

# 20

YEAR IN REVIEW:  
ADVANCING FEMINIST PEACE

# 24

WPSN-C 



# Reflections from 2024

2024 has been a year of profound challenges and immense resilience for peace activists and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gaza, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and beyond have laid bare the devastating toll of violence, systemic oppression, and human rights violations. Among these, the genocide against Palestinians has demanded global attention, exposing the complicity of systems that enable occupation, displacement, and the targeting of civilians. Women peacebuilders and human rights defenders continue to call for accountability and justice, often at great personal risk, as the world watches in collective heartbreak.

These crises have also shaped difficult discussions within our Network, testing our capacity for dialogue while reinforcing our shared commitment to peace and justice. The crises of 2024 have underscored the urgency of a feminist peace agenda. Decades of militarized responses have failed to end cycles of violence; instead, feminist peacebuilding presents a transformative alternative—centred on justice, inclusion, and nonviolence. Throughout the year, global discussions on solutions to conflict have taken place in various spaces, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for systemic change.

Throughout the year, members of our Network have risen to meet these challenges with remarkable action. Organizational members have spearheaded advocacy campaigns, provided crucial funding, and shown solidarity with those most impacted. Individual members have offered expertise, analysis, and leadership, ensuring the WPS agenda remains both relevant and impactful. While our membership reflects a diversity of perspectives on various issues, we come together as a Network to foster collaboration, collective learning, and a shared commitment to advancing feminist peace and justice.

As we move into 2025, we honour the courage of women peacebuilders and human rights defenders by continuing to amplify their voices and advocate for transformative change. Together, we confront these dark times with unyielding resolve and solidarity, reaffirming our commitment to feminist visions of peace and justice.

*Katrina Leclerc (chair), Emily Neilson (treasurer; Canadian Red Cross), Beth Woroniuk (past-chair), Alexandria Bohémier (Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security), Bénédicte Santoire, Dr. Sarah Keeler, Dr. Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic*

*2024 Steering Committee*



# Highlights of 2024 Advocacy and Policy Impact

In 2024, WPSN-C remained at the forefront of shaping Canada's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. A cornerstone of our advocacy was the long-awaited release of Canada's 3rd National Action Plan (CNAP3) on WPS, titled "Foundations for Peace," in March. This milestone was the result of extensive engagement by Network members, who contributed valuable insights during the development process. Veterans Affairs Canada joined as the newest signatory to the CNAP3, a welcomed addition celebrated by Network members. Our publication, "Foundations for Peace" in Turbulent Times: Analysis of Canada's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, provided a comprehensive critique and further cemented our leadership in advancing feminist policy.

As co-chair of the CNAP3 WPS Advisory Group alongside Global Affairs Canada (GAC), WPSN-C participated in efforts to foster accountability and innovation. In August, we co-facilitated a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) workshop with GAC—our first official engagement as co-chairs. The workshop, which included a presentation by Network member Sunitha Bisan on feminist MEL, offered a space to explore practical strategies for assessing WPS initiatives. While challenges remain in strengthening the Advisory Group's role, this session provided an opportunity to advance discussions on meaningful evaluation within the CNAP3 framework.

Quarterly meetings with Canada's WPS Ambassador, Jacqueline O'Neill, provided an essential platform for informal exchanges between the Ambassador and Network members. These sessions ensured consistent dialogue on Canada's progress and challenges, keeping women peacebuilders' voices central to policy discussions.



Image: Group photo of WPSN-C members alongside other WPS practitioners from various countries participating in the WPS Learning Lab. The event was held on the sidelines of the 24th anniversary commemoration of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in New York on October 22, 2024. This initiative was supported by the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives through the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in New York.

In March, WPSN-C prepared a report for the Office of the WPS Ambassador, offering key recommendations to strengthen government engagement with Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in Canada and abroad, drawing from consultations, surveys, and a comprehensive literature review.

The Women Foreign Ministers' Meeting in September in Toronto provided a key moment for WPS advocacy within Canada. Network members briefed ministers on the implementation gaps in WPS and emphasized the need to actualize feminist foreign policies.

As part of our broader efforts to foster dialogue and mutual learning on WPS, our partnership with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN through the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) enabled collaboration with civil society organizations in Colombia, DRC, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Rwanda. These efforts facilitated discussions on regional and global WPS priorities, which were further explored through a 'Learning Lab' and hybrid public event during WPS Week in October. Additionally, insights from this collaboration were shared with stakeholders through our December feedback event and survey, and will continue to be disseminated via upcoming policy briefs and digital content.

