliate and terrorize, forcing [victims] to flee; used for ethnic dilution."

In 2000, the Security Council said that civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by war, including refugees and displaced persons.

International awareness of the vulnerability of women in situations of armed conflict has been intensifying since the 1990s. The Fourth Geneva Convention relating to Protection of Civilians in Time of War states that "women shall be especially protected against rape or forced prostitution or any form of indecent assault." (Article 27) "Torture and inhuman treatment are prohibited: Rape and sexual abuse constitute torture and inhuman treatment, which cause great suffering and serious bodily injury." (Art. 147) The Special Rapporteur asserts that rape and sexual abuse constitute torture and brutal treatment, causing a great deal of suffering and severe bodily injury. In 1992, the U.N. Secretary General stated that systematic mass rape is in fact considered an insidious form of genocide. The Nuremberg Tribunal, with the approval of U.N. General Assembly, affirmed that there has been growing recognition of the fact that acts of rape committed in wartime constitute war crimes and crimes against

humanity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (CCPR) and the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on human rights, joining the U.N. General Assembly in its 1993 declaration regarding the cessation of violence against women, is an important milestone in fighting violence against women in times of war. This was further developed on the basis of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). While the Convention did not mention violence as an issue of discrimination, the Committee of Experts stated in General Recommendation No. 19 that gender-based violence directed against women affects women far more than men and constitutes a form of discrimination: It seriously impairs a woman's right to a torture-free life, freedom, equality within the family as well as the highest attainable standard of health and equal work conditions. According to Recommendation No. 19, the countries that ratified CEDAW are responsible not only for actions taken by their leaders but also for those of all lawbreakers who take advantage of their status or authority. The states are obliged to exert their utmost effort in preventing this kind of lawbreaking, conduct investigations, impose penalties on lawbreakers and compensate those injured.

In 2000, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1325, the first resolution that specifically addresses women in armed conflict. The Council decided that states are obliged to respect the various conventions regulating the situation of women in war; to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and sexual abuse; and to prosecute those suspected of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity without granting amnesty. The states must unequivocally take into account the needs of refugee women as well as those of female and male ex-combatants.

These international norms are clearly formulated; they strictly forbid sexual violence against women in times of war. However, as I mentioned earlier, the main difficulty lies in their enforcement. International judicial decisions are subject to states' agreement—as is the case in relation to the International Court of Justice and the Conventions for Human Rights' Committees according to the Optional Protocols, where agreement is often not granted. States use their authority to prevent the application of international law within their borders. A possible resolution of this problem is the establishment of judicial authoritative bodies not subject to state agreement: courts that specialize in war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. Examples include the International Courts of Criminal Justice established for the specific cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda as well as the court founded in accordance with the 2002 Rome Convention and national or regional courts with universal authority. The

development of international bodies with judiciary authority independent from the agreement of states whose actions or whose citizens' actions are under investigation puts the enforcement of international law and international penal sanctions on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in a new context. There is an obvious, international political desire to enhance and improve the enforcement of what is prohibited. It remains to be seen whether these international legal systems will succeed in becoming the sources of fair, as opposed to selective, justice.

The ruling regarding Yugoslavia is proof that sexual violence against women is among the crimes censured by the growing sphere of international justice. In February, 2001, the International Court of Criminal Justice convicted three Serbian soldiers accused of rape, slavery and torture of Moslem women in 1992. During the Serbian-Moslem war in Yugoslavia, two of the three soldiers raped women and held them captive to enable their rape by other soldiers, later selling the women to other soldiers. One of the victims who had been sold was a 12-year-old girl, who disappeared without a trace. The court sentenced them to 20 and 28 years of imprisonment, respectively. The third soldier, who had raped and tortured a 15-year-old girl, was only sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment—apparently because he was convicted of only one act of rape.

This verdict defined rape as a war crime and a crime against humanity, thus becoming a dramatic precedent in the developing perception that women's rights are an integral part of human rights. The court stressed the fact that the soldiers had used systematic rape as a means of terror, part of the ethnic cleansing plan directed against Moslems. It formulated this conclusion based on the fact that the Serbian military and police personnel enabled these actions, even though there was no proof that they had been committed under military orders. The court thus created an international legal norm, according to which rape is an aggressive and brutal means for achieving male socio-political supremacy. The norm implements a sensitivity that has been developing during the past 50 years, the beginnings of which can be found in Brownmiller and McKinnon's feminist literature.

The traces of this sensitivity are notable not only in attempts to protect women but also in an awareness of the need to include women in decision-making and peace-maintaining procedures, whose objectives include pre-war prevention and post-war rehabilitation. Indeed, the 2002 U.N. Security Council's Second Resolution calls on the U.N. Secretary General and member states to increase the representation of women on the levels of international, regional, national and institutional decision-making in



preventing and resolving conflicts. The resolution also calls for the integration of a gender perspective in training and guidelines imparted on military and police personnel. The decision is far more than just a demand for the fair representation of women in the new sphere of resolutions relating to war and peace. It also acknowledges the understanding that women can contribute a significantly different perspective, the dissemination of which can enhance the likelihood of all societies to attain peace. This understanding initiated a new wave of research focused on the relationship between the status of women and the likelihood of resolving conflicts by peaceful methods.

In 2000, Mary Caprioli studied statistics relating to women's accessibility to political, social and economic power from 1960 to 1992, covering 2,187 armed conflicts in 151 countries. Findings showed a significant correlation between incidents of war in a given country and the ratio of political power obtained by women in the same country. Countries in which women were allowed to vote had lower birthrates, more women working and fewer incidents of war. On the other hand, places where women had limited representation in parliament also had higher numbers of incidents of war.

I am presenting the results of this study because they show that women's societal status is closely linked to conflict resolution of societies at war. However, I have several reservations regarding the researcher's conclusions that including women as equal members of a society will lower the level of international bellicosity. What she succeeds in showing is no more than a correlation—it is not clear whether or not peace enables the nurturing of women or if nurturing women brings about peace. Moreover, the researcher does not tie her research into the variable of aggressive or defensive war.

In 2002, Schmeid and Piza-Lopez conducted a study that examined violence against women as a factor that could predict the outbreak of armed conflict. They found that cultures that define women as inferior and view violence against women in the family as legitimate are more prone to employ violence in the public sphere and to initiate war. The reason can be found in the fact that the male ideal in such societies is a warrior, demonstrating toughness under fire. "Training" a society for armed conflict is tied to intensifying and legitimizing violence on all levels, including the family. In this process, violence against women often becomes "acceptable."

