

The international agenda on women, peace and security: a review of the first 15 years of resolution 1325 and proposals for action in Catalonia

N. 13 · March 2016

ISSN: 2014-2765 DL: B 7724-2016

Maria FANLO TORRECILLA

Elena GRAU BIOSCA

Sabina PUIG CARTES

Fifteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 by the United Nations Security Council, the international community is taking stock of its agenda on women, peace and security. At the United Nations level, the publishing of the Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 has provided us with a valuable tool to evaluate its evolution and make a call for further action. The debate around the resolution has also been brought to Catalonia, in an international workshop organised by ICIP, where participants reflected on what has been achieved, on the issues that remain outstanding, on the prospects that open up and on the appropriate recommendations that must follow from this. This document aims to reflect the assessment that has been made and, with its eyes set on the new challenges posed by the current situation both locally and internationally, proposes a series of measures that could be taken in Catalonia to reinforce the women, peace and security agenda.¹

Context

The Security Council of the United Nations (hereinafter UN) adopted resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (SCR 1325) on 31 October 2000. The adoption of this resolution marked a turning point in the inclusion of women and the gender perspective in peacebuilding efforts and launched the international agenda on women, peace and security.

Origins and trajectory of SCR 1325

The resolution underlines the importance of the active and equal participation of women in peacebuilding and in the prevention of violent conflicts, and of their inclusion in the areas of decision-making and peacekeeping operations. It also emphasises women and girls' specific needs for protection in the context of armed conflict, and stresses the responsibility of states to end impunity in relation to the serious crimes committed against women and girls.

The adoption of this resolution came as a result of the efforts and the work carried out over decades by

women's organisations, seeking to ensure that the issue of women, peace and security was considered to be an important matter at international level, and of their ability to weave alliances with different actors, including the UN and governments. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) was the first international legal instrument adopted specifically for the recognition and protection of women's rights. Some years later, in 1995, the celebration of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing marked another major turning point for the international agenda on gender equality. Among other things, it directly addressed the concern about women and armed conflict. In 1998, during the session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), this issue took on even more importance.

In 2000 two other events took place that would finish laying the basis for the adoption of SCR 1325: Beijing +5 and a new session of the CSW. In these two events the close relationship was highlighted between equality, development and peace and the importance of the active participation of women in these areas.

Women's organisations took advantage of the situation to give an impulse to their demands by promoting the adoption of a resolution on this issue at the highest international body that deals with conflict, peace and security concerns: the UN Security Council. They achieved this on 31 October 2000 with the approval of SCR 1325.

Since then, the Security Council has approved seven other resolutions² — 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) — that have expanded and supplemented the first one, detailing and making operative its content and concepts. The last one, resolution 2242, adopted in October 2015, will be dealt with in a later section.

National Action Plans (NAP) have been one of the main mechanisms for states to implement SCR 1325. A total of 55 countries³ have approved a NAP, with the objective of adapting the contents of the women, peace and security agenda to their respective context. A NAP is a tool that allows a government to articulate its political priorities and coordinate the implementation of resolution 1325 at the state level. Although it is up to governments to lead the process, since they will have the main responsibility for implementing the policies that arise from the plan, the interaction between different actors, and especially civil society, is essential for its proper design, implementation, operation and evaluation.

During the conference on SCR 1325 organised by ICIP, the implementation of NAPs in some specific cases was addressed. Concerning the Spanish NAP adopted in 2007, reference was made to the absence of budget allocations to implement it. Certain apprehension was also expressed that the NAP has prioritised issues such as the increased participation of women within the armed forces. On the eve of a possible second Spanish NAP — in a process that is meant to be more inclusive with regard to the role to be played by civil society in both its design and implementation — one of the worrying issues is the danger that the fight against terrorism becomes the new priority and that the real purpose of the SCR — to empower women and put an end to armed conflict — will remain, once again, in second place.

The other two cases discussed during the conference were those of Colombia and of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which represent two very different situations. In Colombia, which is a country that does not have a NAP, SCR 1325 has been a controversial issue among some women's organizations and has been interpreted from different angles and in slightly differing ways.