WPSN-C members collaborated with Afghan women leaders to draft an open letter calling

for inclusive and transparent justice in addressing Taliban crimes. Beyond facilitating dialogue, this initiative demonstrated the Network's role in leveraging relationships with government and opening doors for grassroots advocates and WHRDs to engage directly with decision-makers.

In late October, WPSN-C member Eunhye Lee joined the Canadian Delegation at the WPS Focal Points Network meeting and WPS Week, accompanying Ambassador O'Neill and contributing to discussions on advancing Canada's commitments to the WPS agenda. Her participation exemplified the Network's active engagement in global WPS dialogues and its role in fostering feminist leadership.

Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C) reposted this



Eunhye Lee

Dialogue, Peace, Community Engagement, DEI, Democratic Participation, Dig...

I am excited to be back in New York this week as part of the Canadian delegation for Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) with the #WPS Ambassador of Canada, representing civil society through the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C)! Looking forward to meeting the incredible women (and men) championing the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at all levels of peacebuilding, security, and decision-making processes.



Image: LinkedIn post made by Eunhye Lee on October 21, 2024.



# Highlights of 2024 Strengthening Knowledge and Connections

Knowledge exchange and learning remained integral to WPSN-C's mission in 2024. In May, the Network hosted a [discussion with Inter Pares' Colombian partners](#), Colombia Diversa and Fondo Lunaria, focusing on 2SLGBTQI+ issues and National Action Plans. These conversations enriched members' understanding of intersectional approaches to peacebuilding.

The Palestine Working Group hosted two teach-ins, culminating in the publication of [Palestine is a Canadian Women, Peace and Security Issue: Obligations and Opportunities](#). Meanwhile, the Sudan Working Group, co-chaired by Inter Pares and Sudan Women Rights Action (SUWRA), convened a closed discussion in August with Sudanese human rights defenders, offering critical insights into the evolving crisis. The Working Group also played a key role in mobilizing Canadian civil society action, releasing an [open letter](#) urging the Canadian government to take stronger measures in response to Sudan's humanitarian emergency.

WPSN-C members also engaged with international networks, including the CSO Nexus Working Group, the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS, and the Research Network on WPS (RN-WPS). This included active participation in RN-WPS' symposium in Ottawa in February, reinforcing our commitment to fostering global connections.



*Image: Group photo following roundtable with civil society, including WPSN-C members, convened by Ministers Mélanie Joly (Canada) and Kamina Johnson Smith (Jamaica) at the Women Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Toronto on September 19, 2024.*



# Highlights of 2024 Expanding Our Network

The Network continued to grow, with membership expanding to 26 organizational members and 55 individual members. Our digital presence also saw notable growth. [LinkedIn](#) followers more than tripled, rising from 462 to 1,609, while we joined [Bluesky](#) to diversify our engagement platforms. [Website](#) traffic increased by 10%, reflecting heightened public interest, with October's WPS Week activities drawing significant attention.

Our monthly internal newsletter kept members informed of Network activities, and in-person gatherings in August and December for Ottawa-based members strengthened our community ties. Through these efforts, WPSN-C remained a vibrant hub for feminist peacebuilding.



*Image: Screen capture of the WPSN-C April 2024 monthly members' meeting.*



# Hear from WPSN-C Members

*Reflections on the occasion of the launch of the 3rd  
National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*

As stated by the WPSN-C chair, Katrina Leclerc, at the official launch, the new Action Plan “presents an ambitious vision that incorporates many of the suggestions that emerged in more than two years of discussions. The plan builds on more than 20 years of work by activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders and by people working across ten government departments.”

“I welcome the recognition of the role women play in disarmament and mine action in the CNAP3. Implementation will be key to ensure that the promise of the Plan is realized.”

**Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada**

“I cannot deny the stark irony of the timing of the release of the CNAP on Women, Peace and Security. With this being the third iteration of the Action Plan, the Canadian government cannot be excused for its lack of adherence to the WPS agenda on any terms. ‘Foundations for Peace’ sets out a standard for achieving gender equality including a response to conflict and gender-based violence that the Canadian government has actively failed to meet in Gaza, Sudan, Afghanistan and elsewhere making it impossible to argue that Canada doesn’t only have an ostensible commitment to gender equality or the WPS Agenda.”

