



WOMEN IN CONFLICT ZONES

No-one can escape the devastating grip of war. For women, it can mark a point of no return. But it can also be a door to new opportunities. Through the cases of **Iraq**, the **Occupied Palestinian Territory** and **Yemen**, this report analyses the impact war and occupation have had on the lives of women. Spain can play a key role in helping to prevent conflict and championing the protection and participation of women. The Government must deliver on its commitment to gender equality now.

Introduction

Women in today's wars

Although wars between countries have been declining, violence within states is on the increase. Over the last two decades, civil conflicts have more than doubled, jumping from 30 in 2001 to 70 in 2016.¹

These wars are concentrated in poor countries with a toxic combination of fragile institutions, inequality, discrimination and social conflict. These factors, together with others such as the intensity of natural disasters, food crises, the increasing threats posed by climate change, terrorism and record numbers of displaced persons, are shaping a new international landscape.

A few decades ago, women and girls in conflict situations were forced to endure brutal incidents of sexual violence, had fewer resources for protection and survival, lost their loved ones and had to take responsibility for their families, were forced to join the combatants, or to flee leaving everything behind. Today, all of these risks are not only just as real, but they are compounded by fact that the very nature of wars invades ever more private spaces, becoming a threat to their identity and their security. Added to this, many outbreaks of violence today are of religious or ethnic origin, linked to issues of identity, which play against women and women's rights. Many of these conflicts are marked by extreme violence and gender-based abuse.

Aim of this report

Using case studies of three different conflicts – Iraq, a post-conflict situation, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, a prolonged conflict, and Yemen, an open conflict, this report aims to analyse the impact of armed violence and occupation on women and girls before, during and after such events. The first section deals with the structural factors driving gender discrimination, while the second analyses the degree to which war and occupation affect the protection of women and girls and their participation in social and political life and looks at the mechanisms that have been put in place for prevention.

Lastly, specific recommendations are provided to the Spanish Government with the aim of influencing the review process of the II National Action Plan 2017-2023 for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

This report provides a holistic perspective, far removed from visions of women as victims reflecting passive and vulnerable roles. The document highlights the strength of women,

and their capacity to adapt and bring forward solutions that contribute to sustainable peace.

Limitations of the report

In order to gain an understanding of the impact of armed violence on women, in all three cases the period immediately before war broke out or the occupation began has been analysed. This timeframe aims to render the report more dynamic and easier to read, although it is recognised that for a more in-depth analysis, social transformations should be researched over a longer period of time.² Thus, for Iraq the report focuses on the period prior to the most recent outbreak of violence under ISIS in 2014 and a comparison with the current period of recovery. The case of the Occupied Palestinian Territory is somewhat different, in that it is marked by occupation. What is compared here is the time of the Oslo Accords of 1993 and the current context of prolonged conflict. In Yemen, analysis centres on the situation immediately before 2015 and the current context of ongoing war.

Another significant limitation of the report is that it relates only to the areas in which Oxfam and its counterparts operate, which means that it is not a full vision of the entire population of women in the three countries. Similarly, gender inequality cannot be addressed holistically, since it covers multiple dimensions (cultural, social, religious) which have been evolving throughout history and are therefore impossible to capture here in their entirety.

The report has been produced on the evidence of existing literature, much of which is derived from Oxfam programmes in the three countries. This has been supported by interviews with feminist organisations and other relevant actors, including the women quoted in the report.

A brief history of two conflicts and an occupation

The Iraqi population has for decades been enduring violence, interrupted only by brief periods of peace. The latest outbreak of violence was in 2014, with attacks by ISIS over large parts of the country. Although now at the rebuilding stage, around two million people are still displaced from their homes. Continuous attacks from militias, together with other factors such as rising poverty levels, lack of economic opportunities and social and political tensions, could bring new sources of unrest. Around 18% of the population is currently in need of assistance, half of them being women and girls.³

Over 50 years of Israeli presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was to have ended with the Oslo Accords, negotiations for which began in 1993. Almost 25 years

later, all that remains are broken expectations. Settlements have continued to increase in number, a wall separating the Palestinian population has been built, the economy has been at a standstill for decades, and unemployment levels are the highest in the world. Since 2006, the blockade of the Gaza Strip adds to this destructive cocktail, which has undermined the lives of seven million Palestinians caught up in this permanent conflict. Half of them are women.⁴

In 2015, armed violence broke out in Yemen, leading to the largest humanitarian crisis of our time. The consequences of the conflict have been exacerbated by existing social and economic inequalities, structural problems and gender discrimination. With 75% of the population already dependent on outside aid, the predictions are that the war will end up affecting the whole of the Yemeni people if the current rate of destruction continues.⁵ A total of 11 million women and girls are surviving thanks to international development assistance.

A framework for the protection of women

Recognising the challenges facing women in such contexts, the international community has drawn up various significant instruments to deal with them, one of which is the Women, Peace and Security agenda, adopted in the year 2000.

Women, Peace and Security agenda

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council approved **resolution 1325**, which marked the start of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The resolution urged the **participation** of women in peace initiatives, **protection** from violations of their human rights, and the **prevention** of conflicts. Eight further resolutions have since been approved, widening the range of issues covered by the agenda and thus making it more ambitious.⁶

One of the commitments included in the agenda is the development of national action plans. These are strategic documents defining a country's objectives and initiatives for implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. To date, 79 countries have drawn up such a plan, including Spain, Iraq and Palestine, amongst others.⁷ Although an increasing number of countries now have a national action plan, most of these merely consist of proposals on paper, with no accountability mechanisms or associated budgets.⁸

UN Resolution 1325 marked a turning point in that it recognised for the first time that women and girls suffer differentiated impacts from armed violence which had until

then been ignored. Decades of war and 1324 earlier resolutions are evidence of the fact that women had not occupied the space they are entitled to.

Unfortunately, this milestone has not had a widespread impact on the lives of women in conflict areas, their protection or the formal roles they play in peace initiatives. In general, there is a lack of political will to facilitate meaningful participation of women in peace processes; address the causes of conflict where gender discrimination is an underlying issue in a holistic manner; create a system for reporting on implementation of the resolution; and mobilise the necessary financial resources.⁹

National Action Plans for WPS: progress for women, but with plenty of scope for improvement

Iraq was the first country in the region to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) in 2014. And this is not something that happened by chance. Decades of work by women's organisations to raise the profile of women's roles has achieved significant milestones.¹⁰ This work, and the fragile and insecure situation of the country at the time, led to the preparation of the first civil society report monitoring implementation of UN Resolution 1325.¹¹ This was a significant step towards promoting the participation of women and their protection. With the aim of monitoring implementation of such plan, the NAP1325 Initiative involving over 30 organisations was set up. A Women for Peace group comprising 20 women from different political parties in Kurdistan was also formed. This plan, as happens with many others, lacks a monitoring system, associated budget and a specific timeline for achieving its objectives.

The Occupied Palestinian Territory was the second Arab state territory (after Iraq) to develop its own action plan in 2016. It includes three objectives: the protection of women and girls, particularly in light of the Israeli occupation; holding the Israeli occupation accountable to fight against impunity; and the participation of women in international and local institutions. The Higher National Committee, which was responsible for preparing the plan, has also become a platform for facilitating dialogue between governmental institutions and civil society organisations.¹² Thanks to the influence exerted by women's organisations, which started a participatory process to enable women to engage from their own communities, a representative NAP has been achieved.

Most of the resolutions adopted focus on the core issues of participation and protection (linked particularly to gender violence and sexual violence).¹³ Although these are indeed essential elements, other crucial issues such as conflict prevention and the role women can play in this are not afforded the same priority. This is largely

due to the fact that the UN Security Council has traditionally focused on physical protection rather than other more structural issues, such as gender inequality, a shortcoming that hinders the potential transformation that the Women, Peace and Security agenda could bring about.