While further scrutiny emphasizes the need to study how these conflicts function as factors that intensify discrimination and violence against women, these riveting studies show the possibility of predicting the outbreak of armed conflicts by discriminative attitude toward—and violence against—women.

## The Implications of an Ongoing Conflict

*Manal Hazan*

I would like to address several aspects and characteristics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that mandate a somewhat different approach to what we might call a “normal” state of war, one with which we are familiar. I have read U.N. Resolution 1325 and its background and discern a leitmotif running through all the conventions dealing with women’s rights, including the most recent Security Council convention, regarding the unsatisfactory—to say the least—state of affairs vis-à-vis women’s rights, particularly in a state of war. Consequently, there is a constant need to create new conventions. In each one, signed by the countries of the civilized world, we will find a paragraph stating: “in light of the situation that mandates intervention and the protection of women, we are formulating this convention...” Perhaps other spheres of human rights are developing, and it may well be that certain countries are internalizing the subject of human rights in general, but women’s rights in particular are being ignored. Another convention is always needed so that people will address the subject seriously and call upon the signatory countries to reapply and legally implement the resolutions.

The importance of Resolution 1325 is unclear. I do not know how it will be applied in other countries and other conflicts, but we should view the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict by how it affects women, children and the entire family cell. It is not a state of war that has been going on for six months or a year, in which military forces advance and retreat and ravaged the country and society rehabilitate. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been ongoing for years. It is questionable whether the crimes mentioned by Professor Raday are characteristic of this specific conflict, and thus this resolution may not greatly affect the state of women here. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see the extent of its effect on the conflict.

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I would like to mention explicitly the main problem women encounter, a problem characteristic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and increasingly exacerbated during the past two years: the extremely painful and destructive family separation. It is common knowledge that many members of Palestinian society are refugees. Some live in Jordan or other countries. Part of the Palestinian people live in Israel and part in the Occupied Territories. Clearly, members of these different populations are joined by marriage. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses a woman's right to become a parent and children's right to live with both parents, is inherent in Security Council Resolution 1325 and referred to explicitly: the resolution calls on all countries to respect it and its intrinsic rights.

Throughout the history of the Israeli occupation the problem of family separation has existed. During the past two-and-a-half years, the government has frozen decisions relating to family-reuniting procedures. I am not speaking about families split between the Occupied Territories and Israel, but about Palestinian families split between the Occupied Territories and Jordan or other countries. In other words, this is not a case of one country's right to prevent immigration, if that term can be used here, into its territories. Likewise, it is not the right of a country to determine laws or instruments for granting citizenship. The issue is the power of an occupying country to prevent families from living together, prevent women from living with their spouses, prevent children from living with both parents. This situation affects women and prevents their development. If previous speakers spoke about unemployment, the difficulties encountered in finding work and Palestinian men's loss of a livelihood source—a situation that naturally affects the family—there is no question that under these circumstances the people who suffer most are women. In a situation in which men encounter difficulties in finding work, women will find it far more difficult both to find work and to develop professionally/psychologically, particularly when they do not live within a family cell.

These kinds of problems, as well as the additional problem of registering children, are not mentioned in the new Security Council resolution nor are they defined as war crimes or crimes against humanity. Since it is not a question of genocide, the problems are not addressed in the new resolution.

A new facet I want to bring to the participants' attention is the importance of the feminine factor in resolving the conflict. Every organization should operate within its society to end this state of war for the benefit of a healthier and less belligerent society. Problems such as those I raised earlier will not go

away unless the occupation ends. This resolution's importance is in protecting women's lives and dignity, but I agree wholeheartedly with Professor Raday's analysis vis-à-vis the importance of including women in the peace process and conflict resolution. The approach that advocates involving women in conflict resolution processes is somewhat new in Israel and to Israeli law. This alternative conflict resolution approach is new to Israeli society; it is also an excellent educational method in which sides take responsibility for their own conflicts. In addition to shouldering responsibility, there is also consideration—perhaps for the first time in Israeli law—of the needs of those on both sides of the conflict. This recognition will bring about a stable, highly appropriate solution that expresses each side's worldview as opposed to a forced, culturally inappropriate and legally foreign solution.

Hence, I attach special importance to the Security Council resolution to involve women in conflict resolution. Depending how and when the resolution is implemented, it will enable, perhaps for the first time, women's representation not from the numerical point of view but rather from the use of women's special conflict-resolving skills. Particularly important is the task of women's organizations: involving as many women as possible from both sides in working together to implement the resolution, as sections of the resolution explicitly demand legislative implementation. Women's organizations are responsible for bringing revolutionary conflict resolution concepts and perspectives to the table: they play an important role in increasing women's involvement in these conflict resolution processes.

# U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325

## Declaration or Reality?

*Netta Amar*

### I. Introduction

In U.N. Security Council's Resolution 1325, regarding women's participation in preventing and resolving conflicts as well as building friendship following violent conflicts, the international community took an initial and outstanding step in implementing the principle of gender equality not only in times of peace but also in times of war. This resolution is noteworthy because throughout history, women have always been the victims, and not the initiators or planners, of conflict. Resolution 1325's new approach hinges on encouraging women to work to prevent and mitigate conflicts as opposed to being passive victims or aggressors.

Despite this widely accepted positive notion, the resolution's practical potential depends on a complex legal and political reality. First, we must weigh the strength or weakness of international law from both theoretical and practical aspects, and its implications on the resolution's implementation. Second, we must scrutinize gender perception, which is a product of the resolution's formulation, and its effect on narrowing or broadening the gap between its professed aspirations and their practical application to women.

### II. The strength and/or weakness of international law

The resolution, which the U.N. Security Council passed, is in itself international law. Therefore, a preliminary discussion is necessary to evaluate the scope of international law on citizens of different countries, in particular the citizens of the State of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

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### III. International law—“soft” law

With the exception of several basic international principles that are systematically accepted and applied in all countries, international law is usually regarded as “soft law.” Thus, it holds less validity than domestic national laws, and its implementation is subject to the goodwill of individual countries. In most cases, conventions, declarations and other documents drafted by the international community’s institutions, including the Security Council, do not have direct and immediate power to oblige countries to hold their citizens to these laws. For example, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 was enforced in Israel in 1991 after the state agreed to ratify it. However, according to Israeli law, the convention will be accorded legal validity only when an Israeli law “adopts” the convention’s articles in its legislation. Since the Knesset has not yet passed such a law, even though it has enacted other laws protecting women’s status in Israel, the convention’s advocates are limited, legally speaking. Among all the documents the international community has signed, Resolution 1325 has one of the weakest standings, a status comparable to that of goodwill declarations, which have no independent standing. Women’s participation is more evident on an international level, as the United Nations initially approved the resolution. For example, women play roles in initiatives such as peacekeeping operations overseen by the Secretary General. These functions will be discussed later.

