

# FEMINISTS *connecting* FOR PEACE



DEMILITARIZATION

# What makes you feel safe?

During the second PeaceWomen Across the Globe-Webinar on Demilitarization in June 2021, four activists shared their perspectives on genuine security. You will find their thoughts on what makes them feel secure throughout this magazine. For an extended version, take a look at our YouTube channel.



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## EDITORIAL

We are excited to launch our very first Feminists Connecting for Peace magazine! If you are reading this, chances are that you already consider yourself a part of our global network of feminist peace activists. If not, you are still welcome:

*WE ARE HAPPY  
TO MEET YOU!*

Our network is spread out across the world: together we work on projects and organize webinars, face-to-face meetings, and campaigns. Most importantly — we feel and act in solidarity with each other.

Supporting feminist peacebuilders and making their work visible is at the core of the vision and practice of PeaceWomen Across the Globe (PWAG). The Feminists Connecting for Peace magazine is a co-creation of activists from our global network. They share their work and experiences in articles and interviews. Thank you to everyone who contributed and to all who will contribute to it in the future!

For the first issue of the magazine, we chose to focus on the topic of demilitarization, because countless people are affected by war and violence or suffer from oppression and colonial politics. As a form of patriarchal violence, militarization continues to impact the lives of many women, men, and children. But the people, from Ukraine to Palestine, from Afghanistan to Colombia, are resisting. Feminists worldwide are working tirelessly for peace and against war and violence. They work towards making

life in their communities secure, in a way that goes far beyond the military's concept of "security". This magazine is a collection of articles that reflect the diversity of our network and our partners' approaches to counter militarization. You will find feminist analyses, critical responses, and stories of resistance to militarization.

Our network and this magazine are platforms for sharing diverse experiences. We hope that by writing and reading the articles and commenting on them, the magazine will benefit all of us, by deepening our knowledge and sharing it in feminist circles and beyond.

As we are writing this, the war in Ukraine is raging. Cries for increased militarization are becoming louder throughout Europe, while voices for peace without the use of military force are suppressed or deemed naïve and ignorant. Fewer and fewer people want to listen to such voices. Feminists, on the other hand, are not deterred, our voices are getting louder – in the public space, in networks and in politics.

More than ever, this is the time to question and contest violence and appeal for peace. We hope you will find the contents of this magazine interesting and motivating,



**CARLA WEYMANN**  
Network Coordinator



**ANNEMARIE SANCAR**  
Network and Program Manager

Bern, June 2022

# AMPLIFYING VOICES CALLING FOR JUST PEACE, GENUINE SECURITY, AND A CULTURE OF LIFE

**Interview with Margo Okazawa-Rey, board member of PWAG and co-founder of the International Women's Network Against Militarism.**

*Calls for rearmament are growing louder since Russia's war on Ukraine, in Europe even among left-wing people and parties. What would your answer be to these calls, as a feminist and peace activist?*

My answer: amplify the voices of those calling for just peace in Ukraine, and the wars and armed conflicts disregarded by the Western media and persons: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, to name a few. The question "why calls for rearmament are growing louder" silences the voices in Ukraine, Russia, and rest of the world that are calling for the opposite.

I quote here from the statement of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement (Pressenza 2022): "We call on all peace-loving people in Ukraine and around the world to remain peace-loving people in all circumstances and to help others to be peace-loving people, to collect

and disseminate knowledge about peaceful and nonviolent ways of life, to tell the truth that unites peace-loving people, to resist evil and injustice without violence, and debunk myths about necessary, beneficial, inevitable, and just war. We don't call for any particular action now to ensure that peace plans will not be targeted by hatred and attacks of militarists, but we are confident that pacifists of the world have a good imagination and experience of practical realization of their best dreams. Our actions should be guided by hope for a peaceful and happy future, and not by fears. Let our peace work bring closer the future from dreams. War is a crime against humanity. Therefore, we are determined not to support any kind of war and to strive for the removal of all causes of war."

Wars are profitable and the profiteers – corporations and individual elites within and outside (e.g., US, Canada, Western Europe) of warring countries – benefit enormously both materially and ideologically. For example, US military related industries' profits have soared since the war: as Forbes Magazine reported recently (Forbes 2022) and the governments of the USA, Germany and Japan, among others, are increasing their military budgets. The national, military and corporate leaders invoke nationalism, the morally bankrupt concept of "national security", in addition to other tropes such as so-called "democracy", protecting human rights, protecting women and children, ad infinitum, to "manufacture consent" (Oxford Reference 2022) among the people. We have heard these rhetorical tricks too often to continue accepting them as given.

As many people already know: Wars and armed conflicts are fundamentally struggles by states and non-state actors (the two often deeply interrelated) for control of resources, accumulation of capital and power to control resources and define reality, such as "this is a just war." Wars are waged systematically against people based on longstanding structural inequalities and exclusions. Peoples of the Global South. Women, children, elderly persons, and other vulnerable people in communities, nations, and regions of the world. More fighting will only make matters worse for the most affected people.

We, feminist activists for peace, genuine security, and a culture of life, must organize in our respective locations to end the war the media are currently fixated on, and all wars and armed conflicts being waged around the world. We, feminists in the West, especially

the US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, and others, must stop our governments from providing military aid to Ukraine (Aljazeera 2022). We must organize to stop arming and otherwise supporting regimes calling for military and militarized responses to conflicts. We must collectively – locally, regionally, and globally – re-create a new visionary peace movement that applies analyses, and practices that fundamentally recognize and honor the power dynamics and disparate impacts and long-term consequences rooted in complex, intersecting relationships among socio-political categories of gender, race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and citizenship status, for example.

