

Towards the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

A Strategic Framework for Action for the Middle East Region



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance

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Acknowledgements

This strategic framework for action for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, in the Middle East region is the collective product of a yearlong consultative process to which women and a few men representing over a 100 women's organisations and other civil society organisations in the Middle East region have diligently and actively contributed with their time, effort and expertise from the ground.

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We hope that this framework for action can be a useful tool for all - the authorities, civil society organisations and others - who are interested in implementing the resolution in the region.

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Overall Priorities

The Regional Framework maybe viewed as a significant move in ensuring peace, security and equality for women in the Middle East, implementing the UNSCR 1325 in the region, and fostering networking and cooperation among the different activists. It is also an initiative that strives to pull together the efforts of women's organizations and other relevant civil society organizations in the region, into a framework for joint action based on a common vision. It can be beneficial to women and human rights organizations that strive to ensure security, peace and equality for women.

The regional framework is a result of several consultative meetings held through the year 2009, in 5 countries in the Middle East region – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Representatives of more than a hundred women's organizations and human rights organizations participated in these consultations, and contributed to the formulation and production of this regional framework.

The participating organizations set the following five general priorities for the region:

- 1. Incorporation of UNSCR 1325 at the national and international levels**
- 2. Increasing the participation of women in decision-making processes**
- 3. Ending gender-based violence against women**
- 4. Uncovering the impact of occupation and armed conflict on gender-based violence**
- 5. Protection for refugee, displaced and imprisoned women**

Our Vision

The regional framework for action is based on the notion of rights, and hence the approach is rights based. It highlights the need to comply with international standards and relevant international conventions on women's rights. Organizations working for women's rights have both rights and duties. Their goal is to empower women and girls as individuals holding rights. These organizations have knowledge of the needs and interests of women and girls in war and post conflict situations. This framework strives to achieve non-discrimination and to provide care for vulnerable groups of women, such as refugee and displaced women and girls, in particular. Empowering women and girls to claim their rights, while at the same time holding duty bearers accountable for implementing this resolution forms the basis of this framework for action. The Framework may also be used in doing advocacy work in the areas of politics, economics, culture or religion.

Organizations working for women's rights and participating in the consultative process:

- Take part in a comprehensive vision to achieve gender equality and equal rights for women in times of war and conflict and in times of peace and reconstruction.
- Believe that gender equality and equal rights for women are necessary conditions for achieving sustainable and true peace and democracy.
- Acknowledge the role of the International Women's Movement that diligently works for women, peace and security, and welcomes the UNSCR 1325 that calls for support to women and girls and the women's movements in the world and in the region. Women's organizations have struggled for long years to bring attention to the plight of women and girls in war and conflict situations.
- Acknowledge the importance of having women take the initiative in formulating, defending, and monitoring the upholding of human rights for women as required by UNSCR 1325. Also, acknowledge the work carried out at the grassroots level by civil society organizations in promoting women's rights in areas of war and conflict.
- Realize the importance of working in line with the UNSCR 1325 within the wider context of women's rights, and linking it with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the UNSCR 1820 for Combating Sexual Violence during Wars, and other relevant human rights conventions and standards.
- Will use UNSCR 1325 as a tool for ensuring that more women enter decision making positions, and for increasing the protection of women and girls in areas of war, conflict and post conflict.
- Realize the existing specific challenges facing each country, but also identify and acknowledge areas of commonality. Recognize that local, national, regional, and international work that are needed for implementing UNSCR 1325 intersect, and hope that serious efforts will be made both at the regional and national levels.

Background and socio-political context for the regional and national work

Since the onset of the last century, the Middle East region has been subject to various wars, military occupations, and armed conflicts, all of which continuously affect the peace, protection, and security of the people in the area, including women and girls. The impact of such wars, military occupations, and armed conflicts on the lives of women and girls in the region take on many forms and dimensions, compounding their suffering and pain.