In the case of Bosnia, where a first NAP was agreed in 2010 and a second one in 2014, progress has been observed in the country on the women, peace and security agenda, such as an increase in the number of women in various decision-making positions. However, there are still many obstacles, such as a lack of proper funding or the lack of specialised services for victims who suffered sexual violence during the war⁴.

Analysis

Balance: The Global Study on the Implementation of SCR 1325

In order to mark the 15th anniversary of the approval of SCR 1325, an important exercise of reflection and assessment was carried out, with a multitude of studies and summits held around the world. The highlight of the anniversary was the High Level Review held in October in New York⁵, which allowed state representatives, activists and specialists in the field to carry out an analysis of the women, peace and security agenda, within the UN Security Council.

The Global Study makes the broadest, most detailed and most participatory balance assessment of the international agenda of women, peace and security

This review process included the presentation of what is undoubtedly the study that makes the broadest, most detailed and most participatory balance and assessment of the international agenda of women, peace and security emerging from resolution 1325. This is Preventing Conflict. Transforming Justice. Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (hereinafter the Global Study).

The preparation of this study was entrusted two years before to Radhika Coomaraswamy, a recognised human rights defender, and an advisory group was set up to support her, made up of experts from around the world. Meanwhile, regional discussions and consultations were held and different spaces were opened up for the participation of civil society, academic institutions and research centres⁶. This consultation process has allowed an analysis to be carried out which illustrates well the diversity and complexity of local experiences and which gives voice and visibility to the women and girls who live through situations of armed violence and to all those women who work on the front line in trying to end it.

Regarding what has been achieved globally since the adoption of SCR 1325, among other things the study points to the strengthening of the international legal framework on sexual violence in armed conflict as well as to some progress in the process of accountability and in a holistic vision of justice which includes truth, reconciliation, memory and reparation. Among the positive aspects it also mentions the increase in references to issues relating to women in negotiations and peace agreements and an increase in the number of women who have taken on leadership roles within the UN system. With some reservations, the study also makes a positive assessment of the increase in the aid allocated to gender equality within international bilateral cooperation.

These positive aspects need to be offset, however, by others which continue to represent serious reasons for concern. Despite the regulatory strengthening that has been mentioned, the number of prosecutions for cases of sexual violence is still very limited. Moreover, although efforts have been made to include the agenda of women in some peace processes, their participation is still very symbolic. The study also points out that despite the improvements observed in international bilateral cooperation and despite the rhetoric of support for the women, peace and security agenda, the economic resources allocated for this purpose are much too sparse.

Based on this overall balance and on the contributions received during the consultation process, the Global Study includes general recommendations that make up a list of ten principles. They should guide the implementation of a women, peace and security agenda which is consistent with resolution 1325. Thus, for example, they call for measures against the proliferation of small arms, against violent masculinities as well as measures in the face of conflicts arising from the impact of climate change, among other priorities. The Study recalls the need to avoid the women agenda being diverted towards the sphere of security and to avoid issues relating to women being used as a tool for military strategy. It insists that concerned women should be involved in the design of the programs of which they would be the object. It also stresses the need to introduce a gender perspective into all areas of the Security Council.

In addition to such general observations, the Global Study offers a much more detailed set of recommendations aimed at specific actors, organised around the eleven areas that make up the study.

We need to avoid the women agenda being diverted towards the sphere of security and to avoid issues relating to women being used as a tool for military strategy

The approval of SCR 2242

In October 2015, under the presidency of Spain, the UN Security Council also adopted Resolution 2242, as part of the high-level review process mentioned above. It is thus the eighth resolution on women, peace and security. Its adoption reactivates and reaffirms the agenda and objectives of the international community in this field, putting particular emphasis on the specific protection for women and girls in the face of violence and armed conflicts, and the need to join forces in favour of greater participation by women.

The resolution calls upon states to expand the financing of programs that deal with the issue of women, peace and security with the aim of further promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, while increasing international development cooperation directed at this agenda.