### IV. International humanitarian law—its weakened status in Israel

A further example of international protection’s limitations is seen through Israel’s failure to implement the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to Protection of Citizens in Times of War. This convention is one in a series of conventions passed in Geneva after War World II following international recognition of an absence of international legislation restricting the use of force. Without such legislation, civilian populations in war zones would continue to suffer from crimes similar to those committed in World War II. Despite this recognition, the State of Israel has not ratified the convention for a variety of reasons that cannot be discussed here. After occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, the State of Israel declared it voluntarily

would fulfill the humanitarian provisions specified in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Although it undertook to do so, it did not specify which provisions it intended to fulfill. Since the convention's passage in 1949, changes have taken place in the international perception of the convention's validity. Today, it is considered not just an international convention, but a customary international law as well. When a convention becomes a customary law, it acquires the supra-status of international law; thus Israeli legislation does not have to "adopt" it for it to hold binding validity. In this sense, the obstacle in applying the convention in Israel today is the common rejection of the convention as a customary law. Despite accepted international standards, inhabitants of the occupied Palestinian territories have not been entitled to legal protection. Any legal protection given to these inhabitants is subject to the decisions of the State of Israel.

Another weakness of international law is that even if binding international legislation is passed, its scope is often determined by the State's own courts. Hence, Israel's Supreme Court has limited the protection of Palestinian residents of the occupied territories in matters such as land expropriation, home demolition, etc.

## V. International aid organizations

A substantial component of encouraging women's participation could take place within international aid organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), UNWRA and the PKO (peacekeeping operations). In order to carry out the resolution and ensure women's true participation, these organizations must be reorganized and additional women must join them. This raises the question of whether it is worthwhile to invest efforts in encouraging women's participation in these international setups in light of the existing criticism levied at these institutions. For example, the ICRC often finds itself unable to help the needy and in numerous cases is limited by secrecy from publishing its findings regarding its work with the IDF. The international observers in Hebron (PIFH) are not authorized to act immediately in order to prevent violence. UNWRA mainly depends on the United States for its financial support and has no political power to advance a solution for Palestinian refugees. In 2000, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Lakdar Brahimi, the former Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to head a team to examine the PKO's role. The recommendations of

Brahimi's report were far-reaching and severely critical. The main criticism focused on the PKO's inability to prevent war crimes in practice and defend its members. It also heightened awareness of cases in which PKO soldiers themselves participated in war crimes. The question of the effectiveness of women's participation becomes more trenchant in view of the existence of local alternative, groups composed of local women, which also aim to prevent war crimes and promote a civilized society based on peace and reconciliation. For example, women who staff the Machsom Checkpoint Watch supervise military roadblocks throughout the West Bank, observing Israeli soldiers' treatment of Palestinian inhabitants seeking to pass. It is a relatively small group, but it merits further thought regarding the establishment of alternative groups of women based on successful local initiatives, offering international organizations an opportunity to learn from the experience of such groups regarding the resolution's implementation.

## VI. The gender concept in Resolution 1325

Fulfilling the resolution in practice and encouraging women's participation in various processes involving violent conflicts depends, *inter alia*, on the formulation of the resolution itself—specifically, the messages it chooses to underscore and the messages it wishes to ignore. Two main issues of the resolution's formulation deal with its failure to stress the need for multicultural participation and the importance of social rights as a condition for protecting women in violent conflicts.

## VII. The need for the multicultural participation of women

As of now, international documents pertaining to women's rights rarely address the blatant fact that numerous women throughout the world suffer from double, often triple oppression, their identity composed of several strata similar to inseparable connected vessels. CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the main and most potent tool for protecting women's rights, ignores situations of compound discrimination and does not relate to discrimination against non-white women on issues related to skin color, race or ethnic origin. The assumption is that women who suffer from compound discrimination possess



life experience and insights, whose complexities will not be sensed by women who do not suffer from the same kind of discrimination. For example, refusing to serve in the army on moral grounds may be an effective social protest in ending occupation, but few can afford to refuse: the numbers of those belonging to the economically well-established class, the majority of whom are Ashkenazi Jews, with adequate education to function outside society's military framework, is very small. Scrutinizing the support of "peace groups" in relation to the scope of army service refusal in Israeli society's sub-groups may lead to the misguided conclusion that while the Ashkenazis are "supporters of peace," the "others," i.e., those of Eastern extraction, are "deniers of peace".

The absence of any statement whatsoever in the resolution addressing the need for the multicultural participation of women can bring a negative result, with the participation of women who are members of the ruling class from national, ethnic and economic standpoints. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Palestinian women, citizens of Israel and women of Eastern extraction will not be candidates for partnership from the Israeli side and that Palestinian-Bedouin women will not be candidates for partnership either from the Israeli or the Palestinian sides. In this sense, the resolution perpetuates the glass ceiling of "other" women and reflects, instead of defying, the existing social stratification in both societies.

### VIII. Civil rights—and the absence thereof

There is no doubt that a considerable part of the hardships inflicted by Israeli occupation is manifested in the violation of the Palestinian people's social rights such as the right to enjoy basic living conditions, the right to have a roof over one's head and the right to private property. The distress of women in particular is characterized by the violation of their social rights pertaining to health and family. Clearly, the scope of social rights' status in international law plays a crucial part in the implementation of Resolution 1325, the objective of which is to promote women's participation to enhance understanding of a potential or real conflict. In general terms, the status of social rights is inferior to that of civil rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to vote. The former's implementation is subject to the majority of the limitations that do not affect civil rights. For example, Article 10 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social

and Cultural Rights of 1966 states, “The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family.” Article 4 of the International Convention on the Right of the Child reads as follows:

States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.

Thus, the prevailing approach in international law, which implements rights based on resources and gradual steps, weakens prospects for the successful participation of women in preventing violent conflicts. Until now, international law mainly developed women’s civil rights during conflicts. A good example of this is the inclusion of the rape of women during times of violent conflict in the general context of the prohibition of torture, maintenance of the right to life and preservation of the body.