A mixed achievement

Although the Women, Peace and Security agenda promoted by the United Nations marked a real turning point, 19 years later there is still much work to be done.

- In 2000, only 25% of the most significant resolutions included a reference to women. In less than 15 years, this proportion has increased to 94%.
- The reports from the Secretary General show an upward trend regarding the inclusion of references to the WPS agenda. At the turn of the century, only half of all reports contained references to women, compared to 89% in 2014.
- Between 1990 and 2000, just 11% of peace agreements signed included a reference to women. Since the turn of the century, this has risen to 27%, a far from significant increase.
- Bilateral aid for gender equality to fragile States has quadrupled in the last decade, but from a practically non-existent level.
- A study of 31 peace processes over two decades, from 1992 to 2011, revealed that only 9% of negotiators were women.
- Only 3% of military personnel in UN missions are women.

Source: UN Global Study (2015)

In addition to this specific set of resolutions, there are other measures which likewise aim to protect women and highlight their specific needs both during and after a conflict. One of such frameworks is **Recommendation 30 from the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, approved in 2013.¹⁴ This covers issues such as the participation of women in all areas – including peace processes –, access and upholding of all their rights, and active participation in conflict prevention. The recommendation also states that implementation of Resolution 1325 is the responsibility of individual States. The **Sustainable Development Goals** constitute a further benchmark framework, in particular SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). Lastly, the **Arms Trade Treaty** is the first agreement to recognise the links between international arms transfer and gender violence. Article 7(4) specifically states that exporting countries must consider the risk that the arms transfer could be used to commit or facilitate acts of violence against women.¹⁵

Not just mere rhetoric

These regulatory frameworks fulfil the important mission of recognising the role played by women both in conflict prevention and resolution, and in peacebuilding. They are considered key actors in peace processes and in the planning of camps for displaced persons in countries devastated by conflict. They also set measures for protecting women against gendered-based sexual violence and upholding their rights.

Empirical data shows that this recognition is more than mere rhetoric.

- Gender equality is the best indicator for ensuring peace, over and above other parameters such as the country's level of democracy, wealth or religious or ethnic composition.¹⁶
- Countries with laws which discriminate against women (on issues such as marriage, custody, divorce or inheritance) are more likely to suffer from conflict or instability.¹⁷
- When women participate actively in the peace process, peace is more sustainable. More specifically, an agreement which includes women has a 35% probability of lasting at least 15 years.¹⁸
- There is a positive correlation between the influencing capacity of women in peace agreements and the probability that such agreements will be reached and implemented.¹⁹

Women's lives before a conflict

Gender inequality is one of the most serious and perverse forms of discrimination. It keeps women and girls in poverty, deprives them of their rights and undermines their capacity for change. In every corner of the world, women exercise less power and control than men. Their vulnerability to violence, the reproductive burden they bear, their unequal access to resources and scant legal protection puts them in a position of constant risk. Such inequality is a fundamental breach of women's rights, and an almost unsurmountable barrier for their development.

Gender relations in these three countries – Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Yemen – are shaped by complex cultural, religious, social and political traditions which have evolved over decades. They vary from north to south, from urban to rural areas, in different tribes and through different generations. Historically, in the three countries, women have held much less power than men in their societies.²⁰

My dream would be to be able to leave the house with the same degree of freedom that my husband enjoys. But I cannot do this because my culture does not allow it.

Displaced woman from Yemen.

Forced to work in the home

Gender norms tend to mark a clear difference between the roles that men and women play in the home in the three countries. The man is seen as the protector and head of the household, whilst women are associated with domestic chores. In the case of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Iraq, gender inequality has increased over time with the emergence of more traditional concepts (such as religious and tribal codes) which have been gaining influence.²¹ This has had important consequences for women, whose lives have been largely limited to their homes.

Women in these three countries are responsible for cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood and water, and caring for children, elderly people and those who are sick. Under this social pattern, salaried work and decent employment are not available to them. In Iraq, only 11% of women of working age were actually employed outside the home in 2012;²² in the Occupied Palestinian Territory the figure was approximately 12% in 1999.²³ In Yemen, a striking 92% of women received no regular monthly income before the war.²⁴

These figures reflect the barriers already affecting women in pre-conflict situations. Issues such as lack of education and skills, limited opportunities and restrictive social norms have confined them to their homes.

Slight progress in participation

Men have traditionally been responsible for taking decisions both within and outside the home. Decisions that women have been expected to accept, even though they could significantly affect their lives (such as the husband taking a new wife, moving home, or having more children).

According to surveys carried out by Oxfam in 2013, men consider that women lack the capacity to participate in political or public life; similarly, women believe that they are unable to overcome the stigmas or social pressures that would arise were they to make their voices heard on such issues.²⁵

Both the federal Iraqi Government (including Kurdistan) and the Palestinian National Council set quotas (30%) to preserve women's participation in political life. Although this was a very positive step towards legalising their participation, reality has not kept up with this gesture, perhaps because the "glass ceiling" they come up against has prevented them from reaching higher positions or taking on roles traditionally held by men. It is obvious that the patriarchal system which governs political decisions and sees women as inferior to men has made it impossible for them to truly benefit from such quotas.²⁶ Even before conflict broke out, social organisations in these countries had already criticised the lack of political will to promote the participation of women, and that quotas were simply a token gesture to increase government legitimacy vis-à-vis the international community.

In 2011, Yemeni women made history when they took to the streets to demand improvements in the living conditions of Yemeni population. This enabled them to take part in the National Dialogue Conference of 2014, where they achieved important agreements, such as a 30% quota and a law raising the legal age of marriage, as well as a further 173 articles relating to women.²⁷ Women had traditionally shown their mediation skills in the roles assigned to them in their own tribes and rural communities. Being perceived as neutral and not seeking personal gain helped them to achieve this.²⁸

National Action Plans for WPS: progress for women, but with plenty of scope for improvement

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Violence in all of its forms undermines women

A male-dominated culture is firmly entrenched in these three countries. Men are associated with qualities such as strength and power, whereas women are believed to be inferior and defenceless. These cultural norms cause conflicts within the family and limit the roles that women can take on outside the home.

Before the war against ISIS in Iraq, women and girls already experienced numerous patterns of violence in their daily lives. According to Oxfam interviews, 83% of women stated that they were subjected to controlling behaviour by their husbands, 33% had suffered psychological abuse, and one in every five women had endured physical violence.³⁰ Early marriage, a widespread cultural, religious and social practice, affected 21% of girls in 2011.³¹

In Yemen, violence against women, in all of its forms, has been a historical reality, and was legally condoned in Article 40 of the Personal Status Law of 1992, which states that women must obey their husbands in all matters.³² Given this legal backing, violence against women has become a normalised and systematic pattern of behaviour. The situation is not very different for Palestinian women, 40% of whom suffered sexual violence in 2010, with over 65% suffering psychological violence.³³

It is important to note that these figures are unreliable, given that victims are usually frightened to report abuse.

Our body does not belong to us. Men consider it theirs.

Activist woman in Iraq.

Denied their basic rights

Strict social norms prevent women from moving around unaccompanied, and thus curtail their rights. For pregnant women in Yemen, this has had particularly serious consequences which largely account for the fact that Yemen is one of the countries with the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, and the highest in the region.³⁴ Not being able to go to a health centre on their own means that many women have died at home due to complications during pregnancy.

Even before the war in 2014, the probability of dropping out of primary school was double the rate for Iraqi girls. Issues such as long distances to school, lack of women teachers or early marriage have meant that girls have left school prematurely.

