

Lebanon, UNSCR 1325, and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Manar Zaiter

The Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1325 (31 October 2000) constitutes an advancement in the international protection of women and girls in times of conflict. It is the first public, legal instrument issued by the Security Council, calling warring parties to respect women's rights and support their participation in all stages and contexts of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace talks, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction.

In view of the situation in the Arab region and of the political, security, economic, cultural, and social context that affects women, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is of great importance to the entire Arab region.

The importance of this agenda lies in several issues, particularly:

- Compelling states to implement resolutions by drawing up and implementing national action plans;
- Urging governments to take appropriate measures that empower women and provide them with opportunities to participate in decision-making mechanisms that affect their lives and families in matters related to war, peace, and security;
- Establishing the agenda's binding nature, as resolutions adopted by the Security Council are binding on member states pursuant to Article 24 of the UN Charter;
- Clarifying states' commitments related to women in times of armed conflict, namely the respect of women's and girls' needs in refugee camps and settlements, in addition to taking measures to support women's local initiatives for peace, and, more importantly, providing protection from all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence, and putting an end to impunity;
- Coordinating a multi-sectoral team through local and national health, social, security, and judicial teams with aims of strategic planning, data collection, information management, resource mobilization, and maintenance of the quality of services.

In 2015, in honor of the fifteenth anniversary of Resolution 1325, the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security was conducted by virtue of a Security Council resolution and with the support of the United Nations Secretary-General. This study paved the way for the adoption of several resolutions connected with Resolution 1325. The main conclusions are summarized below:

- a. Priority must be given to the prevention of conflicts rather than the use of force.
- b. Resolution 1325 constitutes a human rights mandate.
- c. Women's participation is fundamental for achieving sustainable peace.
- d. Criminals must be held accountable.
- e. The existence of a strong gender architecture in the United Nations is key.
- f. The gender perspective must be integrated into all aspects of the Security Council's work.
- g. The continuous failure to provide sufficient funding for the women, peace, and security action plan must be dealt with.
- h. The support of women peacebuilders and the respect of their independence constitute an important means of countering extremism.
- i. The national and local context must be taken into consideration.

The last of the above conclusions is one of the most important findings that must be examined and analyzed. In fact, states' Women, Peace and Security Agenda commitments can only be studied when coupled with the analysis of a country's political, economic, social, and cultural reality, since the Agenda is linked to this system.

In the Lebanese context, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda is of great importance. Lebanon has repeatedly suffered crises of failure in establishing a stable structure. It is also affected by the political and security crises that the surrounding region is facing.

Lebanon has witnessed political and security crises of varying severity which have obstructed the establishment of a civil, democratic state and prevented the fulfilment of the country's commitments to protect women from all forms of discrimination and violence. This led the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 2015, in its presentation of the national report for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to recommend the necessity of adopting a national action plan aimed at implementing Resolution 1325 and guaranteeing women's participation in all stages of peace operations. This recommendation is in line with the General Recommendation No. 30, issued in 2013. The Committee also solicited the international community's support in helping Lebanon fulfil its commitments.

Thus, the Lebanese context brings forth several issues in relation to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The first part of this article explores the issues related to refugee women, in addition to protection and participation. The second part analyzes the most significant conclusions from the work on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Lebanon's International Commitments

First and foremost, we should recall Lebanon's international commitments to protect women from all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence. In 1996, the Lebanese Republic ratified CEDAW by virtue of Law No. 592 which entered into force and effect on August 1, 1996. However, this ratification comprised reservations on key matters. For instance, the reservation on Article 9 pertaining to nationality persists to this day. Up until now, the efforts made by women's and civil society organizations to

bring this issue before Parliament have proven unsuccessful. Also, the reservation on provisions (c), (d), (f), and (g) of Article 16, paragraph 1, related to personal status, still holds today. As a matter of fact, the proponents of this reservation have become more obstinate, refusing to raise it for discussion. Likewise, the reservation on Article 29 pertaining to dispute settlement, persists today.

In addition to CEDAW, Lebanon has acceded to several conventions concerned with human rights, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention against Torture. Lebanon has also only signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To this day, it has not yet acceded to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families nor to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Moreover, Lebanon has not acceded to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. Finally, as pertains to Resolution 1325, Lebanon has not yet drafted the interventions for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda within the package of international decisions relating to security and peace. In fact, the country has only recently begun to finalize its National Action Plan (NAP).

