



PRIO

New Strategic Plan on Women, Peace and Security launched by Norwegian MFA

Continuation and clearer priorities from the Norwegian government in new strategic plan

PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update

Jan-Feb Issue 2011

The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO's Gender Team in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.



Ministers and panelists Jonas Gahr Støre, Erik Solheim and Grete Faremo at the launch. Photo: Hilde Wallacher

Thursday the 20th of January saw the launch of the Norwegian government's new strategic plan on women, peace and security. The plan was launched at a top-heavy event starring Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Defence Minister Grete Faremo and Development Minister Erik Solheim. The strategy is a continuation of the action plan that was adopted in 2006. This new strategy will guide the work of the Norwegian government in their efforts to implement Resolution 1325 and related policies and obligations until the end of 2013.

The Amalie Skram room at Litteraturhuset was packed beyond capacity by a mixed audience of NGO staff, researchers, military personnel and a pack of journalists with cameras big

enough to suggest that they were there primarily because Jonas Gahr Støre was on the panel. Five minutes before the launch was scheduled to start all the chairs in the room were taken, and the latecomers were bumping into the photographers along the walls, trying to keep their big winter coats under control.

The launch starts with a screening of the trailer for Abigail Disney's new documentary film project, a five-film series visualising the impact of war on women, but also women's agency in local initiatives for peace. This screening provided the audience with a valuable reminder of the relevance and crucial importance of initiatives such as Resolution 1325 that addresses the

many gendered aspects and consequences of war, conflict, and peace. This backdrop, rather than the text of the action plan itself, was also the focus of the statements given by the three ministers present.

Jonas Gahr Støre was the first to take the floor, opening with a reflection over how the characteristics of armed conflict have changed so that it is now, as he said, “more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier”. One of the main priorities in the humanitarian aspects of Norwegian foreign policy is currently to strengthen the respect for and adherence to international humanitarian law, as these norms have fallen prey to impatience and shortcuts in the discourse of the so-called “war on terror”. Støre sees the adverse effects of armed conflict on women in the wider context of how attacks on civilian populations have become commonplace and in a sense to be expected in war zones. Resolution 1325 and the obligations, policies and initiatives that builds on it is therefore in many ways part of on-going efforts to more adequately address and understand contemporary conflicts. He also took issue with the political difficulties sometimes associated with promoting norms and principles associated with women’s rights and women’s agency in the face of criticism of western paternalism. The fact that so many aspects of Resolution 1325 were championed by women and women’s groups from the South was according to Støre a testament to the vicariousness of this argument. The same could be said for how members of the Norwegian military and Norwegian aid workers have found the 1325 agenda to reflect the expressed interests and priorities of women in for example Afghanistan.

Ministers Grete Faremo and Erik Solheim emphasized similar priorities and concerns, though seen through the lenses of their respective political areas of responsibility. Faremo spoke about the importance of women in conflict

resolution, particularly the need to secure women’s ability to safely or at least as safely as possible, speak out and contribute in peace building and conflict resolution processes. She sees the involvement of women in armed forces and police forces as the flipside of this coin, leaning on the established truth that female soldiers and police officers makes it easier for civilian women to approach and interact with the army and the police. As Norwegian experiences in this regard are closely tied to the NATO-led involvement in Afghanistan, the Defence Minister expressed appreciation and pride over how the NATO high level meeting in December 2010 saw NATO agreeing to adopt Resolution 1325. However, Faremo’s views on gender perspectives in the military were not entirely without reservations, as she also commented that gender training such as awareness of 1325 was and had to be secondary to the conventional training received by Norwegian soldiers before being dispatched to international operations.



Defense Minister Grete Faremo at the launch. Photo: Hilde Wallacher

Solheim focused primarily on rape as a weapon of war, tying it to what he perceives as an “ethnisation” of contemporary conflicts. In his view, the most important measures for dealing with sexual violence in war are ensuring women’s political empowerment, en-

suring safety through accountability and non-impunity, and ensuring necessary physical and psychological treatment for victims of sexual violence.