*As one of the co-founders of the International Women's Network Against Militarism (IWNAM) you have been campaigning against militarism for decades. What lessons have you drawn from this work that are relevant to activists and organizations taking a stand against rearmament and militarism today?*

One of the biggest lessons: war is the tip of the iceberg. It is the visible manifestation of how many countries' political and economic institutions are organized, and now re-organizing, to prepare for wars and armed conflicts, with the US being the prime example. Others include China, Germany, Israel or Japan. This is evident in the role of military industries in national economies, the indoctrination that war and power to dominate are the only "real" solutions to conflict, and the creation always of an enemy. This kind of organization of societies is a culture of killing and domination that transcends existing sociopolitical categories. Culture of killing is not the domain of any one country, peoples, geographies.

Second, we members of countries/states with colonial and imperial histories and current global power positions, with transnational corporations wreaking havoc worldwide – stealing natural resources including human labor and destroying the planet – have blood on our hands. We, therefore, can no longer passively or individually resist. We must be part of collective movements challenging our governments, corporations, and leaders to take responsibility for past and current damages, and to shift priorities toward all social, economic, political organizing and operations for life-affirming purposes and goals.

Third, the fundamental lesson: We are at the crossroad. At this point in human history, and given the current situation, we – people of the planet – stand either on the side of a culture of killing or a culture of life. There is no neutral position; there are no other ways. Either killing or life. IWNAM's statement, A Feminist Vision of Genuine Security and a Culture of Life (IWNAM 2021), captures our fundamental principles and commitments to the culture of life. The five foundational principles of our vision are: Safeguarding the Environment to Sustain Life, Meeting Basic Human Needs, Respecting Human Dignity, Respecting Peoples' Sovereignty and Preventing Avoidable Harm.

*What contribution can feminist peace organizations make? What for you is a good example of how PWAG contribute to demilitarization and the public debates and perceptions around militarization?*

Because wars and militarism are patriarchal, masculinist ideals and practices (women participate and support these as well), as feminists we must challenge those – ideologically and in practice. Feminism and feminist practice affirm and protect all life. PWAG has promoted this position in its workshops and webinars in attempts to reach wider audiences. Although these events are interesting and informative, what's needed now is a global movement to address the issue of militarism, and militarized economic and political organization of nations. I think we need a global strike or some other form of non-violent direct action that will stop business as usual, interrupt the status quo, get people thinking and understanding deeply this critical moment in history and how we must act.

I want PWAG to be one of the leaders in such a movement. I want us to inspire ourselves and others. I want us to bring people together to imagine possibilities of a better future for all life. I want us to bring like-minded folks together, to build and rebuild relationships, to organize non-violent direct actions. Finally, I want PWAG unequivocally to take a feminist ethical, political, and moral position on war, militarism, colonization and occupation that is anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and that unequivocally supports cultures of life.

The interview was conducted by Christina Stucky, communications manager at PWAG.



**MARGO OKAZAWA-REY**

joined the PWAG International Board in 2003. She is one of the co-founders of the International Women's Network Against Militarism. Her main areas of research and activism since 1994 are militarism, armed conflict, and violence against women, understood inter-sectionally. She is involved with feminist activists in East Asia, the Pacific, and Palestine. She is Professor Emerita at San Francisco State University and Board President of AWID.

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“For me, getting a sense of security is first and foremost historical justice, the acknowledgement of the unpayable debt that every single cell of our societies. We need to work towards the deconstruction of colonial nature, militarization of borders and states, monoculture, hetero- and cis-normativity — and many other issues. Security, for me, is reconciliation that goes beyond temporality and rationality, it's the preservation of the territory, the preservation of the territory body and the opportunity for everybody to achieve the best version of themselves.”

IZABEL BARROS,  
Brazil and Switzerland



*“ACTIVISM IS A MUST!”*  
**HONORING HOPE  
ALVAREZ CRISTOBAL:  
GUÅHAN’S FIRST  
NOBEL PEACE  
PRIZE NOMINEE**



**CHamorus, the Indigenous people of the Marianas archipelago, are celebrating the nomination of Hope Alvarez Cristobal for the Nobel Peace Prize. Ha’āni Lucia Falo San Nicolas met her for a conversation on CHamoru activism against militarization. Ha’āni is a member of PWAG’s partner organization I Hagan Famalao’an Guåhan.**

Saina Hope, as she is fondly called, is an activist, educator, former senator, farmer, and mentor. As a mother, she views CHamoru women as “enculturators,” influential figures who hold a strong sense of responsibility for our people. This identity has driven her lifelong dedication to a decolonized and demilitarized Guåhan and Pacific region.

Born in post-World War II Guåhan, Saina Hope witnessed the increased U.S. military presence on the island. Saina Hope grew up

recognizing the connection between Guåhan’s colonial status as an unincorporated territory and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) military presence, which ignited her to “speak out on all CHamoru issues with regards to military effects.”

From the 1970s to 1980s, Saina Hope jumped into organizing, as a co-founder, PARA-PÅDA and the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights, groups that resisted injustices related to the U.S. colonialism in Guam and addressed the significance of CHamoru self-determination. She furthered the goals of these organizations by representing Guåhan and providing testimony and discussion papers at the United Nations (UN) Special Committee on Decolonization hearings, the 4th Committee, and regional seminars.

In response to the U.S. DOD’s announcement of relocating nearly 10,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guåhan in 2006, Saina Hope was a key figure in the formation of several local demilitarization groups as the co-founder of Fuetsan Famalao’an, Prutehi Litekyan: Save Ritidian, Guåhan Coalition for Peace and Justice, and I Hagan Famalao’an Guåhan. Saina Hope has further galvanized CHamoru engagement in the protection of our culture and land with her commitment to the restoration of ancestral CHamoru burial grounds and sacred sites that are often desecrated by the U.S. DOD’s military base developments.

Even after all her years of advocacy for the CHamoru people, Saina Hope insists that “activism is a must” and must be continued to affect positive change. She remains very involved in Guåhan as the chairperson of the CHamoru Language Commission and the director of the Northern Guam Soil and Water Conservation District, among numerous other responsibilities.

