

On Thursday 29 October 2015, WILPF-US held a panel at the Peace Forum, “Strategic Re-Engagements: Advancing Women, Peace and Security and Beyond” at the Church Center of the United Nations. Speakers included Deputy Foreign Minister of Republic of Macedonia Dragana Kiprijanovska and WILPF-US members Kristen Alder, Brandy Robinson, Altaira Hatton, Rachel Nagin, and Melissa Torres. The event explored the role of local efforts to enact 1325 and create a dialogue for individuals from multiple levels and perspectives (global to local) to share and learn from each other and explore potential for growth.

Kristen Alder (WILPF US) opened the discussion by posing the question “How can we create a holistic strategy for advancing Women, Peace, and Security that engages at all levels?” She shared insights from WILPF’s involvement in creating the US NAP. In this process, WILPF US called for: a human security framework, the ratification of CEDAW, inclusion of diverse women in WPS discussions, quotas for women in government, education/engagement of men and boys in ending violence against women, and ending trade in Small Arms/Light-Weapons. However, most of these recommendations were ignored.

Alder noted that the current US NAP reflects a highly masculinized and militarised state. For one example, the NAP emphasises women in the military and “empowering vulnerable women and girls *abroad*” rather than addressing issues of gender and militarism at home as well. For another example, the US NAP also includes “conscious tackling” of the lack of female soldiers and increased deployment of all military in Afghanistan. Overall, the result is that the impact of women in human security is only felt *outside* of the nation-state and is left open to contextualisation. For third example, Alder noted that NATO is using 1325 as an excuse for increased militarisation and feminising of soldiering; female soldiers act as “ambassadors of goodwill” and soldiering is conflated with peacekeeping so that “protecting” women in conflict means increasing the amount of women present in the conflict. Alder and the other panellists agreed we need a more integrated approach to implementing 1325 which seeks to dismantle the gendered aspects of conflict, demilitarisation at all levels, and addresses the shrinking civil society space.

Dept. Foreign Minister of Macedonia H.E. Dragana Kiprijanovska spoke about the progress made by her country in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Macedonia has adopted a National Action Plan that aims to strengthen gender perspectives in the state’s security agenda. Ms. Kiprijanovska stressed that Macedonian women must fully enjoy the rights of all citizens and not be excluded from decision-making process. She emphasised that women’s participation is a key factor in sustainable peace.

WILPF US Representative to the International Board Dr. Melissa Torres discussed how a holistic understanding of the Women, Peace and Security agenda requires addressing typically ignored issues, such as immigration and trafficking. She highlighted the need to connect action on immigration and trafficking at the US/Mexico border into the US Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Risks and vulnerabilities increase in displaced populations, particularly for women. However this population is completely ignored in the US NAP despite the existence of the TVPA (Trafficking Victim’s Protection Act). She pointed out that the US Department of Justice estimates that 14,500-14,700 foreign-born peoples are trafficked in the US annually, in addition to over 100,000 US citizens, the majority of whom are women. However, the US ignores foreign-born women within US borders in discussions of Women, Peace and Security, and the US NAP mentions trafficking only in regards to other countries. This is problematic for a variety

of reasons, including that there is no legal recourse for victims: with the exception of Colombia, Latin American countries are not recognised as conflict-zones; as a result, children from these countries are merely “unaccompanied minors and are not protected by the TVPA. Torres called for implementation of the US NAP to recognise vulnerable groups of women in the US rather than only addressing victims abroad.

Both Brandy Robinson and Rachel Nagin addressed the question “what can cities do to advance and augment 1325?” They stressed the need to change and localise indicators in an urban context, for example looking at the number of women stopped by police. They noted that much of the language in 1325 and Security Council Resolutions focuses on conflict zones. However, the Women, Peace and Security agenda also relates to non-armed conflicts that the panellists called “urban injustices.” They proposed that 1325 and the Black Lives Matter movement in the US strengthen linkages, since armed conflicts are often symptomatic of latent injustices, such as racial violence and discrimination. Nagin also argued that citizen action plans on 1325 are needed to deal with police violence. Another necessity at the city-level is participatory budgeting and government quotas for women in decision-making positions.

Finally, Altaira Hatton talked about the unrealised promise of 1325 on conflict resolution. She emphasised the importance of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda providing motivation and inspiration for action; it is essential to make clear why women are valuable in this context. She also discussed the peace movement’s issues with inclusion of minorities. Diverse women across all contexts must be included in developing and implementing this agenda.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the importance of taking local action to implement the WPS agenda, including within national contexts of developed countries such as the United States who are often blind to the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda within national borders WILPF US is dedicated to bringing WPS to cities around the US and advocating for a more localised WPS vision.