

# Women For Peace Initiative

## Report on the Process of Resolution

January-December 2013



WFPI



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## Report on the Process of Resolution

### 2013

### *Women's Approach to the Peace Process*

Suggestions for a Lasting Peace



**WFPI**

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## Introduction

A new era has begun in Turkey since January 2013. The parties to this process define this new era as “the resolution process”. However, what the public and the parties to the process understand of a “resolution” are radically different from one another. What the Kurds and their allies expect is an end to the war between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) that has been continuing for the past 30 years, and a solution to the problems that have resulted from the denial of Kurdish identity – which is also the cause for the war. Whereas the AKP government declares that its expectation in terms of a resolution is an end to “terror”. This report aims to consider the resolution process from the perspective of women.

Political and societal actors, national and international NGOs and community organizations, women’s organizations and academics have already documented the extent and dimensions of the social devastation that has been caused by this 30-year-long war in Turkey. The reports they have published demonstrated that the various methods the Turkish State used in the war have caused the suffering of large masses of people in Turkey in general, but especially in the provinces where Kurdish people live; and that these methods have also destroyed and terrorized the social, ecological and economic structure. Among these methods are those that are considered criminal offenses by international and national law, such as paramilitarization, forced displacement, forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, harrasment and rape.<sup>1</sup> Academic studies conducted upon this issue also testify how the loss of lives during clashes, and the militarization of the society caused by official ideologies has been inciting and exacerbating enmity and hostility amongst the peoples on this geography. Those who are being most gravely affected by both the crimes perpetrated against the society, increased militarization and the hostilities between the people are women. In Turkey, just like in the rest of the world, not only do women suffer the most, but they are also the ones who have struggled for peace the most. Women For Peace Initiative (1996), Don’t Touch My Friend (1993), Peace Mothers (1993), Women Meeting For Peace (2004), The Time is Here (2005) are entities that exemplify this struggle.

The Women For Peace Initiative (WFPI) that was founded in 2009, has organized a variety of demonstrations and actions in order to ensure women’s participation in the resolution process for peace that has begun in Turkey. This report aims to share WFPI’s goals, actions, observations, meetings and research, as well as the results and conclusions it has reached, with the public and with national and international institutions and



organizations. With this report, WFPI invites the state of Turkey to immediately create a national plan that places women at its centre, and put into effect regulations that will ensure the equal participation of women in the peace-building process. In the meantime the WFPI report also demonstrates the need for the transparency and popularization of the peace process; in other words, it lays out the necessity of building due mechanisms which will enable the society to participate in the shaping of the peace and resolution, bringing this peace into the society itself. It claims that if this is not done peace will not be lasting or sustainable. This call by WFPI is also in accordance with the resolutions of international organizations that Turkey is a part of, and especially with United Nations resolutions.



*Sharing Experiences with Women from Croatia – Istanbul*

In the 4th World Conference on Women that took place in Beijing in 1995, bringing together women from all over the world, it was determined that although women are one of the groups most effected by war and conflict, in periods and processes of peace their needs are not met, their suffering is not seen and their experiences are not taken into consideration. In this Conference it was expressed that all national and international organizations that play a role in the construction of peace must ensure the equal participation of women and men (gender equality). The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 in the year 2000, and this was supported by following Resolution 1889, which was



adopted in 2009, and Resolution 2122, which was adopted in 2013 with a strong reminder and additional emphasis on the original issue. All of these resolutions emphasize, in the same vein, the importance of the equal participation of women in all activities towards building, spreading and popularizing peace in periods following conflict, and invite countries to develop active policies with regards to this issue.

In the first section of the report the Women For Peace Initiative shall be introduced, its goals and the methods it has adopted in order to realize these goals shall be explained. The second section will be based on WFPI's work, and it will look at the approach women in central political organizations as well as women in local and social groupings have towards resolution and peace. In the third section women's expectations and demands with regards to a resolution shall be discussed under the headings of legal regulations, the uncovering of truths, and security reforms. Thus, with this report, WFPI will have presented its suggestions with regards to what a national plan that aims to constitute peace and base itself on the equality of women should include.

## **1. Women for Peace Initiative: Goal and Methods**

### **1.1. Who is the Women for Peace Initiative?**

The Women for Peace Initiative (WFPI) was founded by women from many different backgrounds in 2009, after a large number of Kurdish women struggling for peace and women's freedom in Turkey were arrested. Between 2009 and 2012 the Initiative worked to expand and increase demonstrations for peace in Turkey, and to discuss and document the many ways in which women were made to suffer from war and conflict. Both organizations and individuals are among the constituents of BİKG, the Women for Peace Initiative. Moreover, the membership of BİKG includes the spectrum of different political positions, class, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and sexual orientations in Turkey.

As of recently, WFPI has created many 'Peace Spots' on streets, in homes, schools and workplaces and organized actions in order to raise the demand for peace across the country and open the way towards peace. It has attempted to establish the direct and indirect damages the war has wrought on both Kurdish and non-Kurdish women. It has created data on what could be done in order to empower women with the portion of the budget currently set aside for the war, and it has organized many forums



and workshops. Details on all of these activities may be found on the website ([www.barisicinkadinlar.com](http://www.barisicinkadinlar.com)) in Kurdish, Turkish and English.

With the beginning of the process of resolution in January, WFPI conducted many discussions and organized workshops with many women across the country. These discussions took place in cities such as Adana, Ankara, Antalya, Çanakkale, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Istanbul, Izmir and Van, in order to lay out what women's expectations from peace are, how these can be voiced in common and rendered visible. The names of the various workshops conducted were: *The Role of Women in Peace Processes across the World, United Nations Resolution No. 1325 and its Applicability in Turkey, Palestinian and Israeli Women's Struggle for Peace, Greek and Turkish Women in Cyprus Struggling for Peace and 1325, Ecological Destruction in War and Violence against Nature and its Casualties, Murders by Unknown Assailants, Forced Displacement and the Women's Struggle, The War Economy and its Consequences for Women, and Women's Peace Films.*

WFPI has also met with women from various media institutions in order to discuss the peace process and women's perspectives towards the process, and it has shared its observations on these issues with women from the Wise People Committee created by the government.



On May 4, 2013 WFPI organized a meeting called Women are Taking an Active Role in the Peace Process in the Bosphorus University, which was attended by 200 women from many parts of Turkey. Professor Yakın Ertürk, who used to be the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, was amongst the speakers in this meeting, and the UN Lead Consultant on Gender, Peace and Security Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini joined through a video conference. In this meeting certain decisions were reached as to what women's demands from peace were and how women were to take part in the peace process, and these decisions were made public by way of a press conference. This report shall summarize the activities conducted by WFPI within the framework of decisions reached in this meeting. It shall also lay out women's expectations from peace in a detailed manner, providing necessary justifications.

Before moving on to the decisions reached by WFPI in the meeting, and the activities it has carried out in line with these decisions, it is necessary to point out certain facts: WFPI is not a non-governmental organization or a think tank. Its goal is to directly practice women's politics, and a politics of peace. As such, it has determined itself as being on the side of women. Therefore, throughout this process that has been taking place since January 2013, WFPI has carried out actions in order to enable women in practicing a politics of peace, in taking part in the construction of peace as equal subjects, and in becoming visible and empowered while doing so. Most importantly, WFPI has tried to transcend the separations created amongst women by war and conflict, by patriarchal, capital-oriented and nationalist systems and orders. In doing so, WFPI has tried to formulate and practice the common words and common actions of women beyond these separations that have been created. All of WFPI's activities aim to organize and increase the ways in which women are addressed as part of the peace process and women's active participation in this process.

## **1.2. Why Should Women Take Part in Processes of Resolution and Peace-Making?**

In the widely attended conference it organized on the 4th of May, 2013, BİKG determined the reasons for which women must take place in processes of resolution as follows:

- Women constitute 50% of the population. Peace processes are time



periods in which the society is rebuilt and new social contracts are made. If women are not equally represented in all structures created during such periods, they end up not having contributed or consented to the resulting contract.

- Women have been affected immensely by war, whether directly or indirectly. They have lost relatives and those close to them; they have been forcefully displaced; they have been subjected to harrassment and rape under custody. Yet what women suffer during war is not limited to such direct attacks upon them. In societies that experience war, men become more aggressive due to militarization, their masculinities are provoked and spurred on. This has resulted in an increase in violence against women. This is precisely why it is important to draw out the connection between gender inequality and masculinities shaped by militarized ideologies. It is therefore also important to include any and all precautions against this in every new social contract that is created as well as in all of the activities for peace.

- Men perceive peace processes as an issue of power sharing. What women see as of primary importance in these processes is, on the other hand, a reparation of the damages in the social fabric caused by war, redress and recovery. In Turkey women, and notably the Saturday Mothers and Peace Mothers, are in the midst of struggle. Their struggle is so that all of those who were made to disappear during war can be found, all of the perpetrators in murders where the assailants are supposedly unknown may be uncovered, and all attacks and massacres directed towards women and children may be investigated into and the perpetrators may be brought to account. A peace that does not take into consideration their struggle and does not include their demands is one that does not reassure or provide confidence. Such a peace cannot become long lasting.

- Women struggle for peace throughout war. During this struggle they overcome their political, ethnic, class, and religious differences and come together, creating common languages. Since the 1980s women have come together for peace dozens of times; and, with their words and actions, they have become one of the most important elements of the history of the struggle for peace in Turkey.

Hence, they are experienced in peace-making, and in this new period



there is a lot men can learn from women. Until today there have been numerous times where peace negotiations took place in Turkey; yet these have failed every single time. One of the reasons for the repeated failures of these peace processes has been the exclusion of the society, and especially women, from taking part in them.

- In Turkey, similarly to the rest of the world, even when armed warfare between men – between those in power – comes to a standstill, the racism, sexism and inequalities of everyday life continue. These do not end, they merely become invisible and unspoken. Both Kurdish people’s experiences resulting from forced displacement and the amount of discrimination, harrasment and rape faced by Arab, Alevi or Kurdish immigrant women coming from Syria are examples that demonstrate how war means women being subjected to more violence as part of their daily lives. The greatest guarantee against this kind of social conflict and discrimination is women becoming political subjects and actors; it is them becoming empowered and taking part in decision-making mechanisms.

- One of the important reasons for why women are excluded from peace processes is that they are not seen as party to the war in the first place. The parties of the war, then, manage to keep women and women-centric issues away from the table by repeating that the war has nothing to do with gender relations and gender equality, and that those who fight do not take up arms for sexual liberty or gender freedom. In other words, since gender equality is not the cause of the war, it is also not an issue that needs to be taken account of during negotiations. Yet even research that the state of the Republic of Turkey itself has conducted demonstrates how both the Kurdish issue and gender inequality, and the Kurdish struggle for liberation and the women’s struggle are actually interconnected. In other words, both war and peace are of particular concern to women.