When I asked Saina Hope how she felt about her Nobel nomination, she was very mamåhlao (humble) as she reinforced the fact that much of her work was not done alone. Rather, it was the collective doing of the community. As CHamorus, we look to our elders for guidance in sustaining our culture and for inspiration in navigating our liberation. And because of our ancestral matrilineal society, CHamorus view women with profound reverence and see them as leaders in more ways than one. I, like many others, view the life and activism of Saina Hope – with all her grace and passion – as someone we aspire to be. Biba Saina Hope!

In a project supported by PWAG in 2021, I Hagan Famalao'an Guåhan, an NGO co-founded by Hope Alvarez Cristobal, facilitated an inter-generational exchange between indigenous women on the question: how do we resist colonialism and militarism? Their findings: through political participation as well as through the preservation of traditional cultural values and practices, ancestral knowledge and language. Together, these women are working for a more peaceful society in the midst of the on-going US colonial regime.



**HA'ANI LUCIA FALO SAN NICOLAS**

is a CHamoru and Samoan activist, poet, teacher, and PhD student in the Indigenous Politics program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is a member of I Hagan Famalao'an Guåhan, the Indigenous CHamoru Women's Association of Guam.

# RECALLING THE ANTIMILITARIST ORIGINS OF THE WPS AGENDA

**The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been criticised for essentialism and an implementation that lacks true transformation. Taking the anti-militaristic vision at the origin of the WPS agenda seriously, we can push for an implementation that challenges the patriarchal status quo, push for structural transformation, and push our governments to take responsibility.**

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000. The landmark resolution marks the success of the advocacy and commitment of transnational feminist networks and women peace activists worldwide – particularly from the Global South – for the formal recognition of the gendered impacts of conflict and the inclusion of women's perspectives in international security and peace policies. Resolution 1325 and nine follow-up resolutions together form the WPS agenda. The agenda acknowledges different gendered experiences of armed conflicts, calls for women's participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction, and demands the protection of women, including from sexualised and gender-based violence, in armed conflict. The WPS agenda consists of four pillars: prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery.



For many women's rights organisations and feminist peace activists, the WPS agenda is a useful advocacy tool. The agenda and its implementation, however, have also been subjected to critique from feminist academics and practitioners alike. Points of criticism include: an essentialist understanding of gender by focusing exclusively on women; understanding women as passive victims and as inherently peaceful and therefore better suited to participate in peace processes; a lack of enforceability of the agenda; or that WPS practice focuses mainly on quotas and does not lead to structural transformation.

More than 20 years after its adoption, we see a growing discrepancy between the transformative potential of the agenda, the rhetoric on WPS and its actual implementation. There has been a strong emphasis on the acknowledgement and prevention of sexualised violence in conflict, and on the participation of women in peace processes. This, however, more often than not took the shape of making war safer for women (Shepherd 2016), on the one hand, and using an 'add women and stir' approach (WILPF 2020), on the other.

National Action Plans (NAPs), which are policy instruments, have become the primary form of WPS implementation. More than 80 countries so far have developed NAPs on WPS. The NAPs propagate WPS rhetoric, without necessarily contributing to a substantive implementation of the agenda. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the orientation that states give to their NAPs correlates with their geopolitical location. While countries in the Global South implement the agenda domestically, countries in the Global North direct their NAPs almost exclusively to their foreign policy. Haastrup and Hagen (2020) argue that dominant WPS practices thus reinforce global racial power hierarchies. Specifically Global North NAPs can "be seen to perpetuate an image wherein the peaceful North (which nevertheless employs and relies on militarism for its practices of peace and security) is obliged to 'rescue' the insecure global South." (Ibid.: 133). In externalising their WPS agendas, Global North NAPs "exacerbate the racialised norms of international relations and of conflict/insecurity being something that happens in other places, while refusing [to acknowledge, – Ed.] the gendered violence within their own borders." (Ibid.: 146)

The Swiss NAP is no different from this. It focuses almost exclusively on Swiss foreign policy, with the exception of two goals: an analysis of the situation and needs of refugee women in Switzerland and

the increase in the number of women in the Swiss Armed Forces. The NAP's main implementor is the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). A domestic implementation, however, seems to be appropriate for several reasons, one being that Global North states need to acknowledge and tackle structural violence within their borders, another being that a state exporting arms is complicit in causing conflicts in which these arms are used.

The feminist vision at the origin of UNSCR 1325 was clearly antimilitaristic. It did not want to make war safer for women, but prevent armed conflicts altogether. Several resolutions make the link to demilitarisation explicit, including a mention of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). It is apparent, however, that states readily take up WPS rhetoric linked to increasing the participation of women (without then necessarily contributing to meaningful participation of women beyond tokenism) but resist including demilitarisation policies in their NAPs. Yet, opposing militarisation is at the heart of WPS, which also becomes evident if we take its prevention pillar and the definition of security as genuine security seriously.

In 2020, Swiss companies exported war materiel worth 901.2 million CHF – a 24% increase compared to 2019. It is illegal, according to Swiss legislation, to export war materiel to conflict zones or to countries where human rights are systematically and gravely violated. Numerous examples, however, show that Swiss military material ends up in armed conflicts (WOZ 2021a). Furthermore, dual-use goods and particular military goods not intended for offensive use are not included in this number. If considered, the amount would reach 387.4 billion CHF. Importantly, these kinds of goods can still be exported to countries involved in armed conflict (WOZ 2021b). Switzerland only partly takes arms exports into account in its NAP. It references small arms and light weapons control but does not mention arms exports generally. Arms exports and the militarisation of society are ultimately about financial profit and resources, about budget allocation, about the distribution of power. The political questions of deciding if funds are allocated to militarised security, thus the defence industry, or allocated to social security infrastructure, the decision to commit to ending arms exports – these are ultimately questions that must be addressed domestically.

It would be easy, even obvious, to dismiss the WPS agenda altogether, given the varied and justified critiques and challenges to a transform-

ative implementation. But we as feminist activists can still try to use 1325 as a tool for transformative change, beyond simple quotas and the perpetuation of a patriarchal status quo. We can continue to push for demilitarisation and, in arms-exporting countries in the Global North, start right at our doorstep.