For Palestinian women, gender inequality has meant, amongst others, that they have been deprived of their right to inheritance. Although such a right is guaranteed by law, figures show clear discrimination. At the turn of the century, only 5% of women owned land and 8% owned their own home. Such low figures are explained by the customary belief that men are in charge of financial decisions, including women's income and assets.³⁵

During and after the period of violence

In contexts of war, gender inequalities tend to deepen, resulting in a disproportionate impact on women and girls. For them, armed violence implies a double burden: they must endure not only the same atrocities as are visited on all the civilian population, but also existing discrimination and inequalities against women, as described in the previous section.

The impact of war on women, in figures

- Increase in mortality and malnutrition rates for women and new born children.
- 60% of preventable maternal deaths occur in situations of conflict and displacement.
- One out of every 5 refugee or displaced women in humanitarian situations suffer sexual violence, a figure which is probably an underestimation.
- In countries affected by conflict, girls are 2.5 times likelier not to be in school, compared to girls in other situations.

Source: UN Women

Protection

Violence affects women's bodies

Physical, verbal and sexual violence against women and girls is used to impose political agendas, humiliate opponents and destroy communities. It is used as a weapon of war against the enemy. The countries being studied here clearly reflect this.

In addition to massacres and multiple human rights violations, ISIS occupation in Iraq caused the displacement of over six million people. Women suffered twofold from this violence, both within and outside their homes. The need to find a new place

in which to live within an unknown community, frequently as head of the family for the first time, put them in a situation of extreme vulnerability and limited their mobility. But this did not prevent their bodies from being used as a weapon of war.³⁶ Between 5,000 and 10,000 women were trafficked for sexual slavery and prostitution,³⁷ a reality that continues today in displaced persons' camps.³⁸ Although the war against ISIS ended in 2017, the nightmare for women thought to be linked to this group is far from over. They are isolated, attacked and stigmatised by their host communities, and unable to return to their communities of origin for fear of being subjected to the same humiliating treatment.³⁹ For hundreds of thousands of these women, overcoming the devastating violence which has marked – and continues to mark – their lives will be an extremely difficult task.

The ongoing war in Yemen is likewise creating greater devastation amongst women in what is now the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Sexual violence, already a structural problem, is increasing as a result of the conflict.⁴⁰ Three million women and girls are believed to be at risk from different types of violence.⁴¹ Here too, women are more vulnerable when forced to flee from their homes. Women and children make up 76% of all displaced persons. Extreme poverty and rampant violence further affect the security of women and girls. According to the report by the UN Human Rights Council Group of Experts on Yemen, there is evidence of rape, detentions, disappearances and extortion of women, who are increasingly being taken from their homes at night to be raped.⁴² Impunity and fear of revictimization means that these incidents go largely unreported.

Landless, homeless and undocumented

The prolonged Israeli military occupation has had a particularly negative impact on Palestinian woman, exacerbating the limitations they already suffered as a result of existing patriarchal structures. The confiscation of land and destruction of homes by the Israeli government are a case in point. For women, losing their agricultural land means losing their livelihoods and ultimately being forced to work in settlements under extreme conditions and the threat of sexual exploitation.⁴³ The demolition⁴⁴ of their homes, with the resulting displacement, devastates their lives.⁴⁵ For women, the home is more than simply a place in which to live. It has symbolic meaning and is central to a woman's capacity to exercise power. Women concentrate a large part of their work within the home and also use it as the focus of their social activities. Losing their home means having to live in crowded camps where they lack privacy and freedom of movement. But finding a new home is costly and requires them to

work in the informal labour market, where they are open to all forms of abuse. Without their homes, women lose their ability to integrate in society.

Iraqi women who survived the horrors of ISIS were subsequently forced to flee. Those who were in any way associated with this terrorist group⁴⁶ have reported that their documents were confiscated and never returned at security checkpoints. Without such documents, freedom of movement is next to impossible. Forced to live in crowded conditions in camps, they are unable to attend health centres, receive government food aid, or send their children to school. But the list of limitations is much longer. Without documents, women have no way of proving their new marital status (in most cases widowed or divorced from ISIS militants following forced marriages), which means that they cannot remarry, inherit or sell property, cannot prove to the relevant authorities that they are the head of the family, or claim any pension they may be entitled to. For all these reasons, these women and their families are one of the most vulnerable groups, living evidence of the horrific nature of a war that has marked them for life. It will be next to impossible for these women and their children to rid themselves of their alleged links with ISIS, which places them at the most extreme margins of Iraqi society.⁴⁷

When ISIS came, we fled to Hawila. I walked for 12 hours together with my daughters. We almost drowned crossing the river, but we made it. Shortly afterwards, we were forced to flee to Mosul because of the bombing. We lost our documents, and with them all hope that we would be able to return. My daughter died before my very eyes. I think I will never be able to erase that vision. I am better now, but I would like the Government to provide me with a solution for getting new documentation. That is all I hope for now.

Displaced Iraqi woman.

Participation

Economic participation

Conflicts shape societies at all levels, changing their demographic composition, decimating the population and condemning them to poverty. The financial crisis caused by all situations of armed violence and the loss of men during a war (through injury or death) is spelling out the role of women in the labour market. Both in Yemen and in Iraq, women are forced to look for ways for increasing their meagre family income. This poses a huge challenge for them, since they had previously been kept away from the formal market. They do not have the necessary education and are

subjected to all types of discrimination in a society still based on patriarchal patterns. This situation is particularly difficult for displaced women who find themselves in a new environment which is as yet unfamiliar to them. They nevertheless have to leave their homes to work, and this adds extra risk to both themselves and their daughters.⁴⁸ Moreover, this new responsibility confers an additional burden on them, added on as it is to their traditional household chores, which already took up most of their day. This new family structure also has consequences for the rest of the family. The men accept women's contribution to the family income out of need but feel that their role is put into question. Resorting to domestic violence (whether emotional or physical) is a way of channelling their frustration and retaining control.⁴⁹ Children are also forced to take on new tasks, both within and outside the home, which leads to increased school drop-out rates and early marriage. Four years after the war in Yemen began, more than two thirds of girls under 18 are married.⁵⁰

Sahar, three, and her sister Hanan, eight, were forced to marry. Their parents claim that they had no choice but to do so in order to be able to feed the rest of the family. Hanan wanted to go to school and not get married, but her father forced her to marry. Her mother-in-law beats her and, when she returns home, it is her father's turn to beat her.

Displaced children in Amran, Yemen

The Occupied Palestinian Territory has the highest female unemployment rate in the world. Only 19% of women of working age are employed. Although it is a highly qualified population, this factor has not been enough to make employment rates rise.⁵¹ There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the Israeli occupation and blockade and the restrictive policies imposed by Israel in recent decades explain the continuing and acute decline of the Palestinian economy.⁵² To compound this precarious situation, women face additional structural barriers which hinder their participation and explain why almost 50% of women are unemployed.⁵³ These barriers are caused by an accumulation of factors, such as the absence of adequate policies to promote the hiring of women, the weakness of the manufacturing sector, lack of a suitable childcare system for women to leave their children, and cultural norms which disapprove of women working outside the home.⁵⁴

Poverty: a common denominator in women-headed households

The loss of men through conflicts has led to an increase in the number of households

headed by women. In the case of Yemen, estimates indicate that 30% of displaced families are headed by women, a percentage that has increased significantly during the war (9% before 2015). In Iraq, it is estimated that more than 18% of families are headed by women, with a slightly higher rate for those living in displaced camps (21%).⁵⁵ Before the war against ISIS, this rate was less than 10%.