With all of the above in mind, WFPI functions from an understanding that women are indeed party to the peace process. Women are affected by the war in ways that are different from men. They experience clashes differently and are subject to a variety of different violations of their rights. It is therefore important to build peace processes that ensure gender equality, that deal with and eradicate the forms of subjection suffered by women in ways that empower women. For this to be possible, it is important that the peace process prioritizes an equal representation of women in all areas re-



lated to the process, a documentation of women's truths, the development of policies that will ensure the human security of women, and the making of laws that shall guarantee the existence of women as an equal power in the public sphere, in politics and in social and economic reconstruction. A participatory and transparent method must be developed in order to carry out all of these priorities within the framework of a national plan.

### **1.3. The Participation of Women in the Resolution Process in Turkey**

The participation of women in peace processes is limited all over the world. In the 102 peace processes that took place between 1990 and 2012 only 8% of the participants (negotiators, signatories, mediators, observers, consultants) have been women. Women have made up only 3% of all signatories and 3.2% of mediators; and, of those who took part in the negotiations as mere witnesses or observers, only 5.5% have been women.<sup>3</sup>

Amongst these, Kenya (with 25% in the year 2008), El Salvador (with 13% in 1992), Croatia (with 11% in 1995), Guatemala (with 10% in 1996), Ireland (with 10% in 1998), Afghanistan (with 9% in 2001) and Uganda (with 9% in 2008) have been the countries with the highest participation of women in peace processes. In other countries, women's participation has remained below 5%, and in many there have been no women participants at all.

As to the content of peace agreements that have been signed, according to a study that looks at 45 separate peace process and the 300 treaties signed during these processes, only 18% of these even take into consideration crimes committed against women during the war. Of the 582 treaties signed as part of 102 separate processes only 92, meaning only 16% speak of gender equality. However, in all of these countries, as it is in Turkey, the struggle of women has played an important role in the road to peace.

As mentioned above, the process taking place in Turkey since January 2013 has been termed "the process of resolution". Differently from other processes, in Turkey this process does not have a legal framework, and therefore does not have official signatories, witnesses, mediators or consultants. It is not, however, the problems caused by the absence of a legal framework, that constitute the main issue of this report. One of the most

important issues that concerns this report is the representation of women in the official structures set up by the state in relation to this process of resolution, even in the absence of a legal framework.

Two official structures were set up for this resolution process in Turkey between January 2013 and January 2014. These are the Wise People Committee, formed as a civil initiative, and the Commission for the Resolution Process created within the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (i.e. the Parliament). After having initially been named the Wise Men Committee, the name of this civil initiative was later changed to the Wise People Committee upon repeating warnings made by women's organizations and women politicians. This committee was made up of various journalists, academics, representatives of the civil society, etc. It was divided into subcommittees, comprised of nine members, that were to work in seven different areas. In a period of two months, these subcommittees conducted meetings in the areas they were responsible for, and created reports detailing the worries, desires and thoughts of societal and political actors with regards to peace. These reports were presented to the President of the Republic of Turkey in July 2013.

Of the 63 members of the Wise People Committee only 12 were women. Thus, women made up 19% of the committee. It is also necessary to point out that there were no women from within the women's movement in Turkey on this committee. BİKG organized a meeting with the women on the Wise People Committee, and in this meeting the women on the committee stated that they would make an effort to conduct special and separate meetings with women in the areas they were responsible for. However, as BİKG has been able to determine, this did not take place, and many of the regional subcommittees did not meet separately with women in their areas. Even though the government has not disclosed the reports of the Wise People Committee, the reports have been made public by members of the committee, and it has become evident that the inequality in the gender distribution of the committee itself has been reflected in the reports they produced. The reports of the Wise People Committee have mostly covered the perspectives and positions of men in Turkey. Thus in these reports, issues such as gender inequality and militarism, or the suffering of women due to war and the activities women have carried out as part of their struggle for peace, have been included in a very limited manner. The efforts of some of the women in the committee to this end have been fruitless.



As a result, the representation of women in the reports of the Wise People Committee has been limited, and they have been included only in their capacity as mothers. Yet, as will be delineated in this report, the suffering and victimization of women in war, and their advocacy for peace is far beyond their identity as mothers and cannot be adequately encompassed within this identity only.

The 11-person Commission for the Resolution Process formed within the Parliament and designed as the second mechanism for the resolution process, on the other hand, includes only one female Member of Parliament. Yet, the Saturday Mothers, Peace Mothers and WFPI (Women for Peace Initiative) have been amongst those providing information to the commission, as they have been invited to do so by the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). A detailed account of WFPI's meeting with the Commission for the Resolution Process will be given in the second part of this report.

How is it that women and women's organizations are excluded from peace processes? The most important reason for this may be summarized as a reflection of the gender inequality already present in Turkey onto the peace process. The connection between the women's issue in Turkey and



*"As Women We Are Party to the Peace Process," Conference organized by WFPI – May 2013*



the war has not been drawn. It is due to this that already existing gender inequalities, and the absence of women in mechanisms of decision-making and power in the parliament, and in other areas of politics has been directly reflected in the structures of committees and commissions regarding the process.

On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that the Kurdish side has taken care to ensure women's representation in the process. Women are part of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) committee that has been carrying out the communication between Abdullah Öcalan (the imprisoned guerilla leader who has been continuing the dialogue for resolution with the State of Turkey), the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party, an armed guerrilla organization) and the KCK (the umbrella executive structure for the Kurds of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria). Moreover, as will later be explained in greater detail, the KCK undertook major structural change during the resolution process and instituted a co-chairpersonship system, ensuring that one co-chairperson would always be a woman. In this process, the KCK Executive Council was also transformed so that women now have 50% representation.

Studies conducted in many countries across the world clearly demonstrate what the consequences are when women and other constituents of civil society do not participate in peace processes. According to these studies, when inclusivity and equal representation across gender and class differences are not ensured, even if peace processes are successful they still create a sense of meaninglessness and oppression, of having been cheated, and of expectations coming to naught in the society.<sup>4</sup> After peace agreements in which the legal grounds for gender equality have not been provided and in which war and gender inequalities have not been ideologically linked throughout the peace process, the result is an increase in violence against women. Furthermore, peace processes from which women are excluded result in ways that least recognize and take care of the societal losses caused by war, and also least operate mechanisms of redress and recovery.

The Women for Peace Initiative organized a conference on the 4th of May 2013 in order to make an intervention into the politics of the State of Turkey and of the AKP government that exclude women from official mechanisms and that refuse to take gender equality into the agenda for the resolution process. In this widely attended conference named **Women are**



*Taking an Active Role in the Peace Process*, the Initiative reached a series of resolutions with regards to this intervention it wished to make, and it has implemented these resolutions.

#### **1.4. The Resolutions of the Women are Taking an Active Role in the Peace Process Conference**

As a result of the war that has been continuing for the last thirty years in Turkey, 40,000 people have lost their lives – with 17,000 of these murdered by paramilitary forces – and 3,000 people have been lost, made to disappear. Hundreds of mass graves have been located in Kurdistan.<sup>5</sup> Thousands of villages have been burned down in the area, 939 villages and 2,019 hamlets have been emptied, 2.5 million people have been forcefully displaced,<sup>6</sup> thousands have been arrested, subjected to torture and kept under incarceration.<sup>7</sup> In this process, women have been killed, lost their loved ones, displaced, tortured, subjected to harrasment and raped.<sup>8</sup> They have been impoverished, and driven to committing suicide. Sustaining and maintaining life as well as mourning for what is lost has become, or has been made, their lot. From the year 2000 onwards, while death and torture has been on the decline, mass arrests have continued, and have in fact, increased. Moreover, in the places that they arrived to as a result of migration and displacement, Kurdish people have faced intense discrimination in many different forms – including, at times, lynchings. Women who do not know Turkish, and who have been torn away from their means of production, have become isolated and marginalized. Civilian deaths have continued, due to land mines, or the usage of disproportionate force by security forces during protests. Mass child arrests, and child sexual abuse has been experienced,<sup>9</sup> and not only have crimes perpetrated in the past not been brought out into the open, but the perpetrators have continued to receive promotions within the civilian administration. It is due to all of this that the process of peace-making and resolution must include regulations that will provide relief to women, counteract the unjust treatment they have received, and contribute to ensuring their equality as well as their empowerment.

##### **1.4.1. Demands**

In the conference titled *Women are Taking an Active Role in the Peace*



Process organized by WFPI on May 4, 2013, women demanded that Turkey make a national plan within the framework of the United Nations Resolution No. 1325, transform its constitution, open the way to democratic participation, and end its discriminatory policies and practices towards Kurdish people, and towards women.

- To this end, it is especially important for there to be legal guarantee for education in the mother tongue and for working in the public sector using the mother tongue. It is also important for gender-based social policies that counteract the unjust treatment women have suffered to be adopted, and for the state to provide constitutional guarantees for ensuring gender equality in every single area and field. It is necessary that gender equality is provided in representation in all political arenas as well.

- On the other hand, women shall not find it reassuring if the peace that is being built is one in which crimes perpetrated in the past are not brou-



*Meeting with Women in Lice*

ght out into the open. One of the fundamental demands of women has thus become the exclusion of those who have perpetrated rape or sexual harrasment during war, in prison or under custody from the benefits of any kind of amnesty or time lapse. Hence women demand that the perpetrators of these crimes be found, put on trial and brought to justice.



- Other conditions that shall allow women to move on and continue living their lives are: a creation of the necessary conditions for returns to villages; a just and fair compensation of all the damages caused by the emptying of villages; an exposure and bringing to justice of all of the perpetrators who have committed what are called ‘murders by unknown assailants’, who have made people disappear, and who have murdered children; and, a determination of the locations of mass graves in a manner consistent with international agreements and conventions, as well as an identification of those found within them.

- Consistent efforts and measures are necessary in order to end the psychological pressure experienced by Kurdish women as a result of the policy of derogating, trivializing and devaluing the losses they have suffered.

- In the meetings conducted by WFPI, women have demanded gender and child-oriented security sector reforms in all cities and villages. In line with this, it is deemed necessary to provide gender trainings for all those working in the civilian administration, to put an immediate end to the construction of new fortress-like military bases and take measures to ensure mutual trust, to abolish the village guard system, to withdraw soldiers from all of the spaces lived in and inhabited by people, to clean up all land mines, and to release women as well as all other political prisoners.