In light of this problematic state of affairs, it is appropriate and blatantly obvious that the resolution specifically stresses the relationship between different goals that are essentially inseparable—the women’s right to equality and social rights. An absence of social rights reference would portray a biased representation of the feminist standpoint, portraying it as neutral vis-à-vis its relationship to social rights. Hence, the neutral formulation weakens the resolution and women’s chances of obtaining what they most need.

## IX. Summary

The main argument supporting the supremacy of national law over international law is based on the principles of sovereignty and self-definition, reflecting citizens’ rights to decide to which laws they are subordinate in the framework of democratic procedures. Without going into the intricacies and justification of the argument, it is noteworthy that accepting decisions according to a dynamic, domestic social discourse is more effective than subjecting citizens to different kinds of supra-laws.

In addition, one should not forget that the resolution, as detailed above, does not define terms such as women’s participation, violent-conflict prevention, and friendship building after conflict termination. In this sense, the resolution is a frame into which content should be poured. A dynamic

discourse on this topic can take place in the framework of a lengthy legislative process, which comprises discussion in the Knesset's committees, the plenums and other public and private forums. This process, which should include Arab and Ashkenazi women, women of Eastern extraction, lesbians, single-mothers, the disabled, elderly women and others, is not only necessary but also desirable, given that it will bring opposing perceptions into an encounter. For example, women, who, following the Supreme Court decision on the Alice Miller case, serve as pilots in the Israel Air Force, and military policewomen, whose duty is to check Palestinians within the Green Line, will be brought into a confrontation. Thus, albeit with great difficulties and at a snail's pace, "the equal participation and full involvement [of women] in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security," which mandates addressing and dealing with all the arguments of all sides and all opinions, will be carried out. The crux of the matter lies in entering a dialogue, the very existence of which is a success in times of conflict.

Regarding the objectives and means of the resolution's implementation, an appropriate social discourse involves shifting from a discussion of the problem's legal aspects to its political aspects. Such a discussion justifiably reinforces feminist perceptions that give less importance to the development of tools for struggle on the international level and support domestic endeavor for social change.<sup>1</sup>

From the above description, it becomes evident that international law is constantly used as a tool for the fulfillment of parties' political aspirations in violent conflicts. Despite various political aspirations, the Palestinian people and the State of Israel have joined in binding international agreements from the standpoint of international law, a step that has brought hope to many. The failure of the Oslo Accords, which brought about the collapse of faith between the parties, also caused civilians on both sides to lose faith in the capability of the international system to safeguard their security and actualize their rights. These negative feelings are an integral part in analyzing the chances of implementing Resolution 1325 in the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and directly affect women's chances to participate in conflict prevention, resolution and rehabilitation on both sides. In this sense, it appears that the resolution offers an option of international cooperation

1 See, for example, Islah Jad's article, "Reflections on the Palestinian women's movement", in *Between the Lines* 21, March 2001, Page 35.

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between women as an alternative to international action that, until now, has been implemented by Israeli and Palestinian men. The interesting question is whether an international action of women on both sides will yield more positive results than the process we have witnessed so far. While the results of women's cooperation on both sides cannot be predicted, particularly in the challenging current situation, there is no doubt that interested women should be supported and encouraged to attempt the project.

## **Feminist Strategies to Get International Initiatives Back on Track**

An Israeli Perspective

*Terry Greenblatt*

I am currently serving as the director of Bat Shalom, a national feminist grassroots organization established in 1994. We are an organization of Jewish and Arab women working for a genuine peace, a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, respect for human rights and an equal voice for women in Israel. We work in partnership and share a set of political principles with a Palestinian NGO, the Jerusalem Center for Women, and together we are known as the Jerusalem Link. Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas and I have been asked to speak at this session about the Jerusalem Link's current initiative, the International Women's Commission (IWC), which is our attempt to implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We feminists have worked hard to gain access to the international policymaking arenas. Why? Because there's power there. Power is the ability and the method to define reality and, even more importantly, to convince others that it is their definition as well. Possibly the most prominent area in which there is almost total symmetry between the Israeli left and the Palestinian movement for national liberation is in our mutual lack of power. We are each failing to make our definition of reality convincing—to the majority of Israelis, to policymakers and to the international community. We are doing our political work in the margins and struggling for legitimization in our respective societies—as women, as binational partners and as feminists.

This past May, the two of us presented an Israeli-Palestinian women's vision for a just peace before the U.N. Security Council. It was an occasion not only to convey our joint political positions but also was an exquisite

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opportunity to challenge the Security Council to comply courageously and honorably with their own Resolution 1325. We called for a commission of women peace activists from Palestine, Israel and the international community to be convened and mandated to contribute to the establishment of a sound foundation for renewed negotiations and to guarantee that civil society's needs, interests and concerns are integrated into any peace process. After subsequent meetings this year of the Jerusalem Link subcommittee responsible for joint international initiatives, we now have a proposed International Women's Commission formulated as an independent body with recognized consultative status to the international bodies, initiatives and organizations—including the Quartet, the United Nations, member states, etc.—involved in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Upon final approval by the board of the Jerusalem Link, the Commission's three objectives will be as follows:

- To provide a women's perspective, voice and experience to all peace planning and peacemaking negotiations
- To provide measures and principles to enable and facilitate constructive engagement and sustainable political dialogue
- To ensure that the needs and issues of women impacted by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are raised and effectively addressed (as outlined in Resolution 1325)

Now, we all know that there's certainly no lack of international resolutions and statements supporting the notion that if moderation and long-term resolutions to conflict are ever to prevail, women must be factored into strategic thinking and peacemaking. The Beijing Platform for Action, the OSC European Gender Action Plan, Resolution 1325, the E.U. Resolution on Conflict Prevention, the 107th U.S. Congress and the G-8 declaration are all clear warnings to policymakers that they can no longer afford not to pay attention to women. We also know too well that voices of critical feminist dissent rarely reach the mainstream arenas of power.

However, we do believe that Israeli and Palestinian women have an exceptional contribution to make, and part to play, in the resolution of the Middle East conflict. We have developed the foundations of an authentic political dialogue grounded in transparency, responsibility and honorable intention that have remarkably remained sustainable and productive, even in the current disastrous circumstances. We are becoming more adept at what the Italian feminists call "processes of rooting and shifting," remaining

centered in the essence of one's position, while at the same time imagining how the world is seen through the eyes of the other. And we believe that women's unacknowledged and untapped experience as architects and care-takers of civil society, and our understanding of the human dimensions of political and legal issues, are critical to any peace and justice initiative. And lo and behold, whether from desperation caused by the absence of productive negotiation processes or because there is genuine understanding and support for what we are doing and saying, the international community—including international NGOs, Security Council member states, European Union leadership and others—are interested in, and supportive of, the IWC concept as a potentially viable alternative.