**Habibah Haque, MA Human Rights**

“I am very pleased to see the interconnectedness of WPS at home and abroad be highlighted in CNAP3, especially through a more nuanced intersectional lens. Now let’s see how it will be put into action!”

**Dr. Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, University of Waterloo**



“We look forward to seeing, and supporting, the government’s strategies and implementation of the CNAP3, particularly in response to crises globally, including prolonged crises which have traditionally been neglected in terms of funding and political attention. CNAP3 is an ambitious policy framework and will require principled, intentional and consistent implementation if a peaceful future is to be achieved.”

**Meghan Theobalds, Equality Fund**

“Canada’s 3rd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security heralds a commitment to weaving the threads of gender equality into the urgency of ensuring that women’s voices are at the forefront of conflict resolution and security strategies.”

**Sophia Papastavrou, World Vision Canada**

“We are pleased to welcome this third plan, entitled ‘Foundations for Peace’, which references youth peacebuilders, young women, and the YPS resolutions 25 times throughout the policy. The Coalition is particularly enthused by the direct linkages and Government commitments to Youth, Peace and Security.”

**Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security**



*Image: Photo of Network members and civil society partners from Colombia, Nigeria and Rwanda outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York moments before attending the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security on October 24, 2024.*



*Excerpts from Palestine is a Canadian Women, Peace and Security Issue: Obligations and Opportunities, a collaborative publication by the Palestine Working Group.*

An arms embargo requires that Canada must ban the import of weapons, military equipment, and surveillance technology from Israel. Canada is Israel's sixth-largest arms customer. In December 2023, when Israel had already massacred nearly 20,000 Palestinians, the Canadian military announced a new deal with Israeli State-owned weapons giant Rafael to purchase \$43 million of their Spike LR2 missiles, missiles that the Israeli military is currently using in their attacks on Gaza.

**Chapter excerpt: The WPS agenda Requires an Arms Embargo Now**

Resultingly, by continuing to provide material support to Israel while cutting support to UNRWA, Canada could also be seen as complicit in this genocidal tactic, and therefore another modality by which Canada, amongst many others, could be deemed yet again as complicit in genocide. As allegations of UNRWA were established as having been falsified, Canada did resume funding, but not without a mass pressure campaign by national advocacy organizations.

**Chapter excerpt: The Case of UNRWA and the Crime of Starvation**

The Women, Peace and Security agenda insists upon accountability for gendered violence specifically and a refusal of impunity. The Rome Statute, underpinning the ICC, includes gendered crimes within war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of genocide. Progressive verdicts related to forced pregnancy and intergenerational harms associated with rape and forced marriage echo the spirit of WPS resolutions aimed at positioning gendered harms in war within a continuum of violence, insisting on accountability to deter future violence.

**Chapter excerpt: The International Criminal Court and the Insistence on Justice**

Acts of sexual violence can constitute atrocity crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocidal acts. As such, Member States have the duty to protect, investigate and prosecute. The WPS agenda asserts that sexual violence directly threatens international peace and security and distinctly demands the cessation of impunity.

If Canada is to meet its obligations under the WPS agenda, it has to include clear action against the torture and sexual violence against Palestinians officially committed by Israel. Silence is a demonstration of Canada's failure to act and clearly evidences an enabling endorsement of these atrocity crimes in direct contradiction to its legal duties.

**Chapter excerpt: Canada has a Duty to Act Against Israel's Crimes Against Humanity**



Canada's crisis response outlined in CNAP3 involves adopting an intersectional feminist approach to the crisis that centres on the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Women's rights organizations and women-led organizations should be at the heart of Canada's crisis response. In our interview with Project Seed's founder, we found that the women who work for the organization adopt the role of first responders in their communities. They have intimate knowledge of the needs of the families that they support and can intervene swiftly with available resources.

**Chapter excerpt: Women's Right Organizations Are Critical**

Despite NATO having a [WPS policy](#) and allies having WPS National Action Plans, they have provided "military assistance," weapons, to Israel as it deploys extreme violence against the Palestinians. The allies' bullets, bombs, missiles, sniper rifles, and fighter jets are used by the IDF to injure and kill women and girls and make the lives of all Palestinians more insecure. This has resulted in the weaponization of WPS as NATO allies are exporting arms and prolonging the genocide in Gaza.

**Chapter excerpt: NATO, Israel and Canada**

Given the current breaches of international law, including the deliberate targeting of civilians in OPT, Canada must take immediate action, including by mobilizing political, economic, and military sanctions against Israel. These are the minimum commitments that Canada must reiterate to the Canadian public and to the world when it comes to a just and lasting peace in Gaza, broader Palestine, and the entire region now at risk of further destabilization.