- Based on the experiences of other countries, BİKG argues that these demands can only be realized if women make up half of all committees and commissions that have been and that shall be formed in relation to peace-building, if these committees collaborate with women’s organizations, and, finally, if committees are established with the specific purpose of bringing the gender dimension into the discussion of all issues and topics regarding the peace negotiations.

The peace process in Turkey is yet to move into the “second phase” where concrete steps shall be taken for the resolution of the issues at hand. If women’s demands are not taken into account and their participation is not ensured, and if the mechanisms that are to enable this, as stipulated by Resolution No. 1325, are not put in place in this second phase, this shall create great obstacles in building a peace that is popularized, a peace the whole society takes part in. This is so, because a peace that is popularized, that spreads through all of society, can only be realized through the parti-



cipation of women, and other social stakeholders.

### 1.4.2. Action Plan and Methods

As of the present, no mechanisms or bodies have been set up in order to ensure the participation of women in the process of resolution currently taking place in Turkey. Therefore, in the conference held on May 4, 2013, women’s expectations from the process of resolution were discussed, and the decision made was that women would take it upon themselves to create the necessary pathways for their active participation in the process of resolution. In line with this, five separate commissions were established within BİKG. These are: the *Women’s Truths Commission* that is to expose the various dimensions of what women have suffered due to the war; the *Gender Equality and Constitution Commission* that is to ensure gender equality and discuss legal regulations that shall aim to compensate for the damages women have suffered due to the war; the *Security Reform Commission* that



Adana WFPI – “Women Are Talking About Peace”

shall determine the human security measures necessary in order to prevent the repetition of the kinds of suffering that women have been subjected to through the war; the *Press and Media Commission* that is to bring attention to women’s demands regarding peace; and the *Contact and Observation*



*Commission* that is open to the participation of any and all women, and that aims to actively watch the process of resolution, evaluate it from the perspective of women, determine women's expectations from peace and help form a voice shared in common amongst all women by conducting meetings with all societal groups – especially women's groups – and with all parties of this process.

Women who are part of the Contact and Observation Commission have made various contacts and observations since May 2013. They have met with women's organizations and the civilian authorities in Dersim, which is an area that is in the guerrilla's withdrawal route, as well as a place where new military bases are being constructed, and in Lice, which is a place where somebody was killed during the peace process due to soldiers firing upon civilians protesting the construction of a new fortress-like military base. The question of whether the peace, negotiation and withdrawal processes are being conducted through confidence building measures or not has been observed in its place, and testimonies, concerns, apprehensions and demands with regards to the process have been heard.

Along with other organizations and journalists, WFPI has observed the first group that reached Kandil as part of the PKK's retreat. It has also continued making contacts and observations in Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Doğu Beyazıt, Ceylanpınar, Nusaybin, Bursa, Çanakkale, Ankara, Adana and Antalya. Moreover, WFPI has presented to the Commission for the Resolution Process created within the Parliament. Along with this, it has met with some of the women who are Members of the Parliament under political parties such as the AKP, BDP and CHP, telling them about the damages suffered by women during the war and conveying women's demands from the process of resolution.

Finally, the group conducting contacts and observations met with the women who are part of the KCK in the mountains of Kandil.

Simultaneous to all of these contacts and observations, WFPI has continued organizing various workshops.

In the following part of the report, the work conducted by the commissions of WFPI shall be detailed. This shall be handled under the heading of women's approach to the resolution, legal measures, women's truths and gender-oriented human security reforms.

## 2. Women’s Approach to Resolution

As is known, what is expected as a result of peace processes that take place throughout the world is the realization of two goals. The first is a set of measures that shall ensure the democratic redistribution of power and equal participation, and the second is the construction of a popularized peace, spreading across society. The methods adopted in line with these goals may be summarized under the following four headings: 1) constitutional and legal regulations, 2) the exposure of war crimes, which includes bringing the perpetrators to justice, and a compensation for all damages that have been suffered, 3) reforms that shall ensure human security, 4) disarmament and the reintegration of those in armed forces into society and politics. As of today, there has not been a single step with regards to any of these issues.

On the other hand, examples from all across the world show that peace processes can be carried out in a healthy manner, and become sustainable only and only if the participation and support of the society is ensured. If



*Meeting with Women Members of Parliament in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey*

this is not the case, and peace is only based on non-transparent negotiations and agreements between men, what happens is either that less than 5 years after these kinds of agreements have been signed, they lose their binding power, or that the social structure that emerges following the ag-



reement continues to be discriminatory, sexist and militaristic. One of the most important factors in ensuring societal participation in peace processes is the participation of women. WFPI has thus conducted a series of meetings with women who are societal and political parties to this process in order to ensure the participation of women in the process, to formulate a position on gender equality with regards to the peace process, to make this position an integral part of politics and to then popularize it, spread it across society. In this section of the report, these meetings shall be relayed. In this first part, the meetings conducted with the political parties to the process, who are taking part in negotiations, shall be discussed. The second part shall then include the opinions of those stakeholders and sections of society that were not/could not directly take part in the negotiations.

## **2.1. Meetings with the Political Parties Conducting the Negotiations**

WFPI has been working in order to enable women's participation as a party to the negotiation process, which the government, Abdullah Öcalan, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the BDP and the KCK have been engaging in directly or indirectly. Up until this moment, WFPI has presented to the Commission for the Resolution Process created within the Parliament, and has met with the women in Parliament as well as the women within the KCK.

As has been stated in the Introduction, WFPI defines itself as a group that engages in and practices women's politics. Thus, one of its goals is to maximize women's voices in the process of resolution, to ensure their participation in the process and popularize a process of resolution based on gender equality. At the same time, WFPI also has things to say regarding the whole of the resolution and peace process. In the contacts it has made with political parties and the KCK, WFPI has predicated itself upon ensuring communication amongst women, the sharing of experiences amongst women, and the formulation of a voice and discourse of women. Thus, with regards to political parties in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey or the KCK, WFPI has deemed it appropriate to conduct its meetings with the women members of these organizations.



### 2.1.1. Parliamentary Commission for the Study of the Resolution Process

The Women for Peace Initiative joined a session of the Parliamentary Commission for the Resolution Process on June 20, 2013, in order to provide information about the contacts and observations it had made. This meeting lasted approximately 2 hours. In it, what was explained to begin with, were the reasons for the establishment of the Women for Peace Initiative and the work it has done, as well as how women from different backgrounds came together in different cities due to their demand for peace. Secondly, the ways in which women were directly and indirectly affected by war were described. Thirdly, the issue of why women must participate in the process of resolution, what their demands are and how these may be realized was discussed.

The Members of Parliament from the AKP who were in the Commission emphasized that all of this that was being recounted had taken place in the 1990s, and that their policies should be kept apart from the past. As an answer to this, the form the war had taken in the 2000s was discussed. In this discussion, BİKG once again brought up the construction of fortress-like military bases, discrimination, the arresting of women and children, the issue of education in the mother tongue, and the rape and harassment of women by security forces. Amongst everything that was mentioned, the Commission for the Resolution Process took into consideration only the fact that women are unable to go out on to the street in certain areas due to the construction of fortress-like military bases and the high amount of soldiers.

The fact that those who were in the civil administration in the past, when a variety of the crimes mentioned were committed, have not been put on any kind of trial during the AKP period either, and that instead they have received promotions, was also discussed during the presentation made to the Commission. WFPI mentioned the violations of rights that took place while Huseyin Avni Mutlu, the current Governor of Istanbul, was stationed in Lice, Şırnak and Silopi. This caused a tense atmosphere in the Commission meeting. The Members of Parliament from the AKP insinuated that WFPI's participation in the Gezi protests over the summer meant that the organization must be against the process of resolution. Moreover, the emphasis on United Nations Resolution No.1325 was criticized,



being found too “Western”. In response to this, WFPI reminded the Commission that this resolution has also been implemented in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal and Malaysia.

Only one of the Members of Parliament in this Commission for the Resolution Process – in which the two opposition parties, the MHP and the CHP, have not taken part – is a woman. This, in and of itself, has become a sign of how no policies or measures are being formulated in order to enable the participation of women in the process. Thus, as was to be expected, none of WFPI’s demands or observations were included in the commission’s recently published report.

### **2.1.2. Political Parties**

On July 3, 2013, WFPI met with the women Members of Parliament who provided meeting times for the organization. These women were from the BDP, CHP and AKP, which are parties that have groups in the Parliament. On this date, WFPI also met with Azize Sibel Gönül, Member of Parliament from the AKP and President of the Commission for the Equality of Opportunity for Men and Women. WFPI was unable to meet with the MHP because no appropriate time and date could be found.

In its meetings with the parties, WFPI presented the report it had prepared with regards to experiences around the world, and explained that the role of women in the peace and resolution process is an issue that is above the differences between political parties. It thus recommended for there to be a common effort in terms of this issue. Attention was drawn to the language used by politicians throughout this process of resolution, the necessity of equal participation, and the United Nations Resolution No.1325. It was thus emphasized that women’s presence would guarantee a sustainable and lasting peace.

#### **2.1.2.1. The AKP (Justice and Development Party – in government)**

What became clear in the meetings conducted with the AKP is that the opinions of women MPs from the AKP on this matter differ from each other, that they believe the violations that took place are a thing of the past, that they see themselves as resolving the problems they have inherited from said past, and that they have no preparations whatsoever in order to uncover the truths regarding what has happened during the war.



President of the Parliamentary Commission for the Equality of Opportunity for Men and Women, Azize Sibel Gönül was interested in what WFPI had to say, and especially in the contacts and observations the organization made in Dersim. Gönül explained that they had carried out work on gender equality in eight separate areas in Turkey, and that they had brought up the issue of women and peace in these tours. Furthermore, she made a promise to continue prioritizing this issue, and stated that she found WFPI's contacts and observations important, and that these should be continued.

Zeynep Karahan Uslu, Vice President of the AKP's Public Relations Department and the President of the Turkish Group in the Assembly for the Unity of the Mediterranean, stated in the meeting conducted with her that she believed the AKP's policies to be correct, that the AKP is not responsible for what has been experienced in the past, that they have tried to provide openings and solutions for the Kurdish problem in their eleven-year period in power, that the fact that nobody has been dying is the most important issue in this peace process and that this is the success of the AKP. She was not responsive, however, towards suggestions made by



*Meeting with women in the KJB*



WFPI, such as those regarding the uncovering of women's truths, and the inclusion of women in the process.

The prior Minister for Women and present President of the Women's Branch of the AKP, Güldal Akşit, also emphasized the correctness of the AKP's policies and their importance in the meeting conducted with her. She argued that the policies of the party have proven quite successful.

During the meetings with the AKP, the MPs have said that they have taken many important steps – especially regarding women's issues. It was therefore observed that they took women's issues into consideration in a manner that was utterly disconnected from the war, that they did not see the true dimensions of the problem, and that they had no preparations in order to ensure women's participation in decision-making mechanisms.