Much of what we women do, what political feminists have historically seen as our mission, is to challenge the stereotypes, status quo, conventional wisdom and lack of real information that plague our societies. Thus, we introduce positions, strategies and values into the public discourse of both societies, propose alternative formulas and analyses for leaving the current paralysis, and ensure a consistent joint condemnation of the individual and collective abuse of human and national rights.

It was through this process of joint political work, of attempting to build authentic trust and learning to work as allies, that the IWC initiative was born. The initiative is therefore imprinted with both the successes that provide it with the actual potential to work as well as with the unresolved issues and challenges that will ultimately determine its fate. Maha will address these issues and challenges in her presentation.

I want to talk about feminism today, because after 25 years of identifying as a feminist, I am still struggling with a dilemma that remains irritatingly unresolved for me. Simply put, if I could get away with it, I would call the commission the International Feminist Commission. Many years ago, I sat in the audience of a small town meeting in a poor neighborhood in Buffalo, N.Y., and heard a veteran African American activist in the civil rights movement stand up and say, "Woman is my slave name. Feminism has set me free." Throughout my experiences as an activist for political and social change, I have sat at countless tables where feminists have used feminist tools to create feminist initiatives to implement feminist ideologies and reached a collective decision that it was "advantageous" for us to define ourselves as "women doing women's work to help women." Part of the reason that we continue to do this is because we understand the importance of building an identity called "woman" and giving it solid political meaning. Sometimes we

do it as a recruiting strategy, believing that women are afraid of, disappointed in or mistrustful of the sincerity of feminists and their “isms”—and God knows we have made enough mistakes along the way for criticism and suspicion, especially regarding race and class issues, to be rampant. Other times we are sure that if we come right out and call ourselves feminists, the boys won’t let us play at all, or that if we “delete the ‘f’ word,” maybe no one will pay attention to the fact that we are a threat to the status quo and intend to be disobedient, unpredictable and free-thinking.

And the threat is as real as it is staggering, for it is nothing less than altering the world in all of its parts: the distribution of money, the management of resources, the ways families are nurtured, the way work is accomplished and valued, and the very way politics is done. For we women, we feminists, do our politics from our heads, our hearts and our guts, and the results are decidedly more reliable, profound and successful for having engaged all three dimensions.

A Women’s Commission rooted in feminist soil would have its feet firmly in the world of public activism, giving serious consideration to the concerns of communities. It would understand that its task is to demystify the political process, ensuring that new standards of transparency, comprehension and civil society participation are prerequisites for people to feel ownership of and be invested in the outcome. It will advise the official negotiation teams that if they don’t know and understand the other’s narrative, then they cannot fully comprehend the significance of their own. Commission participants will strive to make privilege visible and encourage an examination of who the stakeholders in the structural inequality are and how the dynamics that create inequality for some also benefit others. They will understand that they are advocates for millions of other women and that they have to learn how to do so honorably. They will struggle with developing ways of bringing the subject of freedom into accord with that of justice, and they will model an ethical standard of honesty and political integrity. Fearlessly, they will hold human rights and the sanctity of life as paramount values. And any negotiation table that appears to be an extension of the battleground will be upended, discarded and replaced with a table where all sides know that either everyone will leave a winner or the whole world loses.

And when the moment comes—and we all know that it must—when a general or foreign minister, an Israeli or a Palestinian or an American or a European, stands up in rage or frustration or fear and yells, “You women, you, you feminists are wasting our time,” or “you are being naive, unrealistic;



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this isn't the way things are done" or is ready to storm out the door and says, "there is no solution; negotiations are concluded and it's back to the battlefield," may there always be a feminist at the table to stand and courageously say, "No, we are not in the way—we are the way."<sup>1</sup>

1 Toni Morrison, 1991.

## **Feminist Strategies to Get International Initiatives Back on Track**

A Palestinian Perspective

*Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas*

Dear friends—good morning. I am happy to be here to address you today.

We are gathering as an Israeli-Palestinian feminist group searching to find common strategies that will help us chart a path in our struggle away from the lethal deadlock in which our respective societies are presently entangled. I come from the occupied territories, where the harshness and cruelty of life under occupation is something beyond most people's imagination. One would think that the subjugation of an entire nation was a thing of the past. Yet, it is a reality—I can tell you—and it is happening in the 21st century in a region that sits on the cusp of the so-called “progressive world.”

Terry Greenblatt has done a very good job articulating the components and principles of feminist activism. However, there is one thing I would like to stress, even for us as feminists, if we wish to reach out to each other and look for common strategies to guide us through our complicated struggle: We must begin by dropping our illusions and move towards true equality, which means respecting each other's language, culture and sensitivities. I come here from the experience of living under an occupation that is carried out under the Israeli flag, and, as I stand here addressing you, I find myself standing on this podium in front of that same flag that symbolizes my oppression. I suggest to you that a more appropriate and considerate setting would have been to place the symbol of my national affiliation, the Palestinian flag, alongside and equal in stature to yours. Alternatively, since we are feminists, whose values and principles transcend national symbols and boundaries, perhaps the best approach would have been to forget about flags altogether.

There is another point I would like to emphasize, which was raised by a previous speaker and is something of which I have become increasingly aware

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through my experience as a Palestinian woman working with like-minded activists in dealing with the conflict. As feminists, we tend to adopt a global perspective—we have worked hard on joint meetings and gained much prominence addressing international bodies beyond our respective communities. However, this has limited the dialogue to a small group of people. We have really only reached out to friends within a relatively narrow circle. We have not paid enough attention to developing strategies that address our respective communities, in developing a culture of dialogue, which can lead to an eventual joint vision for peace. We need to give more attention to local strategies and develop strong grassroots support for our joint action, because no matter how successful we are at the international level, it is our local realities that will eventually make the difference. Also, since our struggle is a long-term one, we must be sure to mobilize members of the younger generation, who can take responsibility and learn from our experience.

Having said that, I will move on to discuss international strategies, which is the topic that I have been asked to address in this presentation. The international arena offers the opportunity for a variety of types of work, but I would like to focus on international legal strategies.

