

**Feminist Mobilization for Peace - Fact Sheet**  
Naama Nagar for *Sociologists for Women in Society*  
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Feminist peace movements are a global phenomenon encompassing a plethora of groups with varying forms of organizations, degrees of institutionalization, agendas, strategies and modes of action.

**Motivations and Explanations**

Most explanations for the formation of feminist peace movements point to the masculine-feminine dichotomy between militarism and wars as masculinist institutions performed as against feminine imagery (e.g. objects of protection, helpless victims, the country, the nation, etc.) while exclusive of women. Women are therefore seen as either *structurally* or *behaviorally* more likely to take on anti-bellucist positions (see Elshtain 1987, Hartsock 1989, Ruddick 1989). Corresponding to these explanations, a major critique of feminist peace groups is that they reinforce, rather than challenge, the above patriarchal dichotomy and that they cannot, consequentially, successfully challenge the institutions of war. Other explanations for the mobilization of feminists separately from other peace movements focus on *resources* that feminist organizations can provide, including: safe spaces for activists, a chance to explore and promote feminist dynamics within the movement, the opportunity to pursue a joint (feminist and peace) agenda fully without compromising either claim, and the potential to leverage peace activity to further feminist claims (Cockburn, 2007). Last but not least, feminist peace mobilization follows from the understanding that warfare and militarization are gendered phenomena and hence require responses that adequately address them as such, through movements that incorporate feminist and peace analysis and agenda (see Enloe, 2007, 2000a, 2000b).

**Agendas and Issues**

Four general issues characterize feminist mobilization for peace:

- ***Resistance to warfare and militarism*** takes a central stage in feminist peace mobilization. It focuses primarily on opposition to ongoing wars, invasions, military attacks and colonial occupations, as well as on demilitarization and building a culture of peace. While some movements work within their societies, there is also cooperation between movements from occupying and occupied nations, although that remains a contentious issue (see Cockburn, *ibid.*). Within this broad spectrum, ***Motherhood***, in particular, is continually a major focus and channel for mobilization the world over, and a topic for much research. At the same time, the framing of much feminist mobilization around motherhood has also been problematized (See for example, the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*).
- Over the past decades, new topics and emphases have sprung. For one, more and more attention is drawn also to the issue of ***gendered aspects of warfare*** and in particular to the topic of ***women as victims of armed conflict***. For example, feminist peace movements mobilize around gender-based violence during wars, such as Femicide/gendercide, rape or trafficking (for more details on this topic please refer to a previous SWS fact sheet: Kutz-Flamenbaum 2006).
- To address this problem, ***participation of women in peace and justice efforts*** has become a global priority, emphasizing the links between gender equality, development and peace. Some of these efforts led, in 2000, to *UN Security Council Resolution [UNSCR] 1325*, which recognizes the gendered aspects of armed conflict and calls for the inclusion (mainstreaming) of gender perspective and of women in peacekeeping efforts and post-conflict negotiation, repatriation, resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction. A decade later, various obstacles still hinder the successful implementation of the resolution. Critiques claim that the inherent logic of the resolution cannot challenge war-waging institutions and warfare.

Nevertheless the resolution remains a major avenue for mobilization and draws continuous support, efforts and resources from politicians and activists (Anderlini et al., 2010).

- Another important contemporary trend in feminist mobilization is the development of broad and holistic *re-definitions of peace and security* to include personal, environmental, economic and political security, security from gender-based-violence, nuclear disarmament and even democracy and full citizenship. A concept widely used today in relation to these types of redefinitions is *Human Security*, first coined in the UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report<sup>1</sup>. The UN has continued to promote this concept through the work of various agencies, mainly the Human Security Unit. This notion also enjoys growing interest among academic circles, expressed in the number of published works, research grants, scholarships and conferences. Feminist peace organizations, on their part, have taken on themselves the monitoring of the status of threats to Human Security and its advancement using public advocacy, outreach and education to raise awareness and by promoting “freedom from want and freedom from fear” on the ground (Kaldor and Beebe 2011, Sutton et al. 2008).

### **Channels for Mobilization**

There is a plethora of channels for feminist peace mobilization, including: Non-Governmental Organizations, activist groups, local, regional and global networks and coalitions and more.

A relatively overlooked area of feminist peace mobilization is *financing*. Feminist grant making agencies have a pivotal influence on – often through dialogical relations with – activist organizations, expressed in the latter’s priorities, agendas and choice of discursive frameworks. Several big feminist foundations have an enduring commitment to supporting feminist peace initiatives, and through their own grantees networks they build ties among activists and organizations. Importantly, most grants flow from the global North to the global South. There are also important Southern foundations invested in this area, however even some of their own resources are donated by Northern funds.

*New media* offer various opportunities and tools for exchanging information and open up new options for researchers (see Christensen 2009). These developments further foster more communication across regions as well as greater visibility to voices from the world’s periphery on the one hand, but at the same time persistent inequalities of infrastructure and the cultural hegemony of the Net (mainly the prevalent use of English as well as other colonial languages) reinforce global gaps in accessibility to resources and representation (Scott 2001).

**The UN** has responded to and driven much of the processes of feminist peace mobilization in the past decades. The launching, in January 2011, of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, or **UN-Women**, opens new channels for mobilization and alters others. As this new development is still under way, its anticipated global effect is yet to be studied and discussed.