**ANDREA FILIPPI**

is programme and advocacy manager at PWAG. In her work, she focuses on feminist and gender-just peace(building), she is passionate about justice and tries to bring intersectional, decolonial perspectives to her practice.

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“I find safety in the Sanghamitrā or the collective of friends, which can help you to cope with internal and external crises, and give avenues for the empathic tsunami, that one feels when faced with injustices. And what you do with it, how to be proactive and turn empathy into compassion and action. It’s not possible without a cluster of friendships, without voices coming together in high levels of discourse — beyond the binary. I feel that in the world we live in, discourse is often binary, which makes me feel very insecure. And I think I would feel safer if the importance of the interbeing was acknowledged — not only from an anthropocentric point of view, which is the western, colonized, master’s point of view — that interbeing is a transactional kind of relationship — but interbeing as a circular relationship — but that what makes me feel safest in the times of COVID are these networks and relationships.”

SHREYA JANI  
India

# WEBINAR SERIES ON DEMILITARIZATION

From March 2021 to June 2022 PWAG and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) co-organized three webinars on demilitarization, disarmament, and feminist peace policy.

“State security must be aligned with people's security and not undermine it. As it stands, people remain in need of clean water, food, housing, and medical care. The massive militarization of the globe is rooted in creating vulnerability and insecurity.”

International Women's Network Against Militarism

The tendency towards further militarization seems to be unbroken because warmongers know their business. They provoke shamelessly, they stir up fears, postulate deterrence, threaten with massive sanctions, troop deployments and military exercises. The arms market supposedly proves them right, ever supporting this aggressive approach, because a lot of money is earned with the ever more automated killing machines.

The mainstream media take up these polarized threat scenarios, sharpening them and catering to the fears of the people, who supposedly demand a strong response from the powerful. They serve the aggressors with stories of people who seem desperate for more guns from their “saviours”. They report when things go bust, not when conflict has been preemptively avoided through great diplomatic efforts and civil society dialogues on dividing lines.

Many reasons to look at disarmament from a feminist perspective.

The first webinar focused on different scenarios of the world's conflicts with reference to seemingly unavoidable spirals of armament, arms exports, European and national policies, and alliance commitments. Many activists commented from their perspective.

The 2nd webinar mainly allowed women from conflict regions to speak, who are victims and sufferers of the military view of conflicts and the militarization of their environment. They countered with their ideas of genuine human security that includes health care, social and environmental justice, access to resources and clean livelihoods, so that people can feel safe in their everyday lives.

To conclude, the final event in June 2022 focuses on alternatives to rearmament – especially in the area of tension between militarism and climate change – and thus on undermining the logic of militarism. UNSCR 1325 is an important point of reference, the Women, Peace, Security-Strategy provides orientation. This event wants to go further. It will focus on the interconnections between everyday conditions, social relations, and political influence.



**ANNEMARIE SANCAR** *left*

holds a doctorate in social anthropology focusing on migration and development cooperation. In addition to her many years of experience in feminist networks such as WIDE Women in Development Switzerland and the Gender Working Group of the OSCE's Civic Solidarity Platform, she is involved in gender projects with a focus on economic literacy, peacebuilding and migration. Since May 2020 Annemarie Sancar works as network and programme manager at PWAG.

**HEIDI MEINZOLT** *right*

is a long-standing member of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and has been on the international board responsible for Europe since the international congress in Ghana in August 2018. She is a founding member of the Women's Security Council in Germany and Alliance 1325. In 2016, she organized the new OSCE Civic Solidarity Platform working group "On Women and Gender realities in the OSCE Region", which she coordinates with Mariya Yasenovska from Ukraine. In 2018/19, she coordinated the project "Women Vote Peace", which was funded by the EU's Europe for Citizens programme.

# HOW TO DRAW MEDIA ATTENTION TO HUMANISTIC VALUES

**Olena Zinenko studies society through and with the media. Her research focuses on how unpopular social narratives are breaking into the media mainstream and what the media is covering, reflecting public events such as equality marches for women's rights, or anti-war rallies that have swept through the world since the invasion by Russia in Ukraine.**

Media development in the world and in Ukraine in particular, shows that in the pursuit of politics, journalism loses culture, in the sense that culture is a manifestation of human identity and the diversity of opinions. Studies of journalistic discourse show that the media, do reflect and construct being, but the paradox of the media is that the focus of journalists is on what everyone is already talking about. People who are invisible in society, discriminated against, and have very complex problems are often overlooked. In a democratic society, journalism is supported by cultural practices – performances, works of art, literary works. Presented in public, these manifestations of creative action attract media attention and provoke discussions, thus becoming public events. This work becomes a way of expressing the pressure or violence supported by dominant elites. In authoritarian societies, such as Russia, with a lack of access to free media, these peaceful manifestations of dissent become speeches of eccentrics and are not taken seriously.



Working on the promotion of the values of gender equality, non-discrimination, and human rights in Ukraine, I conducted some research in several areas. Firstly, I communicated with experts on this topic; secondly, I monitored seminars, special events and trainings for women to clarify the topic and motivate activists to develop programs to increase the visibility of women's contribution to society development; and thirdly, I looked out for coverage of public events of activists in the media. My observations have shown a simple thing: understanding the concept of gender equality is different at the level of experts, activists and journalists, and there is a need to reconcile these levels of perception of reality. Lack of communication between representatives of different levels and lack of a platform for and interest in public opinion make it impossible to promote humanistic values. Conversely, the systematic communication between experts and journalists contributes to the formation of public opinion, motivates, and supports activists to realize positive change in society. Through the revitalization of the women's movement, Ukraine has succeeded in passing several laws to address discrimination against women in the private and professional spheres. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Ukraine is still not implemented. This hurdle can be overcome by working systematically at three levels of perception of gender equality - conducting expert research, involving the community, and creating conditions for the coverage of this topic for journalists. And this is a question of overcoming stereotypes in the perception of humans (man, woman, child, ecologist, anti-military activist etc.).

