

WCLAC and UNSCR 1325

Principles of human rights as enshrined in international treaties and recognized international standards guide WCLAC's work. As an organisation working under a prolonged Israeli occupation system facilitated by militarism and violence WCLAC refers particularly to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Fourth Geneva Convention, alongside the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is lauded as a milestone for women's security and rights. It specifically recognises the gendered aspects of war and armed conflict on women and girls and the differential gendered impacts of these¹. The three main aspects of the resolution are:

1. Calling for the understanding specifically of the gendered impact of militarisation due to the fact men and women will experience violence differently depending on the ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed in a specific context². Most importantly, it mandates special protection and security of women and girls as well as a respect for their human rights and international law during armed conflicts.
2. Enshrining the importance of women's meaningful political participation and access to and representation in conflict negotiation, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction processes.
3. Emphasising the responsibility of states to end impunity and prosecute those who commit war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, placing importance on the inclusion of violence and sexual violence against women and girls.

An important element when considering 'security' is the 'Human Security' paradigm, which places importance on human dignity and life throughout lining two major 'freedoms': the freedom from fear and the freedom from want. Human security is important as it signals an important move away from traditional conceptions of security, which is necessary especially in the Palestinian context of prolonged occupation.³ In this regard Resolution 1325 specifically facilitates increased recognition of, and attention to, the gendered impact of violence and conflict on Palestinian women. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) illegal Israeli settlements and their associated infrastructure such as checkpoints and roadblocks violate "the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law"⁴. Policies of spatial control and separation affect the daily, lived reality of Palestinians as checkpoints and settler violence restrict Palestinian freedom of movement more generally. It also takes a specific gender dimension when women are further geographically confined due to fear of harassment and violence by Israeli soldiers or settlers⁵. Moreover, the construction of the wall by Israel, which commenced in 2004, has further increased strangulation of the economic and social lives of Palestinian women by disconnecting them from their livelihoods and major Palestinian cities and towns "that provide vital services in health, education, employment and administration"⁶. According to WCLAC's report published in 2010, "the impact on women in these areas is particularly profound; women, especially those that do not work outside the home, are often completely isolated, bound to their homes and cut off from family, community and vital services" (2010).

¹Willett, S., 2010. Introduction: Security Council Resolution 1325: Assessing the Impact on Women, Peace and Security. *International Peacekeeping*, 17(2), pp.142–158; Pratt, N. & Richter-Devroe, S., 2011. Critically Examining UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. *International Feminist Journal*, pp.37–41.

²Al-Ali, N.S. & Pratt, N.C., 2009. Introduction: Women and war in the Middle East : transnational perspectives. In *Women and war in the Middle East : Transnational perspectives*. London: Zed. p. 11

³Human Development Report 2009/10: Investing in Human Security for a Future State.
<http://www.undp.ps/en/newsroom/publications/pdf/other/phdrenng.pdf>

⁴WCLAC, 2010. *Women's Voices: In the Shadow of the Settlements*,

⁵Farr, V., 2011. UNSCR 1325 and Women's Peace Activism in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, pp.37–41.; Kuttab, E. & Johnson, P., 2001. Where have all the women (and men) gone? Reflections on Gender and the Second Palestinian Intifada. *Feminist Review*, 69, pp.21–45

⁶WCLAC, 2010. *Women's Voices: In the Shadow of the Settlements*. Available at: <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1106>

WCLAC's Service Unit works towards ensuring the protection and awareness of the rights of women and girls, while offering them tools to claim these rights. In 2013 the Unit conducted awareness-raising sessions with over 375 women in marginalised areas and with key target groups. These sessions were designed to teach about their human rights and empowering women to claim them. Similarly, to aid access to their rights, WCLAC offered women free social and legal counselling and represented women in over 602 court cases in 2013. Of the 258 cases closed in the reporting period, 256 of these had a successful outcome for women. A large percentage of these cases were women seeking counselling and knowledge of their rights through a period of pre- and post-separation/divorce. Finally, the re-opening of the emergency shelter is a major milestone for ensuring the protection of women and girls in the OPT. After only 7 months of operations, the shelter has already provided protection for over 30 women survivors of violence.

In accordance with Clause 9 of UNSR 1325⁷, WCLAC also documents Israeli human rights violations of Palestinian women and uses them as evidence and tools to advocate for Palestinian human rights internationally. WCLAC noticed an absence of gendered analysis and documentation of Palestinian human rights abuses and thus began to collect "Women's Voices", which are short testimonies that highlight the gender-specific impact of these abuses. In 2013, WCLAC's international advocacy team documented over 78 "Women's Voices" testimonies of human rights abuses and conducted 48 focused advocacy field visits with international delegations to raise awareness on the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinians, and women specifically⁸. WCLAC conducts these activities with the aim of holding duty bearers accountable both at the local and the international level. Delegations have included members of various parliaments and international institutions to influential members of international civil society who in turn influence their own governments' policies.

At the same time, WCLAC's local advocacy work seeks to hold the Palestinian Authority accountable to internationally recognised human rights standards, encourage the implementation of legal reforms, institutionalize the Human Rights Based Approach and improve service provision – a crucial tool necessary for ensuring that women's rights to security and freedom from discrimination are upheld. This is followed by awareness-raising sessions and training on women's rights and political participation of women and youth. These sessions are aimed at training and empowering women with leadership skills through manuals on political participation and activities such as shadowing women members of parliament.

WCLAC's guiding mission is the full realization of all rights delineated in various international human rights instruments and laws, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁹. Thus, WCLAC's work with survivors of gender-based violence in the context of a prolonged occupation positions it to make a unique contribution to the global women's movement. WCLAC's participation, therefore, in over 9 international, regional, and local coalitions for human rights offers a forum in which WCLAC can share its experiences of working with women in conflict¹⁰. All the various aspects of WCLAC's work feed into one another to contribute to a culture and environment where women's rights and women suffering discrimination and violence are protected.

⁷ "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 Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocol thereto of 1967, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979 and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000, and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;"

⁸ Through WCLAC's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights network contributed towards a new report "Palestinian women's rights in EU-Israel and EU-PA Relations" http://www.euromedrights.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/EN_AdvPaper-On-PalWomen_06MAR2014_WEB.pdf

⁹ UN (CEDAW) Committee issues guidelines for protection of women in conflict zones 2013 <http://www.wclac.org/english/etemplate.php?id=1243>

¹⁰ One pertinent example is WCLAC's participation in the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights network, which recently published for the occasion of International Women's Day its regional report entitled "Violence against women in the context of political transformation and economic crisis in the Euro-Mediterranean region; trends and recommendations towards equality and justice", Available at: <http://www.wclac.org/english/userfiles/VAW%20PR%20EN.pdf>