Feminists throughout the world have resorted to legal strategies either to protect or to promote the status of women. In modern societies, law has become an effective tool in the struggle for gender equality. Moreover, in the context of the gendered imbalance of power, law is an equalizing force. Some might argue that if we are true feminists, we do not need to have such frameworks in order to further our goals. As feminists, we tend to focus on the gender struggle through the lens of human security. However, even as feminists asserting our right to equality, we cannot ignore the reality of the fact that we are not equal. Moreover, we come from varied backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. Having a common reference point, such as international legal standards, helps guide us through the process to allow for the re-establishment of trust, which can eventually lead to breaking barriers previously viewed as insurmountable.

As feminists coming from largely conservative—even retrograde—societies, with a vision as well as courage, we can more easily explore different paths, overcome obstacles and create new inroads into the processes of negotiations. As feminists, we can force our agenda of gender equality on the negotiators and legislators. However, this is possible only, as I mentioned earlier, by dropping our own delusions about the “other.” We must look at the hard, often painful facts and deal with them constructively. We cannot delude ourselves about each other. This painful struggle has to take place on both sides jointly as well as

independently. It is a process of self and collective awareness that we can and must undertake if we hope to make a difference, and I am afraid there are no short cuts.

It was persistent, principled and sober feminist activism that finally led to the historic recognition of rape as a war crime. From time immemorial, women always had been raped during military conflict, and it was long considered a “normal” consequence of war. It was not until the vivid brutalization of women in Bosnia and Rwanda that feminist and human rights activists around the world mobilized to find mechanisms to criminalize those horrendous acts. Now there are war crimes tribunals to prosecute those who ordered and committed crimes of war rape.

However, rape is not the only violation that women experience during military conflict. Watching your own children and husband being cursed, abused and humiliated, if not tortured and killed by the army, seeing your life-long, hard earned labor blown up in front of you—watching all of that with a sense of complete helplessness and without recourse to justice is a gross violation, a form of psychological rape. Anybody who accepts the attempt to legitimize such actions is an accessory to the crime. Under international law these actions—willful killings, torture, indiscriminate use of force, collective punishments—are recognized as war crimes. This is because human history has taught us how such acts destroy human life, foster resentment and obstruct the prospects for long-term peace and security.

How much bloodshed do we need to see on our TV screens in order to transform our intellectual recognition into mobilized action?

Obviously, we need help. Let us admit that we, collectively, have allowed ourselves to be overwhelmed by the brutality surrounding us, and we are standing back fearfully watching with horror as things sweep by. Fear is a state of mind, and allowing it to take over is a form of defeat. As Palestinian and Israeli feminists, we are surrounded by death, and any sense of security we create around us is illusory. If we cannot be propelled into action by what is happening around us, then we should rethink our postures and perhaps join the rank and file of the masses who are mere followers.

There is a vibrant international feminist movement whose resources have not been tapped appropriately to deal with the Middle East conflict. There is a lot of good will and energy. However, we need to harness it. In order to be able to do that, we need to be very clear about our own political positions as well as our principles. This movement can be most effectively mobilized by principles alone. We do not need the type of solidarity work that focuses on who is pro-Israel and anti-Palestine or vice versa, because the activism of such groups is

based on the elimination of the “other” and can be more harmful than helpful.

The idea of an International Women’s Commission was developed during the height of the reoccupation of Palestinian towns and villages in the spring of 2002. It was a feminist attempt to break through the prevalent discourses on both sides. It was a new idea, and, I should also admit, it was daring and ambitious given the social climate at the time. However, such times require new thinking along new lines, even while recognizing our own limitations.

We need to think internationally: Palestinian and Israeli feminists are straddled with our own fears, pain and competing histories. We need a strong, pro-active and fair third party that can maintain the principled grounds within the available legal guidelines. Let’s be honest and admit that we have a deep mistrust of the “other,” that we really need the presence of a third party to help in regaining some balance. We also need the power of that third party to lobby on our behalf with other governments to generate principled, law-based political will to support our movement. This would be a welcome change from the short-term, narrow-minded political plans that we see playing out these days and which imperil our lives and the lives of our children, not to mention jeopardize the well-being of future generations.

The Middle East is a strategic region in terms of its resources and geopolitical position. And there are many interested bodies that would like to influence outcomes in order to serve one interest or another. We, who live in this part of the world, must decide for ourselves what is in our best interests and for how long we can allow our children to be gun fodder in proxy battles maintaining the power balance of outside forces, with some of our own people collaborating in the process.

What would be the role of a Women’s Commission? It largely would depend on the timing and circumstances. We do not want to repeat the existing attempts of having parallel peace agreements, to create a women’s ghetto, nor do we wish to be trial balloons. We should work out a position for ourselves as to where and how we can impact the whole decision-making and negotiation process. This requires a carefully thought-out strategy with parallel activities jointly and independently, locally and internationally.

Both sides have a lot of homework to do. I think it must begin with some serious soulsearching amongst ourselves and taking very clear, principled positions on the conflict first within our own communities to help give the other side some confidence that we are a possible partner in the struggle for a just peace. Building trust is crucial in being able to take a risk on this venture in the political minefield of the current conflict.

## Strategies for the Inclusion of Women in Conflict Resolution

*Naomi Chazan*

The purpose of this presentation is to examine strategies for the inclusion of women in conflict resolution in general, as well as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict specifically. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 establishes guidelines for a gender-sensitive approach to violent conflicts and calls for engendering peace processes. To implement these principles, it is necessary to weigh various options for implementation and assess their applicability to particular conflict areas.

Resolution 1325 contains three key components. The first ingredient of the resolution focuses on the plight of women—and by extension, children—in armed conflicts. It stresses that women and children are the key victims of contemporary wars and calls for increased protection of women and girls during and after violent conflagrations. The resolution insists on the significance of examining violent conflicts from a gender perspective.

The second element of Resolution 1325 deals with including women in conflict resolution and peace processes. It accentuates the significance of involving women in arrangements to end violence and in the quest for just and viable peace agreements. By demanding the representation of women in peace efforts and the mainstreaming of women's perspectives on these issues, the drafters of Resolution 1325 seek to break the gender barrier that has persisted in peacemaking and peacekeeping operations in the past.

The third, albeit less overt, facet of Resolution 1325 relates to the empowerment of women. Behind the commitment to incorporate women into the task of conflict resolution lies an understanding of the potential

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contribution of women to the resolution of long-standing disputes and a firm belief in the necessity of actively enhancing women's participation in decision making.

The three motifs apparent in the resolution are not always compatible. There is, indeed, a logical connection between the adverse effects of conflicts on women and children and the desire to bring women into peace-making efforts. However, the emphasis placed on protecting women in times of violence may contribute to the stereotypical image of women as victims and thus undermine their credibility as problem-solvers. Those who require protection almost by definition tend to be marginalized and all-too-frequently undervalued.<sup>1</sup> It becomes increasingly important, therefore, to examine different approaches to the effective inclusion of women in the termination of armed conflicts.