The strategy itself is as mentioned a continuation of the pre-existing action plan, and intended to target a couple of issue areas wherein the government considers Norway to be particularly well equipped to contribute. This means that the Norwegian focus on issues of women, peace and security for the next three years will be put on peace processes and peace negotiations; international operations; post-conflict and peace building; sexualized violence in conflict; and reporting and accountability. The strategic plan appears more structured around concrete and applicable targets than what was the case for its predecessor. Each of the five main topics have been elaborated through several targets with a set of related activities and set time frames. Many of the targets are of a rather vague nature, worded in terms of a “strengthening” or “supporting” already existing work in Norway or internationally. Among the more interesting goals or action points it may be worth noting the strong emphasis on securing the involvement of local women in peace negotiations and peace processes. In addition to the expected normative statements regarding the importance of involving women in these processes, the action plan also points to the valuable role of existing women’s grass-root organisations and to how Norway can interact with these groups to reach their goals of truly involve women as peace makers. Interestingly, this perspective is not really represented in the other four areas of priority, in spite of the obvious role for women’s grass-root movements in processes of post-conflict reconstruction and in fighting sexualised violence, to name the most obvious omissions.

Towards the end of the session, a couple of organisations were asked to provide comments and questions for the panel. The Norwegian Red Cross focused on the importance of ensuring that more countries are able to prosecute perpetrators of genocide and ethnic cleansing, especially seen in the context of sexual violence and rape as a weapon of war. The women's solidarity organisation *Fokus* provided an interesting perspective as they commented on the over-reliance on war to build peace, and challenged the panel on how the strategic plan is weighted towards peace building as the ending of armed violence rather than as the building of the foundations for a lasting peace. In this context, they were worried about the lack of gender, peace and security training for civil society, diplomats, and other civilian staff working with peace building and post-conflict efforts. The responses of the panel were for the most part reiterations of the features of the strategic plan and of their initial talking points, giving the audience the impression that they were less than willing to enter into any substantial discussions in the context of the launch. This sense of an unwillingness to engage beyond their pre-defined limits was further cemented when researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad from PRIO's gender team challenged the Foreign Minister on the lack of long-term, reliable funding for research on different aspects of women, peace and security. This situation makes it difficult to carry out research that is properly independent of shifting policy priorities and that can bring about a more sophisticated foundation for understanding the many diverse and complicated aspects of this field of study. To this, Gahr Støre replied that they were already spending significant amounts of money on gender and conflict research, and that it was important for them to, in so many words, "get their money's worth" in terms of readily applicable and policy relevant research. There thus seems to be no reason for the research community to hold their



PRIO researchers watching excerpts from the Women, War and Peace film project. Photo: Hans Olav Myskja

breath in anticipation of a change in the Ministry's attitude to research towards a greater recognition of the values of more in-depth, independent, and comprehensive knowledge building.

Ultimately, this observer came away from the launch with a sense that the new strategic plan is more focused than the previous one, and that it is likely, if properly implemented, to be a useful tool for the different constituencies implementing Norwegian policies on women, peace and security in different contexts and places. It is far from revolutionary in its attempts to answer the many challenges inherent in Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on this topic, and the panel of Ministers gave few indication of wanting to explore new policy avenues in this regard.

The English translation of the strategic plan can be found here : http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/dok/rapporter_planer/planer/2011/strategi_1325.html?id=631062 ■

“Women, War, and Peace” film series in the making

In connection with the launch of the Norwegian government's action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325, PRIO was fortunate enough to have US documentary film maker Abigail Disney visiting to show excerpts from her new film project and to talk about her work and her thoughts about women's roles in war and peace.

Abigail Disney is probably best known for her previous documentary film, “Pray the Devil Back to Hell”, which received significant attention and praise at film festivals across the globe in 2008, including winning the award for best movie at the 2008 Tribeca film festival where it premiered. This movie, made in collaboration with director Gini Reticker, documents the awe inspiring story of the Liberian women who came together across the Christian-Muslim divide to stage peaceful protests demanding an end to the country's 14 years of bloody civil war.