### **Strategies**

Feminist peace strategies range from direct action through humanitarian and relief work, to research, education and advocacy. Several current trends in mobilization worth noting. First, perhaps, is the *growing cooperation among feminist peace movements from across the globe* through coalition building, joint campaigns and conferences. Second, feminist peace organizers *work closely in cooperation with various other movements*: feminist, peace, social justice, LGBTQIA, environmental, religious movements and others. Third, while some groups work towards *specific policy goals*, many others try to highlight issues of *symbolic reproduction* by focusing on research, outreach, education, media and art. Lastly, there are also trends that appear contradictory, such as working with military organizations, on the one hand, versus conscientious and political objection to military conscription, on

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<sup>1</sup> Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security. *United Nations Development Programs*. Retrieved January 31, 2011 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>

the other (see Elster and Sørensen, 2010). These demonstrate the *diversity in ideological visions* and interpretations of feminisms and of 'peace'.

### **Political responses to the work of feminist peace movements**

Few *women politicians*' careers evolved directly out of involvement with feminist peace movements or the latter's support for them. Probably the most notable is Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Various international organizations, as well as national and local initiatives make constant efforts to bring together feminists from civil-society movements and organizations with women in political office in order to create an affinity of interests among them. Once in office, however, many women politicians, regardless of their background, express sympathy to and support for the work of feminist peace activists and try to collaborate with them on some level.

There are many success stories of feminists mobilizing movements for peace. Several of those have received world recognition as *Nobel Peace Prize Awardees*. Yet many feminist peace movements the world over face *repression* by different regimes, governments and other military and political organizations. It is sometimes difficult for activists and for researchers to know whether feminist peace movements are threatened because of their *feminist* agenda, or owing to their work against war and militarism; are these activists persecuted qua feminist activists, or qua peace activists? Either way, the fact remains that feminist peace activists are subjected to legal and physical persecution and to public demise. This is true for activists working within their own societies and especially so for those working against foreign political entity, under conditions of colonialism and occupations.

### **References: Books and Articles**

#### Motivations and Explanations for Feminist Peace Mobilization

- Cockburn, Cynthia. 2007. *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis*. London: Zed Books
- Elshtain, Jean. 1987. *Women and War*. The Harvester Press, Sussex.
- Enloe, Cynthia. 2007. *Globalization and Militarism: Feminist Make the Link*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield
- 2000a (1989). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Berkeley & London, University of California Press, Second Edition.
- 2000b *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Hartsock, Nancy. 1989. "Masculinity, Heroism and the Making of War", in: Harris, Adrienne and Ynestra King (eds.) *Rocking the Ship of State: towards a feminist peace politics*. Boulder CO: Westview Press
- Ruddick, Sara. 1989. *Maternal thinking: toward a politics of peace*. Boston : Beacon Press

#### Issues: resistance to war, motherhood, gendered aspects of warfare, UN1325 and Human Security.

- Anderlini, Sanam, John Tirman, Cerue Garlo, Shyamala Gomez, Suraiya Kamaruzzaman, Turid Smith Polfus, Elena Rey and Lina Zedriga. 2010. "What the Women Say: Participation and UNSCR 1325: A Case Study Assessment" the *International Civil Society Action Network and the MIT Center for International Studies*. Retrieved January 31, 2011 ([http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport\\_10\\_2010.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/WomenReport_10_2010.pdf)).
- Elster, Ellen and Majken Sørensen (eds.). 2010. *Women and Conscientious Objection - An Anthology*. War Resisters International. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.wri-irg.org/pubs/WomenCOs>)

- Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement: Mothering, Violence, Militarism, War and Social Justice*, Spring/Summer 2010, 1:1
- Kaldor, Mary and Shannon Beebe 2011. *The Ultimate Weapon is No Weapon: Human Security and the New Rules of War and Peace*. New-York: PublicAffairs
- Kutz-Flamenbaum, Rachel. 2006. "The Gendered Impact of War", *Sociologists for Women in Society: Fact Sheet*. Retrieved January 31, 2011  
([http://www.socwomen.org/socactivism/fall\\_06\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.socwomen.org/socactivism/fall_06_factsheet.pdf))
- Sutton, Barbara, Sandra Morgen and Julie Novkov (eds.) 2008. *Security Disarmed: Critical Perspectives on Gender, Race and Militarization*, Rutgers University Press

### Channels for Mobilization: New Media

- Christensen, Wendy. 2009. "Technological boundaries: Defining the personal and the political in military mothers' online support forums.", *Women's Studies Quarterly: Special Issue on Technology*, Spring/Summer, 37:1&2, pp 146-166
- Scott, Anne. 2001 "(In)forming politics: processes of feminist activism in the information age", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 24:3/4, pp 409-421

### Other Teaching Resources

**Course Material:** These links provide syllabi, teaching materials, reports and analysis.

- The Boston Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights. Retrieved January 31, 2011  
(<http://www.genderandsecurity.umb.edu/>)
- Gender and Women's Studies for Africa's Transformation. Retrieved January 31, 2011  
(<http://www.gwsafrica.org/teaching-resources/gender-conflict-peace/course-outline>)

### **International Agencies, Think Tanks, Research Institutions dedicated to Human Security:**

These links provide databases, reports and information on the state of human security around the world.

- Human Security Gateway. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/>)
- Human Security Report Project. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.hsrgroup.org/>)
- Hunt Alternatives Fund, the Institute for Inclusive Security. Retrieved January 31, 2011.  
([http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/7\\_the\\_initiative\\_for\\_inclusive\\_security.cfm](http://www.huntalternatives.org/pages/7_the_initiative_for_inclusive_security.cfm))
- Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Retrieved January 31, 2011  
(<http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/publications/>)
- United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Human Security Unit.  
Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://ochaonline.un.org/humansecurity/tabid/2212/Default.aspx>).

### **International Organizations and Feminist Foundations:** links to global feminist peace initiatives

- The Association for Women's Rights In Development (AWID). Retrieved January 31 2011  
(<http://www.awid.org>)
- The Global Fund for Women. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org/>)
- Mama Cash. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.mamacash.org/>)
- The Nobel Women's Initiative. Retrieved January 31, 2011 (<http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/>)