The participation of women in conflict resolution is integrally related to the empowerment of women. Given the failure of men to reach agreements that would prevent the eruption of violent conflicts in recent years, particularly in the Middle East, the design of strategies for engendering peace processes becomes even more urgent and may in fact constitute the missing ingredient in the quest for viable solutions.

It is possible to suggest three main strategies for the implementation of the active aspects of Resolution 1325. Each of these strategies, while placing women as key actors in the quest for peace, nevertheless contains both advantages and disadvantages that must be weighed carefully in the process of implementation.

The first strategy, and that adopted most explicitly by the Resolution's drafters, calls for the incorporation of women into *official* conflict prevention, management and resolution efforts.<sup>2</sup> Ostensibly, there are major advantages to the incorporation of women into formal processes: Such a move goes a long way toward the actual empowerment of women, it brings the female perspective directly into the deliberations, and, by definition, it enhances the prospects of actually influencing the deliberations' outcome. Despite the

1 A possible contradiction inherent in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 was demonstrated in the structure of the conference today. Two of the three panels dealt with the impact of wars on women and with the need to institute more effective measures to protect women and girls in times of armed disputes. Insufficient attention is still being paid to the more central issue of involving women in processes of conflict resolution.

2 See paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Resolution.

reluctance of some women to enter directly into the centers of official decision making, there is clearly no real substitute for increased female representation in these critical bodies.

There are, however, several impediments that moderate the impact of the official strategy. The first is quantitative. The inclusion of one or two women in a negotiating team is, by itself, not only ineffective but actually smacks of tokenism. Women's perspectives and voices are significant when women comprise a substantial proportion of the decision-making body and are able to articulate the diversity of women's views. Thus, the official strategy presumes a prior process of female empowerment, something that has been palpably lacking in most areas of armed conflict, notably, in the Palestinian-Israeli arena.

The second impediment is qualitative: not all women are inclined to promote feminist positions, particularly on matters of war and peace. In fact, the present composition of the Israeli government, and partly the Palestinian Authority, suggests that the adoption of the official strategy of gender inclusion would preclude the articulation of a variety of progressive women's voices. The useful implementation of such a formal strategy demands both quantity and quality: a large number of feminist women in decision-making positions.

A second possible strategy of female inclusion in negotiations is an *informal* one, sometimes referred to as backdoor diplomacy or parallel negotiations. In many respects, this approach is the direct opposite of the formal strategy. Its starting point is at the grassroots, as opposed to the elite, level; it involves large numbers of women; potentially, it is open to diverse women's voices; and it can offer frameworks for the expression of divergent feminist views.

Informal efforts at conflict resolution abound. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, women have engaged for quite some time in what can be described as parallel negotiations, and several important documents have been produced in these meetings.<sup>3</sup> Some proposals have been made recently to initiate second-track negotiations between Palestinian and Israeli women that will follow the official agenda. Many women favor this approach on the grounds that it might be easier to arrive at an agreement in the more protected environment of gender-discrete talks.

The informal strategy for the incorporation of women into peace-making efforts does permit heterogeneity and can ensure broad representation.

3 See the Jerusalem Link principles and the joint platform of the project on Sharing Jerusalem.



However, it runs the very serious risk of proving totally irrelevant to ongoing negotiations, because there need not be any official recognition of these efforts. The impact of informal mechanisms cannot be guaranteed. In this strategy, the potential embedded in broad vertical links comes at the expense of the key purpose of participation—influence on the nature and the direction of conflict resolution.

The viability of the informal strategy of inclusion of women in conflict resolution depends on the capacity of those involved to bring their conclusions to the attention of the official negotiators. In the absence of a direct connection to decision making circles, these efforts may result in the exclusion of women rather than in their incorporation.

A third, increasingly intriguing strategy for including women in peace processes is the *independent* one. Best exemplified by the proposal of the Jerusalem Link to create an International Women's Commission for a Just, Comprehensive and Sustainable Peace in the Middle East, this approach seeks to combine the advantages of the formal and informal strategies. It calls for the creation of a highly representative body with a recognized advisory status that encompasses a broad spectrum of women from Israeli and Palestinian society charged with furnishing women's perspectives on critical issues in the negotiating process. The International Women's Commission (IWC), as outlined in the presentations of Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas and Terry Greenblatt, can initiate topics for discussion in the official negotiations, inject women's perspectives into the process, monitor outcomes and assist in their implementation. Because it contains an international component, it may also carry greater weight in complicated efforts at conflict resolution.

The model of an autonomous women's commission foresees broad grassroots mobilization with a strong link to decision makers. The concept is avowedly feminist in design and intent. Its success, however, depends on the achievement of a recognized advisory status by the partners to the negotiations and their international interlocutors (in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by the Quartet or by one of its components: the European Union, the United States, Russia or the United Nations). The impact of the IWC's proceedings are consequently contingent on the capacity of its originators to bridge the gap between informal and formal strategies for the incorporation of women into processes of conflict resolution.

None of the three strategies for gender empowerment and inclusion in peace processes are mutually exclusive. Each option must be explored at this time, and practical steps need to be taken to put them in place. Successful

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attempts at incorporation must address issues of adequate participation, representation, pluralism and communication geared to assuring maximum influence at the decision-making level.

Women in conflict areas can no longer afford to be excluded from negotiations nor do they have the luxury to contemplate alternatives while formal efforts are set in motion in their absence. This is particularly true in the case of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The gender empowerment and inclusion clauses of Resolution 1325—the core of this historic document—cannot remain on the declaratory level alone. The concerted efforts of involved women, coupled with the commitment of the international community, can bring about their implementation through the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for female representation and participation.

Israeli and Palestinian women, if they act together now, can play an important role in giving the proposals contained in Resolution 1325 concrete form. By doing so, they will be able to help mold their future and provide inspiration for women in other conflict areas.

## **U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325**

Relevance to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

An Israeli Viewpoint

*Amalia Saar*

We have heard about the day-to-day experiences of women under the influence of the conflict, about the legal viewpoints and about organized attempts to influence both the State of Israel's and the Palestinian Authority's policies and actions. These dimensions have very different levels of relevance—women's experience is usually silenced within the male dominant political discourse ("security" refers to the use of weapons in the name of national struggle and not to other popular means of violence). From the point of view of most women and girls, the legal and political levels are mere abstract concepts describing unknown realms. Even if on an intuitive level they know these levels affect their lives, they do not have the tools to analyze or formulate this connection. In order to try to turn U.N. Resolution 1325 into a relevant document, it is incumbent upon us to attempt to explain clearly the relationship between the "personal" and "political" in words that the general population can understand.

