



Peace negotiations and state building: A closer look into the Syrian peace process.

Together we strive for peaceful societies. A stable peace can only be achieved by making certain that the process is inclusive right from the start, until the end and at all different levels. This also means that the actual implementation of the results of the peace negotiations need to be inclusive.

International and national peacebuilding actors have recognized that social exclusion can be a major driver of conflict, and that inclusiveness broadens the number of stakeholders with an investment in the system of governance, which can deepen stability. This is especially relevant with regards to women's inclusion. Women's participation aids in ensuring broader social acceptance and commitment to the peace deal from communities and those affected by the conflict, who will equally be affected by the rebuilding of a new society.

For us as organizations working on gender equality and women's rights we therefore want to stress the importance of women's participation. Women's participation broadens the peace process to larger constituencies beyond the fighting parties and potential spoilers.

In cases of peace processes with women's participation and a strong influence of women, an agreement was almost always reached. Furthermore, strong influence of women in negotiation processes also positively correlated with a greater likelihood of agreements being implemented¹.

Women's inclusion at the peace table shifts the dynamics towards conclusion of talks and implementation of agreements. Increasingly research is showing that the impact on effectiveness is a result of women bringing a particular quality of consensus building to public debate. Women's inclusion centralizes a gendered and inclusive perspective on issues of governance, justice, security and recovery aspects of peace agreements. These concerns, if addressed, can

¹ Coomaraswamy, Radhika (2015) "Preventing Conflict. Transforming Justice. Securing Peace." Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325



help build a more sustainable peace, a more rapid return to the rule of law, and increased trust in the new State.²

In this regard we would kindly give you the following recommendations:

- Make sure women have a meaningful space at peace negotiations as is ensured by the existence of UNSCR1325, an urgent need for this is for example at the Geneva III peace negotiations regarding Syrian conflict. Desist from any use of observer status as a substitute for real and effective participation. Women should not be on the side-lines observing, but an integral part of negotiations and decision-making on the future of their country.
- Support women civil society activists and (grassroots) women's rights organizations to participate in processes necessary to achieve democratic change, transitional justice and peaceful transition. For each process, develop and fund a strategy of long-term support to build the capacity of women's networks to engage in political dialogue, strengthen the gender awareness of mediators, facilitators and conflict parties, address practical issues that may limit women's engagement.
- Invest in activities that address the underlying causes of conflict and violence such as matters related to: fair allocation of resources, participation, security and economic well-being
- Mobilize necessary financial resources to ensure full implementation of Res1325
- Increase the number of women as negotiators in peace processes.

² Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice & Securing the Peace – A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 p. 37 - 57



- Increase the knowledge of (international) negotiators on gender to make certain that gender is included from the start of the negotiations at the right levels. Commit to ensure that technical experts on a mediators' team are trained on gender-related aspects of their technical area, and that these technical experts themselves have the relevant technical knowledge on the impact of women's participation and the skills to support effective inclusion.
- Ensure that UN- appointed mediators and special envoys report on their consultations and outreach to women's groups and women's rights organizations in line with Security Council resolution 2122 (2013).
- Increase the participation of women in both constitution building and the resulting national politics in order to enhance the quality of democracy. Recognize that women's participation does not mean that they are solely responsible for women's issues, but that they are allowed to participate and be decision makers on the full range of issues involved in the peace process.³
- Continue to support local women's organisations present inside Syria (and Damascus specifically). These organisations should not lose momentum now. They are in the position to establish and foster connections and relations with the local governments. Once the war is over, they are capable to influence policy makers and to participate actively in the political process. These organisations are the ones that 'have stayed'.⁴

³ Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice & Securing the Peace – A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 p. 58 - 59

⁴ In regions like Iraqi Kurdistan and countries like Libya where activists fled their war and conflict zone, and spent years outside their country, the often heard reproach is when they return that they have been absent. These outsiders have less leverage and credibility than organisations that did stay.