An important issue in the resolution is the reference made to terrorism and violent extremism, in particular paragraphs 11, 12 and 13⁷. The resolution calls on Member States and the UN to integrate the women, peace and security agenda into the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. It also urges them to investigate, from a gender perspective, the factors that lead to the radicalisation of women and the impact of counter-terrorism strategies on their human rights. Finally it makes a call for ensuring women's participation and leadership in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism.

An important issue in resolution 2242 is the reference to terrorism and violent extremism

As already noted above, this last factor was discussed at the ICIP seminar. Fearing the possible manipulation of SCR 1325, speakers coincided in insisting on the originally antimilitarist character of SCR 1325 and stressed that it should not be used to justify measures directed towards an armed concept of security that would end up acting against the interests of many women.

Future prospects

The celebration of the 15th anniversary of the SCR 1325 takes place in a global context in which new challenges have emerged, such as the increase of violent extremism and the inability to prevent or manage large scale humanitarian crises. On the other hand, the use of armed security and militarism is being generalised, whether through the increase in arms spending or the use or the threat of military force to resolve disputes. All three aspects have a direct impact on the security and human rights of women, and contribute to worsening gender inequalities.

However, this anniversary coincides with other events and processes that could contribute to strengthening the role of women and to stopping militarism, such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Beijing +20, the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the UN's High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, and the World Humanitarian Summit 2016.

SCR 1325 and its successors, including SCR 2242, define the scope and priorities of the women, peace and security agenda. These international instruments should be interpreted in the light of the values for which they were adopted: gender equality and antimilitarism. We must remember and keep alive, just as the Global Study does, the demands of the women who promoted SCR 1325: less wars and more gender equality.

We must remember and keep alive
the demands of the women who
promoted SCR 1325: less wars and
more gender equality

Although the eight Security Council resolutions are particularly directed at Member States and at the UN, it is obvious that the involvement of other actors is essential in fulfilling the women, peace and security agenda. In this regard, it should be said that both the present Development Cooperation Master Plan of the Catalan Government, and the ICIP's Strategic Plan for 2015-2018, also deal with and propose actions in the context of the women, peace and security agenda.

Recommendations

Below are a series of proposals for measures that could be taken from Catalonia, both by institutions and by civil society (in particular NGOs and the media), to contribute to the effective implementation of SCR 1325.

Participation, empowerment and leadership

1. Ensure, within the framework of the development and peacebuilding programs promoted from Catalonia, that women from communities in situations of conflict receive sufficient support to significantly participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the humanitarian interventions and cooperation projects that have an impact on their lives and their communities.
2. Allocate funds, within the framework of the development and peacebuilding programs that are promoted from Catalonia, so that women affected by armed violence can attend and participate in peace negotiations and at national or international conferences dealing with their situation.
3. Increase funding for programs directly aimed at the empowerment of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations, for example through training programs, in order to promote their participation at different levels of the political sphere and in the reconstruction of their countries.
4. Make visible the diversity of positions, visions and agencies that exist among women in scenarios of conflict and post-conflict, in order to meet their needs and give them specific support through cooperation and peacebuilding programs.
5. Promote the participation of women in the Catalan public structures and mechanisms for foreign affairs, diplomacy, international cooperation and peace building and ensure their competence in tasks of negotiation, mediation and conflict resolution.
6. Encourage the members of the Catalan Parliament to give political support to the movements and initiatives of women who work for peace.
7. Encourage Catalan members of the Spanish Congress to monitor the elaboration and subsequent implementation of the future National Action Plan, ensuring that groups of women from civil society can have a real involvement in its design.

Protection and reception

8. Increase funding for cooperation programs directly aimed at the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations and of women peace and human rights activists.

9. Ensure the appropriate reception, protection and care of women and children displaced by direct and/or structural violence, in accordance with their specific needs.

10. Encourage the self-organisation of these women so that they can give visibility to their demands and look for support for their proposals in relation to their needs.

11. Strengthen the training of specialists who work in this area within the Catalan public authorities, so as to deal adequately and effectively with the protection of this group.

12. Recover the ideas of the former Human Rights Defenders program of the Office for the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights of the Catalan government, putting the emphasis on supporting women threatened because of their activism in favour of peace and human rights.