### **Communication in War**

The war in Ukraine started before 24 February 2022. Since 2014 territories in the Eastern part of Ukraine have been occupied. The situation in Ukraine became more difficult in 2022 when Russia began its aggression against the whole country. Rocket and mortar shelling, some cities occupied. People are dying, being left homeless, women are giving birth to children in bomb shelters, caring for people with disabilities, supporting the elderly. Disappearances, forced evacuations to Russia and rape by the occupiers in the occupied territories have been reported. This is a humanitarian catastrophe. Thanks to the networking of our organization Kharkiv Regional Foundation "Public Alternatives" within our joint project "Women's PeaceTables Ukraine" with PWAG we can connect with women from Kharkiv, Luhansk and Donetsk regions and help them.

In wartime, women are the most vulnerable group in society. Do the mainstream media represent women in their diversity? Not much. Do women have access to the mainstream media? Media producers, chief-editors, experts, and heroes of the media are primarily men. They decide what to talk about. How do women get information about their needs? How does the world get information about them? Sometimes by chats, sometimes from anywhere. The question is not about the representation of women but about giving a voice to the people in their diversity. Especially during the war when the mainstream became militaristic. The most fascinating thing about the Ukrainian media discourse during the war is that it is not about power but about people. We can see not only the president talking and male soldiers in the media, but female soldiers, mothers, children, elderly people, persons with disabilities. But to provide a non-militaristic discourse based on human rights concepts, it is not enough.

Working with women in different parts of Ukraine I saw the following picture: there is a big gap between informed and not-informed women. Women are informed about their needs mostly by women activists, by alternative media created by women activists. Where does this media get its resources? It is mostly volunteer work or special projects initiated by activists supported by NGOs and international foundations. I can single out the motives why women unite in Ukraine: they either unite based on the shared ideology of feminism or due to the circumstances they live under. In my work, I connected to both types. Women united by ideology: created by NGOs and civic initiatives, women's social networks can offer mutual help now during the war; useful information, and support to each other. For the last 8 years, such public organizations have achieved quite powerful results. Educational events are held, women's history becomes visible. Gender committees operate at different levels of government. Interaction and mutual assistance projects for women from vulnerable groups translate into activities across Ukraine, but it is not enough.

The second type of active women in society: such women unite at work, in parent committees of schools, in creative initiatives etc. This type of woman is mostly poorly informed about any human rights issues. Working women among them have a little bit of awareness of their rights. Before the war, we saw this situation: the higher the standard of living, the less a woman is willing to accept the fact that she suffers from any inequality. We can call this a delusion a

person who survived. Working women have access to information and opportunities, while housewives with children remain in their bubble and mostly dependent on their husbands' earnings. Housewives are also united in communities of interest. Despite the fact that children with both kinds of mothers study in schools, mothers who are housewives become the most influential in parent communities because they have more time. They mostly influence the educational process at school. It is in this circle that education on gender equality becomes the most difficult. Although the state cultural policy is implemented in a completely different direction, harmful stereotypes about women or men are spread in the communities of mums and housewives. It is worth noting that these communities proved to be the least self-sufficient during the war. In school groups, I see silence, despair, or calls to prayer. Such groups are most vulnerable to fake news. Of course, there are exceptions. The situation at school depends on the level of gender literacy of teachers and school principals.

For Ukrainians, the family is a guarantee of security, protection, and privacy. The woman is the head of the family and the guardian. The positive characteristic is that the family is an open system in Ukraine. The practice of family networking is a guarantee of sustainable development for Ukrainians. Ukraine has a very strong tradition of women's independence and self-sufficiency; however, we are faced with such a bias that the idea of gender equality is against family values. The most vulnerable in this situation are girls – middle school pupils, students and the unemployed. Often girls, from the age of 10, start helping their mothers in the household. And often this limits them in finding their identity and realizing opportunities. In the projects with young girls of our organization, when we work with young people, we often face the situation that a girl is not released for training because she has to look after younger siblings.

In current times I have to say that the situation of war helped both types of women to see each other, to understand what gender issues are about. And now new questions arise: Do we have specific media for women in need? Do we have specific programs in mainstream media for teenagers, especially girls? No. It could be an opportunity for peace building in our country where the media play an important role in impacting on society.

Before the war, our media and authorities had only started to look toward using effective communication tools from educational insti-

tutions to develop society and support women, based not on biases but on humanitarian concepts. But it is not enough. We need to work on issues such as how women can connect to each other, how they can share information about needs and problems, how they can represent themselves in the media not only through gender roles, but as professionals.



**OLENA ZINENKO**

is a trainer in non-discrimination, human rights and media literacy, mother of two daughters: “I am a married white woman with two children, I have a high education, work and feel myself as feminist in Ukraine. I am an ambitious woman, but many of my ambitions have been limited by the glass ceiling of gender biases. Therefore, I consider my mission in promoting gender equality and creating spaces of communication with respect for human dignity.”



“Militarization is surrounding me and my people, I am a Palestinian woman surrounded by all means of militarism: armed Israeli soldiers at checkpoints who are licensed to kill in cold blood, armed settlers who are living in the illegal settlements, raiding villages night and day burning olive trees, stealing crops backed up by the Israeli soldiers. Militarism is sleeping in my bed, kicking me out of my home and land, accompanying me in every step of my life.

As a Palestinian peace woman, nothing can make me happier than a just and viable peace that would enable me to live in solidarity with my friends and neighbors.

As a Palestinian writer and poet, I will be really happy when I can write about beauty, love, nature, music and fine arts, not about genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.

Nothing can make me happier than living in a society of justice, equality, liberties, and the rule of law.”