Most of these women are neither ready nor adequately trained to take responsibility for the family, and society does not recognise them in this new role. All of the issues described before (sexual violence, exploitation, abuse, limitations on mobility, social marginalisation) are concentrated in these families. Cultural barriers further prevent them from accessing humanitarian aid or other means for survival. This poses particular dangers in Yemen, where 75% of the population depends on international aid and poverty affects 62% of Yemeni society.⁵⁶ Add to this the fact that more than half of Yemeni women were married before the age of 18 prior to the outbreak of war, with 40 percent being illiterate, and the picture we obtain is desolate.⁵⁷ Although no disaggregated data are available, there is a high risk that many families are headed by very young women, with limited education and high levels of poverty. Not only does this turn them into easy targets for abuse and discrimination, but it will also make them highly susceptible to resorting to negative coping mechanisms (child labour, reduction in food intake, providing sex in exchange for basic goods, or begging).

In Iraq, 43% of displaced families headed by women suffer food insecurity.⁵⁸ This is two times higher than those headed by men. These women and their families depend to a greater extent on external aid, although they are frequently forced to sell this to generate income. Underemployment is higher in families led by women than by men, with child labour being at times a common means of income generation for the whole family. Participation of these women in decision-making within the community is practically non-existent, and results in their needs not being taken into account.

Political participation

Participation of women in political life is crucial for boosting development, promoting democracy and representing women's citizenship rights. To a great extent, this depends on the particular social, political and cultural aspects of a given society. It is important to understand what participation forums are available to them at all levels, but especially at the local level. Although this is frequently ignored in most analysis, local participation will provide a stepping stone for women to access other levels of decision-making, including national peace processes.

Following four years of war, Yemeni women have lost the very limited influencing capacity they once held in local decision-making structures. Such structures have all

but disappeared as a result of the conflict, with the role of women being reduced to the supply of specific services for women.⁵⁹ Things are not very different for Iraqi women. During the period of control by ISIS, women were completely isolated and marginalised, and were deprived of all possibility of taking part in community decisions. After the fall of the terrorist group, women are slowly starting to return to decision-making spaces, though their voices are as yet not being heard.⁶⁰

As has been said before, the uprising of women in Yemen following the Arab Spring was a true success story⁶¹ which allowed them to actively participate in the National Dialogue Conference of 2014. However, the current peace process has not been able to live up to expectations, and participation of women in the peace building process has not reached the agreed 30%. Indeed, representation of women was below 13%, less than half the agreed figure. Only one woman took part in the last meeting, held in Stockholm in December 2018. But it is not simply the limited number of women taking part that is of concern, but also the fact that the criteria applied to choose those that do participate are unclear. And this is key, as there is a substantial risk that they will have neither the standing nor the legitimacy required to influence the men on both sides and that their participation is purely symbolic.

My name is Dahab Sawafta and I live in Bardalah, in the Gaza Strip. I am a farmer but spend as much time as I can as a volunteer in an association for the empowerment of women. Despite all the difficulties that Israeli soldiers put in our path – they cut off our water supply, install checkpoints to prevent our movements, ban our transport – I continue with my project. I know other women cannot do this, as they are afraid to leave their homes. I would encourage them to participate.

Palestinian woman

Wars that also provide opportunities for women

It is a fact that wars destroy everything in their path, permeate all spheres and decimate all that has been built. However, some positive lessons may be extracted from such extreme situations. There are myriad examples of how women are able to overcome the intense ravages of war, whilst fighting against the very stigma of being a woman.

As we have seen before, conflicts force women to move beyond their traditional roles, either because they must take over as head of the family or because they are forced to look for new sources of income. As a result of these new situations, **women are leading changes in traditional social norms** which enable them to perform tasks

previously banned to them. Working outside the home, moving independently or being the main family breadwinner. These changes are in turn enabling them to make their voices heard in decisions within the home, affording them greater autonomy on issues relating to their children, and giving them greater control over the family budget.⁶²

And such empowerment is not limited to their private lives. In the three countries under study, women are perceived to have a positive impact on various tasks relating to conflict resolution. They have shown capacity to mediate between displaced persons and local communities and a will to reconcile different factions (there are numerous examples of Iraqi women living peacefully side by side with women linked to ISIS), have campaigned for the release of prisoners, and have proactively led peace building programmes.

These are all crucial steps towards the empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality, but they come with risks. Access to the labour market does not necessarily imply greater autonomy for women. In fact, it can expose them to new forms of abuse, given that they have no control over their conditions of employment or their salaries. There is also a danger that when the conflict situation ends, men will again take up their traditional employment, leaving women jobless. Evidence also points to the risk of domestic violence increasing as men see their traditional roles change and brought into question.⁶³ Moreover, a more exposed profile, as a result of both their peace-building activities and their employment outside the home, puts women at greater risk and makes them potential targets of attacks and abuse.

Women's empowerment, driven by the economic, political and social instability created by war, has begun. This is an essential step towards achieving gender equality which cannot be foregone. In order for progress to translate into structural changes, it is essential to protect women and reduce the risks associated with their new roles.

Prevention

Conflict prevention is another of the key pillars of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but one that has received scant attention since the agenda was launched. Failure to prevent conflicts results in a reversal of hard-won gains. Yemen is a clear example of this. Despite the progress achieved by women at the National Dialogue Conference, they were removed from the negotiating table when violence broke out, showing that women's issues are put to the side in times of war. This means that it is essential for changes in the empowerment of women to be supported by structural changes, so that they cannot be easily reverted or reduced to rhetoric.

Inequalities are a breeding ground for conflict. Countering inequality is therefore key to preventing conflict. According to research, gender inequality bears a direct correlation to armed violence, with higher levels of inequality making the probability of conflict more likely, the violence more severe, and peace, when achieved, more fragile.⁶⁴ Eliminating gender inequality is therefore a path to preventing conflict.

Initiatives for preventing gender based sexual violence

Eliminating sexual violence in conflicts has gained ground on the international agenda through the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.⁶⁵ This Call to Action was launched to prevent gender-based violence and protect women and girls from the earliest phases of a humanitarian emergency. Recent international forums, such as the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 or the launch of a Road Map for implementing the Call to Action, have highlighted the importance of this initiative. To date, 82 partners have joined the initiative, including donor countries, international organisations and NGOs.

Despite the fact that sexual gender-based violence is receiving greater attention now than ever before, much remains to be done. According to the evaluation report on this initiative, funds for addressing gender-based violence (GBV) have increased, but still fall far short of what is needed. Partners have improved measuring systems, and needs assessments now systematically include GBV. However, in order to achieve significant progress on this issue, more human and financial resources are required.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, initiatives of this type are crucial for focusing attention on these issues, ending impunity for cases of GBV, and encouraging organisations to provide mechanisms for protecting women. Access to justice for women who are victims of abuse is almost impossible, particularly in a war context. According to the United Nations, 65% of Palestinian women who have suffered domestic violence have chosen to remain silent.⁶⁷ Yemen has no legislation to ensure the protection of victims.⁶⁸

Aid targeted at promoting gender equality

One of the tools available for fighting gender inequality is international assistance. This can help finance programmes for women's access to employment, build the capacity of women's organisations, or support gender equality training programmes.

Such assistance can bring about important changes in the lives of women, but to do so it must not be submitted to the artificial separation between humanitarian and development contexts drawn by the international community. Action against gender inequality must be sustained over time because its ultimate aim is to transform social norms.

Between 2015 and 2016, member countries of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee assigned an average of 40 billion Euros (38% of total bilateral aid) to the promotion of gender equality.⁶⁹ Although a much higher amount than ever before, there is still much room for improvement. For example, only 4% of this amount targeted gender equality as a principal objective,⁷⁰ with 62% of total aid remaining gender-blind.⁷¹

Aid targeted at gender equality

Any intervention carried out in such fragile contexts must be based on a suitable gender analysis to ensure that traditional patterns are not reinforced and that violence against women is addressed.⁷²

Protecting the rights of women and promoting gender equality requires long-term commitments. Humanitarian emergencies cannot serve as an excuse to leave programmes for women's empowerment to the side. Supporting and protecting women in all phases of conflict is key to laying the foundations for a more equal society.