**Chapter excerpt: The Horrors of Healthcare in Gaza:  
How can bombing of hospitals in Occupied Territory be Self-Defense?**

Allyship, though well-intentioned, can become harmful if it reinforces existing power imbalances. This is particularly relevant in Palestine, where international involvement often risks overshadowing the leadership of local activists. A prominent example of this is the risk of "saviorism"—the tendency of international actors from the Global North to take centre stage, believing that external interventions will resolve the conflict rather than acknowledging the agency and knowledge of those most affected.

**Chapter excerpt: The Role of Allyship in the WPS Community  
Amid the Genocide in Palestine**



# Leadership & Transitions in 2024

2024 marked a historic leadership transition for WPSN-C, with Katrina Leclerc assuming the role of Chair after 12 years of remarkable leadership by Beth Woroniuk. This change represents a new chapter for the Network, building on a strong foundation of advocacy and collaboration.

In addition to this significant change, we welcomed three new Steering Committee members, who brought fresh perspectives and renewed energy to our leadership team. This expansion has strengthened the governance of WPSN-C and supported the continued growth of the Network. The 2024 Steering Committee included Katrina Leclerc (chair), Emily Neilson (treasurer; Canadian Red Cross), Beth Woroniuk (past-chair), Alexandria Bohémier (Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security), Bénédicte Santoire, Dr. Sarah Keeler, and Dr. Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic. We extend our deep gratitude to Laura Sewell who served on the 2023-2024 Steering Committee.

We are grateful to Monique Cuillerier for her contributions in 2024, as she continued to serve as the WPSN-C Coordinator, supporting the Network's administrative processes during this transition year.

As part of this transition, we undertook internal processes to review and refine our 'ways of working.' This ongoing process reflects our commitment to accountability—to our members and to each other as a Network—ensuring that our practices remain transparent, inclusive, and aligned with our feminist values. Through this reflection, we aim to strengthen our responsiveness in challenging political climates and contexts of injustice.

This year also saw the establishment of the [Sudan Working Group](#), housed within WPSN-C and co-chaired by Inter Pares and Sudan Women Rights Action (SUWRA). This initiative exemplifies the Network's commitment to addressing pressing global issues through inclusive and collaborative approaches. The Working Group has already provided critical platforms for dialogue, including a closed discussion with Sudanese human rights defenders, further advancing our mission of feminist peacebuilding.



# Looking Ahead to 2025

As we enter 2025, WPSN-C is ready to build on the momentum of the past year while navigating the challenges of a complex and rapidly changing political landscape. This year, our focus will be on fostering resilience, enhancing collaboration, and amplifying feminist leadership across Canada and beyond. We continue to strategize and evaluate our approach to political advocacy and explore how members can advance the WPS agenda in increasingly polarized contexts.

Our working groups remain at the heart of our activities. Key priorities for 2025 include:

- Engaging members through the CNAP3/WPS Advisory Group, focusing on facilitating civil society engagement with government departments to ensure meaningful implementation of Canada's third National Action Plan on WPS. As the first CNAP3 progress report is expected this year, WPSN-C looks forward to reviewing its findings and providing feedback to strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Given Canada's presidency of the G7 in 2025, our G7 Working Group will contribute recommendations to the Foreign Ministers' track and work jointly with the Women's 7 engagement group.

- Strengthening the Palestine Working Group to build on its advocacy and knowledge-sharing activities, including its recent publication and ongoing efforts to address Canada's obligations.
- Supporting the Sudan Working Group as it continues monthly exchanges and develops campaigns to raise awareness, mobilize resources, and advocate for Canadian policy changes regarding the crisis in Sudan.

Our collaboration with international networks, such as the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on WPS, will continue to thrive. This year, we will collaborate on a joint publication critically examining WPS in the politically polarized landscapes of Canada and the United States, encouraging dialogue and reflection on these challenges.

Finally, we are committed to ensuring that WPSN-C remains a space of connection, respectful dialogue, and support. We will create spaces to foster collective care, practice solidarity, and uphold our commitment to anti-racism in all aspects of our work. Whether through in-person gatherings, virtual discussions, or collaborative initiatives, we look forward to working together to advance multiple feminist visions of peace and justice.

**WPSN-C** 

[wpsn-canada.org](http://wpsn-canada.org)