

Feminist Visions of Peace, Justice and Transformation

Spring 2012



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Hanna's House Ezine. We hope you will find it relevant and interesting and that we can engage you in a conversation on the feminist issues that we are passionate about.

This season's focus is on the subject of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), and ideas on how we can implement the resolution throughout Ireland and the positive impact it could have on women who have been affected by conflict.

We have thought-provoking contributions from Andrée Murphy of Relatives for Justice writing on the subject of **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the need for spaces where women can reflect on the impact of conflict on their lives.** Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, TD and member of **the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement Committee** talking about its work and relevance to north south cooperation. Melanie Hoewer, of the UNSCR 1325 Consultative Group and UCD presents findings from her recent PhD thesis on **Voices and visions on women peace and security** and the importance of the inclusion of women's diverse experiences of conflict in National Action Plans.

What is UNSCR 1325 and why does it matter?

UNSCR 1325 is a groundbreaking resolution which was adopted by the Security Council in 2000 to highlight the different experiences that women and men have of conflict and therefore the gender perspectives that need to be incorporated into peace building, peacekeeping and post conflict reconstruction. For example, women are more likely to experience economic harms and increased caring responsibilities within the home and the community; they are also usually excluded from peace talks and negotiations. Men are more likely to be directly involved in the fighting; to be imprisoned; and to be the decision-makers and negotiators of peace talks and agreements.

A recent report by the UN Secretary General to the Security Council notes that the levels of women's participation in preventative efforts and other key decision-making processes related to peace and security remain unacceptably low. Weaknesses in security, legal and justice institutions continue to present serious challenges to the safety and security of women and girls in many post-conflict settings.

UNSCR 1325 focuses on the '4 Ps' and the '2 Rs' which are: women's role in the prevention of conflict; the protection of women and girls from specific harms; the participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles, in particular women's involvement in peace negotiations and agreements; and gender perspectives to be included in the implementation of programmes by the United Nations, civil society organisations and other peace building institutions. Women's rehabilitation and recovery needs and the monitoring and evaluating of governments' commitments are also key elements of the resolution. www.peacewomen.org has more detailed information about the resolution.



Left to right: Deirdre Conlon, Communities Connect and Sandra McEllen TD. Dara Larkin, Communities Connect, Phil Killeen, Glencree Peace & Reconciliation and Joanna Tuffy TD & Chair of the Implementation Committee on the Good Friday Agreement who all attended the Hanna's House Parliamentary briefing on UNSCR 1325 on 30th November 2011 in Buswell's Hotel Dublin.

National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325

National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325 outline a government's commitment and political will to include the experiences and needs of women affected by conflict into public policy. However, the British National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325, which was updated in 2010, does not include any references to the conflict on these islands.

The Irish NAP on UNSCR 1325 launched in November 2011 has two specific references to the conflict in relation to: 'Providing technical and financial support to initiatives that foster exchange and cross-learning among women's civil society organisations in Ireland, within and across the North and South and on a cross-community basis as appropriate focused on promoting women's equal and effective participation in political life and decision making' (2011: 19) and to: 'Engage with appropriate Northern Ireland authorities to encourage development of policies and measures consistent with the aims of UNSCR 1325, in consultation with civil society organisations' (2011: 13).

Hanna's House Position on UNSCR 1325

On the 30th November 2011, as part of a series of discussions, Hanna's House met with members of civil society and academia to outline our position on UNSCR 1325 and to work together to brief parliamentarians in the Dáil on the resolution and the ways it could be implemented throughout Ireland building on the National Action Plan. As the NAP is a living document and will be regularly updated we asked parliamentarians to encourage the Irish government to:

1. Make a detailed commitment to ongoing peace building work with women who have experienced the conflict on this island.
2. Ensure that Ministerial Councils (the British-Irish Council, British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, North/South Council and the North-South Parliamentary Forum) cooperate on issues related to women's equality and human rights as laid out in UNSCR 1325. In particular, the resolution needs to be an integral part of the work of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA).
3. The NAP needs to acknowledge that victims of the conflict live in both jurisdictions and therefore co-operation between the two jurisdictions is needed to implement UNSCR 1325 on this island.
4. The implementation of the Good Friday Agreement is ongoing and UNSCR 1325 now needs to be woven into it. Possible vehicles for this are the development of an all island bill of rights and an all island civic forum.
5. It is our belief that if UNSCR 1325 had been in place at the time of the Good Friday Agreement it would have improved women's agency and presence in the ongoing peace process. The innovative three-strand approach of the Good Friday Agreement is recognized as integral to its success. These three strands involve cooperation and agreement across:
 - Internal democratic arrangements within Northern Ireland;
 - Relationships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland;
 - Relationships between Britain and Ireland.