It became evident from the meetings that were conducted that the women from the AKP are determined with regards to the process of resolution, yet they do not have a homogenous perspective on it. However, they all argued that they, themselves, were solving a problem they had inherited from the past, and that no violence or violations whatsoever had taken place or were occurring under their government. These women MPs from the AKP were all seen to emphasize that the losses belonged to everyone equally, without differentiating between Kurds and Turks. This created the impression that they were blind to the differential and special nature of the injustices perpetrated upon Kurdish people. It also became apparent that they, as women, had no approach with regards to working together with women from other parties.

### **2.1.2.2. CHP (Republican People's Party – major opposition party)**

In the meeting on the role of women in the peace process WFPI conducted with Sena Kaleli, Melda Onur, Hülya Güven, Ayşe Danişlı and Binaz Toprak, these MPs from the CHP emphasized that civil society, and a women's entity outside political parties and the parliament may be more effective in terms of building peace. The women MPs from the CHP thus underlined the importance of the pressure that steps from the civil society regarding peace would create on the parliament, rather than the actions of the parliament itself.

These MPs from CHP responded positively to WFPI's suggestions with





regards to proposing a motion in the Parliament in order to bring UN Resolution No.1325 into the agenda, and to demand the preparation of a national plan. Yet they then mentioned the difficulties of doing politics as women in the Parliament. They conveyed that the government was not carrying out the resolution process in a transparent manner, and that therefore they were not aware of what policies and politics of peace-making were being planned. Thus, they stated if women were to establish a wide and extensive peace platform, this would also empower women MPs in the Parliament and would enable them to play a more active role regarding peace-building.

Moreover, Ayşe Danışlı, a CHP Member of Parliament from Istanbul, mentioned that she would share the information she gathered from her meeting with WFPI as well as WFPI's reports with the Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee and the EU Harmonization Committee, of which she is a member.

### **2.1.2.3. BDP (Peace and Democracy Party – opposition party)**

The Co-Chair of the BDP, Gültan Kışanak, and the Group Deputy Chairperson, Pervin Buldan attended the meeting that was conducted with the BDP. The first part of this meeting was open to the press, and in it the MPs from the BDP drew attention to the importance of women as actors in the process of building a lasting peace. The BDP members emphasized, however, that there was a pronounced attempt at keeping women away from both the process of resolution and the construction of peace due to the fact that the AKP government has been insistent on carrying out this process in a non-transparent manner, unlike many examples from around the world. They also declared that they were ready for any kind of cooperation with WFPI with regards to the process of resolution and the construction of peace.

Gültan Kışanak mentioned that a much greater amount of women had to be included in mechanisms regarding the resolution process such as the Wise People Committee and the Parliamentary Commission for the Resolution Process. She then called attention to the fact that unmanned aerial vehicles and village guards are still active in the area, and that the process of armament continues. She underlined the importance of disarmament for a true peace, and the necessity for a complete abolition of the village



guard system. She also emphasized the importance of redirecting resources away from military spending and, instead, towards education, health, and the benefit of women.

During the meeting, the women MPs from the BDP also spoke about Medeni Yıldırım, who had been killed during a protest against a military base in Lice. They explained that operations, the construction of military bases and new fortress-like bases, the continuing political oppression in the area and the fact that political prisoners have still not been released detract from the credibility of the process of resolution.

The MPs from the BDP also shared the work they had done regarding the removal of land mines from the area, state projects aiming to return to their villages those who had been forcefully displaced, the abolition of the system of village guards, the termination of HES (hydroelectric power plant) projects, and the annulment of the 10% election threshold.

#### **2.1.2.4. Summary**

The result that came out of all of these meetings is that the chances of women acting together in order to give voice to a women's perspective during the peace process are actually quite slim due to the current dynamics in the Parliament and the difference in understanding and position amongst the different political parties. Women from the AKP have iterated that what is being done is sufficient, while women from the CHP have stated that they are unable to take an active role in the process due to their inner differences and to the exclusionary policies of the AKP. However, as became clear in the example of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) Commission for the Equality of Opportunity of Men and Women (KEFEK), at some points it was indeed possible for women from separate parties to work together. In this resolution process it is necessary for a structure resembling TBMM KEFEK to be set up, and for women working towards peace and women's organizations to also be included in this structure. This structure must then play a more active role regarding the issue of peace and women, in a manner that transcends the differences between political parties. This kind of a structure would then be able to both bring up UN Resolution No.1325 and play a role in its implementation.

### **2.1.3. KJB (Committee of Eminent Women – front organization of women within the KCK, Group of Communities of Kurdistan)**

In line with the decisions reached and the action plan determined in the conference held on May 4, 2013, WFPI met with the leadership of the KJB (Committee of Eminent Women – Koma Jinên Bilind), which is the women's branch of the KCK, in August 2013. The main framework of this meeting, just like the contacts made earlier within the Parliament, was a discussion on the equal representation and participation of women in peace processes and agreements, the uncovering of women's truths for the construction of a popularized and societal peace, the exposure of all forms of violence that all women – but especially Kurdish women – have been subjected to, whether directly or indirectly, due to the thirty-year-long war, and the creation of mechanisms in order to compensate for the damages these kinds of violence have caused.

In its meeting with the KJB, WFPI stated that one of the most important points in the process of negotiating for peace was putting into effect UN Resolution No.1325, since this is a resolution that Turkey officially recognizes, and has been in supervisory position regarding its implementation in some cases around the world.



*Meeting with Women in Diyarbakır*



In the meeting that was held, the women in the KJB conveyed their opinions regarding the construction of peace. While doing so, they determined that the exclusion of women from this process called “the process of resolution” is one of the greatest obstacles to spreading this peace across society and popularizing it. As peace negotiations began between the State of Turkey and the PKK, the KCK instituted a system of co-chairpersonship (where one man and one woman would always be in the leadership positions together, rather than having a single chair). At the same time, the KCK in general was transformed into a structure within which women have completely equal representation. These were pointed out during the meeting as both important gains of the struggle being carried out by the Kurdish women’s movement for years, and vital indicators of the determination of the Kurdish women movement and of the KJB to take part in the peace process as equal parties to the process. The KJB emphasized that a lasting and popularized peace that spreads across society is only possible with the active participation of women in the process of peace-building, and underlined the necessity of taking the first steps towards forming the mechanisms required in order to ensure this.

First amongst these mechanisms are the commissions and research groups that must be established in order to lay bare the direct and indirect effects of the war on women’s lives, in a clear and unequivocal manner. The members of the KJB invoked the failed negotiation processes of the past that had ended with many negative consequences on their part – especially their previous withdrawal process in 1999, thus emphasizing that this current process could not be carried further without definite legal guarantees. The KJB also stressed that, before all else, what is necessary for the construction of peace are transparent negotiations, and mutual steps and measures taken in order to ensure trust and confidence. They remarked that, for the creation of this kind of trust, it was first of all necessary to face up to all the negative consequences of the war, and to expose the war crimes that had been committed.

The KJB has closely followed and analyzed the various examples of peace processes and agreements from around the world, which are also mentioned in this report. With regards to this, the KJB perceives the issue of uncovering women’s truths in Turkey, and of gaining an equal right to speak and equality in representation for women in the building of peace as an important arena of struggle, not only for Kurdish women, but for all

women who live in Turkey, and even the women of the world. Within the framework of this struggle, the determinations made by the KJB regarding the current process are as follows:

- The PKK and the KCK have fulfilled their own responsibilities in terms of the negotiations throughout the process of withdrawal, which is considered the first phase of the peace process. However, it is necessary for the AKP government to immediately put into effect the necessary legal regulations in order to enable the passage into the second phase.

- What comes first and foremost amongst these legal regulations is the establishment of mechanisms and commissions in order to ensure that the peace process is conducted in the form of a true negotiation. Only in this way can these meetings that have been named ‘the process of resolution’ become transparent and public, thus gaining democratic character with the participation of all of the peoples of Turkey.

- While hundreds of Kurds, who were arrested for being active in the realm of legal politics, are stil kept in prison, it is impossible for women guerrillas to trust in the state to provide the necessary circumstances for them to come down from the mountain and take part in politics. Therefore, one of the most crucial steps in building the groundwork for trust



*Meeting with Women in Dersima*



is the immediate release of the thousands of Kurdish politicians who are currently under arrest within the framework of the KCK Court Case.

- The deployment of military forces in areas from which the guerrilla has withdrawn is creating a serious amount of insecurity and distrust regarding the intentions of the state. While the existence of guerrillas in places where people live has been an important source of security for women, the current placement of soldiers in areas from which the guerrilla has retreated is contributing to an increase in their sense of being under threat.

- While the existing amount of military bases should be decreased and the level of military force present brought down to normal, instead new fortress-like military bases are being constructed and a military build-up is taking place especially around border zones. This, in and of itself, is another source of apprehension and concern.

- For the popularization of peace, i.e. for a peace that is to spread across the society, what is necessary is a process of negotiation that includes all of the democratic forces in Turkey. In line with this, it is especially impor-



*Women Protesting the Wall in Nusaybin*

tant for women and women's organizations to actively participate in the peace process. The sphere of social opposition that has now livened up and sprung into action through the Gezi resistance also increases the possibility for building a peace that is truly societal and popularized.

- The Government's policies regarding Syria are directly related to the peace process. However, the developments taking place in Rojava must not be used as a bargaining chip in the peace process. It is important that the societal forces in Turkey also closely follow what is happening in Syria and Rojava.

### 2.1.3.1. Retreating Women Guerrillas in the PKK

On May 8, 2013, WFPI went to the Metina area in Behdinan, along with various journalists, in order to observe the retreat of the first group of PKK guerrillas across the border. Interviews were conducted with the women from the PKK who had arrived at ground zero. In these they explained that many guerrilla fighters had been killed during the withdrawal in 1999, and this had caused the current withdrawal to be experienced as an uneasy process as well. The guerrillas mentioned that as they were returning to the



Ankara WFPI - 'Peace Caucus'



main base they were faced with very difficult conditions, describing how on the one hand they had been harassed by village guards, and, on the other, they had been under the constant threat of UAVs. They thus explained that no legal framework whatsoever was being created for the process of withdrawal, and that quite on the contrary, it was being obstructed and made more difficult.

### 2.1.3.2. Summary



*Bursa WFPI – ‘We Are Marching for Equality, Freedom, and Peace’*

Many peace processes around the world have spread into society, have become popularized and therefore progressed due to structures set up by women. As of today, it can be seen that no transparent or legalized negotiations are taking place in Turkey. Transparent and legalized negotiations are crucial for the continuation of this process. However, even a negotiation process of this kind does not carry any guarantee that women’s problems shall be taken into account.