FAIHA ABDULHADI  
Palestine

# FEMINIST SOLIDARITY AND DISARMAMENT

**Even emancipatory movements, such as the feminist peace movement, exist within and can even be fraught with power dynamics that create silences and structural violence. Still today, the voices of those directly affected by war and conflict are not always heard or adequately considered in the formulation of feminist peace politics or calls for disarmament. Thus, feminist solidarity for peace includes asking difficult questions about privilege and power within the movement, critical reflexivity and an openness to have hard discussions within our communities in order to really hear those affected by war and violence and to elevate their voices for peace.**

Disarmament and clear stances against militarisation were a central demand in the process of founding the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the oldest women's peace organisation, in 1915. Today, disarmament remains centre stage in our work for feminist peace. The reasons for this have long been proven through research: from the harmful arms production industry and corrupted sales streams to the lethal use – there is no point in time in the existence of weapons that does not perpetrate environmental, gendered, racist, or other forms of violence. However, when speaking from positions of relative privilege and safety, e.g., EU countries, unreflective universal statements for disarmament “come what may” can become vehicles of oppression themselves.

Even emancipatory movements can be fraught with and exist within structural systems of discrimination, violence, and oppression. The women's movement is no exception, as it has historically been entwined with racist, imperial, and colonial politics. Still today, feminist movements struggle to centre anti-racist politics and especially white and Western feminist movements have trouble engaging with the various intersections of its member's individual and collective privileges or disenfranchisement (Stavrianakis, 2020). Similarly, Zakaria (2022) aptly highlights how the recently announced feminist foreign policy in Germany can well remain steeped in a problematic genealogy of colonial and racist entanglements of the German women's movement. Such violent and problematic dynamics can only be dismantled through the uncomfortable process of taking this heritage seriously and interrogating its present effects, both explicitly (e.g. representation) and implicitly/structural (e.g. which topics are discussed, which ones remain invisible).

One way this can be illustrated is for instance by highlighting the importance of positionality of feminist pacifist perspectives and asking whether there are legitimate ways of asserting agency and/or resistance with arms. With regard to disarmament, this means asking uncomfortable questions, such as: What is the stance of feminist peace perspectives towards arms if such weapons are used as a self-liberation tactic, as an expression of agency such as in the example of women aiming to use them individually or collectively as self-defence or as a way of resistance? Who is in a position to make such judgements ethically? Unfortunately, these questions have become painfully urgent: Feminists from and in Ukraine have called for weapons supply and other military measures in the face of the Russian attack on their homes and war crimes. Similarly, feminists of the Kurdish resistance have made the armed struggle their feminist politics for peace.

Dirik (2017) highlighted the distinction between statist, imperial, colonialist and interventionist militarism in contrast to necessary and legitimate self-defence: "When feminists in relative safety accuse militant women in the Middle East facing sex slavery under ISIS of militarism, we must problematize the liberal notion of non-violence which disregards intersecting power systems and mechanisms of structural violence". Of course, we need to be wary not to romanticise armed struggles and consider the gendered causes and effects of armed violence that can be contradictory. But Stavrianakis (2020)

rightly asks: where to draw the line? And, I might add, whose voices are considered?

This is a crucial question when talking about international feminist solidarity that takes the real-life experiences and oppressive systems that impact women's lives very differently, seriously. In this vein, Tsymbalyuk et al (2022) highlight how embodied and situated knowledge is crucial to feminist politics, also for peace: "What does an embodied perception of (in)security mean for a person from Ukraine now, and how would peace look from this perspective?". Thus, solidarity for peace includes a serious look at privilege and the ways our positionalities impact our activism, our political perspectives and the way we engage with transnational issues as well as with feminists who do not inhabit these privileges.

That is the reason why, for example, the perspective of WILPF Germany on feminist foreign policy remains that such policies need to be "grounded and realistic" (see Cheung et al., 2021). Importantly, we must be sure not to elevate our own perspectives, steeped in privileges of relative safety or other, over those affected by the very violence and oppression we aim to fight. This is uncomfortable and hard, can even paralyse. Open and safe discussion forums that include multitude of perspectives on disarmament and feminist peace are necessary for that very reason. Moreover, addressing local and regional dynamics of militarisation and armament are ways we can work against militarism in our own contexts and in terms of our own governments, communities, and transnational solidarity networks, such as PWAG or WILPF. Opportunistic remilitarisation of world

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politics, currently heavily happening in Germany for instance, but also the USA, Switzerland and many more places, is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed from a feminist intersectional perspective. Especially because state militarism does not lead to more safety for those already marginalised by liberal statist politics and persisting coloniality.



**MARIEKE FRÖHLICH**

is co-president of WILPF Germany and Research Associate in the Gender and Diversity Studies program at Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences (Kleve, Germany). Her work focuses on feminist as well as post- and decolonial perspectives on peace, feminist foreign policy approaches and the Gender, Peace and Security Agenda.

# WOMEN STRUGGLE TO CHANGE NARRATIVES

Women in Kosovo, although they have made great progress in improving their gender equality rights by working hard over three decades, still face many challenges to free themselves from oppression, marginalization and gender stigma. However, they have always been aware of their mission and role to serve the collective cause — mobilization against violence and destructive wars around the world. Today, many women in Kosovo are actively engaged in the process of reintegrating returnees to Kosovo from war zones in Syria and Iraq.

Aware of the need to maintain peace in Europe and around the world, free from destructive wars, Kosovo never forgot the bitter experience lived during the last war on her unhealed skin, causing freshly opened wounds. Although a new country with fragile independence, vegetating in the European Union, Kosovo has taken seriously the responsibility to create a meaningful reintegration process for its citizens, who are former fighters of foreign wars in Syria and Iraq, returning with their families to Kosovo.

The “Arab Spring” was an incident of damaging consequence for Kosovo’s’ fragile road to independence. When the outbreak of the conflict in Syria and Iraq in 2012 occurred, the young men and women

from Kosovo, unemployed, with no access to visas, no hopes of travelling like other young people in Europe, triggered by empathy to support the efforts of the proponents of the “Arab Spring”, joined ISIS. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria and Iraq in 2012, about 400 Kosovars have traveled to these countries, and nobody knew exactly why, in such a significant number in such a short period. According to their accounts, they were convinced that they were supporting efforts for “democratic changes” in both countries. However, when they reached war zones in Syria and Iraq, they faced a reality completely different from what they had expected.