Hanna's House propose that such a three-strand approach be adopted in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 throughout Ireland.



L to R: Phil Killeen of the Women's Programme, Glencree Peace & Reconciliation, with Senator Ivana Bacik, and Dr Melanie Hoewer reviewing Ireland's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the need for spaces where women can reflect on the impact of conflict on their lives

By Andrée Murphy of Relatives for Justice

In December 2010 as part of the Irish Government's consultation on UN Resolution 1325 NGOs Relatives for Justice and WAVE brought together a group of women directly affected by the conflict to discuss what impact the resolution may have on their needs.

It quickly became clear that these women, all directly bereaved, injured, carers of those injured or ex-political prisoners had never before had the space to consider how they experienced conflict as women. It was also clear that the women felt they had no voice in either securing or developing appropriate services which would meet their long-term needs as women affected by conflict.

High on the lists of the issues identified was the historic lack of appropriate trauma based therapeutic support. Other than that provided through the grass roots victims sector it was clear that women had been isolated and disempowered by statutory and other services that had neither met nor tried to understand the long-term emotional and psychological harms and conflict-related traumas that affected and altered their lives. Further it was clear that this trauma did not reside in the one generation who had been directly impacted. There was clear evidence of significant trans-generational trauma, the implications of which are clearly not appreciated by local health services.

The firsthand information provided by these women was evidence of the sparse understanding of the lived effects of trauma during the conflict – unfortunately while it is getting better it is still limited. Diagnoses of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are still very difficult for civilians to access; symptoms of PTSD are treated with long-term anti-depressants and sleeping tablets – rather than the root cause being addressed. There is better support for those who are/were current and former state actors in terms of diagnosis and support but again for many diagnosis can take years. Years lost for those who suffer, and the families who attempt to support them.

With the rates of PTSD the highest “12-month and lifetime PTSD among all comparable studies undertaken across the world, including in other areas of conflict” and the total numbers being in the region of 18,000 adults this is obviously a challenge for the state's mental health provision. And this is just the North, and does not include those affected by the conflict who reside south of the border.

Sadly, this recent research does not include a gender analysis of these figures. Women will clearly be disadvantaged in any study. Military activists were largely men, consequently more men will receive appropriate diagnoses and support. Civilian women however will visit GPs and are likely to be wrongly diagnosed – many are still on long-term often life-diminishing medication. This is not to dismiss the role of local GPs during the conflict who, in the absence of other support, supported many women to survive the horror of prolonged conflict and multiple traumas.



Left to right: Andrée Murphy, Aisling Swaine, Joanna McMinn (back), Melanie Hoewer and Mary Lou McDonald TD; and with Maureen O'Sullivan TD.

This is not a Six County issue. Women affected by conflict, suffering the emotional, psychological and physical effects of trauma, and supporting their family members similarly displaying the symptoms and lived effects of trans-generational trauma, live on both sides of our border.

Indeed those displaced and those who experienced the conflict south of the border face a compounding isolation, and a health service even less equipped to support the needs of conflict related trauma.

This massive societal issue must be acknowledged as a transitional justice issue as those women who suffer are less able to participate equally in any post-conflict development unless they receive appropriate acknowledgement and support. Fairly much what Resolution 1325 aims to address.

Footnotes:

1. 'The economic impact of post traumatic stress disorder in Northern Ireland, Ferry, F et al, Northern Ireland Centre for Trauma and Transformation, November 2011, Summary of key findings.
2. Ibid.

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Work of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

By Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD, Labour Party TD, Dublin North Central

On Thursday, 30th June 2011, I took part in the first meeting of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement since the General Election. Having already been appointed vice-chairperson of the wide-ranging Jobs, Social Protection and Education Committee, I was unsure as to the workload and the scope of the Good Friday Committee. However, it did not take me long to realise the enormous and critical role the Committee plays in addressing major cross-border and cross-community issues.