Although Palestine and Iraq have been the most turbulent and affected areas in the region during the past two decades, neighboring countries like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan are also strongly impacted, particularly the Golan Heights, in the Syrian region, and the Shabaa Farms in Lebanon which are as yet under Israeli occupation. Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon still host Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Further, Lebanon is still in a phase of reconstruction as a result of the civil war and the wars waged on the country by Israel in 1982 and 2006.

In addition to the impact on the security of the citizens and the lack of protection from the violation of their rights, the wars have impacted on the economic, social and psychological aspects of life in the countries of the region. The political violence, occupation, and armed conflict have gender implications, subjecting women to various and specific forms of gender based violence and assault. Women are sometimes subject to harassment and sexual assault as well as social restrictions, due to the lack of security, which often limits their freedom of movement. Women and girls are sometimes prohibited from carrying on with their education or from working outside the home.

The region suffers from humanitarian crises in general. One of the main issues of concern is the question of Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. The number of Palestinian refugees has reached 3.4 million people spread across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Women and children constitute the majority of this refugee population. Further, it is said that approximately 11,000 Palestinian prisoners continue to be jailed in Israeli prisons.

The rising unemployment and poverty in the region, particularly among Palestinian and Iraqi populations, compounds the suffering of women and girls in these groups two-fold or even three-fold, compared to women in the rest of the world. Women and girls in the region are subject to various forms of violence and abuse and a large number of them are displaced - compelled to leave their homes – fleeing the violence or attempting to secure a living in another area. Moving across the country is also hazardous for women and children, constituting a huge barrier for women to work, and for children to go to school.

Many women's rights organizations and activists were subject to threats and assaults. A number of politically and socially active women, particularly those calling for women's rights were attacked and some of them as a result, have lost their lives.

The Methodology and the Process

This strategic framework for action has been developed during the first phase of a regional programme implemented by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), aimed at fostering and consolidating the efforts of civil society in ensuring peace and security for women in the Middle East region. It is the result of a yearlong consultative process during 2009 initiated and facilitated by the NCA Women, Peace and Security project and the NCA Civil Society and Human rights programme for the Middle East region. The process involved the active participation of over a hundred women's and human rights organizations from 5 countries in the Middle East region: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. Forming the basis of this process is a rights-based approach and a methodology based on the active involvement and participation of all the participants. And in order to ensure this, consultative meetings were held in the 5 countries: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. The process involving the participation of representatives from Iraq was funded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Iraq (UNIFEM - Iraq).

The Strategic Framework for Action has thus been developed as a result of in-depth reflections and deliberations among the participants in the consultations that were held, both at the country-specific, as well as at the regional levels. These deliberations addressed 2 aspects of the UNSCR 1325 – ensuring the equal participation of women at all levels of the peace and reconstruction processes, and ensuring the protection of women and girls from gender based violence and assault in war and post war situations. The consultations discussed the rights deficits and needs of women and girls, making visible the challenges and barriers faced by women in enjoying their rights to actively participate in securing peace, to engage in the re-construction processes both in their specific countries as well as in the region, and in determining good approaches for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in the region - a region that has been to such a large extent impacted by war and armed conflict through so many decades.

A Reference group was formed, constituting the backbone and mainstay of the process. The group consisted of representatives of two organizations from each country, representatives from the UNFPA and UNIFEM Iraq, a regional representative from the Swedish organization Kvinna til Kvinna (Woman to Woman), and the NCA professional team working for NCA Middle East and Iraq. Plans for the consultations were made in the Reference group meetings and the group served as a reference point through the course of the consultative process and the follow-up work.

The consultative process adopted a multi-faceted approach, where work was carried out at a number of levels:

- 1- Work and focus at the national level in each of the five countries, through the participation of women's and human rights organizations at the national level, linking their work with that at the regional level, enabling the identification of collective and common challenges facing women in these countries and the determination of priorities for joint efforts.
- 2- Gathering various viewpoints, perspectives, areas of specialties, and work methodologies for the purpose of enriching thoughts, ideas, reflections, discourses, research and initiatives. Representatives from women's and human rights organizations participated in debating and discussing different rights domains such as services extended to women victims of violence, women's empowerment, and the representation of women in decision making bodies/situations.
- 3- Benefitting from the expertise and experiences of women in different areas of the world and learning about and from similar work, through their participation and contributions to the consultations.