13. Encourage the media, through initiatives such as training courses or the creation of guides and glossaries, to avoid making comments that may offend or stigmatise victims of sexual violence in conflict, displaced people, or certain religious beliefs, and for them to be especially careful when covering stories of children and women who have suffered these situations.

Justice and memory

14. Support the training and professional entry of women from countries in conflict and post-conflict situations in the field of local and international justice.

15. Promote the training of legal practitioners in the investigation, litigation and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to sexual and gender violence.

16. Support civil society initiatives aimed at bringing together women's memories in the context of transitional justice processes.

Alternatives to militarisation

17. Increase support for nonviolent civil defence initiatives in countries affected by armed conflict.

18. Strengthen the commitment of the media to give coverage of the different roles that women and men can play in situations of armed conflict or post-conflict, especially as agents for the prevention of violence and for peacebuilding.

19. Open a local debate about what is meant by the security of women and for women, organising the exchange of experiences and of reflections internationally, and investigating alternatives of security without arms.

20. Promote debates in Catalonia about the construction of masculinities and the processes that can link them to violence and militarisation.

21. Promote training initiatives aimed at both women and men, girls and boys so as to strengthen nonviolent and non-militarised expressions of masculinity.

Violent extremism

22. Promote research and debate about the impact violent extremism can have on the women, peace and security agenda in Catalonia. A critical reflection is needed on issues such as the role of women in combating violent extremism; on factors that can lead women to exercise violence and those that can impede this; or the impact that strategies against violent extremism based on militarised security can have on women and girls.

23. Facilitate debate and exchanges of experiences and knowledge with women from other countries working on the same issue, in order to enrich reflection and promote the search for solutions.

NOTES:

1. The preparation of this document was aided by the contributions and debate that resulted from the Seminar on SCR 1325 organised by the International Catalan Institute for Peace, in coordination with the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation (ACCD), on 3 November 2015: <http://icip.gencat.cat/en/noticies/Resum-1325>. The Seminar coincided with the campaign promoted by the ACCD, #DónaVeu1325. The document has also benefitted from the report prepared for that Seminar by María Vilellas, *15 years of resolution 1325. An assessment of the women, peace and security agenda*.
2. For more detailed information on the resolutions adopted within the framework of the women, peace and security agenda, consult the mentioned report prepared by the researcher María Vilellas. See also ICIP magazine Per la Pau No. 25, which is dedicated to this topic: <http://www.icip-perlapau.cat/numero25/en>.
3. <http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>. Web consulted 18 January 2016.
4. One can learn more about the experts' contributions in the Report of the Seminar on 1325, to be published shortly by ICIP.
5. <http://wps.unwomen.org/en/high-level-review>
6. *Through the Lens of Civil Society: Summary Report of the Public Submissions to the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security*
7. [http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2242\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=S/RES/2242(2015))

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Maria Fanlo Torrecilla graduated in Political Science and Public Administration at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, with postgraduate studies in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and Euro-Mediterranean issues. She is currently technical assistant to the ICIP Presidency.

Elena Grau Biosca graduated in Contemporary History. She has done research into the thought and practice of women writers and peace activists, especially analysing the connections between feminism and nonviolence. She is currently head of the training and dissemination area of ICIP.

Sabina Puig Cartes graduated in Political Science and Public Administration (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and has specialized in international human rights protection both in her studies (Essex University) and in successive positions. She currently works in the training and dissemination area of ICIP.

DISCLAIMER:

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the ICIP.

INTERNATIONAL CATALAN INSTITUTE FOR PEACE

The International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) is a public, but independent institution, whose primary aim is to promote the culture of peace and to facilitate the peaceful resolution and transformation of conflicts. ICIP's activities are related to research, the transfer of knowledge, the dissemination of ideas and awareness, as well as intervention on the ground. With research as one of its priorities, ICIP has a special interest in promoting original research that contributes to new results, not only in the theoretical field but also in terms of practical solutions. The publication of this series of ICIP *policy papers* is part of this mission.

www.icip.cat / icip@gencat.cat