

12 November 2016

**To the UNSC Chairperson**

**To the UNSC member Ambassadors**

**Subject: Supporting Peace Efforts and Inclusion of Yemeni Women**

We take this opportunity to communicate that we value your efforts in seeking an end to the devastating war in Yemen and supporting its stability, by resuming the political process, supporting the Yemeni citizens to reach a peaceful transition of power, conducting a free, democratic, and transparent elections, that will lead to state building based on citizenship, justice, equality, and rights protection, as per the outcomes of the national dialogue, GCC initiative, and UNSC relevant resolutions including 2216, in addition to, contribute to seeking transparent and independent investigation to the human rights violations and abuses, and justice for the victims, through forming an international inquiry.

However, we would also like also to share our disappointment, as we see Yemeni women, who bare exacerbated impact of this ugly war, as direct victims, or being exploited through armed recruitment or deprived from their resources to support the war efforts, while their role in making peace is underappreciated and are being increasingly marginalized when it comes to meaningful participation at the negotiation table. While the UN have played a key role in supporting women's participation during the transitional period, we see a hesitation when it comes to calls for a fair representation of women now.

As such, stemming from our faith in the UN, as a sponsor of meaningful participation of women in the political process, based on UNSC resolutions 1325 and 2242, and based on our believe in the nations interest and justice for affected communities, we urge you to:

- Enhance the participation of Yemeni women, youth, and South representation at all levels of the political and peace process in accordance with the NDC outcomes.
- Provide necessary international guarantees to end the war and initiate the transitional phase based on local, regional, and international agreed reference agreements.
- Focus on reconstruction and economic recovery, and support Yemeni women in this regards, specially those heading households, including support to social protection.
- Emphasize a gender responsive transitional justice and initiate immediately reparation for victims, and hold human rights violators and abusers accountable, including political isolation, fair prosecution, and end impunity.

We have attached the Yemeni Women Peace and Security Agenda as per UNSC resolution 1325, hoping that the international committee will commit to achieve and realize those rightful demands.

Sincerely,

The Women Undersigned Below

CC: G18 Peace Process Sponsors, Excellency Ambassadors

CC: UN General Secretary and his Envoy to Yemen.

**Yemeni Women Agenda for Peace and Security**

**A. Background:**

The Yemeni women leaders, who visited Kuwait to support the third round of peace talks between Yemeni warring parties, put out a few [messages](#) for the national, regional, and international community last May 2016. Additionally, the civil society organizations including women led organizations developed a [statement](#) that was presented at the World Humanitarian Summit last June. The messages and demands in both have been redefined through a consultative process with other women in Yemen and outside Yemen to reflect their opinion and widen the spectrum for inclusivity and voice. The messages are categorized under UNSC resolution 1325 main thematic areas are as following:

- 1- Prevention of Conflict and Protection of Women.
- 2- Women Political Participation in Peace and Security.
- 3- Early Recovery and Reconstruction.

#### **B. Status of Yemeni Women:**

The war has led to exacerbating an existing protracted humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The situation is devastating with women and children being victims of hunger, malnutrition, lack of medications, and collapse of health services. The gender-based violence has increased by 70%. Yemeni women are subject to different types of violence including physical, sexual abuse and assault, psychological, deprivation of resources, forced and child marriages, forced displacement and relocation, indiscriminate shelling and air bombarding, explosive mines; there has also been an increase in militarization of women and girls. The complete collapse of the legislative system and lack of protection laws, as well as, disregard of international humanitarian law by all warring parties magnify the devastating situation. Additionally, the war has affected delivery of basic services including access to water, electricity, health care, and education. There are half a million pregnant women risking complication during delivery amid collapse of health services. There is also increased mobility restrictions due to suspension of commercial flights that prevent seeking better medical facilities outside Yemen.

The economic circumstances and livelihoods for women have been affected greatly. There is increased poverty, specially among women and children, leading to a catastrophic famine, addressed poorly through humanitarian response, exacerbated by siege, and absence of social protection and social safety nets. Since 2015, the Social Welfare Fund suspended its support to 1.5 million beneficiaries including 43% women. Additionally, Civil servants salaries have been either interrupted or stopped completely for months. Vulnerable groups of women such as retirees and other civil servants have been deprived from their income. Rural women vulnerability increased as they are deprived from any form of social protection and social security interventions and health care.