An **International Resource group** consisting of a few key / resource persons with expertise from the international women's movement, work on violence against women and from peace and reconciliation

work was also formed. This group served in an advisory capacity on thematic issues and contributed to the consultations with their input and verbal and written interventions.

The **first meeting of the Reference Group and the International Resource Group** was held at the start of the project - in early February 2009. This meeting was a preparatory and planning session, where the overall framework for the consultative process and the work methodology were set. The importance of the participatory and consultative process was reemphasized. It was acknowledged that such a process would make visible the experiences of women and allow for the production of knowledge and work methodologies built on these and on the in-depth and contextual knowledge of women's and human rights organizations on the situation and the needs of women in the region.

Following the Reference Group meeting, **national consultative meetings** were held in each country over the course of several months. All the meetings focused on examining the lived reality of women in these countries, and the meetings were all documented. The meetings also strived to identify the problems and challenges women and girls are faced with as a result of living under occupation and armed conflict.

The **first Regional Consultation** was held in Amman in early July 2009. Around 70 activists and human rights defenders from five countries in addition to members of the Reference and Resource groups participated in this meeting. The participants set forth work priorities for each country, and identified commonalities at the regional level. At the end of the consultation, the Reference Group met in order to debrief and strategize.

Notes from all the country consultations and the first Regional Consultation were compiled and a draft Framework for Action was produced.

The **Expanded Reference Group Working Meeting** was held in Istanbul, over 3 days in late September/ early October. (Due to funding constraints, the planned 2nd Reference Group meeting was combined with the planned 2nd Regional Consultation into this Expanded Reference Group Working meeting). Outputs from the 1st Regional Consultation, the work progress and the draft Framework for Action were discussed. The challenges and achievements so far were reviewed. The meeting acknowledged that there was a clearly demonstrated joint ownership to the process and its outcomes among all the participants. It was clear that the participants showed their engagement to the initiative, and had committed themselves to gathering and documenting the knowledge and experience that women's and human rights organizations had, based on their work and engagement within their specific contexts. More than 40 participants from different countries took part in this last Regional Consultative Meeting. Through the three-day meeting, work focused on reviewing, refining and concretizing the regional framework presented in the section below. As a conclusion of the meeting, the representatives of each of the countries agreed, on return to their home country, to convene a final meeting at their national levels, in order to endorse and approve the outputs of the last regional consultation.

Several experts have enriched the consultative process with their knowledge and expertise.

Regional Priorities, National Focus and Possible Actions

(To be noted here that not all priorities were addressed for national focus or possible actions)

1. Incorporation of UNSCR 1325 at the national and regional levels

There seems to be a lack of political will for incorporating and implementing the UNSCR 1325 into the agendas of national governments in the region. There are no clear mechanisms at the national level to implement UNSCR 1325. For example, there are no national plans of action in most countries, and no legal mechanisms put in place to ensure the implementation of this resolution. Moreover, at many levels of society, there is a lack of adequate awareness or knowledge about the resolution and its significance as a tool for the empowerment of women – whether at the level of civil society, political parties, or local communities.

Possible Regional Actions

- Convene a regional moot court and meetings that include live testimonies of women affected by displacement and/or war – refugee women, women in detention, and women under occupation, for the purpose of listening to their suffering in the current situation.
- Document these testimonies in a report to be presented to the Security Council, asking for a commission or committee for investigation.
- Form a regional committee to follow up on cases.
- Provide training in writing, presentation, documentation of testimonies, and the workings of the Security Council regarding UNSCR 1325.
- Conduct training sessions at the regional level to train specialized and qualified trainers on UNSCR 1325. Further, to implement the resolution through national strategies that include civil society organizations (women's organisations and human rights organisations), government institutions and the media.
- Provide training in campaign preparation, lobbying and advocacy, and in applying mechanisms for incorporating the resolution into national legislations.
- Train and qualify women in decision-making positions on the substance and intent of the UNSCR 1325, good governance, management of conflicts and negotiations, leadership skills, and in the preparation and conduct of electoral campaigns. Women activists in civil society organizations, political parties, public and legal institutions, the parliament, and local councils/ local media and press should be especially addressed.