Refugee Women in Lebanon

The 1951 Refugee Convention is the first international convention that tackles the fundamental aspects of the lives of refugees. This convention underlines a group of basic human rights that must be, at the very least, equivalent to the rights enjoyed by foreign nationals in a certain country and by citizens as in many cases. The Convention acknowledges the international scope of refugee crises and recognizes the necessity of international cooperation, including the sharing of burdens, in order to solve this issue.

Yet Lebanon has not acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor to the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1951 Convention is not applicable to refugees cared for by United Nations agencies other than the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, such as Palestinian refugees whom the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) protect and help. Moreover, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been excluded from regional refugee protection instruments, such as the 1965 Casablanca Protocol which the Lebanese government has not ratified.

Following the recent events in Syria, Lebanon has witnessed the largest flood of refugees in the country's history. Since the very beginning of the crisis, the formal response has drowned in political confusion, caused by the continued refusal to admit the longevity of the crisis and consequently, the lack of appropriate planning, and the refusal to use the term 'refugee'.

This is not the first time the country has served as a refuge for those effected by geopolitical crises in the region. Palestinian refugees have found refuge in Lebanon since 1948, and have settled into 12 formal refugee camps across the country. Though Palestinian refugees have been residing in Lebanon for 76 years, the Lebanese

government has not given them a legal definition. They are administratively divided into three categories: refugees registered at the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities – Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees and at the UNRWA; refugees registered at the Directorate of Political Affairs and Refugees and not registered at the UNRWA; and unregistered refugees, whether in the state or the UNRWA (refugees who have lost their identity documents). Recently, a fourth category was added for Palestinian refugees coming from Syria.

Many rights of Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon are being violated to this day. These violations include the below:

- Acquisition of the Lebanese nationality by Palestinian women who are married to Lebanese men;
- The right to work, and the deprivation of working Palestinian refugees of their full social security rights;
- Right to ownership, specifically obstacles to the registration of real property under the ownership of any foreign man married to a Palestinian refugee;
- Right to protection, as Law No. 293/2014 on the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence guarantees protection of refugee women within their families. However, weak procedural justice in Lebanon and its absence in camps hinders refugee women from seeking justice and denies them the protection and enjoyment of human rights. Consequently, these women are prone to sexual exploitation due to their vulnerability, which is caused by the regular and recurrent flow of refugees.

As for Syrian refugees, Lebanon has been receiving them for more than five years. Subsequently, the crisis took geopolitical dimensions. This affected organizations' work as well as the refugee response plan in Lebanon – a diverse plan that covers issues related to protection, food security, education, health, basic needs, housing, sewage and sanitation, etc.

International as well as national non-governmental organizations (NGO) are working hard to fight the increase of gender-based violence against Syrian refugee women. They do so through centers that provide victims of such violence with access to legal, medical, social, and psychological help. These centers often constitute a safe shelter for women, presenting them with services and vocational training, and allowing them to take part in support groups and discuss gender-based violence issues in a safe environment.

NGOs also seek to prevent such violence by empowering women, so they can protect themselves, members of their family, and their community. In addition, some organizations raise awareness among men of GBV with the aim to help them control their anger and stress, the latter being two factors that contribute to GBV. In spite of the important work of women's and human rights, and development organizations in fighting for refugees' rights, several issues arise in connection with public authorities' interference in and in some cases their prevention of program planning and approaches, project implementation, and refugee service provision.

Syrian women have suffered the most from the war. Their suffering mainly includes rape, sexual harassment, emotional and physical violence, psychological trauma, domestic violence which strips them from feeling safe in their homes, early and forced marriage in the context of displacement and the decline of resources, and exploitation in return for services, in addition to problems caused by overpopulation and the unsafe political situation. Moreover, like Lebanese women, Syrian women face a weak legal framework, increasing their vulnerability. In the case of GBV, this weak framework often allows perpetrators to exercise such violence without fear of punishment by the State or society itself. Furthermore, Syrian refugee women continue to suffer from stereotyping, another form of violence. While media supposedly constitutes a space for spreading awareness and speaking up, only 3% of Lebanese newspaper content on Syrian refugees is dedicated to Syrian refugee women. In television reports and coverages, 20% is dedicated to Syrian refugee women.