Over the course of the summer, Members began drafting a comprehensive work programme for the remainder of 2011. Upon completion, one of the items on the agenda involved an official visit to Belfast to see the Peace Wall in Alexandra Park and to meet with the various community leaders and organisations in the area forging better relations and cooperation between nationalist and unionist groups. It was truly inspiring to be able to discuss with residents, from both traditions, the role that the Peace Wall has played in bringing people together and diffusing old tensions. Interestingly, in September, a gate was opened which provides residents with access throughout the day signifying the improved relations between communities.

As one might expect, cross-border and cross-community relations have been complex matters for decades and one of the key aspects of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was to improve relations through improved dialogue on policing, communications, infrastructure, etc. However, sport is also playing an invaluable role in this regard. One of the most interesting sessions took place when the role of sporting organisations in combating sectarianism was discussed. Representatives from the IFA, IRFU and the GAA outlined how sporting organisations are tackling sectarianism, racism and discrimination by attracting individuals from the various communities into sport. In a remarkable presentation, these representatives reaffirmed my belief that sport can play an invaluable part in achieving progress and building stronger, more cohesive communities.

In November, the Committee welcomed members from the Parades Commission to discuss developments of parades and celebrations which took place over the summer. Recommendations were to continue with cross community coordination and planning in order to ensure that parades remain peaceful. Although skirmishes were reported on the 12th July, all reports acknowledged that these incidents were by no means as violent or hostile as years previous.



Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD and Dr Catherine O'Rourke of Hanna's House at the Parliamentary Briefing on UNSCR 1325 in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin.

Whilst the Good Friday Committee places a great emphasis on the looking forward to the future and healing old cross-border and cross-community wounds, Members also believed it was critical to study issues surrounding the so-called decade of commemorations. As a result of our meetings, we believe a new focus should ensure an all-island approach be taken to these commemorations. Over the next decade it is imperative that that citizens north and south remember major events such as WWI, the Easter Rising of 1916 and the signing of the Ulster Covenant. I believe this approach will not just seek to acknowledge key moments in the history of Ireland but it will also signify a more modern, mature approach to all-island relations.

Just last week, the Fine Gael and Labour coalition marked a year office by stating that even though progress had been made over the past twelve months, a lot more remains to be done if we are to get our fiscal house in order and put this country back on the path to prosperity. This sentiment of acknowledging progress but always looking forward is one I would echo. The people of this island have come a long way over the last fourteen years. However, it is absolutely essential that we never go back to times which were blighted by terror, fear and uncertainty. As a Member of the Good Friday Agreement Committee I hope to play a small role in ensuring that those days never return by enhancing and promoting cross-border and cross-community relations in areas such as trade, security and sport.

The Committee has also discussed the role that women can play in peace and conflict resolutions under UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Women's experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland is something which must be addressed and as a group they have an indispensable part to play in the peace building process. The Government's Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 is a starting point to ensure that women have a mechanism to participate in this area.

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Left to right: Ciara Conway TD and Dr Joanna McMinn. Emma Rogan of Hanna's House and Senator Katherine Zappone at the parliamentary briefing in Buswell's Hotel, Dublin.

Voices and visions on women, peace and security in my work

By Dr Melanie Hoewer of the UNSCR 1325 Consultative Group and UCD

“My energy I gain from the others that made me the woman I am, I am not only a wife, a mother, a daughter, an aunt, I am someone who organises in the community, I am a teacher, a food grower, I am also a grower of ideas and dreams, I am many women.” Bety Cariño

Addressing the complexity of women's voices and of their experiences of peace and conflict has been a central concern of my academic and activist work in the past years, which I dedicated to working about, with and for the benefit of women in Chiapas and in Northern Ireland. My own position has shifted from being an activist and project worker on human rights, peace and social justice issues to engaging in academic research on the topic of gender and identity in peace and conflict processes. Motivated by listening to, and learning from vivid discussions between indigenous and mestiza women in Chiapas, I began in 2008 a PhD project in the UCD School of Politics and International Relations looking at what happens to women's self-understandings when they mobilise against ethnic exclusion and injustice.

As part of my work, female activists shared with me their perceptions of being “Indigenous”, “being poor”, “being a woman”, “being of a certain age” etc. in periods of peace and conflict and their visions of security. Listening to and learning from women’s perceptions and positioning during episodes of contention and peace in Chiapas and in Northern Ireland reveals underlying causes for the differences in the availability of spaces for women’s voices in the public sphere post conflict. In both regions, women were actors in the ideological re-creation of the community and in the transformation of its culture. Shifts in women’s ethnic and gender perceptions during conflict are interlinked with changes in the positioning of women in this phase from the private realm into the public sphere. This becomes visible in a shift in women’s positioning towards the State, the community and the family.