According to the evidence collected from our programmes,⁷³ women need to receive aid that they can access without this placing them at risk. For example, they must be the ones to indicate where latrines or water points should be located, to ensure that they are in a place which is safe for them. They need programmes that promote access to the labour market and facilitate spaces where they can take part in decision-making. Protection must be the central focus of all actions to ensure that women's rights are safeguarded. In this respect, creating mechanisms to support victims of gender violence is key. Due to the very role they play, women are the persons best placed to indicate what type of aid they and their families need. For this reason, their voices must be at the heart of any intervention carried out.

Arms are harmful for women

It is clear that arms have a specific impact on women. Even prior to the outbreak of armed violence, highly militarised countries (such as Yemen and Iraq, which ranked 33 and 37 out of 155 countries in the Global Militarization Index⁷⁴) tend to invest

heavily in military spending, to the detriment of other sectors. This means that key investments for promoting gender equity, such as education, health or specific services for women, have fewer resources.

Arms, whatever their origin, are controlled almost exclusively by men. Whether within government structures (such as the army or the police forces), amongst armed groups or even for personal defence within the home, the very fact of owning a weapon confers a certain power to men which women lack.

Small arms, such as those exported by Spain, are used to coerce, intimidate and abuse women. Domestic violence can become fatal when weapons are involved. This is not restricted only to conflict situations, but when violence deriving from such contexts becomes a widespread social pattern, it is easier for arms to be used systematically.⁷⁵

Arms used in wars essentially kill or injure men. Which means that women are the ones who suffer the long-term consequences of conflict: displacement, illness and hunger, in addition to becoming the head of the family, whether they want to or not. As has been previously discussed, becoming a widow comes with other consequences, such as lack of protection and marginalisation.

Moreover, it is women who have to care for those injured by such weapons. This added responsibility may limit the capacity and time available to them for seeking employment, and their food security may be affected by the need to buy medicines.

Explosive arms likewise have particular consequences for the female population. Pregnant women are likely to suffer an abortion following exposure to an explosion.⁷⁶ Moreover, the lack of health infrastructures, destroyed by explosive devices, can have serious consequences for women's health during pregnancy and childbirth. This is already the case in Yemen. Recent attacks on the port city of Hodeidah destroyed the only mother and child hospital there. Women living under siege in this city no longer have anywhere to go.

We fled from Salahaddin to Hawllia when the bombing began. Many people died because of the bombs, many lost their legs. My sister died in an explosion and now my nephews have lost their mother. ISIS took my husband, and I have never heard from him since. My niece is now blind because of shrapnel.

Displaced Iraqi woman

Spain and the Women, Peace and Security agenda

Spain's support for the Women, Peace and Security agenda has been mixed. Although it is a cause that has remained as one of the main priorities of Spanish foreign policy irrespective of the party in government, it has not always received the necessary support. For example, during Spain's tenure as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, it was one of the issues receiving greater efforts on both national and international level. However, support waned once its mandate expired and it has not since recovered, despite the new government's claims of putting women at the heart of its policies.

Poor performance with respect to the National Action Plan

Spain signed its first NAP in 2007, and as such was one of the first countries to sign up to the WPS agenda, with fewer than 10 countries in the world having developed such a plan. Unfortunately, the momentum created then has not been maintained over the last decade. Both the first NAP and the second NAP for 2017-2023, showed substantial gaps. They had no specific budget, no indicators to measure progress, no adequate institutional framework. Moreover, the role of civil society was merely consultational.

The second NAP has not succeeded in consolidating lessons learned. It has failed to target Spain's actions within a framework of consistent policies, has not strengthened the role of local civil society organisations, and has failed to prioritise actions promoting protection, prevention and participation, while increasing spending on its armed forces.

Resolution 2224, a favourite for Spain

Resolution 2224 was approved in 2015, 15 years after Resolution 1325. Spain, at the time occupying a seat as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, played a significant role in pushing for this resolution.⁷⁷ Although any initiative in this respect is to be welcomed, this document focused mainly on the role of women in combatting extreme violence and terrorism: a utilitarian and reductionist vision of women.

Also, during its term as non-permanent member, Spain led the launch of the UN Focal Points Network in 2016, the aim of which was to create synergies between countries having a National Action Plan. This network is an important platform

through which to share lessons learned and influence governments for promoting gender justice.

A very limited vision for standing up to sexual violence

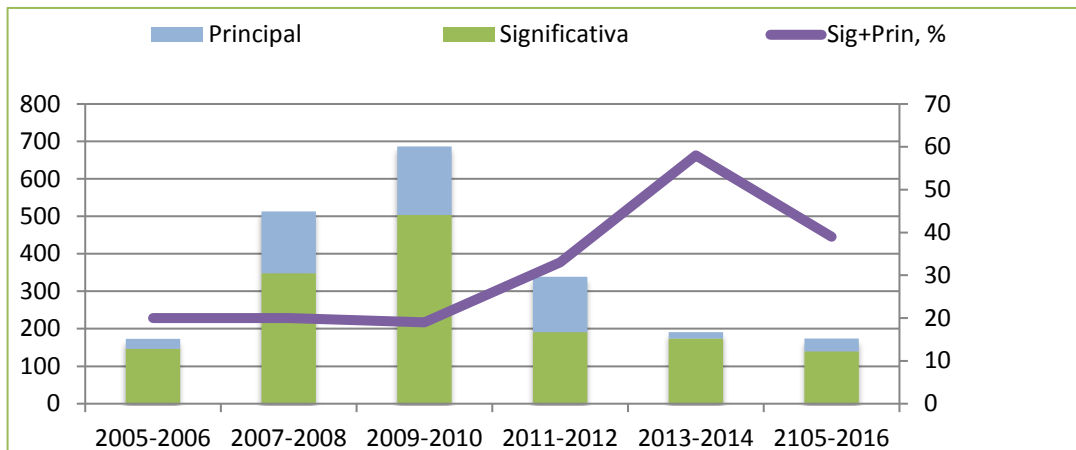
It is rather striking that it took Spain more than four years to sign up to the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence, whereas several of its European partners had joined from the start.⁷⁸ The annual report on accountability prepared by Spain for this forum shows a very reductionist view of the instruments available to the Executive for combating and eliminating GBV. According to the report, only the systems and operations of the Office for Humanitarian Action of the Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Ministry (MAEC) have been made available.⁷⁹ Dealing with this type of violence requires, as we have seen, a holistic view which goes beyond the humanitarian sphere.⁸⁰ Such wider focus requires the development of structural policies in support of social transformation, as well as measures for preventing this type of abuse.

Scarce but sustained funding

Figures for Spanish aid show a positive trend in the volume of aid targeted at gender equity until 2010, when Spain ranked second amongst all donors. Since then, gender equity funding has declined as a result of the sharp decrease in total Spanish aid, dropping by 75% (from 687 to 174 million Euros). Despite the general fall in Spanish aid, funds for gender equality have grown proportionately, representing 50% of total bilateral aid in 2014. Unfortunately, figures for 2015 and 2016 indicate that this trend has not been maintained.

Ikram Fadil, 26, chose to challenge all the barriers she faced as a Yemeni woman to shape her own path to success. The critical humanitarian context, precarious security situation and other social barriers did not prevent this young woman from learning to use a sewing machine. Thanks to a loan provided by development assistance, she is now the person generating income for her family.

