



# Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO, Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.

## Statement for Human Rights Day

### Introduction

The 10<sup>th</sup> December is Human Rights Day and the culmination of the 16 days of activism, the theme of which this year has been militarism and the link to violence against women.

WILPF has been making these links since its foundation in 1915 and our critique is sadly as relevant now as it was then, it's just that the context and the tools to address the issues are different. This year will hardly be recalled as the year when great strides were made to address militarism, violence against women and the absolute necessity of upholding human rights, on the contrary. From the attack on a humanitarian flotilla, through the gendered horrors of the DRC, to the exposures made by WikiLeaks and the disgraceful and possibly illegal responses from the leading democracies, 2010 will not be a great year in the annals of human rights protections.

Since May, WILPF has made public statements and analysis to draw the threads of these issues together, not just to criticize but to give attention to the legal frameworks which exist to try to make sure that we move away from violent conflict as a pretext for security, and to give support to ways in which that quantum shift can be made.

- We have done it by linking the vast sums spent on arms and on prosecuting war,
- We have done it by looking at the legal frameworks and how to peacefully invoke the doctrine of the responsibility to protect to prevent conflict rather than intervene when it is too late,
- We have done it by comparing expenditures which could have been used on peaceful, progressive policies to realize the MDG's and instead have been wasted in conflicts,
- We have done it by showing how looking at the rights of women as part of SCR 1325 implementation could be used as a mechanism for early warning, for more effective participation and protection and linked that to the obvious need to control the arms that prevent this from happening,
- We have done this by looking at terrorism and why it emerges,
- We have done it to recall the support needed for the people of Palestine and how new thinking must take the process forward and that nothing has credibility if women are not at the table.

WILPF will continue to articulate these links and demand that actions be taken by States to uphold international law, to disarm, to divert resources away from arms, and in the words of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action "reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments", with the purpose of increasing the amount of available resources to inter alia human security, renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure, and to re-define security as human security and uphold human rights.

### **Relevant extracts from our statements**

Despite a global economic crisis, military expenditure, arms production and arms transfer have continued to increase, totaling an estimated 1531 billion dollars in 2009 (Stockholm Peace Research Institute).

Armed conflict and the constant threat of war or terrorism have become both a cause of and response to this growing militarism. While military expenditures increase every year, investments in conflict resolution, peace building and development lags far behind, making the links between military expenditures, arms trade, violent conflict and the reduction of available resources for social and economic development and gender equality clear.

Read more here: [Statement on counter-terrorism](#)

Armed conflict and the threat of war impedes development by upsetting social programmes, education, transportation, business, and tourism. It prevents economic stability and sustainable livelihoods, and absorbs vast amounts of funding that could otherwise be spent on human security, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Funds reserved for development initiatives are increasingly spent on emergency relief and rehabilitation operations to clean up after violent conflict.

Read more here: [Statement on the MDGs](#)

The high level of militarism is inextricably linked to the reported human rights violations and the failure of peace processes. This is especially evident in the Israel-Palestine conflict. In 2009, Israel's military expenditures reached a total of \$US 14,309 billion. The United States is the primary source of Israel's weapons arsenal, as U.S military aid accounts for more than twenty percent of Israel's total defense budget. Consequently, this militarization occurs with the consent of other states. States that export arms and weapons technologies without actions to prevent their use in the commission of violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law, or without appropriate response, should be considered as complicit. The ability of Israel to continue its occupation, the blockade and its military interventions would be severely curtailed without the omissions of other states. It is crucial that the international community and bodies of the United Nations take coherent, practical steps to urge Israel to fulfill its international human rights obligations and implement all UN resolutions pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Read more here: [Gaza and flotilla](#), [Prevention paper](#), [Statement on Palestine](#).

New thinking must take the process forward. It is necessary to re think who should be at the peace negotiating table and use different minds to the ones who created the problem. This year was the 10th anniversary of SCR 1325. Where are the women when it comes to discussing peace in the region? It is time to involve civil society and particularly women. Participation in existing structures is a pre condition of women having a real political voice, and hence power, to prevent conflict. Research indicates that where the level of women in governance falls below 6% the potential for conflict increases exponentially.

Read more here: [Prevention outcome document](#), [Protection outcome document](#), [Letter from Madeleine Rees to Ambassadors on four priorities](#).

It should be clear by now that continued investment in militarism does not make the world a safer place. Military responses have rarely been successful in stopping or preventing terrorism. Instead we

need to address the underlying causes of it. Economic and social development, including international and cooperation and assistance, can play a key role in reducing support for terrorism by preventing the conditions that give rise to violence in general, and to terrorism in particular. Without concerted efforts towards the realization of all human rights, for all peoples, it is impossible to achieve international security. It is therefore necessary to address and consider the links between military expenditure, arms trade, violent conflict, and the reduction of available resources for social and economic development. Weapons cannot address the main threats people all over the world are facing today, such as natural disasters, increasing food prices, and lack of adequate health care, education, and a clean environment.

Read more here: [Statement on the MDGs](#), [Statement on WikiLeaks Afghanistan](#)

WILPF remains deeply concerned about the high level of militarization in the world, and believe it is crucial that the international community and bodies of the United Nations take coherent, practical steps to urge states to fulfill its international human rights obligations and implement all UN resolutions. We need a new, non-military approach, to address inequalities that fuel terrorist activities, diverts resources from social and economic development, and take into account the impact of protection and promotion of women's human rights. Instead of continued increase in military expenditures, we must take action to fight poverty, inequality and instability. Only such measures will establish true peace and security for all humans.