However, in order to be widely accepted those shifts at the inter-subjective level of identification need to be translated into objectified, social changes in demobilisation processes. Parallels and contradictions in my findings such as the need to move beyond the ethnic boundary in order to avoid a competition between traditional and shifted gender perceptions in the public sphere and an increase in the potential for contention in the private sphere post conflict contribute a further perspective to existing analysis on women, peace and security.

This provides a direct link to UNSCR 1325, which demands the recognition of the role of women in conflict prevention, management and resolution and the inclusion of their different voices and experiences at all levels of those processes. My findings confirm the demand for a coordinated implementation of UNSCR 1325 both globally and on the island of Ireland and for the inclusion of difference. Acknowledging difference and diversity of experiences and perspectives is essential in order to address long-term issues of structural violence and exclusion.

In May this year I will begin work as a lecturer on the subject of ‘the politics of conflict and conflict resolution’ in the Institute for British Irish Studies (IBIS) in the UCD School of Politics and International Relations and I hope to continue contributing to a better understanding of the significance of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent resolutions to changing unequal gender structures and perceptions in post-conflict societies.

Being involved as an academic advisor to the Consultative Group in the development of Ireland’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 I have listened to many different visions of those involved in conflicts across the world (from Liberia to Timor L’este) and about how the aspirations of this resolution might become a reality. Following on from this question, listening to gendered voices and visions of peace and conflict to understand how to make the aspirations of UNSCR 1325 a reality for men and women on the Island of Ireland and beyond is one of the issues that I personally want to develop in my new role in IBIS.

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Left to right: Linda Kelly, Derek Nolan TD, Claire Hackett; Senator Kathryn Reilly and Claire Hackett presenting Christmas wreaths with suffragette coloured ribbons and a reminder to support Hanna’s House position on UNSCR 1325. Photographer of 1325 event: Derek Speirs.

Upcoming Hanna's House Events on UNSCR 1325

On 24th April, Hanna's House and NIWEP are co-hosting a seminar in the Equality Commission Belfast. The aim of the seminar is to create space for a conversation amongst members of civil society on UNSCR 1325 and its implementation throughout Ireland. Following on from that event we will be hosting a briefing with MLAs in Stormont, this is planned to take place in May.

Diary Date: on 5th November Hanna's House will be hosting an all-Ireland conference on UNSCR 1325 titled: **Delivering Women Peace and Security** in Croke Park, Dublin. President Higgins will launch the conference which will bring together decision makers and activists to discuss and develop transformative policies on women's involvement in peace building activities throughout Ireland.

Feminist Film and Networking Evenings

Film nights have been arranged around the country throughout May. The film **As If I Am Not There** will be screened in the Central Hotel Dublin, the evening will be co-hosted with Feminist Open Forum and will take place on Thursday 10 May. This film will also be shown in Cork and that event is being co-hosted with Cork Feminista on Tuesday 15 May.

As If I Am Not There is a story of a young woman from Sarajevo whose life is shattered the day a young soldier walks into her apartment and tells her to pack her things. Rounded up with the other women from the village and imprisoned in a warehouse in a remote region of Bosnia, she quickly learns the rules of camp life. The day she is picked out to 'entertain' the soldiers, the real nightmare begins. The film's director, **Juanita Wilson**, will be present at both screenings to facilitate a discussion about the film and to answer any questions from prospective women film makers who she is keen to encourage.

In Donegal, we are co-hosting the screening of **Miss Representation** with Women into Public Life, and in Derry the film will be screened in the Magee Campus of the University of Ulster. **Dates to be confirmed.** These are free events but donations will be gladly accepted.

This Ezine was produced by Shirley Graham, Peace Project Co-ordinator at Hanna's House. If you would like more information about any of our projects or events please contact: **Shirley@hannashouse.net** or refer to our website: www.hannashouse.net or www.Facebook.com/hannashouse.



Hanna's House Board: Back row—Joanna McMinn, Margaret Ward, Ann Hope, Catherine O'Rourke, Emma Rogan; Front row—Shirley Graham (Project Co-ordinator) Claire Hackett and Linda Kelly.