Figure 1. Spanish aid for gender equality (2005-2016)



Source: OECD, DAC

It is very positive to see that Spain was one of the six countries to take part in the launch of the Global Acceleration Instrument on WPS.⁸¹ The main objective of this funding mechanism is to promote the role of women on issues relating to peace and security. It is a good example of the so-called *nexus*, as it strives to overcome the artificial silos existing between humanitarian development, peacebuilding and security contexts. Recognising the difficulties that local women’s organisations face for accessing funds, particularly in times of crisis, this particular mechanism was designed to provide half of its funds specifically to such organisations. Spain has been able to translate its commitment into financial contributions. From 2016 to 2020, it will contribute close to 680,000 Euros to the fund, making it the seventh largest donor. As such, it will contribute 3.4% of the USD 100 million target set for the period.

Another path for analysing Spain’s effective commitment to gender equality is through the budget assigned to the NAP for implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Unfortunately, neither the first plan approved in 2007 nor the current one have an associated budget, a fact which undermines their implementation and capacity for bringing about real changes.

At the other end of the spectrum, Canada is an example to follow. Its last National Action Plan 2017-2022 has a budget of close to 1.2 billion Euros. But its commitment to gender equality goes beyond the limits of the plan. By 2021-2022, 95% of the country’s bilateral aid will directly target the empowerment of women.⁸²

The high cost of Spanish arms

Successive governments have maintained or increased arms exports to sensitive countries where there is a risk that they could be used to perpetrate violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights. This goes against the Spanish Arms Trade Law of 2007 and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) ratified by Spain in 2014.

Such arms could be fuelling conflicts in Iraq, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in Yemen, with horrific consequences for women. The fact that the JIMDDU (Inter-ministerial Board for the Regulation of External Trade in Defence and Dual-Use Materials), the body entrusted with the assessment and approval of arms exports, fails to include an analysis of potential risks for women in the decisions it takes, is in itself a breach of Article 7(4) of the ATT.

Table 1. Spanish arms exports (2015-2017)

	Iraq	Coalition led by Saudi Arabia
Volume in millions of €	171.4	1,463
Main types of arms	bombs, torpedos, rockets, missiles, mortar shells, munition fuses for light weapons.	light weapons, munitions, fire control systems, parts, components and spare parts for in-flight refuelling, transport and combat aircraft, and unmanned aircraft

Source: Arms trade analysis carried out by the Control Arms campaign

Conclusions

There is no question that wars cause profound devastation on entire populations. But for women, who rarely carry arms on the battleground or are responsible for sparking the violence, these effects are multiplied. Gender inequalities, engrained in the countries analysed in this report, are exacerbated in times of conflict and revert any progress achieved on women's rights.

This report shows how in three countries which are experiencing different phases of conflict (open conflict, post-conflict and prolonged conflict), women's empowerment will only be achieved by changing the social norms which perpetuate the patriarchal system. It is a lengthy process which requires sustained commitment. Periods of violence should be no excuse for prioritising short-term humanitarian interventions to the detriment of structural programmes aimed at promoting gender equality.

As we have seen, wars can also open up new opportunities for women. Despite being plunged into extreme situations, women have shown an unwavering capacity to challenge the traditional roles to which they have historically been submitted and overcome many of the barriers that prevent them from achieving greater autonomy in their public and personal lives. There are, however, many risks that could undermine such progress. It is therefore essential to support women in the paths they have embarked on, and to do so from a holistic perspective that takes into account the three pillars of the WPS agenda.

Spain has much to contribute in this respect. The review of the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2017-2023 provides a unique opportunity to turn this document into a useful tool for guiding the work of the Spanish government in its aim of promoting gender equality through protection, participation and prevention. In order to do this, it is essential that monitoring of the Plan ensures there is consistency in its policies. This was a shortcoming of the first plan which the current version has as yet not managed to overcome.

Gender justice is not merely an issue of human rights, it is the cornerstone for more democratic and peaceful societies. The Government's new commitment to make feminism its distinguishing feature should transcend our country's borders. The time is now. Millions of women depend on the political will of countries such as Spain.

Oxfam programmes for the promotion of gender justice

Oxfam believes that one of the key elements for consistently improving women's rights is enabling them to take control of their own lives. Their empowerment moreover has an important multiplier effect on peace and the democratic system. In accordance with these principles, Oxfam puts the rights of women at the heart of all it does, further contributing to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In Iraq, all our traditional humanitarian programmes (water and sanitation, livelihoods) integrate a gender perspective which permeates all stages of the programme. From the beginning of 2018, we are implementing a specific programme for women victims of sexual violence. The aim is to provide them with tools to enable them to overcome the trauma by improving their lives and making their voices heard. For this, we have worked together with over 200 survivors and 50 community mediators (including male community leaders) in awareness-raising campaigns aimed at achieving an understanding of their rights. We have identified 100 of the most vulnerable women and trained them to start their own micro enterprises. This work is carried out together with Al-Amal, a local Iraqi counterpart organisation.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Oxfam is providing support to six organisations.

Three of these are women's organisations belonging to the national 1325 coalition; the other three are Israeli organisations working to meet the legal and protection needs of Palestinian women. Through the support provided to these groups, Oxfam is encouraging increased participation of women in decision-taking at all levels. Moreover, we are pressuring to influence the Palestinian Authority into enacting legal reforms to protect women. In Gaza, local committees have been created to identify violations against women caused by the blockade.

In Yemen, actions are mainly focused on providing visibility to the role of women and their participation in the political arena. In order to do this, training has been provided to Women Partners for Peace and 30 local organisations in Saná, Aden and Al Hodeidah on the WPS agenda and CEDAW. Additionally, two campaigns have been implemented in the country (The Missing Peace and #I_Can) to raise awareness amongst the general public on the role of women in peacebuilding. As a result of their empowerment and training, these organisations have been able to prepare a series of documents aimed at influencing the peace process and have presented them to the UN Special Envoy.

Recommendations

Spain must deliver on its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women by promoting its feminist policies beyond our borders. In order to do this, and building on the monitoring of the second NAP, the Government and Parliament should:

Protection

- **Protect women and girls from gender-based violence.** Women survivors are stigmatised and doubly victimised. They need sustained support to be able to rebuild their lives. This can be done by:
 - **Funding women's organisations** so that they are able to provide legal support, assistance and shelter to victims.
 - **Supporting awareness-raising campaigns** for women and men on gender violence through the media.
 - **Protecting organisations** working with victims to overcome the institutional stigmatisation they are subjected to.
- **Protect the rights of women and girls.** Such as by funding programmes to improve access to basic social services, such as health centres offering specific services for women and youth; implementing campaigns to promote

the education of girls and awareness raising on the consequences of dropping out of school. All activities must be carried out based on an assessment by women's organisations to ensure that all of these services are accessible for women and girls and place them at no further risk.

Participation

- **Fund women's livelihoods programmes.** With a particular – though not exclusive – focus on women who are heads of families, such programmes must be sustained over time, including capacity building and training, as well as being market-oriented to ensure sustainability. This could be done through small grants, cash-for-work, job placements or access to loans. In order to mitigate potential risks for women both within and outside the home, programmes of this kind should be continuously monitored.
- **Promote community ownership.** Any action carried out should have as its main objective the empowerment of women at the local level. This is the first step towards achieving a critical mass of women who are able to participate in national development and social transformation and contribute to peace. Different strategies may be applied for this: programmes for improving women's inclusion in local decision-making; working with community leaders (and women); promoting the role of women leaders as an example to be followed (such as, for example, the Peshmerga brigades in Iraq).
- **Advocate in favour of women's participation in peace processes.** This requires advocacy on a number of issues: training and capacity building for UN Special Envoys, to ensure that the negotiating process is gender-sensitive from the start; promoting quality and effective consultation mechanisms with existing women's organisations, without creating parallel structures; funding networks of women's organisations implementing programmes for the participation of women in peacebuilding; facilitating visas so that women are able to travel to third countries to continue their education or take part in key events; exerting pressure to comply with the 30% quotas in formal and informal negotiations.

