



WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: WHAT RESOLUTION 1325 MEANS FOR WOMEN OF COLOUR IN CANADA AND BEYOND

by Esra Bengizi

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) continues to resonate as a key policy tool for women peacebuilders, human rights defenders, and feminists seeking to challenge and emphasize the impact of conflict and violence on women's lives around the world. As we commemorate the anniversary of Resolution 1325 ongoing efforts are still required to address existing gaps and their impact on Indigenous and racialized women in Canada and beyond. While Canada claims its firm commitment to the WPS agenda and broader human rights approaches, our domestic and foreign policy often invisibilizes the systemic inequities and historical legacies that continue to negatively impact racialized women. These challenges warrant urgent attention to realize the aspirations of the WPS resolutions and their global community.

The Problem

Inequalities continue to persist for women and disproportionately for women of colour, which necessitate dialogue, reflection, and renewed calls to action. At Women of Colour Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS), we advocate for the application of an intersectional⁴ and decolonial lens to WPS, helping us address the historical legacies and structural inequalities that persist to ensure proper and full implementation of the agenda.

⁴ Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw that recognizes how Intersectionality is a field of study, an analytical strategy and critical praxis that describes how different aspects of one's identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, sexuality and so on, operate as unitary and not mutually exclusive.



Domestic

Domestically, Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (CNAP) fails to confront how racialized and Indigenous women continue to be devalued and face persistent insecurity and violence across the country. The erasure of the specific threats they experience reveals how the realities of racialized women are consistently neglected within national peace and security frameworks. Moreover, the NAP overlooks Canada's own role as a perpetrator of violence. Canada's colonial, racist and misogynistic foundations continue to shape the systems that govern society, permeating education, the justice system, government, and other institutions. By reproducing colonial measures of progress (as depicted in the NAP), such as representation and individual empowerment, the NAP reduces liberation to symbolic inclusion rather than structural transformation. Oftentimes, women of colour are tokenized by the very institutions committed to the NAP, where "success" is measured by representation-based metrics that advocate for "representation", "inclusion," and "empowerment" but neglect how true success is rooted in collective liberation, land sovereignty, safety, and improved quality and longevity of life for Indigenous and racialized communities.

For instance, many reports and data illustrate how Indigenous communities have lower life expectancies, reflecting how colonial inequities persist. Similarly, as outlined by the Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment and the 2023 report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, racialized women across Canada face compounded forms of insecurity, from the racial wealth gap and gender-based violence against Indigenous women, Black women and widespread Islamophobia that disproportionately harms Muslim women. The NAP's silence on these intersecting forms of violence exposes the contradiction of promoting women's peace and security while neglecting the ongoing colonial and racial violence experienced by women of colour. Moreover, this reinforces the reality that not all lives are viewed or protected the same within Canada's vision of peace and security, revealing how historical legacies continue to shape which lives and safety are prioritized.



Foreign Policy: Israel-Palestine

Canada's foreign policy roll out has contributed to the disproportionate targeting of women of colour in several contexts. For example, arms exports that directly and indirectly feed conflict to its collaboration with states and allies with proven track records of human rights and women's rights abuses, Canada has been complicit in the oppression of women of colour. For instance, Canada's slow response to ongoing calls and protests of Canadians and the international community demanding a stop to Israel's attack on Palestinians warrants urgent attention.

According to a 2025 UN report, "Israeli military operations in Gaza have had a disproportionate impact on Palestinian women and girls, who continue to bear the brunt." Canada's failure to prioritize the needs of women and girls in Palestine is extremely concerning and fails Resolution 1325. Canada should ensure accountability and punitive measures are taken against the Israeli government. The measures should protect and prevent violence against Palestinians, especially Palestinian women and children who have been disproportionately targeted and harmed. By holding Israel accountable, Canada reinforces its commitment to the WPS agenda and upholding Resolution 1325. Undoubtedly, Canada's response to the Israel-Palestine conflict has differed drastically from its response to the Ukraine-Russia war. While both conflicts involve attacks against a nation's sovereignty and violations against international law, Canada has demonstrated unwavering political, financial, and humanitarian support for Ukraine while remaining relatively silent on Palestine. This double standard is rooted in racism and shows whose lives we value more. This pushes us to think critically as to why Canada was markedly more responsive to condemning Russia, yet is hesitant and less critical of Israel. Canada's response to Palestine and Ukraine is drastically different, as it reflects a deeper structural bias and racialized hierarchies of value.



Recommendations

Adopt a truly intersectional and decolonial approach to WPS

Canada must integrate these not just as a theoretical commitment but as a guiding framework for policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Canada must critically examine how colonialism, racism and historical legacies continue to shape the insecurities faced by women of colour both within Canada and globally.

Reassess the role of armed forces within the WPS agenda

Canada should confront the contradictions of promoting peace through militarized structures and arms exports, where military interventions have disproportionately harmed women and communities of colour.

Hold allies accountable to human rights and WPS principles

Canada's foreign policy must consistently apply its feminist and human rights commitments, including toward allies. This entails acknowledging and condemning violations of international law, rather than remaining complicit through silence.

Adopt a proactive, prevention-based approach to WPS and conflict response

Canada should shift from a reactive stance to a proactive model that prioritizes early intervention. This involves supporting local women-led and grassroots initiatives that address the root causes of insecurity.

Affirm that all lives hold equal value

Canada must confront the racial hierarchies embedded in its domestic and foreign policies by ensuring that all women, regardless of race, nationality, religion, or geography, are afforded equal protection, recognition, and dignity.



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Conclusion

To conclude, Canada's domestic and foreign policies showcase deep-rooted structural and systemic issues stemming from enduring legacies of colonialism, and racial and gender inequities that adversely affect racialized, Indigenous communities and women. By neglecting an intersectional and anti-racist approach to the aspirations of WPS plans, these issues will continue to persist. In fact, adopting an intersectional and anti-racist framework to domestic, local, and foreign policies and discourses on WPS will advance Canada's commitment to human rights, while adhering to the principles of Resolution 1325 and the suite of WPS resolutions.