WFPI is of the opinion that it is necessary for there to be another party to this negotiation, one within which women with different political, re-



ligious, ethnic, sexual orientation and class backgrounds can take part. Women must become a party to the process of resolution from a position outside the dominant political frame, and they must include the common problems and demands of women in the process. Kurdish women have worked in a comprehensive and in-depth manner regarding women's problems. They have thus determined the ways in which women have been victimized and made to suffer, and have taken many important steps with regards to providing the equality that may, to some extent, compensate for these injustices. These efforts, however, have all been unilateral and thus their effects upon society have been limited. Similar kinds of work must be undertaken by the AKP and the CHP as well.

#### 2.1.4. Local and Societal Stakeholders

In line with the decisions it reached in its conference, WFPI conducted meetings and made contacts in order to determine the ways in which the process of resolution was being perceived by women in different cities, the kinds of expectations that were arising, and the ways in which women were intervening and taking part in the process. The stagnation of the process is becoming a serious problem in both the West of the country and in Kurdistan. It is possible to say that as of now the peoples are experiencing three separate realities. On the one hand, there are the Kurds who are the direct victims of the war and who have concrete demands regarding the construction of peace and resolution; on the other, there are those who are



*Antalya Women's Films for Peace Film Festival*

not actively supporting the process because it is being conducted in a manner that excludes them; and finally, there are those who believe that the process in being carried out in the most correct fashion imaginable by the AKP and thus cannot tolerate any kind of opposition. The work undertaken by WFPI has demonstrated that confrontations between these separate realities and the creation of spaces that enable them to transform each other are constructive in terms of building a peace that is societal and popularized. Women take on important roles in forming these kinds of spaces, yet they must be supported, and mechanisms must also be developed in order to multiply such spaces.

WFPI's visits to Lice, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Doğu Beyazıt, Ceylanpınar, Nusaybin,

Ankara, Antalya, Bursa and Çanakkale shall be described below. The Gezi Park process shall then also be taken into consideration as a zone of encounter, under a separate heading.

#### **2.1.4.1. Lice, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Doğu Beyazıt, Ceylanpınar, Nusaybin**

The meetings and observations conducted by WFPI in Lice, Dersim, Diyarbakır, Doğu Beyazıt, Ceylanpınar and Nusaybin clearly demonstrate



*Meeting with Women in Çanakkale*

Kurdish women's approach towards peace and what they expect from a resolution. It is first and foremost important to state that one of the significant reasons behind the support Kurdish women are giving to the resolution process and to peace-building is that there have been no more deaths. It has become evident, however, that the prevalent emotions women express regarding the process are none other than anxiety and anger.

This anxiety and anger is caused by the long years of oppression, ill-treatment, and the many losses they have been made to suffer at the hands of the state. The localized reasons for anger and anxiety, and the shapes they have taken on a local scale are listed below:

- Until the period of retreat, there were many women and men PKK guerrillas stationed in Kurdish provinces and in rural areas in close proximity to Kurdish district centers. The people consider the presence of the guerrilla to be a serious deterrent against the kinds of violations that were experienced intensely throughout the 90s, and that the military forces are capable of perpetrating again.

- Moreover, women within the PKK have become a safeguard against crimes perpetrated on women and have encouraged gender equality in the areas where they have been stationed.

- Due to these two factors, in Lice, Dersim and Doğu Beyazıt, the guerrilla are seen as a military and societal force that provides protection against suffering caused both by being a woman and by being Kurdish. Therefore, there seems to be a sense that the retreat of the guerrilla has left women defenceless against men, as well as against state and military forces.

- Previous retreats of the guerrilla, the existence of various resolution and peace processes that have taken place since the 1990s, and the fact that the war has been rekindled after each and every one of these have caused a serious preoccupation amongst Kurdish women that this process of resolution is also merely temporary.

- In Dersim, Alevi women worry that, with the retreat of the guerrilla and the resolution process, the AKP government shall increase pressure upon Alevi communities. A group of women from the CHP are especially concerned that what this peace will become is a Sunni alliance.



- In almost every Kurdish province, district, city and village women have suffered many calamities, such as rape and harrassment, murder, and the murder or disappearance of one's loved ones. The fact that not only have the perpetrators of these crimes not been brought to justice or even exposed, but that instead, they have continued to be employed in the civilian administration either in the area itself or in other parts of Turkey, has created great concern with regards to whether this peace can become lasting or sustainable. It has also caused a lot of anger and distrust towards the government.

- Yet it was also observed that the majority of the Kurdish people, and especially women, control their anger and their apprehensions with the wisdom and common sense they have garnered through a more than 30-year-long war; and they thus do not let these create obstacles for the construction of peace.

- Their observations regarding the process have brought women to the conclusion that the government is not taking the steps necessary to ensure trust in the name of peace. First in the list of government actions that cause distrust comes the building of fortress-like military bases, which are being constructed at an ever-increasing pace, and are being built upon sacred



*Women from WFPI in the Gezi Protests*

sites in Dersim. In Lice, the issue is the eight separate military bases within and around the town, and the fact that the soldiers within the garrison, or who live in the military lodgings in the area, are overly present in everyday life, and disturb women with their gazes and their words. This greatly decreases any kind of belief in peace. These kinds of behaviours cause people to relive painful pasts; they invoke the massacres of 1937-38 in Dersim, and the rape and harrasment of women as Lice was being burnt to the ground in 1993. They fuel fears that these kinds of events may be experienced once again.

- Since the beginning of the resolution process women have taken on an active role in preventing the construction of new military bases – a process that has accelerated since the beginning of peace negotiations, in pushing to be able to receive the bodies of PKK fighters who have died during combat, and in the “take a step!” campaigns directed towards the government. Thus, instead of experiencing their anger and anxiety as traumatic, they have been actively contributing to the construction of peace.

- Upon the start of Mayor Ayşe Gökkan’s death fast against the wall that was being built on the border between Turkey and Syria, WFPI went to Nusaybin and met with Ayşe Gökkan as well as with women from Nusaybin. In the meetings that were conducted, it was determined that the deterioration of any feelings of hope or trust regarding peace caused by the many harmful measures implemented during the resolution process had now been cemented by the concrete wall being constructed across the border. The women said that the high barbed-wire fence in existence between Nusaybin, a district of Mardin, and Qamişlo, a town in Rojava, was already making it exceedingly difficult for family visits amongst close relatives and trade to continue. Thus, what the women are demanding is not a new wall that is to be made out of concrete, but rather the removal of all land mines from the border zone. As those who have the most intimate knowledge regarding the meaning of borders and walls in life, women waited day and night by this border, and forcefully declared that no decisions could be made by way of excluding local positions on the issue, and that no wall could be built between the two peoples. Women from WFPI also witnessed the use of violence in the suppression of the protests that were organized against the construction of the wall. The women in the area did not trust the government’s subsequent declaration that they had cancelled their plans to build the wall. And, as had been expected, after a short peri-



od of time had past, the government continued its construction of the wall.

- Women who had fled the war in Syria were visited in Ceylanpınar. It was observed that there was a great similarity between their problems and those of women who had been forcefully displaced within Turkey. The living conditions in Ceylanpınar were yet another proof of the fact that war impacts a person's life completely and in a lasting manner. The contacts made in Ceylanpınar exposed the extent to which women who immigrated under conditions of war were vulnerable to physical, economic, and sexual assault. Women, who bear the full weight of the labour of care-giving, live under conditions of unemployment and extreme poverty. They can not receive adequate health-care or education, and they face rape, harrassment and being forced into marriage or into sex work.

#### **2.1.4.2. Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Çanakkale**

WFPI organized a series of discussions, workshops, and conversational meetings with a variety of women's groups in Ankara, Bursa, Antalya and Çanakkale in order to observe how the process of resolution was being perceived by women living in the West of the country.

The meeting decided that the peace process should be transparent, that women should be included in all the commissions and committees organized as part of the peace process, that a women's truth commission be established to investigate war crimes and especially sexual crimes committed against women and children, that steps should be taken to make sure such crimes would not benefit from amnesties, and that steps also should be taken to ensure the safe return of the diplaced population and that women should be able to monitor such steps.

TheWFPI Bursa chapter concentrated its efforts on trying to bring together women from different political positions. On June 13, 2013, they organized a march they called "We Are Marching for Equality, Freedom and peace." What was a novelty for Bursa was that a woman MP from the Republican people's Party, Sena Kaleli and a woman MP from the Peace and Democracy Party, Sebahat Tuncel, joined the meeting and together adressed the woman at the rally after the march. In the process of organizing this event, many meetings with associations, foundations, unions, trade organizations and political parties were conducted and a variety of media institutions were visited.



WFPI organized a “Festival of Women’s Films for Peace” on September 14, 2013 in Antalya in collaboration with the Filmmor Women’s Cooperative and the Antalya Women’s Counseling and Solidarity Center. The festival featured documentary films about violence against women, and about being a woman in war. These films provided a discussion on the kinds of violations of rights one may experience as a woman during wartime, and on violence against women in general. Thus, it has become evident in this situation as well that women feel the need to talk about and discuss peace.

On November 2, 2013, WFPI met up with various women’s organizations in Çanakkale and exchanged ideas, especially with regards to women’s perspectives on peace and discrimination against Kurds and women.

*The observations garnered during all of these meetings are listed below:*

- It was determined that the factors observed as preventing various women MPs from working together within the Parliament were also apparent in certain cities. For instance, the efforts to bridge the march in Bursa and the Gezi protests caused arguments amongst various groups of women, and the Member of Parliament from the AKP thus refused to join the march. Moreover, Sena Kaleli, the MP from the CHP incurred much criticism on social media due to the fact that she had appeared alongside Sebahat Tuncel, the MP from the BDP.

- The opposition of those who define themselves as nationalist, in the Western cities of the country, to the process of resolution has largely prevented women from coming together. Incorporating these kinds of people into the process and into a woman-oriented unity of action requires much effort.

- In the meeting held with women from the CHP in Çanakkale, these CHP members were saying that they did not wish tears upon any woman. Yet, on the other hand, they were still able to state that they did not approve of “the AKP’s non-transparent” peace process, and that they did not find it right that the AKP was interfering in the committee that was to go to İmralı to visit Abdullah Öcalan. While they argued that speech in the mother tongue should be allowed, they also remained utterly silent on the issue of providing any kind of constitutional guarantee for the usage of the mother tongue. The women from the CHP spoke in this meeting on the peace process through an intense opposition to the AKP in general, with



a special focus on the concern they felt regarding interference in their lifestyles and living spaces.