Prevention

- **Drive an education which promotes gender justice.** Support long-term educational programmes in schools promoting different gender role models.
- **Prevent gender based sexual violence.** Government action on this issue cannot be limited to humanitarian interventions; rather, it should mainstream a holistic vision in all public instruments and funds (amongst them NAP2,

AECID Gender Strategy, SDGs, CEDAW). The annual report to the Call to Action must include clear indicators and funds contributed in order to be able to adequately measure Spain's progress.

- **Address the root causes.** Eliminating gender inequalities requires preventing the emergence of situations where such inequalities are exacerbated, such as wars or occupation. In this respect, there is much Spain can do:
 - **Stop selling arms.** These are potentially being used in Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Yemen, and could also be used to commit acts of violence against women.
 - **Include potential impact on women's rights in the risk analysis carried out prior to arms transfers.** Pursuant to Article 7(4) of the Arms Trade Treaty, of which Spain is a signatory, the Government should not authorise the transfer of arms in cases where there is an evident risk that such arms could be used to commit acts of gender-based violence.
 - **End the Israeli occupation and demand that all parties end violence.** Palestinian women are deprived of their rights and will not recover them unless a political solution is reached.
- **Increase funding for the promotion of gender equality.** The second NAP must be associated to a budget. Without one, it is simply a token gesture. Given that Spain's national budgets for 2019 have not yet been approved, it is still possible to assign a NAP budget through the relevant amendments. Moreover, budget allocations linked to gender equality should increase in proportion to the increase in total ODA to drive an upward trend. In this respect, it is imperative that more funds are targeted at programmes with gender equality in contexts of conflict and post conflict as their main objective, given that, as described in this report, the needs of women are greater in such situations.

If the Spanish Government truly wishes gender equality to be its defining feature, it must take on such a commitment in all areas and have it permeate all of its policies. This includes integrating the Women, Peace and Security agenda in all bilateral and regional agreements (including, but not limited to, all development agreements), bringing it in line with existing regulatory frameworks on the issue (including the CEDAW and the Sustainable Development Goals), and having public policies focused on eliminating gender inequalities beyond (and within) our borders. Moreover, it must make use of international forums such as those

provided through its membership of the Human Rights Council and the Permanent Representative at the United Nations to continue to push for this agenda by bringing the stories and voices of women from these countries to such forums.

I would like to have the chance to talk to the presidents and tell them that peace is essential, if any progress is to be achieved by women.

Woman from Gaza.

NOTES

¹ R. Muggah (2018). Large parts of the world are growing more fragile. Here are 5 steps to reverse course.

² For example, in 1948 Iraqi women were very active against English colonialism and the monarchy. Between 1950 and 1970 they had access to all their rights: they could work, marry, choose what clothes to wear or get a divorce. In subsequent decades, with multiple wars and invasions, such rights were reversed. Tribal laws began to rule life in Iraqi society and gave women an inferior role economically, socially and politically. Ultimately, militarisation of the country has undermined all chances of progress for women. This report covers the decades prior to the most recent outbreak of violence in Iraq in 2014. The case of Yemen is different, since it has for decades been at the bottom of all rankings for gender equality and has long been defined by violations of women's rights. The Occupied Palestinian Territory is again a different context altogether, marked by Israeli occupation for over 50 years, with women being affected both by the occupation itself and by gender discrimination. Women's organisations, such as the Arab Women Society or the Women's Association of Palestine, were formed in the 1920s. Some of the organisations existing today have their origins in these early associations.

³ For further information on the conflict, see Oxfam, UN Women, Afkar (2017). Gender and conflict analysis in ISIS affected communities of Iraq. UN OCHA (2018) Iraq Humanitarian Needs 2019

⁴ http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_7-3-20148-women-en.PDF

⁵ UN OCHA Yemen <https://www.unocha.org/yemen/about-ocha-yemen>

⁶ Res. 1820 (2008), Res. 1888 (2009), Res. 1889 (2009), Res. 1960 (2010), Res. 2106 (2013), Res. 2122 (2013), Res. 2242 (2015), Res. 2272 (2016).

⁷ See <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>

⁸ UN (2015), Global Study on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325

⁹ For an up-to-date critical analysis of the implementation of this agenda, see Escola per la Pau (2017) Género, Paz y Seguridad

¹⁰ Beginning in 2003, the Iraqi women's movement made extensive efforts to empower the role of women in political and social life. The Transitional Administrative Law of 2004 specified that women must occupy a minimum of 25 percent of all seats in parliament and other elected bodies. During the January 2005 election – the first after the overthrow of the Ba'th regime – women won 31 percent of parliamentary seats and 28 percent of the seats in local councils. This was the result of an active role by women's rights organizations: raising awareness about the elections, training female candidates in campaigning, and motivating women to vote. In this context, Resolution 1325 is one of the instruments used by women in Iraq to push for equality in decision-making positions and national reconciliation. https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=29bd93c9-5f83-d335-c67d-7320ff223668&groupId=252038

¹¹ Global Network of Women Peacebuilders

¹² For further information, see MIFTAH (2017). A Vision for Palestinian Women's Rights Organizations based on the Global Study of the UNSCR 1325

¹³ The international community has adopted an integrated regulatory framework on sexual violence in conflicts. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which entered into force in 2002, provides an extensive list of crimes against women. Since the 1990s, international courts and tribunals

have developed case law in relation to such crimes. The Security Council has also acted by appointing a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, reporting to the Council. Moreover, a monitoring and reporting system has been set up to report sexual violence against women and girls in conflict situations.

¹⁴ See

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW/C/GC/30&Lang=en

¹⁵ See [https://documents-dds](https://documents-dds.ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N13/272/20/PDF/N1327220.pdf?OpenElement)

[ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N13/272/20/PDF/N1327220.pdf?OpenElement](https://documents-dds.ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/N13/272/20/PDF/N1327220.pdf?OpenElement)

¹⁶ Hudson (2012). [What Sex Means for World Peace](#)

¹⁷ Family laws which discriminate against women serve to entrench men's domination over them. The outcomes in male-dominated societies include values which glorify violence, a tendency to resolve conflicts using violence, and an economic system based on accumulating personal wealth whatever the cost. All of these factors are a barrier to national security and stability. Bowen, Hudson, Nielsen (2015). [State Fragility and Structural Gender Inequality in Family Law: An Empirical Investigation](#).

¹⁸ Krause, J. Krause, W & Bränfors, P. (2018). [Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace](#)

¹⁹ Paffenholz et al. (2016). [Making Women Count](#).

²⁰ Countries in the Middle East have historically performed poorly on indicators for gender equality, frequently linked to high levels of authoritarianism in the region, low levels of democracy and poor governance. However, it is difficult to disaggregate cause from effect in what seems to be a persistent cycle of bad governance practices and gender inequality. In fact, it is important to understand gendered struggles and the ways in which these have permeated conflicts in the past to fully comprehend current realities in these three countries. See FCO, Oxfam, Alert (2017). [Now is the Time: Research on Gender Justice, Conflict and Fragility in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

²¹ During the Iran-Iraq war, for example, Iraq's highly educated women took on roles in the security and military forces. By the 1990s, the Ba'ath party, in alliance with conservative groups, changed this approach to promote women's place in the home. Oxfam (2017). [Gender and conflict analysis in ISIS affected communities of Iraq](#).