Her current project, “Women, War,

and Peace”, will be released in the autumn of 2011. It consists of five films, out of which three document the roles of women as victims, agents, and activists in three very different conflicts, and the remaining two will be providing an overview of the topic. At PRIO, she showed excerpts of these case-based films, documenting women’s roles in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Colombia. She told the audience about her experiences filming the different chapters of the series, and shared her impressions from the way her first movie had been received as she toured conflict and post-conflict zones to arrange screenings for local women’s groups. Upon showing it to a mixed audience of Christian and Muslim women in Srebrenica, she experienced a reaction which has proven to be representative for most of these types of screenings. After a period of complete silence, women started getting up to tell each other about how different bits and pieces of what they had just seen resonated with their own memories, and these reflections crossed ethnic and religious divides in the room in a way that made it clear that many of the personal stories had a touch of something universal about them. The women recognised their own stories in those featured in the movie, and in most cases this soon triggered pragmatic initiatives for creating platforms of cooperation, local peace or reconciliation efforts, common position statements, and so on.

To Disney, these initiatives were both impressive and humbling, but they also triggered a sense of guilt that she and her team were unable to provide the resources necessary to help the women realise their plans in a practical way. Depending on the relative extent of local resources, in terms of skills, capacity building and infrastructure as much as purely in terms of money, some of the local initiatives saw fruitful realisations, while others were incapable of getting off the ground in a meaningful way. In spite of these frustra-

tions however, the overall experience of these screenings of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* were so promising that she intends to set up a similar structure for bringing *Women, War, and Peace* out to local women’s networks globally. Her ultimate goal is to create a toolkit around the films that local organisations and networks can use to mobilise around initiatives for peace.



Film maker Abigail Disney at PRIO.
Photo: Hans Olav Myskja

In response to a question from the audience, Disney admitted that she had wanted to cover yet another side of the equation that is women’s roles in war and peace, namely that of women as fighters. She said she was drawn to the idea of portraying women as fighters in contexts ranging from guerrillas to the US army, but that in the end she limited herself to focusing on “women’s special relationship with peace.” Showing this role of women, while one-sided, is something the film makers believes will be a necessary corrective to the domestic US view of women in conflict zones, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq. She expressed hope that the films may help show the agency of these women and how they are assets to their community instead of just pas-

sive victims in need of liberation from the outside, which is the dominant perception in mainstream US discourse.

Abigail Disney’s movie projects are unique in how they combine the portrayal of women in conflict situations with real attempts to support their agency for peace and reconciliation. Through a focus on political participation and organisation as important tools for women to improve their own livelihoods and to fight sexual violence and other gender based and gender specific forms of violence, these movie projects are attempting a dialogue with their subject that is far from common. It will be interesting to see if her new project will be received in the same positive and enthusiastic way as “*Pray the Devil Back to Hell*” upon its release in the fall of 2011. Interested readers can learn more about the project on <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/women-war-peace/introduction/4093/>. ■

UN Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010) – stepped up efforts at fighting sexualized violence in conflict?

On 16 December 2010 the UN Security Council, under US chairmanship, adopted Resolution 1960 on Women, Peace and Security. The resolution was unanimously adopted by the 15 members of the Council to step up efforts at fighting sexual violence in conflict. All together 60 member states sponsored the resolution, including member states where the gravest cases of abuse have been perpetrated.

The resolution was adopted following a two-day Open Debate on ‘Women, Peace and Security’ during which the

Secretary-General's Report on the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) was discussed. A record number of 91 member states participated in the debate.

The language and commitments made in this resolution are much stronger than in any of the previous resolutions on 'Women, Peace and Security'. One progressive development is that the resolution encourages the Secretary General to include in his reporting to the Security Council lists of parties that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. The resolution further expresses the Security Council's intention to use this list as a basis for appropriate actions, including sanctions.

The resolution has been criticized for not properly addressing the fight against impunity for sexualized violence. The representative from Lichtenstein even referred to the resolution as a missed opportunity. Its operative

clauses make no reference to the Council's commitment to end impunity, let alone provide any concrete measures to that end. The text is also silent on the work carried out by the Council's own ad hoc tribunals, specifically by the International Criminal Court.

The resolution text can be accessed online at http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions10.htm

The Meeting Transcript of the Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security can be accessed online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2010/sc10122.doc.htm> ■

New editor of the PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Newsletter

Suk Chun, editor of the PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update from its start in January 2010 has left PRIO to

pursue new challenges in Beijing. Suk has been a great asset to the PRIO Gender Team, and we wish her the best of luck in her endeavors.