Now they return to a country still very fragile and suffering the consequences of the war in the former Yugoslavia during the period of 1998-1999. By other countries of the European Union, Kosovo is still perceived as being stuck in the late 21st century, this state is aggravated by the open wounds of the Serbian state genocide perpetrated by the Milosevic regime on its population. For the last two decades, the inept and hesitant UNMIK Mission has failed to build Kosovo’s strong capacity for governmental institutions. The economy has degraded, and the rate of unemployment and poverty is high.

The ISIS fighters started returning to Kosovo in 2016. Today, the total number of individuals who have returned Kosovo from Syria amounts to 124 men, 38 women, and 80 children. These 242 individuals amount to 56% of the overall total 431 Kosovars who were part of ISIS, including children born in the conflict zone. The recently repatriated men were placed in detention immediately upon arrival, pending prosecution. Meanwhile, the women and children were initially held at an asylum center near Pristina for 72 hours. During this time, they were given medical examinations and assessments of psychological and other needs. Many were judged to be exhibiting symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. Following this initial assessment, women, and children were allowed to return home together, with the women being subject to house arrest.

### **Reintegration of Returnees**

Determined in its efforts to build a sustainable and resilient democracy in Kosovo, together with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the Kosovo government, with strong international funding, created

conditions for a solid and structured return and reintegration process of the returnees from the war zones in Syria and Iraq to Kosovo, supported by a relevant legal framework (National Strategy and Action Plan 2015 – 2020, the next one is in the drafting stage) and with recommendations by CSOs.

In this challenging process of return and reintegration of the returnees (men, women, and children), women who are engaged in government institutions play a crucial role. They demonstrated a high work capability in this process - many of them wearing different hats – be it as a police officer, social worker, assembly members, gender equality officers, or psychologists. As influencers on other local relevant actors, these women are key to creating a larger and more stable space for the returnees’ easy reintegration. CSOs, well equipped with the proper expertise and training in the field of prevention and reintegration, supported them with additional capacity development skills for sustainable reintegration of the returnees into society. These efforts ensure that the returning women will be equipped with knowledge and skills on how to easily reintegrate, so that they can give up ISIS ideologies, demonstrate “the will not to harm”, obey the national constitutional rules and order - for their own and their children’s sake but also for the sake of a safe future of the entire community.

The Partners Kosova Center for Conflict Management (Partners K), a local NGO founded in 2001, has been actively engaged in the field of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) since 2016. Currently, Partners K is again engaged in three new projects in this field of P/CVE: The EUTEx project “Developing a European framework for disengagement and reintegration of extremist offenders and radicalized individuals in prison, including returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families”, co-funded by the European Union; the ERASMUS+ project “Radicalization and violent extremism prevention in the community” funded by the EU as well, and the third is ‘Women Breaking Silence Changing Narratives’ supported by PWAG, Bern, Switzerland. Through this project Partners K aimed to raise the awareness of the professional women in Kosovo working as Gender Equality Officers, Social Workers representatives of CSOs, and Municipal Assembly Members in two Kosovo municipalities (Prishtina and Podujeva), by training them in P/CVE skills. Because those influencers are very often in contact with the community, by utilizing the learned skills and knowledge they can better articulate



and raise issues that returnees are concerned about (their own and their children's future) at the local level. The training consists of active communication techniques, peace and reconciliation and trust-building-approaches, to strengthen their capacities to influence a change in the isolation of the returned women towards more open and gender equalized opportunities. Many women are isolating themselves because they fear the perception and judgement of society. On the other hand, society fears and isolates them, because of the consequences of foreign wars waged by ISIS and the spread of their ideology in society at large.

Partner K supports these experts to create a safe space for the marginalized and stigmatized Kosovar women returnees sitting behind silent walls. Partner K engages local experts who can help them to break the silence and move out of their isolation, for example as social workers through professional sessions, to smooth and foster the reintegration process of the women returned and overcome the harsh stereotypes.

Based on Partners K research and experience with the social workers during the work that we have developed in the framework of the above-mentioned projects, we were made aware that the situation is still fragile in this field, especially in terms of ideological impact on these women, and some barriers to the resocialization and reintegration process, which requires increased attention from government and the community in general. In all this painful experience for the fate of this category of people, Partners K considers that the role of women in their sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration, is important, whether from government institutions or CSOs. Partners K, because of their experience since 2016 in this field, have realized that women are very committed to their work, especially keeping in mind the collective cause rather than an individual perspective.

Finally, Partners K considers that all women's groups involved in this project could serve as a great asset to the government approach, playing their role as influencers in the structured reintegration and resilience process of the returned women. Partner K also considers that the current government should give more space to CSOs to contribute to this area, by being engaged in a governmental Working Group for drafting the new Strategy and Action Plan in the field of P/CVE recommendations.



**SHUKRIJE GASHI** *left*

is a Kosovar civil society (human rights) activist, mediator, a National Trainer, internationally certified by Partners in Democratic Change International (PDCI), and a former journalist who has passionately dedicated her life to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in and outside of Kosovo. She is the founder and executive director of local NGO Partners–Kosova Center for Conflict Management (Partners K) which is a member of Partners Global, an International Network of Partners for Democratic Change.

**HILMIJE RAMABAJA** *right*

serves as training programs manager/mediator and trainer at Partners–Kosova Center for Conflict Management (Partners K). As a National Trainer (PDCI), internationally certified, she provides expertise, recommendations, and training on mediation, human rights, gender equality, transitional justice, and P/CVE locally and internationally.

# THE HUMAN COST OF PALMOIL

The global demand for palm oil is increasing, despite heavy criticism of the palm oil industry. Indonesian NGO Sawit Watch has long-standing experience researching the conditions of workers on oil palm plantations. Supported by PWAG's Feminist Peace Initiatives, Sawit Watch's research team conducted a study focusing on the link between the use of private security personnel and violations of human rights and women's rights on oil palm plantations in Central Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, and Bengkulu and on the precarious employment conditions there.