Still, the biggest issue remains the creation of projects and programs beyond the framework of international decisions on safety and peace, such as Resolution 1325 and the Security Council resolutions which followed. Perhaps, this is one of the greatest challenges, given women's currently weak access to services and information concerning gender-based violence. These resolutions entail a commitment to include gender in the approach for protection. In other words, they call for broadening the umbrella of protection, so as to shift from the concept of public protection to that of special protection, which is based on specific needs and which takes several factors relating to refugee women into consideration.

Of the many examples of gender neutrality concerning refugee women, the most prominent are those relating to the right to health. Women who suffer violence may manifest health and social behavior that negatively affects their physical, mental, and social welfare. Nevertheless, the lack of better health among women, particularly reproductive health, is not only caused by the diffusion of violence against women, but also by many other factors, especially the adopted health policies and their failure to fight gender-based violence.

Syrian refugee women in Lebanon suffer many health problems. Some of these problems are general, caused by living conditions as well as the lack of sufficient water and air supply, and of exposure to the sun. Others are specific, resulting in communicable diseases such as scabies, lice infestation, and skin disorders. Still, the most important are those relating to women and resulting from pregnancy and childbirth conditions, preterm birth, and abortion:

- Hemorrhages, acute anemia, and risk of death in childbirth
- Low capacity to purchase medicine
- Lack of equal opportunities to access medical services
- Deprivation of safe childbirth services
- Difficulty in finding help within the local community
- Women's ignorance of where to go in order to receive medical help, especially in emergencies
- High costs of childbirth
- Poor living conditions which cause a danger to pregnancy

Violence suffered by refugee women, on the one part, and health problems, on the other, are closely linked together especially since the established value system is built on the lack of an individual identity for refugee women, and since a culture of privacy and protection of one's body remains non-existent as a form of response. Moreover, in light of the prevailing culture of large families and family farming, which entails an unconscious conviction that repetitive pregnancy and childbirth are important, refugee women's endurance of many forms of violence, such as repetitive pregnancy and unsafe childbirth, is understandable.

Thus, the eradication of maternal death, pregnancy risks, and unsafe abortion can only be achieved through national policies and programs designed to serve all women, particularly marginalized women. Therefore, the lack of an integrated approach prevents access to health services.

Another example lies in the educational policies that have been adopted since the beginning of the refugee crisis.

In 2014, Lebanon adopted the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) policy that contributed to raising the number of Syrian children enrolled in public schools. Then, in 2016, the country adopted the RACE II program in order to implement the second phase of the policy. This program extends over five years and aims at having 4,400 Syrian children enrolled in public education by the academic year 2020-2021.

In spite of all the efforts made in this direction, the issue of education for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon remains one of the most prominent challenges facing refugees. Not only that, but it also directly affects girls, with multiplied effects. In fact, according to the study conducted in 2016 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the American University of Beirut, and SAWA for Development and Aid, child marriage rates among Syrians have multiplied by four compared to these rates before the crisis. The survey also shows that school enrollment declines among girls as they grow older. As a matter of fact, 70% of 9-year-old girls are enrolled in school, while only 17% of those aged 16 are.

Protection of Women

Equality between men and women is closely linked to peace and security - this sentence summarizes the most prominent findings of the Global Study that emphasized the link between equality on the one hand, and the achievement of security and peace on the other hand. However, due to issues relating to equality and protection, this remains inadequate in Lebanon.

In its preamble, the Lebanese Constitution raises the principle of equality. This preamble has gained constitutional value by virtue of the Constitutional Council's decision that Lebanon shall comply with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 7 of the Constitution provides for the principle of equality without giving any details on this principle. Moreover, Article 2 of the Lebanese Code of Civil Procedure stipulates that international law shall prevail over domestic law where the two conflict. In spite of these provisions, the Constitution is in agreement with the CEDAW, since the former does not expressly prohibit gender discrimination. Moreover, the scope and

degree of the possibility of implementing the procedures for challenging laws that do not agree with the Constitution and with international, legal commitments are limited. To this day, Lebanon has not yet followed the recommendations of the Recurrent Committee, the most recent of which were issued in 2015. These called for the inclusion of a definition for gender discrimination and a prohibition of such discrimination in the Constitution, in line with Article 2(a) of CEDAW. They also pushed for the amendment of Articles 9 and 10 of the Constitution in order to guarantee gender equality in a context of freedom of religion and confessional diversity.