Starting from this issue, Hilde Wallacher will take over as editor of the Newsletter. Hilde holds an MA from the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights at the University of Oslo, and has worked at PRIO since 2006. She has published reports, policy briefs and an article on the topic of gender mainstreaming in mine action, based on field work in Cambodia and Colombia. In addition to editing the newsletter, she does research on international arms trade and is interested in international law and norm development, gender and conflict studies, displacement and migration, and minority nationalism. If you have any questions, suggestions, or want to share your views of the newsletter, please send an email to hildew@prio.no. ■

International News

The executive board of UN Women had its first meeting 24-26 January 2011. The executive board consists of representatives from 41 countries, with a rotating selection of 10 representatives from Africa, 10 from Asia, 4 from Eastern Europe, 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 5 from Western Europe, and 6 from contributing countries.

The 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) takes place at UN Headquarters in New York from 22nd February – 4th March 2011. The priority theme for the 55th CSW is the access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. There will also

be a number of other panels and side events during the session.

A seminar called Implementing UNSCR 1325 on Women and Peace and Security; Strengthening the CSW 55 Agenda was organised by the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders on the 17th of February, in conjunction with the 55th Commission on the Status of Women. Speakers were Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former UN Under-Secretary-General and President of the Security Council, Mavic Cabrera-Balleza, International Coordinator of the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) and Cora Weiss, President of Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP) and UN Representative for the International Peace Bureau. ■

News from Norway

Christian Michelsens Institutt (CMI) in Bergen organised a conference entitled Sexual Violence in Conflict on 3 February. ■

News from PRIO

Inger Skjelsbæk

Presented a paper entitled *How to Study Perpetrators of Sexual Violence in War?* at the Sexual Violence in Conflict conference at CMI on 3 February. Inger also chaired the panel that discussed specific case studies, where Maria Stern and Ingrid Samset presented studies on sexual violence in the conflict in the DRC.

Raghild Nordås

Presented the results from the PRIO/CSCW project Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) at the Sexual Violence in Conflict conference at CMI. The project is aimed at creating a comprehensive database on patterns of sexual violence within and across contexts and conflict actors, with the goal of facilitating evidence-based preventive strategies. The project was also presented to the Norwegian MFA, who is the project funder, by Inger Skjelsbæk, Håvard Strand and Elisabeth Wood on 4 February

Morten Bergsmo

Is the founder of FICHL (Forum for International Criminal and Humanitarian Law), which is organising a seminar on Thematic Investigation and Prosecution of International Sex Crimes in Cape Town on the 7-8 March. The seminar addresses the justifications for the prioritisation of sex crimes in the ICTY and other relevant judicial contexts, as well as deliberating whether international sex crimes should be addressed under specialised jurisdiction or be the object of specialised structures for investigation and prosecution. ■

Recent PRIO Publications

Falch, Åshild (2010) *Women's Political Participation and Influence in Post-Conflict Burundi and Nepal*, PRIO Paper, Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Nordås, Raghild (2011) *Sexual Violence in African Conflicts*, CSCW Policy Brief 1, Oslo: CSCW

Nordås, Raghild and Dara Kay Cohen (2011) *Wartime Sexual Violence – Challenges and Opportunities for Data Collection and Analysis*, Oslo: CSCW

Tryggestad, Torunn L. (2010) *The UN Peacebuilding Commission and Women: What Role for Norway?*, PRIO Policy Brief 12/2010, Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) ■

Other Recent Publications

Edwards, Alice (2011) *Violence Against Women Under International Human Rights Law*, New York: Cambridge University Press

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office [ed.] (2010) *UNSCR 1325 in Europe – 21 Case Studies*, EPLO

Hudson, Natalie Florea (2010), *Gender, Human Security and the United Nations. Security language as a Political Framework for Women*, Routledge Critical Security Studies, London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Frances Group

Olonisakin, Funmi, Karen Barnes & Eka Ikpe (2011), *Women, Peace and Security. Translating Policy into Practice*, Contemporary Security Studies, London & New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group

United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2011) *Ten Year Impact Study on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security in Peacekeeping*, United Nations

Wibben, Annick T.R. (2011) *Feminist Security Studies : A Narrative Approach* London : Routledge, PRIO New Security Studies ■



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