- In another meeting that was attended by 15 women from the Çanakkale City Council, from different political circles and different professions, on the one hand, ideological debates took place regarding the sources of the war. On the other hand, however, a series of apolitical discourses stood out. These were with regards to how Çanakkale is a city of peace, how this claim must be grounded and supported, how it is therefore necessary to use a language of peace and take responsibility, and how this is a project that requires education, etc.

- Kurds have described that in Western provinces not only do they experience the troubles of doing politics or existing in the social sphere as Kurdish people, but that they also face serious discrimination in everyday life. It was remarked that the state also discriminates against Kurdish women, and especially Kurdish women who are students.

- However, the fissures and divisions that are being experienced are not completely irreparable or insurmountable. The visit paid to Çanakkale by Abdullah Demirbaş, the Mayor of the Sur District of Diyarbakır, in April 15, 2011, and the fact that the Sur and Çanakkale Municipalities became sister municipalities after this is but one example. It has been observed that this event created a softening in tensions surrounding the 8th of March and 1st of May demonstrations, and somewhat during Newroz celebrations as well, resulting in greater attendance to these celebrations in comparison to the past.

- In the meetings that were conducted, it was emphasized that women do not formulate their everyday lives through politics, and thus it is easier for women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds to form relationships and build bridges than for men to do so.

#### **2.1.4.3. Gezi and Park Forums**

WFPI has underlined the fact that it sees the Taksim Gezi resistance as a demand for democracy and peace. It has attempted to draw connections between the peace process and the Gezi resistance, thus determining that the Gezi protests were related to the feeling of relaxation created in the society by the peace process. During and after Gezi, WFPI took part in a

variety of activities attempting to demonstrate that the political and social problems all around Turkey are connected to each other. According to WFPI's analysis, the fact that, by way of not reporting on Gezi, the media demonstrated its own bias, and that the police forces used violence upon people during the protests, led to a much more widespread understanding of what might have happened in Kurdish areas throughout the 1990s. The Gezi resistance allowed the demand for peace to reach the portions of society that had been left outside the process of resolution. Especially in Gezi, and then in the forums set up in a variety of local parks (Abbasāğa, Bebek, Cihangir, Tatavla [Feriköy], Maçka and Yoğurtçu Park), the society was seen to develop a desire to learn about the truths regarding what had happened in the war. Moreover, the sharing of these truths and experiences facilitated support for the peace process as well as helped render the peace more fully societal. While on the one hand Gezi strengthened the common ground between some women from different ideological and religious positions; on the other hand, at times, it also excluded certain other women and made them deeply anxious.

- In all forums one of the most emphasized points has become the opinion that mainstream media can no longer be trusted. Here, it was witnessed that most participants were experiencing their first powerful realization that they had been fed missing or incorrect information by the state and the media for many long years. It must be emphasized that this realization also included the Kurdish issue to a certain extent, even though in a tentative and timid manner. It is also necessary, however, to underline the fact that this issue still created a general sense of unease.

- Concrete examples and the sharing of experiences plays an important role in creating commonalities in women's demands for peace. For instance, when the Saturday mothers, who have lost close relatives to state violence, were brought up, it was seen that people drew connections between all that had happened on the east of the Euphrates and what was now being experienced on the west of the Euphrates due to the Gezi protests. In a forum conducted in the Abbasāğa Park in August 2013, Öcalan's name was mentioned, and yet the participants did not get stuck on this as they had in earlier forums. It is important to emphasize that they were able to look beyond the mentioning of this name and still hear the pain and suffering that was being narrated, and relate to the experiences described.



- Furthermore, the forums made an attempt at focusing on municipal elections. Yet, as the inadequacy of representative democracy became apparent, notions such as decentralized government and direct democracy that are also supported by the Kurdish movement were voiced in more crowded and public settings for the very first time. It was also observed, however, that certain portions of forum attendees were completely unaware of how mutually embedded and nested these intersections were. When anybody drew attention to this fact, they still easily gave the common knee-jerk response saying “Kurdism is happening here!”

#### **2.1.4.4. Conferences and Meetings**

WFPI has established contacts with many women’s organizations in order to get their opinions on peace and discuss projects to be carried out together. These meetings have demonstrated that women’s demands regarding peace are quite similar, and that they share the position that without an acceptance of women’s demands a lasting peace is impossible. On January 19, 2013 WFPI met with women from the Hazar Association and from the CHP, and discussed what could be done together for peace. After this first meeting, WFPI continued to establish contacts with various other groups. The Women’s Civil Society Institutions Forum organized under the title, “We are Meeting for Equality,” with the participation of 600 women from 81 provinces, held in Ankara on June 21-22-23, 2013, and the Women’s Shelters and Counseling/Solidarity Centers Convention held with the participation of around one hundred women’s groups, in Istanbul on October 25-26-27, 2013 are two conferences that BİKG attended. Moreover, the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) organized a workshop in Istanbul, between the 26th and the 28th of October 2013, inviting 49 women, who are peace activists from fourteen separate countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. In this workshop, these women discussed what is necessary in order to bring peace to the region, and they ended up emphasizing that women’s active participation in processes are essential for the construction of peace.

WFPI has also attended the conference coordinated by the Democratic and Free Women’s Movement (DÖKH), organized under the rallying cry “Jin Jiyan Azadi” (Woman, Life, Freedom), and dedicated to the Kurdish women politicians Sakine Cansız, Fidan Doğan and Leyla Söylemez, who were slaughtered in Paris. 250 women from 26 countries in the Middle

East and North Africa came together and shared their experiences in Diyarbakır during this conference, held between the 31st of May and the 2nd of June, 2013.

Between the 24th and 26th of May, 2013, the Meeting Women's Group, constituted by a mix of representatives of women's organizations from the religious section of society and of independent women, who are not part of any organization, held its 11th meeting in Diyarbakır. In this meeting, titled *Women Meeting for the Construction of our Common Future*, women from WFPI participated as speakers. Here, women who came from all over the country emphasized their support for the peace process, and underlined the fact that this process cannot progress in a healthy manner if women's participation is not ensured. Women also shared their personal experiences of the war in this meeting. It was thus clearly demonstrated that WFPI's demands are shared by women from almost every background and section of society.

The Istanbul Branch of the Human Rights Foundation organized a conference titled *Experiences of Peace from around the World*, on June 7, 2013. WFPI also attended this meeting, within which peace representatives from Ireland, South Africa, the Basque region, England and Sri Lanka shared their experiences.

WFPI participated in the *Democracy and Peace Conference* put together by way of a call made by a group of people promoting peace. This conference was held on the 25th and 26th of May, 2013 in Ankara, and WFPI was present with many representatives.

### **2.1.4.5. Summary**

Through its meetings with women, the conferences it attended and the observations it garnered, WFPI determined that political and ideological differences are decisive in determining one's approach to the resolution process, and that these create differences in opinion amongst women. However, the sharing of different truths, and women bringing up their concrete problems and demands carry the potential of overcoming this dividedness. As a result of its observations, WFPI's position that women must be represented, in political and social fields, as a party to the peace being constructed, has been reinforced and strengthened.



In various towns and cities, many different women's organizations have been working on the issue of peace for years, and have been gaining experience with regards to working together on concrete matters. It is clear that this amount of work and accumulation of experience shall play an important role in the process of resolution. As of today, no women wish for the continuation of war. However, due to the fact that they have had a differential experience of the war itself, they are only able to find common ground to the extent that they can comprehend each others' experiences and truths. The strengthening of these commonalities that are established, the empowerment of this collaboration, and the creation of an independent body for the representation of women in the peace process shall constitute one of the most important areas of struggle in WFPI's subsequent activities.

### **3. Suggestions for Ensuring a Lasting Peace**

As a result of the observations it made, the contacts it established, and the work its commissions conducted, WFPI has summarized women's issues as relevant to the process and their expectations from the process of resolution under three main headings.

#### **3.1. Constitutional Changes**

The Women for Peace Initiative does not see the issue of the constitution as merely one regarding a legal text. The constitution is a sum of rules and regulations, a foundational document that directs the political and economic life of women and of the whole society, as well as one that organizes the relations of power within society. These rules change based on what the regime is, its crises, its internal contradictions and the status of societal opposition.

We witnessed the way in which the new constitution was being prepared, and this was not a process that inspired confidence. It therefore came to an end. The fact that a parliament whose overwhelming majority is composed of sexist people even attempted to come to an agreement on a constitution itself is a problem. We believe it is necessary for the preparatory period to be made transparent, and for an approach based on "writing the constitution together" should be taken. Our demands regarding the constitution are as follows:

- We want a constitution that is not sexist.



- We want a constitution that is mindful of gender equality and the diversity of gender identities.
- We want a constitution that guarantees equal representation and equal participation in all areas of life.
- We want an “egalitarian, democratic, social, and emancipatory” constitution, a constitution of peace that is for the benefit of the oppressed.
- We believe that in order for the spirit of the constitution to be imbued with women’s demands for equality and freedom, it is necessary for the entirety of the constitution to carry these qualities.

### **3.2. The Truth Commission**

A variety of civil society organizations in Turkey are conducting studies on the violence and violations of rights caused by the war, and they are publishing reports or books. Based on its belief in the impossibility of forming a new society from which wars have been eradicated without facing up to the past and openly talking about the violence that has taken place, WFPI has created a Truth Commission. Something that a woman in Lice said has once again demonstrated how important this kind of confronting what has been done really is: “First the state has to admit that it was responsible, that it burnt Lice down!”

The findings resulting from WFPI’s activities and research are listed below:

- The Truth Commission formed by WFPI has studied the research conducted up until this date and has read the reports. Based on this, it has deduced a history of state policies from the end of 1980’s to the mid 1990’s as could be observed, and has come to the conclusion that the truth of war has various dimensions. The truth commission has defined these as the truth of the state, the truth of women, of the perpetrators, of the victims and the truth of the people of the West of the country. It has determined that these truths are different from each other, that they thus must be taken into consideration separately, and that each and every one of them must be worked on in this manner. It is evident that the truth of war cannot be understood if all of these various levels are not taken into consideration.
- The truth of the state is the state’s policies regarding Kurds and how



these have changed over time. The state has implemented a variety of strategies at various moments in order to obstruct the Kurdish political movement. These strategies have changed based on the activities of the Kurdish movement and on the ways in which the state has defined the problem. Uncovering the truth of the state entails exposing this fact, as well as the fact that crimes against humanity such as the burning of villages, the forced displacement of people, murders where the perpetrators remain unknown, the disappearance of people under custody, and rape are not coincidental, but rather are carried out as part of these specific strategies. Moreover, it is important to understand how concepts that are currently made great use of, such as “disproportionate force” and “unauthorized protest”, are part of broader security strategies that also emerged from a specific context.