The problem is not limited to the Constitution. In fact, the legislative system in Lebanon does not meet and, worse still, contradicts most of Lebanon's international commitments. This system is unable to protect women in times of peace, all the more in times of crisis where its negative effect on women augments. This is especially true for women's access to justice, which remains weak.

Personal Status Laws

Lebanon suffers from a multitude of laws and courts concerned with personal status. Each of the personal status laws contains provisions that discriminate against women, and thus they contradict the Constitution, which adopts the principle of equality between citizens, as well as United Nations instruments. In addition, Lebanon has made reservations to several provisions of Article 16 of CEDAW.

Today, many confessional and religious laws are applicable in Lebanon (around 15 different personal status laws are under confessional authority and governed by their decisions). These different, backward laws have dangerous effects on women, whether citizens or refugees, especially as pertains to custody rights, marriage, inheritance, and guardianship, among other things. In the absence of a consolidated civil code of personal status that is built on absolute gender equality, no law deals with the affairs of people who do not belong to any of the confessions recognized by Lebanese law.

In addition, due to the multitude of laws dealing with marriage and the varying legal minimum age of marriage, child marriage, especially among girls, continues in Lebanon, and consequently, so do the flagrant violations of children's rights. Lebanese laws do not stipulate a minimum age of marriage that agrees with the country's commitments as a signatory to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years old. Thus, a big problem arises, and it is further aggravated in view of the situation of refugees as well as the increase of child marriage among girls to the extent of human trafficking in refugee camps.

The applicable personal status laws differ between women of different confessions. These laws are drafted by religious authorities without women's participation, and thus intensify the vertical social division between citizens of the same country. Furthermore, each of these laws discriminates against women by giving family the form of an authoritarian pyramid which man heads (the head of the family). In fact, descent in domestic and religious laws (nationality for instance) is derived from the father and not the mother. Moreover, the relationship between mother and child comprises a set of rules, which regulate family life, regarding breastfeeding, guardianship of the person, and guardianship of estate. However, these rules are omitted, thus proving women's weakness in times of peace as well as in times of conflict.

Domestic Violence

Concerning domestic violence, the Lebanese parliament passed, on April 1, 2014, Law No. 293 on the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence. In spite of its various deficiencies, this law constitutes an important, historic opportunity in women's struggle for the legal protection of domestic violence victims.

Nevertheless, the following issues arise:

- Defects in the law itself;
- Women's poor knowledge of the law;
- Weaknesses in the judicial system and in access to justice due to procedural complexities;
- The matter of the law's inclusion of refugee women in camps and complications concerning their benefitting from the Law because of their legal situation (illegal residence).

The Lebanese Penal Code

The Lebanese Penal Code still includes a number of Articles that do not protect women and in many ways, make them more vulnerable. Firstly, Articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code exclude marital rape from their provisions. In fact, the Code is lenient with perpetrators of this crime. Next, although Article 526, which excuses honor killings, has been repealed, Lebanese Law still includes outrageous provisions with regards to women and girls.

Sex work is still punishable by law: sex workers are punished, whereas those who pay for such services are not. Further, the Law allows for a circumvention by permitting "female artist visas" – an easy way for traffickers to get women and girls entry visas to Lebanon. Though an anti-trafficking law was passed, many obstacles to its implementation persist. Since its adoption in 2011, only a few convictions have been issued, even though the problem affects all corners of Lebanese society, particularly refugees and non-Lebanese workers. Further, the law itself contains a few shortcomings.

Regarding abortion, Lebanese law is extremely strict: abortion is punishable by up to three years in prison. As for those who perform or attempt to perform an abortion – even with a pregnant woman's consent – punishment can be anywhere from one to three years in prisons. In some situations, the punishment is even stricter, with punishment ranging from four to ten years in prison based on the circumstances. On the contrary, mitigating excuses are possible if abortion is carried out in order to preserve one's 'honor'. The law also allows for therapeutic abortion under exceptional conditions.

Finally, Article 522 which exempted perpetrators of rape or other crimes (hymenotomies, incitement of prostitution...) from punishment if they married their victims, has been repealed. However, this repeal has been distorted by the maintenance of this Article's effects on the provisions of Articles 505 and 508 of the Penal Code.

