Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Resolution 1385 (2004)[1]

Conflict prevention and resolution: the role of women

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Conflict is a gendered activity: women and men have different access to resources, power and decision making before, during and after conflicts. The experience of women and men in situations of tension, war, and post-conflict reconstruction is significantly different. Approximately 80% of today's civilian casualties are women and 80% of all refugees and internally displaced people worldwide are women and children. As emphasised in the Platform for Action of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, "while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex".

2. Women are thus caught in a vicious paradox: while they are the main civilian victims of conflicts, they are often powerless to prevent them, excluded from the negotiations when it comes to their resolution and confined to a marginal role in the post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. The general exclusion of women from decision-making positions prior to, during and following violent conflicts, reinforces their victimisation.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that women can play a particularly important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and appreciates the positive contribution women can make in post-conflict reconstruction and peace consolidation. Empowering women in conflict situations would help prevent gender-based violence such as the abominable crimes of rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery and others. These crimes constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, and should be prosecuted as such.

4. The Assembly recalls the adoption in October 2000 by the United Nations Security Council of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, in which it urges the member states to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

5. It also recalls the European Parliament Resolution (2000/2025 (INI)) on the participation of women in peaceful resolution of conflict and the Resolution MEG-5 (2003)4 on the roles of women and men in conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict democratic processes – a gender perspective, adopted by the 5th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men in January 2003, both of which encourage the integration of a gender perspective in all activities aimed at conflict prevention and resolution.

6. Notwithstanding resolutions, appeals and recommendations of international bodies and the pressure of non-governmental organisations, Europe has so far failed to ensure women's full participation on an equal footing with men in conflict prevention, peace operations and post-conflict peace-building. In particular, women are often marginalised or excluded from negotiations and diplomatic initiatives aimed at ending armed conflicts, as was the case in peace talks in Kosovo, the Southern Caucasus and recently in Afghanistan and Iraq.

7. The maintenance and promotion of international peace and security cannot be realised without fully understanding the impact of armed conflicts on women and without appropriate measures being taken to ensure their empowerment and security. Women's equal participation in the peace process is an essential

1. Assembly debate on 23 June 2004 (21st Sitting) (see Doc. 10117, report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Ms Cliveti). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 June 2004 (21st Sitting).

precondition for establishing lasting peace. Women also bring alternative perspectives to conflict prevention which is more focused on the grass-roots and community levels. Practical steps and initiatives should be taken by the European countries to advance the role of women in all aspects of conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building.

8. Therefore, the Assembly calls on the governments and parliaments of the member states of the Council of Europe:

8.1. general measures

a. to ensure that their national legislation is compatible with the Statute of the International Criminal Court as a matter of priority, with particular attention given to the substantive and procedural provisions regarding crimes against women;

b. to include in national legal systems, where it has not yet been done, provisions penalising all forms of violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations;

c. to support women's participation in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction by strengthening women's representation in local, national and international bodies for the resolution of conflicts;

d. to provide sustained funding to women's non-governmental organisations dealing with peace issues;

e. to encourage research focused on women and their peace-building activities and the impact they have on peace processes and make the results of this research widely known and used in designing domestic and regional policies;

f. to increase public awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in peace-support operations and provide training in gender equality at an early stage in the training of military personnel so that respect for women becomes a matter of course and an atmosphere which reflects this respect prevails in the army;

g. to increase the access of women to media and communication technologies so that gender perspectives, women's expertise and women's media can influence public discourse and decision making on peace and security;

h. to support the training of editors and journalists to eliminate gender bias in reporting and investigative journalism before, during and after conflict situations and to promote gender equality and perspectives;

i. to involve women and their organisations in peace negotiations at all levels (for example, round tables);

8.2. in the field of conflict prevention

a. to empower local women and women's groups in areas where conflict is brewing and to support their strategies aimed at avoiding armed conflict;

b. to encourage the appointment of women to regional, national and international posts relating to conflict prevention;

c. to increase the percentage of women in delegations to national, regional and international meetings concerned with peace and security, as well as in formal peace negotiations;

d. to include "education in peace" in all curricula beginning from primary school level up to the level of professional training in order to develop a spirit of and respect for peace in society;

8.3. in the resolution of conflicts

a. to facilitate the input of women's peace groups and organisations into key peace conferences at all levels through systematic consultation with them, ensuring that their problems and priorities are reflected in the official peace process;

b. to include gender experts and expertise in all levels and aspects of peace operations, including in technical surveys, the design of concepts of operation, training, staffing and programmes;

c. to take necessary measures to train women as mediators to be involved in peace missions, conflict resolution and peace support operations;

d. to provide personal security to women through the police forces, protecting them from all forms of sexual and domestic violence;

e. to ensure that actions against trafficking in women in areas affected by conflict form part of peace and security initiatives and that they take women's specific needs into account;

f. to give the opportunity to refugee and internally displaced women to play a key role in camp planning, management and decision making so that their interests are taken into account in all aspects, especially resource distribution, security and protection;

g. to grant at least temporary refugee status to women who have been raped or have been subjected to other forms of sexual violence during armed conflict;

h. to involve civil society in the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes;

8.4. in post-conflict situations

a. to establish macroeconomic policies in post-conflict reconstruction that prioritise the public provision of food, water, sanitation, health and energy, the key sectors of the daily life of people and communities in which women provide unpaid work;

b. to introduce measures that give local women priority in recruitment during emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction;

c. to adopt constructive measures to guarantee women's socioeconomic rights including employment, property ownership and inheritance during post-conflict reconstruction;

d. to provide physical and mental health services for women recovering from war injuries and trauma, including specialist support for women who are caring for children conceived as a result of rape and for those who have been ostracised from communities and families as a consequence of rape;

e. to ensure special legal and social support to women in order to aid their reporting and prosecuting of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses committed during and after conflict;

f. to conduct a gender-oriented budget analysis of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction to ensure that women benefit directly from resources mobilised through multilateral and bilateral donors;

g. to grant at least a temporary residence permit to women who have been raped or have been subjected to other forms of sexual violence following armed conflict.