- On the other hand, the truth of women is defined as the destruction wrought in women’s lives as a result of state policies targeting women during war and of the strengthening of the patriarchal system in these situations. All throughout war, women’s bodies have also been made into battle fields. Women have been subjected to harrassment and rape, to forced sterilization and all kinds of violence, and to a variety of war crimes and violations of rights. Yet it is also true that all these violations of rights and crimes against humanity change shape depending on the war strategies mentioned above. It is necessary to start out from the position that all forms of violence against women’s bodies have a kind of timing. Thus, it is important to reveal when and how violence against women is implemented, and what kind of state policies it is a part of. It is also important to expose the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated on the bodies of women guerrilla fighters who died during combat. However, it has become apparent that while the truths of war are being discussed, somehow the issue of harrassment and rape against women ends up being the topic that is talked about the least when compared to other kinds of violations of rights.

- Women have not only been made part of the war by way of crimes perpetrated against their bodies. Along with these, it is also necessary to mention war widows. There are women who have lost their husbands, fathers, or grown-up sons. These women end up having to work in sectors involving heavy labour and a low status such as seasonal agricultural work or domestic labour. Not only do they work in these jobs along with their children and for a minimal pay, but they also lose their authority and influence in the household. All kinds of care labour also become the responsi-

bility of women who have suffered forced migration, and these women end up living deprived of any social rights. Facing an incomprehensible language, household organization and street life, along with unfamiliar government offices is also part of women's experience of war. It is also evident, however, that women have become empowered in this process through the formation of the Democratic Free Women's Movement (DÖKH), and that they have become the founders of a different familial order.

- What is understood from the “truth of the perpetrators” is the identity of those who are responsible for these violations, whether they have been punished or not, and what positions they currently hold. Moreover, it is also important to expose whether these perpetrators have re-used the various security tactics and strategies they learned while they undertook certain roles during the war against the Kurdish people, in different areas.

- The truths of victims is what has been talked about the most amongst all of these truths that have been mentioned. However, even these truths are only known to a very narrow and limited audience, and not to the entirety of the society. What we understand from the truth of the victims is being forcefully displaced, forced migrations, policies of impoverishment and assimilation resulting in the loss of identity. There has been a variety of studies conducted on how even those land owners who had some kind of social status could be reduced to being part of the unskilled labour force, barbarians and, in fact, terrorists in the span of a single day. It has taken a long time for those who arrived at large cities as a result of migration to start their lives anew. This has resulted in the emergence of a whole generation of children that have been called “children who throw stones” and have thus been subjected to anti-terrorism laws. It has also resulted in a variety of other sociological phenomena such as the production of a cheap labour force and the emergence of chronic unemployment

- What becomes evident as the most prominent truth in the West of Turkey is all that has been told through the media and other official bodies throughout the 30-year-long war. What has been told has produced its own form of truth, and, as has been seen in the park forums all through the summer, this has resulted in the development of the image of the monstrous Kurd rather than in greater knowledge about what was experienced during the war. As was made clear in the period of democratic initiatives, the power of this image has, at times, even been able to block reforms that



were being attempted by those in power. Thus, the language of war that was used in certain moments by those in the highest levels of the state became a powerful reminder of this past, and reinforced the animosity that had been created. The fact that the demonstrations and protests of the Kurdish people are seen as illegitimate, and that the “disproportionate” methods security forces use in order to prevent and subdue these actions are considered normal have also become the truths of the people who live in the West of the country. Certain places such as the Galatasaray Square in Istanbul and the Koşuyolu Park in Diyarbakır have been transformed into spaces where those that have been made to disappear under custody are demanded back from the state. War has thus inscribed its own memory into the very geography of cities.

- One of the most important tools in uncovering the truths of war has been scientific research. Teams made up of anthropologists, chemists, biologists and human rights defenders, and also including forensic experts have been set up in a variety of countries – starting with Argentina and Guatemala. These have carried out research in mass graves and battle fields. These studies are able to show how the oppressive policies of the state have changed over time. For instance, a study conducted on corpses in Colombia demonstrated that techniques and forms of torture are of a systematic nature and that they have changed over a 5 year period. Another important result of studies of this sort is the determination of the identity of the corpses of those who have been made to disappear. These bodies are thus returned to their families. It is vital that similar studies are conducted in Kurdish areas immediately, before all proofs have been obfuscated.

### **3.3. Gender-Sensitive Security Sector Reform for Human Security**

As has been mentioned earlier in the report, one of the three pillars necessary for resolution processes to be able to provide society-wide peace is security sector reform for human security. On the one hand, security sector reforms aim to ensure non-violence and demilitarization. On the other, they include precautions in order to prevent crimes that have been committed in the past from recurring. These reforms also aim to create an atmosphere in which sectors of society that have been harmed either directly or indirectly by combat situations and serious human rights violations shall feel safe. They do this by way of legal, political, social and economic regulations.

As has been mentioned above, women and children are among those who suffer the most in war. This section of the report shall be on human security issues relevant to women, that have been determined by the Women for Peace Initiative as a result of the contacts it has established and observations it has made. Here we shall discuss what kinds of demands women have in terms of their own security in order to establish a lasting peace. Before moving on to this section of the report, it is necessary to point out that one of the most important steps in carrying out human security reforms is demilitarization. This includes creating and putting into practice legal measures in order to provide an atmosphere where groups that lay down arms can integrate into and be active within political and social life. Laws that guarantee freedom of expression, and regulations that enable guerrilla fighters to come back home are absolute prerequisites for security sector reforms. Within this context, women guerrillas occupy a special position. However, in Turkey the process is still too far from coming to this stage.

In peace processes across the world, ceasefires, withdrawals and disarmament is usually considered part of a whole. Indirect or direct negotiations are set up in order to create a legal framework, form committees in order to observe and track how it is being put in practice, determine what measures must be taken and set dates for their implementation. In Kurdistan, however, the PKK started its withdrawal and declared a ceasefire before such mechanisms were put in place. On the one hand, this caused great joy because it opened the way to peace and prevented any more deaths from taking place. Yet on the other, we may say that the withdrawal of the guerrilla has created certain apprehensions amongst women. In this process, women's organizations, and especially the Democratic Free Women's Movement (DÖKH) comes to play an important role. Kurdish women's organizations become the most important source of empowerment and reassurance for women. Thanks to DÖKH's campaigns, actions, and networks of support women are able to be protected – to a certain extent – from patriarchal structures, as well as from both male violence and state violence. Below, we will briefly discuss the security issues that are relevant to women. The primary ones among these are language rights, the right to protest and the freedom of expression, the issue of impunity, the construction of fortress-like military bases and security dams, village guards, discrimination, violence and issues surrounding property ownership.



- **Languages Under Pressure**

One of the greatest threats to the economic, political and social security of Kurdish women in Turkey is the fact that Kurdish is not recognized or used in official institutions. Hence, education in the mother tongue and state services in Kurdish are among the primary demands of women.

Due to the fact that state institutions only provide service in Turkish, women are unable to fully take advantage of state services. When they come face to face with the state, most state officials are men and only speak Turkish, and thus they perceive the state as a masculine and colonial one.

Women have been excluded from the public realm, and have not been able to take advantage of their right to education, health services, and gainful employment in the way that men have. They have therefore not needed Turkish in the way that men have, and have played an important role in the preservation of Kurdish as a living language. The fact that the transfer of language has been through women has meant that women are the determining factor in maintaining the Kurdish language, culture, and identity. On the other hand, however, the fact that they speak no language other than their mother tongue has caused them to face intense discrimination.

Due to this, we may say that the official policies in Turkey have subjected Kurdish women to serious form of “language terror”. Although we have observed that multi-lingual municipalities have been partially put into service in Kurdish areas, this remains geographically limited. As a result of all of these factors, providing guarantees for the Kurdish language through education and service, and ensuring the security of language and identity have become some of the most important demands women have with regards to peace-making.

- **Village Guards**

One of the issues that must be taken into consideration first foremost in the peace process is the situation of village guards. However, in the current process of resolution not only does this system of village guardship continue, but new village guards are constantly being employed.

The security problems that this system causes both for village guards themselves and for the Kurdish people are becoming more and more



apparent. The effect that this system of village guardship has on women, however, has not been investigated fully. Yet this system creates serious risks for women, both with regards to the families of village guards and to those who have not accepted village guardship. Today, this structure does not only function as part in the war against the guerrilla, but also in a variety of criminal organizations. The massacre of the Bilge village is one of the clearest examples of this fact. Harrassment and rape, the abduction of women, domestic violence and the murder of women are the leading crimes village guards perpetrate against women.

Recently, women are also being included as village guards in the system. While village guard women are made to use arms on the one hand, on the other they are also required to clean the weapons of male village guards, cook, and clean military bases. This results in a reproduction of gender inequalities and gender roles.

Thus, another common demand formulated by women for the sake of their own security is the banning of the village guard system, and the provision of jobs for village guards in other areas that do not involve carrying arms.

- **Military Fortresses**

We have mentioned that demilitarization is one of the goals of security sector reforms as they are implemented across the world, and that one of the most fundamental practices in this process of demilitarization is the provision of legal reforms that shall enable the continuation of the struggle in the political realm. This is not, however, the only condition necessary to ensure non-violence. It is necessary that soldiers and “security forces” also withdraw from areas from which armed organizations have retreated.

Yet, what is taking place in Turkey is the exact opposite of this. Military fortresses are being constructed in the areas from which the guerrilla is withdrawing. Military fortresses are military bases where high security measures have been taken. They are surrounded by many-layered, thick walls and are protected by unmanned aerial vehicles. It has been repeated over and over again that the construction of military fortresses means investing in war, and not in peace. It has been mentioned that for this reason it deeply troubles the Kurdish people. Through the contacts and observations we made, the Women for Peace Initiative determined that with



the construction of military fortresses, the increase in both the amount of security forces and their visibility, many villages and districts have become practically unlivable for women. Not only are these military fortresses and soldiers occupying their living spaces, but there is also an increase in soldiers catcalling, disturbing and harrasing women. Due to this, women have mentioned that they have more and more difficulty going out on the street. Moreover, the construction of these military fortresses is causing ecological destruction, and as a result of the illumination of these bases many species are dying out and becoming extinct.

In numerous cities and districts protests are taking place against the construction of military fortresses and women have been at the forefront of these protests. In Lice, where there are already eight military buildings only in the town center and still new military fortresses are being built, a young man named Medeni Yıldırım was killed by soldiers during a protest against the construction of these bases. Nobody has received any sentence or punishment in relation to this incident.

- **Impunity**

The fact that many deaths just like Medeni Yıldırım's result only in complete impunity in the area is causing great concern and increasing insecurity.