²² Iraq Woman Integrated Social and Health Survey (2012)

²³ SIDA (1999). [Gender Equality in the Palestinian Territories](#)

²⁴ Results of interviews carried out for the report Oxfam, Care & IASC (2016). [From the ground up: Gender and Conflict analysis in Yemen](#)

²⁵ Oxfam (2016). Iraq Gender Analysis: "In the perfect world men would consult and respect us"

²⁶ FCO, Oxfam, Alert (2017). [Now is the Time: Research on Gender Justice, Conflict and Fragility in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

²⁷ Oxfam, Saferworld (2017). [We won't wait. As war ravages Yemen, its women strive to build peace](#)

²⁸ Farr & Boukhar (2017). [Feminism at the frontline: addressing women's multidimensional insecurity in Yemen and Lybia](#).

²⁹ For further information, see MIFTAH (2017). [A Vision for Palestinian Women's Rights Organizations based on the Global Study of the UNSCR 1325](#)

³⁰ Oxfam (2016). Iraq Gender Analysis: "In the perfect world men would consult and respect us"

³¹ UNICEF [Iraq Statistics](#)

³² Al-Eshari & Al-Sabri (2017). Report on Unseen Restriction Policies. Identification Papers and their impact on Women Access to justice.

³³ [UN Women in Palestine](#).

³⁴ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/maternal-deaths-yemen-continued-calamity>

³⁵ [The Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center](#) (2013)

³⁶ Human Rights Watch (2015). [Iraq: ISIS Escapees Describe Systematic Rape](#). 70% of the women examined at the Dohuk health centre had been raped whilst in captivity.

³⁷ Minority Rights Group (2015) [No place to turn: Violence against Women in the Iraq conflict](#)

³⁸ Information compiled from interviews with local and international organisation and key informants.

³⁹ For further information, see UN Women, Oxfam (2018); Human Rights Watch (2015); Oxfam, UN Women, Afkar (2017).

⁴⁰ By 36% in 2017. UNFPA (2018). [Humanitarian Response in Yemen](#)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² [Report by the United Nations Human Rights Council Group of Experts on Yemen](#) (2018)

⁴³ Miftah (2018) [Fact Sheet on Violations Against the Palestinian Women and Girls in East Jerusalem by the Israeli Occupation](#)

⁴⁴ Since 1967, the occupation has demolished some 5,000 Palestinian homes, causing the displacement of more than 120,000 Palestinians from Jerusalem. Between 2000-2017 the occupation also demolished 1,706 homes, leaving 9,422 people homeless, including 5,163 children. See [Miftah](#)

⁴⁵ See, for example, Bimkom (2017) [The effect of forced transfer on Bedouin women](#)

⁴⁶ Links to ISIS are very broadly drawn and include having a family member belonging to the terrorist group (brother, son or other relative), or marriage to an ISIS member (even if a forced marriage). In many cases there is no evidence that such links exist, sufficing with an allegation even if not proven. It is estimated that over 100,000 persons are judged in this way. They suffer extreme discrimination and are a highly vulnerable population group, accused of a crime they never committed.

⁴⁷ Oxfam (2017) [A life in limbo](#); Amnesty International (2018) [The condemned women and children isolated, trapped and exploited in Iraq](#).

⁴⁸ In Yemen, for example, lack of security in displacement contexts was a key reason for not allowing women to look for work. Oxfam, Awam and YLDF (2017). [The impacts of war on the participation of women in civil society organizations and peacebuilding](#).

⁴⁹ For information on the impact on men in Iraq, see Oxfam (2016). Iraq Gender Analysis: "In the perfect world men would consult and respect us"

⁵⁰ UNICEF Yemen. Before the war, half of girls under 18 were married.

⁵¹ In 2016, for example, half of all unemployed women had received 13 years of education or more (compared to 19.1% of men) and 12.7% had no education (compared to 31.5% of men). However, women represented more than half of all university graduates in 2016/2017. There are several factors at play here, but what seems obvious is that public and private investments in education are not matched by opportunities in the labour market, and this prevents access for many highly qualified women. The high levels of women's enrolment in tertiary education, whether vocational or academic, do not appear to help women access the labour market, partly because their education is limited to a reduced number of stereotypical sectors.

⁵² The most visible aspect of this is unemployment, the highest in the world, which affects more than 27% of the population. ILO (2018) [The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories](#)

⁵³ [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics \(2018\)](#)

⁵⁴ According to the ILO, women do not go to employment offices or seek help from their network of contacts for social reasons. Most choose to do this on the internet to avoid having to interact with persons they do not know. Ibid

⁵⁵ [OCHA \(2018\)](#)

⁵⁶ [UN OCHA](#)

⁵⁷ [Unicef Yemen](#)

⁵⁸ OCHA (2018). [Iraq: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2019](#)

⁵⁹ Oxfam (2016). From the Ground Up

⁶⁰ Oxfam (2016). Iraq Gender Analysis: "In the perfect world men would consult and respect us"

⁶¹ This case was explicitly mentioned in the [Global Study on UN SCR 1325](#)

⁶² See, for example, Oxfam, UN Women, Afkar (2017). [Gender and Conflict. Analysis in ISIS affected communities in Iraq](#); Oxfam, Awam and YLDF (2017). [The Impacts of War on the participation of Women in civil society organizations and peacebuilding](#)

⁶³ Oxfam (2016). Iraq Gender Analysis: "In the perfect world men would consult and respect us"; IANSA (2011). [Why Women? Effective engagement for small arms control](#); Oxfam, UN Women, Afkar (2017). [Gender and Conflict. Analysis in ISIS affected communities in Iraq](#);

⁶⁴ Erika Forsberg and Louise Olsson (2016) [Gender Inequality and Internal Conflict](#)

⁶⁵ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>

⁶⁶ See International Rescue Committee (2017) [The Impact of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#)

⁶⁷ <https://medium.com/@UNDP/everyday-hero-access-to-justice-for-palestinian-women-5d095a01f477>

⁶⁸ Oxfam (2019) [Yemen's Shattered Food Economy and its Desperate Toll on Women](#)

⁶⁹ This heading includes assistance where gender equality is both the “principal” objective and the “significant” objective, i.e., where gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal objective.

⁷⁰ To understand how the DAC scores its gender equality programmes as “principal” or “significant” see <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>

⁷¹ OECD, DAC, (2019) <http://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Dev-finance-for-gender-equality-and-womens-economic-empowerment-2019.pdf>

⁷² See the one prepared by [Oxfam](#) (2013), although many others can be found at [IASC](#) (2018), page 45.

⁷³ [Oxfam](#) (2013) [Gender issues in conflict and humanitarian action](#)

⁷¹ This index analyses military spending in relation to other areas of society. The Occupied Palestinian Territory is not included in this ranking.
<https://www.bicc.de/publications/publicationpage/publication/global-militarization-index-2018-833/>

⁷⁵ IANSA (2011). [Why Women? Effective engagement for small arms control](#)

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ [Oxfam Intermón](#) (2016). [España en el Consejo de Seguridad](#)

⁷⁸ http://www.aecid.es/ES/Paginas/Sala%20de%20Prensa/Noticias/2017/2017_09/09_29_cicr.aspx

⁷⁹ These reports are prepared annually by all partners to provide accountability on progress regarding commitment. They have not as yet been published, and [Oxfam Intermón](#) therefore wishes to thank the Administration’s bid for transparency in having shared this report.

⁸⁰ In particular, reference is made only to humanitarian aid, the humanitarian strategy and humanitarian staff.

⁸¹ For further information on this fund, see <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/2/global-acceleration-instrument-launch>

⁸² For further information, see https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/cnap_ip-pi_pnac-17-22.aspx?lang=eng

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