However, in this discussion we must take into consideration the following points:

- The silencing of the feminine experience within the political discourse regarding war and peace
- The silencing of political issues inside the liberal-feminist discourse regarding women's rights
- The silencing of women's peace activism (radical feminists) in the broad public discourse

Gendering all conflict resolution attempts involves analyzing the basic assumptions underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on their

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influence upon women. This should take into account issues such as prostitution (prostitutes in conflict areas), low paid workers in the factories, the deteriorating ability to make a living in certain professions and the increasing demand for workers in others. All these factors influence women, though the word “women” does not appear in their title. Yet gendering becomes much more complex when we take into account that civil society is comprised of diverse ethnic groups (Ashkenazi, Mizrachi, Muslim, Christian, Druze, Bedouin), national groups (Jewish and Palestinian) and economic classes (poor, middle-class and rich). If “relevancy” refers to the way the conflict affects our lives and experiences, each of these groups is dealing with different issues. For example, economically speaking, the idea of creating a “New Middle East” aimed to create a place for free enterprise: a liberal-capitalist economy and cheap labor. Since such a conflict’s influence is a product of multiple factors, including class, ethnicity, nationality and gender, its effects on men and women and on different social strata varies.

Another complication hidden in the demand to mainstream a gender perspective into conflict resolution attempts might appear only after the international community has already recognized this as a necessity. Often, gender issues become empty tokens when, in the name of “women’s rights”, certain states take upon themselves the right to invade other countries. It is easy to persuade public opinion in the west or in Jewish Israel with the moral necessity of “saving colored women from the violent hands of colored men.” “They” hit, imprison and murder their women, and we the enlightened will free these miserable women.

The process of gendering the discourse regarding peace and war is challenged because we must address issues that concern women directly, and also speak about all the things that men can benefit from war as *men*—without falling into the trap of cultural arrogance. It might be true that “they” (whoever they may be) rape, beat, imprison and murder women. But, the occupation can make this behavior worse. It is our role to stress the political dimension of domestic violence. For instance, a man who returns home after serving in the territories can rape, beat and murder...at home. He does that due to the deep cultural background that excuses men’s uncensored violence, but more than that, he has a weapon, feelings of guilt, fear, panic and a license to kill.

Turning U.N. Resolution 1325 into a document relevant to Israeli civil society forces us to look reality in the face. It forces us to address women’s interests and needs without playing into the hands of the orientalist discourse

that uses women in order to maintain cultural and moral supremacy. The true meaning of gendering the peace and war discourse is not to follow “cultural” explanations (how “they” oppress “their women”) but rather to expose the political context of women’s oppression in the family and society and the deadly circle of lethal violence in which men and boys are trapped. We want “our” men (even when we work together, each group acts in its own space), to *see* us. We want them to see how war and its different solutions affect women and men differently, while at the same time, we want them not to *use* us in their struggle with the enemy. We don’t want them to use our “freedom” or our “morality” as proof of cultural supremacy or to seem more enlightened than the enemy. But above all, we do not want them to use us to escape from responsibility to their actions.

How can we transmit these ideas to the local public? Here we can identify two main possibilities: working within the general public and on the organized level of civil society, the NGOs.

In order to engage the public, we as women are compelled to penetrate the media that tends not to see us, or, at most, to categorize us under the general “social” heading. In all economic discussions there is an economic journalist who reports on the market leaders, the treasury or the banks and there is the journalist who reports on social organizations and single mothers. It is our role to break up this classification in order to convince the public that the “social” is “political” and that the “political” has a gender aspect. Women have something to say, much to lose and much to gain in all these areas, and the current political/economic arrangements serve only a specific section of the population—and within that section, it is primarily the men whose needs are served.

On the level of NGOs, one must insist on working with organizations that address women’s rights but avoid politics, in order to politicize their efforts. For example, an organization like “Women Giving Birth” that lobbies for the right to give birth respectfully—what is its moral responsibility to Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints? Questions like this will not be welcomed easily, since in Jewish Israel, the social segment of women who have already dared to speak about women’s rights are still so deeply suspicious of the label “feminist” that it stops them from any other form of radicalism. It is even more difficult because the soldiers of the occupation, some of whom are, by the way, rapists, girl killers, soldiers who broke a woman’s nose with the butt of a rifle or humiliated her husband in the street, can easily be the brother, the son or the husband of the same activists.

These cross-cutting positions—women who are citizens and simultaneously the wives/daughters/sisters/widows/mothers of—is paralyzing. By using a social analysis, we can expose how these mixed loyalties—the simultaneous belonging to a multiple self-defining groups that are all hierarchical and gendered—works in favor of the patriarchal system. This can also explain how, with all of the issue’s cynicism, the battling sides in this bloody conflict are in reality very similar in organization and culture, especially in their patriarchal structure.

Gendering the discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict means uncovering this complication. It means showing how this complication keeps men and women trapped in situations in which they are obliged to oppress. I use the word “oppression” because those who are oppressors are oppressed themselves. Due to the complication of crossed loyalties, the identification with feminist ideology and praxis is tagged automatically as a betrayal in men; whereas on the other side of the peace movement, there is a tendency to forget the women and their interests.

If so, in terms of strategy, making U.N. Resolution 1325 relevant for women means working with peace organizations and women’s organizations in order to convince them to take an extra step toward radicalism, to look inward in order to uncover oppression and to face it squarely.

The first reaction will be shock—they will say to us: what we are trying to achieve in the women’s movement is so difficult anyway, why put politics into it? Or, why are you slipping in the “woman question” when we are talking about peace?

This is the challenge—it’s difficult but doable. The support of respected international organizations such as the United Nations helps, but the burden sits firmly on our shoulders to bring to the public the understanding that femininity and masculinity are political issues. Many of those present here today have dared to face the internal oppression. Many of us are veteran protesters and have campaigned for years against the occupation, even when it seems to threaten the collective wholeness of the family, the community and the country that we love. We have come through the first shock of acknowledging these crossed loyalties, and we have emerged stronger, wiser and with new friendships. We must cherish these benefits and distribute them generously, so that we may begin to bring a promising decision like 1325 down to ground level, down to the Israeli-Palestinian reality—this bleeding, racist, chauvinistic reality to which we are connected so intimately.