Women who are advocating for human rights and political activism and women representing minorities including religious minorities are subject to violence including arbitrary detention, imposing travel bans and

restricting mobility, physical violence, deprivation of resources, breaking into their house, amid absence of protection laws. Moreover, Yemeni women mothers organized themselves into an alliance to call to release their sons, where faced with violence during their peaceful protests, and their demands were not seriously addressed.

Throughout the last decades, donor countries could not commit to its development assistance for Yemen, and humanitarian response plans remained underfunded, which gives a disastrous indicator for early recovery and reconstruction, which will lead to more suffering and conflict threats. As we see, post conflict areas in Yemen and those that have not been affected suffer from absence of basic services, fragile security situation, spread of corruption, lack of strategic local planning , and collapse of the legislative system.

We emphasize about the importance of transitional justice, which was discussed during the national dialogue as a main theme, however, the political discussions failed to pass the transitional justice law, a draft law that lacked adequate gender responsiveness. Additionally, the implementation track for transitional justice including the different reparation funds announced were not supported technically or financially.

The flow of arms into Yemen hinders the peace process. Yemen before the war ranked 2 out of 178 countries in terms of number of privately owned firearms per 100 people, with 61% of households in possession of at least 1-2 guns, and 84% of homicide was related to gun violence in 2012. Arms transfer continue to be supplied to warring parties in Yemen hindering the peace process. There are countries, which are member UNSC states that continue to supply the warring parties with weapons, while also claiming they are sponsoring the peace process, while other states continue to fuel this war through supporting the militia.

Calls for cessation of hostilities in Yemen are generally not respected, Yemen is under chapter 7, which gives mandate to UNSC for peace keeping, international de-escalation monitoring, buffer zones over populated towns and cities. However, these options have not been explored.

We express our frustration about UNSC 2216, as it was not gender responsive, and women and children priorities were not put forward at the peace agenda. The resolution only mentioned women once in reference to their participation when resuming the political process, and failed to reference UNSC 1325, 2242, and other relevant resolutions, that form basis for committing to women, peace, and security agenda. Additionally, the leaked new UNSC resolution sponsored by the UK, is unfortunately repeating the same mistake.

In General, the Yemeni women have been failed, they are victims of this war, or exploited as fighters, and are not respected as a partners in peace building, and their place at the negotiation table remains vacant, with symbolic representation rather than meaningful. This is evident as the conflict negotiation parties did not adhere to the 30% representation for women as per the GCC initiative mechanism and NDC outcomes. There are only 3 women out of 26 members are among the negotiating delegates, those are usually representing the interest of the delegates they are affiliated to. Additionally, their role is increasingly limited when the parties are not meeting face-to-face and shuttle diplomacy is in place.

Additionally, women participation in track II initiatives are not adequate and are increasingly leading to reinforcing negative stereotypes about women's roles as secondary instead of respecting their leadership role.

As such, we the women undersigned below, request that the Yemeni women leadership role be respected, and bring forward the following demands:

### C. Women, Peace, & Security Demands:

#### 1- Prevention of Conflict and Protection of Women:

- **Support cessation of hostilities**, at land, sea, and air, lifting the internal and external embargo, ceasing indiscriminate attacks and civilians targeting, immediately conduct independent, transparent investigation, hold human rights violators and abusers accountable, end impunity, and immediately open safe channels for relief. The UN should urgently work to pressure the warring parties to reach a fair and comprehensive peace.
- **Support for GBV comprehensive interventions**: through establishing a comprehensive system to support GBV survivors, including shelter services, psychosocial support, and legal aid. We also urge to improve, activate, and neutralize social services including health and education, as well as, improve access to water and electricity.
- **Economic empowerment and improved livelihoods** of women is critically needed. Yemeni women completely lost social protection system. As such, we demand immediate implementation for Programmes and interventions to address this economic empowerment and improving livelihoods, specifically, support to women led private sector initiatives, small scale industries, social entrepreneurship. We also urge for supporting civil servants salaries and support social protection programmes and safety nets, specially targeting women, children, and special needs persons, considering establishing urgent funds to address this gap if required. We also call for the support of internally displaced women through providing permanent shelters, social protection, and legal aid to substitute their legal papers.
- **Gender Responsive and Inclusive Humanitarian Plans**: The humanitarian plan remains under funded and interventions remain reactive instead of proactive and sustainable. Additionally, the plans are not developed in an inclusive way where women voices are heard. As such, we call in for activating the humanitarian accountability framework to improve transparency and participation, to contribute to the planning process for humanitarian response plans and focus on sustainable relief interventions.
- **Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Political Activists, and minorities**: We call on the provision of supporting women rights defenders, political activists, and minorities and improving their access to protection programmes including services for relocation, social security aid, legal aid...etc.
- **Disarmament and Arms Transfers**:
  - Arms Flow: We call in the international and regional stakeholders to play a real role in mediation to reach a just and permanent peace, by suspending the flow of arms, seriously addressing disarmament of fighters, demobilization, and reintegration.
  - Ending child recruitment in armed conflict: We urge to place this issue at the center of negotiations as per UNSC 2216. We also urge lifting the suspension that the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 suggested on the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDRs) programmes targeting child combatants, ensuring their gender responsiveness, as well as, improve education services in areas with high recruitment of children as prevention mechanism.