Country Specific Focus and Possible Actions

Iraq

Introduce the resolution to central and local legislative and executive authorities:

- Meetings with decision makers

Advocate for a national plan of action

- Carry out lobbying and campaigns for the adoption of the substance of the resolution in the national agenda, and to integrate the resolution

Jordan

Increase awareness at the local level concerning UNSCR 1325 (women and human rights organizations):

- National campaigns for awareness-raising (workshops, training, leaflets)
- Media campaign
- Training sessions on using the UNSCR 1325 as a tool to ensure the protection and participation of women

Lebanon

Spread awareness about UNSCR 1325 and 1820 among at least 50 civil society organizations in a national conference

- Form a central coordination committee consisting of experts on UNSCR 1325
- Organize capacity building workshops to spread awareness about the resolution
- Set a television day to spread awareness about the resolution. TV programs to be broadcast on special global occasions such as International Women's Day, Human rights day, Anniversary of UNSCR 1325 etc.).

Incorporate the resolution within the work of respective organizations

- Organize a consultative session between relevant organizations to formulate the activities associated with UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (participatory approach) in their plans for the coming years.
- Conduct regular meetings under the supervision of a central committee to follow up on the implementation of such activities.

Palestine

Increase awareness of civil society organizations regarding UNSCR 1325:

- Conduct educational workshops and trainings
- Work with focal groups
- Use audio-visual public media

Form a national committee to adopt and endorse the resolution:

- Coordinate with institutions, political parties, and the government
- Develop a national plan regarding UNSCR 1325 to protect women and increase women's participation in the decision-making process

Build capacities for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and international mechanisms:

- Train CBOs, NGOs and CSOs on United Nations mechanisms
- Training on participating in sessions before official and international bodies
- Training in documentation

Implementation of UNSCR 1325 at the national and international levels:

- Advocacy campaigns at the local, regional and international levels
- Coordination, networking and cooperation at the international and regional levels

Increase women's participation in the decision-making processes

- Build women's capacities in areas like negotiations, internal conflict resolutions, and Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution
- Spread awareness about the use of the media
- Put efforts into changing the electoral law to guarantee the quota

Syria

Create knowledge and awareness at the grassroots level:

- Networking among national and charity institutions
- Workshops and training to spread awareness on women's rights in general and during conflict in particular
- Training and training of trainers on the CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and 1820
- Increase awareness on the resolution in the relevant groups (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, the Syrian Board, Women's Union)

Adopt an official governmental strategy:

- Set forth a national plan

2. Increasing the participation of women in the decision-making process

Representation of women and their role in negotiations barely exists at the national peace-making level. The role of women is mainly confined to civil and unofficial groups. Even if women fill many regional leadership positions in official institutions, very few of them are in positions in the political decision-making processes. Usually, the real impact of women in the decision-making process is confined to their connections with men, tribes, sects, religious groups or political parties. This limits their space and ability to participate in establishing peace and security for themselves, their families and local communities. There is a lack of understanding of the importance of women's active participation in developing laws and in the political decision-making process.

Country Specific Focus and Possible Actions

Jordan

Increasing women's representation in decision-making places:

- Application of international resolutions and conventions that ensure the increase of women's participation in decision-making and legislative organs by 30%
- National pressure campaign for the participation of women in decision-making places at all levels (quota)
- Media campaign
- Petition campaign
- Launch national dialogue with decision makers (government, parliamentarians, civil society leadership)

Amend the electoral law and revoke the one-vote principle to ensure justice in representation:

- Establish coalitions with civil society organizations
- Commence dialogue with decision-makers
- Form a committee of experts to formulate the modifications

3. Ending gender-based violence against women

The historical and cultural heritage of viewing women as bodies / objects/ possessions, as well as the taboos and general silence around questions of violence against women in the region, present crucial barriers in providing good protection for women and girls from gender-based violence. Further, the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of crimes committed against women and girls during armed conflict also presents a serious barrier to ending the violence. And this needs to be addressed seriously.