Sexual Violence and the Lebanese Legal Framework

The Lebanese legal system does not include a definition of sexual violence. The only direct reference to this type of violence appears in Law No. 239, which defines

domestic violence as being any act, abstention from an act, or threat of such act or abstention, that a family member commits against one or several other family members according to the definition given to family, and which consists of a crime stipulated by law, resulting in murder or in physical, psychological, sexual, or financial harm.

This definition of domestic violence does not serve as a definition for sexual violence, especially since the former is limited to family and to the crimes mentioned in the Law on the Protection of Women and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence. Moreover, the Penal Code neither defines sexual violence, nor does it list the crimes that fall under it. Further, the expression 'sexual violence' does not expressly appear in the Code. Consequently, the concept of sexual violence differs from one person to another. Some consider sexual violence to be broader than sexual crimes, to which the Penal Code gives a restricted definition (the principle of legality "nullam crimen, nulla poena sine lege"). However, the Judiciary as well as the Internal Security Forces (ISF), through their practice, appear to be more developed than the law. For instance, the law does not mention sexual harassment, but considers some acts, which may be characterized as sexual harassment, to be crimes. On the contrary, the term 'sexual harassment' is widely used in court decisions and in ISF records.

Also, the ISF categorization of sexual crimes is based on the Penal Code; but, contrary to this Code, it classifies a group of sexual crimes under harassment. The categorization includes: rape, hymenotomies, the facilitation and exercise of prostitution, harassment, incitement of promiscuity and immorality, bride kidnapping, and sexual assault.

Conversely, Lebanese law does not define sexual harassment, and does not use this term. Still, the amended Penal Code punishes criminal acts that correspond to sexual harassment. Such acts include insults and defamation that are set out as crimes in Article 385. This Article defines an insult as the act of harming a person's honor or dignity by attributing information to this person, even where such attribution is made in doubt or as an inquiry. As for defamation, it is defined in Lebanese law as any degrading or offensive statement made orally, as well as any demeaning expression or drawing. Defamation does not attribute something to the person. Other articles in Chapter Seven, which covers crimes against public morality, consider several acts that may be described as sexual harassment as crimes. For instance, Article 507 stipulates that any person who coerces another, by force or threat, to suffer or to carry out an indecent act is punishable by a minimum of four years of hard labor. Where the victim is under fifteen years of age, the punishment shall be of five years at the least.

Furthermore, some acts that contradict ethics and public morality as defined in Articles 531 and 532 of the Penal Code can be equated to sexual harassment. Article 531 of the Code stipulates that violations of public morality through any means mentioned in Article 209, paragraph 1, are punishable by one month to one year's imprisonment. (Article 209, paragraph 1 mentions the following as means of publishing: acts and gestures made in a public place, in a place open for the public, or in plain sight, as well as acts and gestures seen by an unrelated party due to the perpetrator's fault).

Article 532 also provides that violations of public morality through any means stipulated by Article 209, paragraphs 2 and 3, are punishable by one month to one

year in prison, and a penalty ranging between twenty thousand and two hundred thousand Lebanese Pounds (these means include any and all speech, screaming, writing, drawings, hand drawn pictures, photographs, videos, signs, or statues which are displayed in a public place, in a place open for the public, or in plain sight, as well as those sold, offered for sale, or distributed to one or more persons).

Moreover, Article 519 of the Penal Code stipulates that any person who indecently touches or fondles, without their consent, a minor under fifteen years of age, whether male or female, or a girl or woman who is fifteen years old (or older), is punishable by a maximum of six months in prison. The legislator does not provide a definition for 'indecent touching', leaving this task to general custom. The latter is one of the 'main sources of law' and leaves much room for discussion.

Similarly, the Lebanese Labor Code does not provide any articles related to sexual harassment. However, some of its articles, in addition to jurisprudence, impose consequences to superiors' abuse of power against their subordinates. Such legal consequences have been imposed on situations that correspond to sexual harassment, even though the cases were brought to court on other merits, such as psychological pressure which pushes an employee to resign. For example, the Court of Cassation's chamber concerned with labor cases issued a decision granting a female employee dismissal compensation. The employee had resigned after her superior deprived her of promotions and of legitimate benefits with the aim of pressuring her into sexual involvement with him.