- Cessation of hostilities, de-escalation, peacekeeping: We urge the UN to play its role in facilitating international guarantees for de-escalation and monitoring, in addition, to support cessation of hostilities and buffer zones in populated towns and cities.
- Releasing of arbitrary detained, forcefully disappeared persons: We urge for protecting the mothers of detainees and addressing their calls, in addition to, activating the role of ICRC to facilitate this process including granted full access.
- Media and amplifying voices of peace: the role of media has so far been negative and provoking violence, and women voices have been absent. There is a need to support women led media initiative that promote peace and amplify the needs of society.

## **2- Participation in Peacebuilding and security**

### **- Representation of women:**

- The political process in Yemen is being guided by UNSC resolution 2216, that emphasize the adhering to the GCC implementation mechanism and outcomes of the national dialogue (NDC). We urge UN to commit to WPS agenda through integrating meaningful participation in the upcoming draft and including UNSC resolutions 1325,2242, and other relevant WPS resolutions clearly in the new draft.
- We affirm the importance of committing to 30% representation of women and seek its serious implementation according to criteria including competency, integrity, respect of human rights, and considering fair representation of Southern women (50%), and young women (20%), at all levels of political leadership, including the committees formed as result of the peace negotiations such as the de-escalation, security and military, and any government formations..etc.
- We urge the support of women participation in track I negotiations through supporting an independent women delegate.
- We urge for the support of women participation in track II consultations, through activating the role of specialized INGOs in WPS, including activating the role of the UN WPS informal expert working group to improve the effectiveness and competency of this process.
- We urge that women and children priorities are at the center of peace talks, and that the agenda is more gender responsive, as well as, discussing south women priorities in terms of discussing a just resolution of South issue.

### **3- Early recovery and Reconstruction:**

- Ensure that specialized women are included in the early recover and reconstruction process, including the planning and implementation phases.
- Returning of State Institutions: the international community must ensure that state institutions are returned to the state and services are activated starting with service delivery institutions.
- Local Stability Plans: the international and regional stakeholders must support the local authorities in Yemen technically and financially in establishing local stability plans. Those plans must be gender responsive. The plans must cover issues related to coordinating humanitarian response, reactivating the legislative system, improving social services, building capacity of local civil servants.
- Local mutual accountability frameworks must be established that are gender responsive to improve coordination among different stakeholders and address corruption.
- Developing a joint reconstruction and early recovery fund to commit pledges and secure necessary funding for the process in Yemen. Today, the deteriorating of services is seen everywhere whether in zones suffering from conflict or areas in post conflict.
- Gender Responsive Transitional Justice:
  - We affirm the importance to support the process of developing the transitional justice law, to lead into a real national reconciliation.
  - We call for supporting gender responsiveness reparation programmes and compensation for all victims and their families.
  - We call for developing an emergency plan for prosecution and ending impunity.
  - We urge for supporting the reviving of the legislative system and rehabilitation of prisons.
  - We urge to form immediately gender-balanced transitional justice authority.

### **D. Implementation Mechanism:**

- **We call on the international community to respond to this statement with applicable commitments and support, through immediately supporting our calls to cease fire and hostilities, support the humanitarian relief and ensure fair access to all governorates.**
- **We call on the international community to support women inclusive peace process committing to the 30% representation in all political and leadership spaces, in addition to, supporting women inclusion in Track II consultations through a competent process that include INGOs and UN Informal Expert Working Group on WPS.**
- **Ensure that the members of the negotiations, and UN mediation mission, have information on mainstreaming gender to peace and security agenda, understand WPS international commitments, and have gender experts as advisors.**
- **We call on the international community to support the Yemeni women to develop a national action plan for 1325 financially and technically.**