Country Specific Focus and Possible Actions

Palestine

Protecting women from gender-based violence:

- Provide psycho-social counselling and services
- Develop a case referral system in coordination with civil society and the government
- Document cases and present them to the respective national and international entities
- Uncover violations against prisoners in international assemblies and meetings
- Organize national and international campaigns calling for the release of women prisoners from occupation prisons

4. Uncovering the impact of occupation and armed conflict on gender-based violence

Incidents of violence against women and girls during war and occupation are often neglected due to the priority and urgent attention given to addressing national liberation. (Sometimes bringing up violence against women as an issue for discussion can be seen as causing a distraction from the main priority, which is to achieve liberation from occupation). Further, many women's organizations lack the necessary skills to document and verify assault. And the links between theoretical and academic knowledge on violence against women and practical application and work in this area are weak.

Country Specific Focus and Possible Actions

Iraq

Identify the impact of occupation on gender-based violence:

- Introduce substantively, the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 to non-governmental and women's organizations
- Conduct a study on the impact of occupation from 2003 to the present
- Conduct workshops and conferences, and publish reports
- Build a database on the effects of occupation and sectarian violence on cases of gender-based violence.

Increase the awareness of personnel in security departments and institutions concerned with the resolution:

- Coordinate with the respective governmental bodies to provide training for their officers and staff.

Lebanon

Monitor and uncover the types and forms of gender-based violence practiced against women:

- Build a unified database
- Prepare regular reports that uncover violations
- Issue a regular newsletter
- Develop a regional website to uncover violations

5. Protection of refugee, displaced and imprisoned women:

Refugee and displaced women suffer in situations of conflict and post conflict. International conventions concerning refugees and displaced persons have not been ratified in some countries and have not been implemented despite ratification in some others. In most cases, refugee women lack legal protection, and do not enjoy suitable health conditions, educational opportunities, or citizenship rights. Further, refugee girls are especially vulnerable to early marriages, dropping out from school, and many forms of psychological distress.

Regional Priorities

Ensure the protection of refugee and displaced women:

- Establish a regional network among relevant organizations for the coordination of the protection of refugee and displaced women
- Exchange of expertise among member organizations through email groups, and annual meetings in at least one of the partner countries.
- Coordination and cooperation in referring refugee and displaced women
- Monitor cases of violations
- Organize advocacy campaigns
- Advocate at the regional and national levels against violations practiced against refugee women through preparatory meetings with the media, decision makers and the press.
- Organize a regional solidarity day to support the rights of refugee women and find innovative ways to document and present the abuses and violence practiced against them.

Country Specific Focus and Possible Actions

Iraq

Enhance the living conditions of internally displaced women and provide them with basic services:

- Coordinate with the relevant international and donor organizations
- Provide legal and social support services
- Form teams to conduct needs assessments
- Coordinate with local governmental and non-governmental entities (shelters in Kurdistan, relevant public entities for the provision of health and educational services, local governments in governorates and the regional government)

Inform local and international public opinion about the reality of prisoners and detention centres:

- Organize visits to prisons and detention centres

Jordan

Provide an updated information base on issues related to refugee women, and provide necessary protection for refugee women and ensure a better quality of life:

- Conduct studies and research
- Establish shelters and support existing ones

- Establish service provision centres (legal, psychological, and health)
- Prepare awareness-raising programs (training, workshops, leaflets etc.)