Finally, both a draft law that criminalizes sexual harassment, prepared by the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, and a proposed law raised by the National Committee for Lebanese Women's Affairs through Member of Parliament (MP) Ghassan Moukheiber, have been presented to Parliament.

Women's Political Participation

The general rate of women's candidacy in elections has been very low and has shown no noteworthy improvement since 1992. Recently, the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, under pressure from civil society, presented a draft electoral law which comprised an article providing for a women's quota. This article stipulated that women constitute 30% of every electoral list. This draft law was then amended by the Cabinet to include female candidates by only 10% in every electoral list. However, the draft law was not approved by the political forces in Parliament, and in 2017, an electoral law was issued with no female quota.

Achieving equitable political participation remains a difficult goal since society has not easily accepted women's involvement in politics as a result of any number of social, cultural, and political factors.

Women have become uninterested in politics and civil matters for many reasons. First, democracy remains weak; and so does the political and civil culture. In fact, the principles of multi-party democracy have not been established. Also, roles are still distributed between men and women in a traditional manner, and patriarchy persists in the Lebanese society. This has led to the dominance of men and inferiority of women,

in addition to the spread of all forms of discrimination against women. Consequently, women have been driven away from decision-making and have been driven out of the public sphere.

Attachment to religious and traditional beliefs, which have greatly affected discriminatory laws and practices, further contributes to this issue. These beliefs render discrimination against women somehow sacred. They also obstruct the revisal of such laws without the abandonment of cultural heritage and of beliefs that impede women's enjoyment of their rights. This is especially true today with the rise of extreme religious groups.

The challenges to women's participation in Lebanon are numerous and include the following:

- Women's empowerment and engagement in economically profitable work: whatever the arguments presented, a woman who remains dependent on another person to provide for her cannot exercise her full rights;
- Women's institutional engagement in political mechanisms: We have been working, in vain, to implement any form of quota in the political system and in electoral laws;
- The re-creation of a democratic civil culture, in other words the culture of law, of freedoms, and of democratic political practices through elections;
- The challenges facing women themselves to break the chains of fear and doubt and to engage in public life;
- The establishment of a powerful state that commits to the eradication of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, by way of actual laws, policies, and strategies;
- The often convoluted understanding of each state actor and institution and their actual role in Lebanese politics, which in turn affects the status of women's political participation. For example, knowledge of Parliament's role in legislation, and its oversight of the Cabinet's work; the role of the Cabinet to draft action plans and strategies; the role of political parties to spread political awareness; the role of municipalities to guide development; and the role of universities and schools to educate citizens;
- Political parties' commitments to empower women and raise political awareness devoid of stereotypes, as well as parties' commitments to include women's issues as part of their political agendas. Today, political parties' weak support of women's participation in politics is noticeable through the lack of moral and financial support for female candidates, and their limited access to political networks. In their public statements, some parties do address gender equality; this is generally done as a superficial acknowledgment of women's political rights, whereas express talk of women's participation in politics remains non-existent.

Lessons Learned

- The need for promoting local as well as regional partnerships;
- Linking Resolution 1325 with CEDAW and its resulting recommendations, particularly those pertaining to violence;
- Linking UNSCR 1325 to subsequent resolutions that together make up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda;

- The need for encouraging and supporting future potential female political leaders;
- The need for monitoring and documenting sexual violence;
- The importance of interacting with international protection mechanisms in order to protect women's rights in times of conflict;
- The need for working towards empowerment through untraditional approaches, tactics, and means, as well as for drawing up guided training plans and for building long-term capacities concerning the Women, Peace and Security Agenda;
- The need for working on economic and social policies, given their important role in promoting women's participation and protection;
- The need for integrating the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the core of legislative action;
- The need for bringing about feminist messages on violent extremism, political repression, and armament;
- The importance of associating the Resolution with International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law and of considering the Resolution as part of this system, complementing it rather than erasing it;
- The importance of documenting the experience of organizations working on women's security and peace;
- The need for broadening the scope of studies on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda;
- The need for developing guided training plans, and building long-term capacities in order to promote organizations' as well as individuals' contribution to forwarding the Agenda, in addition to the promotion of multi-party partnerships with security sector organizations, the judicial system, and parliaments;
- The need for adopting a human rights-based approach when addressing women's issues in times of conflict.

Manar Zaiter is a lawyer and human rights activist in Lebanon.
Email: manarzaiter@gmail.com

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