*What led you to research the working conditions of women laborers on oil palm plantations?*

Oil palm plantations continue to grow in many countries, especially in Indonesia, which is the world's largest palm oil producer. The area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia has reached 21.18 million hectares. Many reports show how oil palm plantations destroy forests and peatlands, violate labor rights, and displace indigenous peoples. While the demand for palm oil is growing, there is little concern for the working conditions of workers on oil palm plantations. Sawit Watch continues to find serious violations of human rights and labor rights on the plantations. These violations include precarious employment relationships, unfair work systems, health and safety issues, low wages, and discrimination. Due to the patriarchal structures on the plantations, women are especially affected.

*What are the main findings of your research?*

Sawit Watch's investigations into oil palm plantations show many similarities in working conditions and exploitative practices across the country, including large companies that have already received sustainability certificates. Labor conditions on the plantations are generally precarious: with job uncertainty, small benefits, heavy workloads, unrealistic daily targets, discrimination against workers, the use of child labor (either directly employed or employed by the family but not paid), inadequate social security, and other human rights violations.

*Did you look into gender-based violence on the plantations?*

It is very difficult to research sexualized and gender-based violence on the plantations. We hear reports about it, but women rarely speak about incidents let alone report them to the authorities. Because women are in very marginalized positions on the plantations, they are highly prone to sexualized violence. The vast plantations create situations, where women can easily be attacked.

*Can you tell us more about the women working on the plantations?*

There are two groups of women working on the plantations. Some women who work on the plantations receive a salary. These women are the first victims of the casual employment scheme. The practice of employing women workers with precarious employment status has been going on for years. The second group of women is the wives of plantation workers, especially harvesters. They help their husbands to meet their target so that he receives his salary. Involving the wife to join the work is common on oil palm plantations in Indonesia. The laborer's wife does not have an official working relationship with the company but is forced to work to achieve work targets that cannot be carried out by one harvester alone. The women work without adequate safety and health equipment such as helmets, gloves, and boots. The use of workers without a clear employment agreement raises the issue of labor protection, not only in terms of wage protection but also job security, health, and other basic rights.



*How is the presence of security personnel linked to the violations of workers' rights?*

Private companies hire private security personnel, while government-owned companies usually use police or military personnel. Security units are trained by institutions within the Police of the Republic of Indonesia or a security service business that has an operational permit from the Chief of Police of the Republic of Indonesia. There is training for the security unit, which is controlled by the Police Headquarters of the Republic of Indonesia.

There are two important things related to the presence of security personnel in oil palm plantations. First, land grabbing by the palm oil industry makes the local farmers landless – and by that marginalized and dependent on working on the plantations. The presence of oil palm plantations in Indonesia is closely related to land grabbing and conflict. The oil palm plantation sector requires large amounts of farmable land. This directly and indirectly triggers a change in control over land. By hiring security personnel, the palm oil companies try to “protect” the plantations from the former landowners, who protest the land grabbing by the state and private companies.

Second, security personnel are used to exercise control over workers to maximize profits. Through intimidation by security personnel, the plantation owners reinforce poor labor conditions. The magnitude of the power of plantations, the weakness of state supervision, and labor policies that do not favor workers increasingly leave plantation workers powerless and exploited. While the security personnel are supposed to protect the plantations, there are many reports that they also break up strikes, prevent union building and intimidate workers.

*What are your recommendations to ensure that workers' and women's rights on plantations are monitored and safeguarded?*

Indonesia does not yet have a specific protection policy for labor on plantations. Existing policies focus on workers in industry or manufacturing. Yet there are significant differences between working in manufacturing and on plantations, such as the work environment, the equipment, and the workload.

The government must ensure job security, wage certainty, and work safety for all laborers on oil palm plantations, particularly women. The plantations must provide facilities for and access to women laborers to ensure their health and safety, as well as child protection and children's education.

One way in which Sawit Watch is trying to support the workers is by educating them about their rights. However, it is very difficult to reach the workers inside the plantations, security personnel often hinder our staff from entering.

The interview was conducted by Christina Stucky, Communications Officer at PWAG, and Carla Weymann, Network Coordinator at PWAG.



Hotler “Zidane” Parsaroan is a labor specialist at Sawit Watch, who has been working on labor issues in oil palm plantations for a long time.

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June 2022

Supported by FokusFrauen

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#### PeaceWomen Across the Globe - PWAG

PeaceWomen Across the Globe (PWAG) is a feminist peace organisation with an international network that works towards the equal inclusion of women in all areas of peace and security. The network of PWAG dates back to the nomination of 1000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. The international organisation is based in Bern, Switzerland, and is committed to the participation of women in peacebuilding. PWAG advances the sharing of experience and knowledge between PeaceWomen worldwide and advocates for women's sustainable and visible peace work.

[www.1000peacewomen.org](http://www.1000peacewomen.org)

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of PWAG.

"I know my people and myself feel secure when the environment surrounding us ensures the physical and emotional safety among women, men, children, the vulnerable. With no discrimination based on wealth, status, creed, sex, race, or political affiliation. I feel like these are the issues that are affecting my well-being and that of my fellow Africans. Whether being abroad in the diaspora, where we feel safer, or back home. Even living abroad, you still have part of our identity in crisis because Africa, where you come from, defines who you are — and if you feel there is an environment that's shaken and insecure, like what's happening in Tigray, it affects you. You feel for the women there."

MARIA NAMUMA HEISE  
Kenya and Switzerland

“One of the biggest lessons: war is the tip of the iceberg. It is the visible manifestation of how many countries’ political and economic institutions are organized, and now re-organizing, to prepare for wars and armed conflicts.”

MARGO OKAZAWA-REY,  
board member of PeaceWomen Across the Globe



PeaceWomen Across the Globe  
FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT  
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم  
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Женщины мира за мир на земле  
MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO  
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DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO

ピースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち  
全球和平妇女