Lebanon

Protection of displaced and refugee women

Reinforce coalitions to ensure the implementation of both resolutions

- Build a national coalition among participating organizations based on a joint binding code
- Organize a national pressure / advocacy campaign to implement the resolution (training, educational workshops, production of media materials)
- Set a mechanism for making UNIFIL accountable for the implementation of the resolution

Syria

Guarantee the rights of refugee women and provide necessary services:

- Increase networking with international bodies (United Nations, Caritas etc.) and look into the shortcomings in protecting the rights of refugees, particularly women and children
- Network with governmental bodies (Ministry of Interior), Bar Association, and the Ministry of Social Affairs
- Implement educational and rehabilitation programs for women and children
- Improve and strengthen the care services provided to refugees, and draw the attention of the government and national organizations to the need for strengthened care provision.

Introduce laws to combat human trafficking:

- Implement awareness workshops for developing the law, and advocate that the government adopt it, particularly for the benefit of women victims of war.
- Use the media in all its forms

References

The Regional Framework relies on a number of references that constitute international working tools and legal resources:

- **UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security**

The UN Security Council unanimously approved resolution 1325 on the 31st of October 2000, which was the first resolution to address the impact of war and armed conflict on women. The Resolution addresses women's contribution in crisis resolution and in achieving sustainable peace. It also sees women and girls as rights holders. It officially acknowledges the right of women to participate in all aspects of conflict prevention and resolution, reconstruction post conflict, peace building, and their protection. It also calls for action to prosecute perpetrators of violence against women during times of war and conflict. The UNSCR 1325 clearly refers to the duties and responsibilities of all parties, including the United Nations and the international community in protecting women during armed conflict. It also calls on duty bearers to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual assault in cases of armed conflict.

- **1820 on Women and Peace and Security**

The UN SCR 1820 was approved on the 19th of June 2008. It highlights sexual violence practiced against women in armed conflict as a means of repression. The resolution considers this violence to be a security issue, with serious negative consequences for the prevention and the resolution of conflicts. The resolution confirms that sexual violence does not only affect the wellbeing and safety of women, but also reflects on their countries' economic and social stability. Sexual violence calls for security responses criminalizing it in all its forms. The resolution stresses the need to undertake tangible measures to protect women against violence during conflict.

- **UNSCR 1888 on Women and Peace and Security**

The UN SCR 1888 was approved on the 30th of September 2009. It builds on the UN SCR 1820 by requiring high-level leadership on the prevention of sexual violence, development of rapidly deployable judicial expertise to help stop impunity, deployment of women protection officers to work with peacekeepers to develop systems for stopping sexual violence, and core accountability tools, such as the potential to engage sanctions committees on the issue of sexual violence, and production of an annual report that will provide information on perpetrators.

- **UNSCR 1889 on Women and Peace and Security**

The UNSCR 1889 was approved on the 5th of October 2009. It focuses on women's low participation and the funding deficit for women's needs in the post-conflict peace building phase, and in this regard builds directly on UNSCR 1325. It calls for an increase in appointments of women as Special Representatives and Special Envoys of the Secretary-General and for the development of a set of global indicators to track the implementation of 1325. 1889 also requests the Secretary General to submit a report to the Security Council within 12 months addressing women's participation and inclusion in peace-building and planning in the aftermath of conflict.

- **The United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**

The CEDAW defines discrimination against women and sets forth a national program to end it. Signatories to the CEDAW commit to undertaking a series of actions to stop all forms of discrimination against women including, integrating the principle of equality between men and women into the country's legal system, canceling all discriminatory laws and endorsing other suitable laws that prohibit discrimination against women, establishing courts and other public institutions to ensure effective protection of women against discrimination, and, ensuring the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women on the part of individuals, organizations or institutions.

- **The Beijing Platform for Action**

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 is considered the basis for a vast work program to foster and protect human and women's rights throughout the world. It calls for the sharing of power and responsibilities between women and men in all areas. It includes 12 critical areas of concern, one of which is women in armed conflict. This Platform for Action has been acknowledged by 197 governments during the United Nations 4th World Conference for Women, in Beijing, China