Another goal of security sector reforms is to put on trial crimes that have been committed against the civilian public and to take all precautions necessary to prevent them from happening again. In Turkey, however, this issue has not come to the fore at all, except for a couple court cases. Although there are 17,000 murders whose perpetrators remain unknown, thousands of emptied villages and unjust arrests, and 3000 people who have been made to disappear, neither an official truth commission has been established, nor has the state confronted its own past in any way.

According to various reports, if the 1990s were the years in which disappearances, perpetrator-unknown murders, the burning of villages, and the activities of paramilitary forces (JITEM) reigned supreme, the 2000s have become the time when certain security forces and civilian authorities created their own rape and harrassment networks. Not only have those who are seriously suspected of being part of counterinsurgency and organized crime rings in the 1990s not been brought to court, but these people have

instead even been promoted. On the other hand, the identities of members of security forces who have caused the deaths of many children such as Ceylan Önkol, Uğru Kaymaz and Enis Ata throughout the 2000s have been kept secret, and investigations opened against them have remained futile. In a similar vein, rape and harrassment cases brought to court against state officials in recent years have also been ending without any result.

Alongside all of this impunity, there is also the fact that 10,000 Kurdish political prisoners remain imprisoned. In other words, while the crimes perpetrated by state officials remain unpunished, any kind of political activity on the Kurdish side carries the risk of imprisonment. This dichotomy is one of the most important sources of insecurity for women.

- **Property Relations and Social Security**

One of the important effects of war, the emptying of villages, and the village guard system in Kurdistan has been the fast transfer of property. Village guards have appropriated villages that were emptied through forced displacement. As a result of borders drawn in land deeds in the absence of villagers themselves, many villagers have ended up without homes and without land. Due to all of these reasons, fights over land have increased in recent years, and these fights have at times even caused deaths. Women already did not have much share in the property, but this kind of total dispossession has made their situation even worse. Women have thus been forced to work in sectors such as cleaning construction sites, seasonal agricultural work, and other illicit or unlicensed jobs in areas where they have arrived as a result of forced migration. All of these jobs are precarious, require long hours, have no social security, are low wage paying and labour-intensive. Any plan or program aiming to compensate the damages women have suffered as a result of the war in Turkey must also be able to fix these kinds of problems.

Payments have been made in accordance with the law regulating material compensations for the emptying of villages, but women have not been given any shares. These payments have been made to men, who are still considered the heads of households. This program, which only managed to have a very limited effect in general, must be brought back into consideration and it must be arranged in a way that will benefit women.



- **Discrimination**

Another result of the war is migration to cities in the West. The research we have conducted has demonstrated that Kurdish women become the targets of political, social, cultural and economic discrimination in the Western cities they migrate to. This includes problems in terms of finding jobs or houses, as well as feeling the need to conceal oneself, not being able to voice ones opinions, being spied on by law enforcement agencies, and constantly being threatened.

Moreover, the discrimination that their children face at school and in the neighbourhood also creates serious problems for women. For example, in panel organized in Bursa Kurdish women explained that their children end up being depressed as a result of the discrimination, mockery, and accusations they face at school, and as a result they do not wish to attend school. Once again according to what women have recounted, employers that are not Kurdish often refuse to hire Kurds. In Çanakkale Kurdish women have said that if they have any kind of contact with the police due to some kind of accident, or a similar incident, they are most definitely held in the police station even if they are completely innocent while the perpetrator of the incident is immediately released. Kurdish women who own stores have explained that they face daily harrassment, and women have said that when their children get beaten up at school the principals do not take any action whatsoever against the student who beat them.

These problems are very important for women's life safety and their social security. They can only be resolved through a serious campaign against discrimination and through precautions taken by those in power.

### **3.4. Summary**

The United Nations emphasizes the importance of ensuring the security of women and children in processes of resolution and peace-making, and it encourages all member nations to make plans and develop programs in this area. WFPI has determined that, as of today, Kurdish people in general, and Kurdish women in particular, have very serious legal, cultural, and economic security problems in Turkey. The primary issues here are losses caused by the war, the village guard system, dispossession, the constant threat of imprisonment, rape and harrassment by security forces and the absence of any prosecution or justice. In order to ensure the security of Kurdish women what is necessary is to first and foremost decrease the

number of security forces stationed in Kurdistan, put an immediate halt to the construction of military fortresses, provide education and services in the mother tongue, compensate damages suffered during the war in a manner that considers women equal beneficiaries, prosecute war crimes and uncover the truths of war. It is also necessary to develop policies to combat discrimination in Western cities.

Kurdish women have made it clear that they feel more safe and confident in terms of defending themselves both against men and against security forces in areas where women guerrillas are present. In a similar fashion, women are also able to defend themselves in many arenas in areas where the Democratic Free Women's Movement is strong. Due all of these reasons, it is necessary to act in collaboration with the Kurdish Women's Movement in all plans and programs attempting ensure women's security, and to invest in policies that shall further strengthen and empower this movement.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This report is comprised of the Women for Peace Initiative's findings resulting from the contacts it established and observations it made between May 2013 and January 2014. A couple serious disappointments with regards to the process of resolution were experienced while the Initiative was carrying out its activities and writing this report. While these were taking place, the women in the Initiative were worried just like all other women, they were witness to the anxieties surrounding the possibility of the dissolution of the process, and to the desire for it to work. First and foremost amongst these disappointments came the wall that is being erected between Nusaybin and Rojava, and the killing of three people during a popular protest against the destruction of the graves of guerilla fighters. What has become apparent is that Kurdish women have been proven right in all the worries and apprehensions they voiced throughout the process of resolution. The process is now at a standstill, but the hope for peace is still not lost. Desire and hope are not sufficient, however, when comes to reaching a resolution or building peace.

The "democratization package" that was publicly announced by Prime Minister Erdoğan on September 30th, 2013 and that was then sent to the Parliament on the 6th of December 2013, has still not passed into law. Moreover, this package does not contain what the state must do in order to make a resolution possible. The Constitutional Negotiation Commission



declared that it put an end to its work on the 26th of December 2013. No steps have been taken to release those who are imprisoned as part of the KCK court case, or to shed light on the Roboski massacre. All requests made for the release of the Members of Parliament from the BDP citing precedents were denied. These MPs were only released after individually applying to the Constitutional Court. Neither the democratization package, nor the work conducted in terms of negotiating for a new constitution includes any real steps towards resolution. Furthermore, the regulations that have been announced are far from bringing equality, freedom and democracy to women, LGBTI individuals, members of different religious, ethnic and political groups, and to anyone who wants the resolution process to progress and peace to come to encompass the entire society.

The AKP government has increasingly continued to implement its policies that further deepen already existing inequalities between men and women throughout the process of resolution as well. Its political approach involves attempting to build a hierarchy amongst women based on binaries such as married and single, those who have children and those who do not, those who wear the hijab and those who do not, legitimate and illegitimate, etc. Through its policies that consider women invisible and non-existent in any area other than the family, AKP has continued this invasion by the state into women's bodies and their labour. Along with the language and politics of war, male violence against women has also continued its growth. The budget for 2014 was approved on the 20th of December 2013. The highest portion in the budget has been set aside once again for security expenses. While there are only 120 women's shelters in Turkey, and no women's shelters in 8 provinces whose populations exceed 100 thousand according to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, this issue has not been taken into consideration when making budgetary regulations. Unemployment and being dispossessed from social rights continue to be overwhelming issues facing all women.

The changing agenda in Turkey constantly poses a threat to the continuation of the peace process in Turkey. The Middle East policies of the government have done anything but strengthen peace in the area, and the resolution process in Turkey. Instead, through relations the government has formed with certain groups that it has been supporting, it has served to further spark the civil war in Syria. The crisis in government that was unleashed on the 17th of December 2013 has set Turkey on a course where its future is even more unpredictable. The government has become increasingly oppressive, and this has made it impossible for there to be any transparency in the workings of those in power in Turkey, or any fair in-





investigation into the corruption scandals that broke out. Rising government pressure in the country has also eliminated the possibility of establishing a state that is truly governed by the rule of law. In this situation, it seems ever more difficult for the peace process to acquire a legal framework.

As has been mentioned numerous times above, WFPI believes that the conditions for making the process fair, just and sustainable include forming a legal framework, and including women in the process in an equal manner, as parties, observers and negotiators. Furthermore, WFPI's research, observations and meetings demonstrate that the peace process can only progress if a constitution with equal participation is created, the truths of war are uncovered, and security sector reforms that are human-based rather than state-based are implemented.

A decision must be made to ensure gender equality in the constitution and in all documents that shall emerge throughout the process. All effects the war has had on women, whether directly or indirectly, must be exposed. The perpetrators of violations of human rights during the war must be put on trial. And finally, a new security perspective must be institutionalized. This form of security must enable women to take full advantage of their right to life and to travel freely as well as to establish their social, political and economic freedom. All of these are also part of the UN Resolution No.1325.

The only way peace will become lasting and sustainable is if all oppressed and excluded portions of society are included in this process of reorganizing the social contract. Thus, WFPI emphasizes the need for a supra-party body where women from all backgrounds come together to work for peace. WFPI also insists that this body must produce a national plan for resolution. Through its own work, the Women for Peace Initiative has been able to demonstrate time and time again that in organizations where women come together and share their own truths freely, they can indeed find common ground and work towards a resolution, while simultaneously voicing their very realistic and concrete demands.

The Women for Peace Initiative shall continue to work in order to transform the process of resolution into a peace that will ensure the equal participation of women in social life.

**25 January 2014**

**Women for Peace Initiative**



## Footnotes:

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1- Şemsa Özar, Nesrin Uçarlar, Osman Aytaç (2013). Geçmişten Günümüze Türkiye’de Paramiliter Bir Yapılanma: Köy Koruculuğu Sistemi. Disa

2 – The data used in this section are quoted from the UNWOMEN (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) reports.

3 – Human Rights Foundation Diyarbakır Branch, East and Southeast Anatolia 2012 Report on Violations Against Children’s Right to Life

4 - [www.yakayder.com](http://www.yakayder.com), [www.hafiza-merkezi.com](http://www.hafiza-merkezi.com)

5 – Report on the Village Guard System in Turkey: “Forced Migrations and Returns” Göçder-2013

6 - Ayşe Tepe Doğan, Handan Çağlayan, Şemsa Özar (2011). Ne Değişti? Ankara: Ayizi

7 – Prepared for Publication by Eren Keskin, Leman Yurtsever. Hepsi Gerçek- Devlet Kaynaklı Şiddet, Punto Yayınları (2006.)

8 - Human Rights Foundation Diyarbakır Branch, East and Southeast Anatolia 2012 Report on Violations Against Children’s Right to Life





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