

Since 2000 every year in October women peace advocates as a recognition of their tireless work and commitment to women's meaningful participation in peace processes meet at United Nations Headquarters in New York to celebrate the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and human security. In 2017, for the celebration of the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCR1325, Anna Arutshyan, Armenian antimilitarist feminist activist, was invited to make a speech at "Women, Peace and Security in the Protracted Conflicts - Women from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine Address Protracted and Ongoing Conflicts through the implementation of UNSCR 1325" event organised by Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) in partnership with Austrian Development Agency.

Approximately 40 representatives of Permanent Missions of UN Members States, colleagues, ambassadors, policy makers, international NGO agencies, researchers and allies from UN Women attended the event to learn more about the challenges women face in the protracted conflict regions in Eastern Europe. Below is the speech delivered to the audience by Anna Arutshyan.

Your Excellences, distinguished fellow panelists, feminist friends, donor community and honoured guests

Good afternoon!

On my way to the UN building today, I saw the following quote engraved on the wall and thought that it is much aligned with the key message of my talk today and decided to share it with you:

"They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more. – Isaiah"

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be here and speak about the challenges Armenian women are experiencing as a result of the protracted conflict in the South Caucasus region. I will also show how women, peace and security international policies, particularly, on behalf of UNSCR 1325 are being advocated and implemented on the domestic level.

In 2017 in partnership with Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Society Without Violence civil society organisation which I represent today launched "Localisation of 1325 and other supporting WPS

resolutions” project in Armenia. This project was credited with a tremendous success in the 15 countries where it was deployed. The launch of the project in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine throws light onto the underrepresented OSCE region and addresses the specific challenges of the women living in the protracted conflict zones.

This project and other civil society initiatives for the advancement of women, peace and security agenda in Armenia are of vital importance. The volatile nature of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict affects the political, economic and social growth in the conflict-ridden country. Acknowledged as a protracted conflict zone, armed escalations across the contact line may erupt any minute which in its turn destabilizes sustainable growth in the country and in the region of South Caucasus in the whole.

In Armenia as of 2017 there are only 19 women out of 105 members in the Parliament. Only one minister is female. Women are excluded from any formal peace processes or integrated on a very marginal non-formal level. Inter-country politics with emphasized militarist agenda perpetuated by nationalist groups on one end and ineffective functioning of the international mediation group of OSCE on the other provokes frequent armed clashes and causes casualties among the civilians on both sides. The fragility of the conflict puts women and girls in the most vulnerable position in the male dominant society with constant militarist narratives fueled in the media. A new concept of “Nation-Army” initiated by high ranking governmental officials forcing taxpayers pay more money for the benefit of the army and encouraging women to give birth to future soldiers once again underlines the lack of political will to see women as decision makers in the public sector.

Through the recent security sector reforms the Government of Armenia aims to encourage the engagement of more women into the security sector and it is claimed to be a considerable step towards the implementation of UNSCR 1325. As stated by the Ministry of Defence, the strategy deployed by the Republic of Armenia towards the implementation of the Resolution is successful and the indicators are women's inclusion into the security sector and security politics as well as the increasing number of females in military institutions.

However, it is my deep understanding and conviction that the frightening tendencies of engaging women into militarist rhetoric to reinforce the hostile narratives prevailing in the society is not what a group of dedicated peace activists worked hard to advocate for the adoption of the Resolution 1325 back in 2000. Here, I would like to thank my feminist fellows for their endless efforts and determination in the campaign for the adoption of this hugely

important resolution on women and peace to keep our governments accountable.

As an antimilitarist feminist, I am for feminist conceptualized peace. I do not know how I am supposed to welcome women becoming part of the masculine militarization process when I am advocating for a sustainable long lasting peace. This sustainable peace starts with the education of non-violence, respect of gender equality and eradication of hate speech and hostility. The concept of sustainable peace should be profoundly rooted in people's mindset, it is about eliminating the culture of war in continuum rather than thinking of models of protecting vulnerable groups during or after an armed conflict and engaging more women to bring gender balance in war. Education is the key factor and the role of the media in it is of huge importance to understand that war exists in continuum, as a system. Working towards the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals for the achievement of sustainable peace, the concept of war continuum - with its devastating and disruptive impact on women- should be questioned as a process of dismantling hegemonic militarist discourses in the country.

As an advocate for long lasting peace, I do not think that equalizing society and army, integrating more women to make the war better and win over "others" is the right strategy to move towards the implementation of the Resolution 1325 and SDG Goal 16 on Sustainable Peace. Adopting the model of "add women and stir" into security system would not contribute to the implementation of SDG Goal 5 on Gender Equality. Sustainable peace is only possible when we talk about peace, not war and militarization of the society.

Therefore, I am here to speak out as an antimilitarist feminist activist and a mother of two boys for the sustainable, long lasting peace with its core the global disarmament challenging the concepts of war continuum and not just focusing on protecting women during armed conflict and its aftermath. I am here not to make the war better for women but advocate for the eradication of fueling "enemy" concept into the young minds of our children and against proliferation of fundamentally militarized culture in the country.

I am here to claim that as an Armenian woman I am a change maker with my own anti militarism and pro people's peace agenda. I am not just the victim of violence in need of protection against war crimes, but proud and capable agent of change. In my deep belief in the "Participation" pillar of the Resolution 1325 women are advocating and striving not to make war better and safer for women, but to dismantle the militarist agenda and say No to "othering" propaganda. For sustainable peace we are not supposed to welcome more women's enrollment in maintaining war, but participate to fight those harmful practices of war and constantly question them.

**As a civil society actor, I urge the Government of Armenia to:**

- 1. Develop National Action Plan (NAP) under UNSCR1325 not just adopting “add women and stir” strategy but through critical gender lens**
- 2. Ensure that all levels of the executive branch have sufficient and competent resources and cooperate with civil society actors for the adoption of the National Action Plan**
- 3. Address the issue of Sexual Violence during Armed Conflict at state level and take steps for data collection and the development of the necessary mechanisms**

**And most importantly**

- 4. Talk peace, not war!**

**Thank you for your attention!**

**Anna Arutshyan**