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WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3:

Feminist Reflections on Progress and Gaps

WPSN-C

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS

- AJWRC: Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center
- ANDSF: Afghan National Defence & Security Forces
- BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
- CAF: Canadian Armed Forces
- CCYPS: Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security
- CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CNAP / CNAP1 / CNAP2 / CNAP3: Canada's National Action Plan (first, second, third iterations)
- COVID: Coronavirus Disease
- CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child
- CRSV: Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
- ECOSOC: United Nations Economic and Social Council
- FCW / FCWs: Filipina Care Worker(s)
- G7: Group of Seven (intergovernmental forum)
- GAC: Global Affairs Canada
- GBA+: Gender-Based Analysis Plus
- GBV: Gender-Based Violence
- GDP: Gross Domestic Product
- GE2 / GE3: Gender Equality Markers (OECD-DAC coding used by GAC)
- HSR: High-Speed Rail
- ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- ICJ: International Court of Justice
- ICU: Intensive Care Unit
- IE SOGI: Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- IPS: Indo-Pacific Strategy
- MMIWG: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- NAP / NAPs: National Action Plan(s)
- NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- ODA: Official Development Assistance
- OECD-DAC: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
- P7: Pride7 (informal G7 queer & trans engagement group)
- PBO: Parliamentary Budget Officer
- PRC: People's Republic of China
- PSOPs: Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (Canada)
- REI: Race, Ethnicity, and Indigeneity (data)
- RSF: Rapid Support Forces (Sudan)
- SAF: Sudanese Armed Forces
- SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
- UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- UNSCR / UNSCRs: United Nations Security Council Resolution(s)
- US: United States
- WAGE: Women and Gender Equality Canada
- WASH: Water, sanitation and hygiene
- WCAPS: Women of Colour Advancing Peace and Security
- WILPF: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- WPS: Women, Peace, and Security
- WPSN-C: Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada
- YPS: Youth, Peace and Security
- 2SLGBTQI / 2SLGBTQI+: Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex (plus)

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ON: FROM LANDMARK TO LITMUS TEST

by Katrina Leclerc, Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic and Sarah Keeler

When the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 in October 2000, it set a global precedent: the first international recognition that peace and security cannot be achieved without the inclusion of women and attention to gendered impacts of war. Twenty-five years later, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is both a landmark and a litmus test. It is a landmark in the sense that it reshaped the discourse of international security. But it is also a litmus test of governments' willingness to act, as implementation remains uneven, under-resourced, and vulnerable to political shifts.

The anniversary comes at a time of profound global uncertainty. Authoritarianism, armed conflict, military spending, and climate change are converging with backlash against gender equality and human rights. Far from being a moment of celebration, this anniversary forces us to ask whether WPS commitments are keeping pace with contemporary realities.

Canada's CNAP3 in context

In Canada, the anniversary coincides with the second year of the third National Action Plan on WPS (CNAP3), covering 2023–2029. CNAP3 builds on previous plans and situates WPS within Canada's broader feminist policy framework, including the Feminist International Assistance Policy. It sets out ambitious objectives: advancing women's participation, preventing violence, supporting human rights defenders, and strengthening gender-responsive peacebuilding.

Yet critical questions remain. Is CNAP3 adequately resourced? How is the implementation monitored? What leadership structures ensure coherence across departments? And, crucially, how inclusive is the plan for women in all their diversity, both within Canada and internationally?

These questions echo concerns raised consistently by civil society since Canada's first action plan. They speak to an underlying tension: Canada positions itself as a global leader on WPS, yet the gap between rhetoric and practice remains wide.

by Katrina Leclerc, Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic and Sarah Keeler

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

Purpose of this publication

This analysis publication is coordinated by the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (WPSN-C), a coalition of over 80 civil society organizations and individuals committed to advancing feminist peace. Timed deliberately with the 25th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the publication serves three purposes:

1. Accountability: to critically assess Canada's progress, shortcomings, and contradictions in implementing WPS and CNAP3.
2. Policy analysis: to provide evidence-based insights on current challenges, from military spending to climate impacts, and their implications for Canada's commitments.
3. Advocacy tool: to amplify civil society perspectives and ensure that feminist analysis shapes both Canadian policy and international debates on WPS.

The contributions are written by members of WPSN-C — researchers, practitioners, and activists. They bring diverse expertise and lived experience, providing a grounded analysis that challenges government policy where necessary and offers constructive recommendations for change. The authors are expressing their own views and not necessarily those of all Network members.

Key debates shaping WPS today

The chapters in this publication illustrate how the WPS agenda continues to evolve. Four debates run through it:

- Leadership and accountability: WPS requires more than symbolic endorsement — it needs political champions and resources.
- Conflict and geopolitics: global conflicts, military strategies, and foreign policy choices directly shape the scope and credibility of WPS.
- Intersectionality and inclusion: women and communities marginalized by age, disability, race, sexuality, and displacement must be centred, not sidelined.
- Care, justice, and survival: feminist approaches remind us that peace is not only about ceasefires but about the conditions that sustain life, dignity, and justice.

These debates frame the contributions that follow and signal where civil society sees the most pressing gaps and opportunities for Canada.

by Katrina Leclerc, Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic and Sarah Keeler

A guide to the chapters
The publication begins with a focus on leadership. Bénédicte Santoire and Beth Woroniuk call for the re-establishment of a Canadian WPS Ambassador to provide visible political leadership, while Woroniuk later interrogates CNAP3's financing, warning against ambitious plans left without the resources to deliver.

Chapters on conflict and geopolitics highlight Canada's contradictions. Nahid Azad documents the environmental devastation of war and urges a feminist approach that links WPS with climate justice. Ellen Woodsworth and Tamara Lorincz expose how ballooning defence budgets undermine Canada's feminist commitments. Wazhma Frogh details the lived realities of Afghan women under Taliban rule, underscoring Canada's enduring obligations. Mary Bridger brings Palestine into focus as an urgent WPS issue, while Rita Morbia situates Sudan as both a site of devastation and a reminder of WPS's ongoing relevance. Tamara Lorincz also critiques Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy as a militarized approach that erodes feminist foreign policy claims.

The next set of contributions examines intersectionality. Alexandria Bohémier, Kim Vance-Mubanga, and Sarah Clifford push for queering WPS and integrating 2SLGBTQI+ perspectives. Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler expose the invisibility of women with disabilities in both Canadian and international WPS frameworks. Shayne Wong argues for meaningful, not tokenistic, youth engagement by drawing links between WPS and the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. Esra Bengizi outlines critical concerns and experiences of women of colour in the context of WPS, including shedding light on domestic and foreign affairs decisions that are contrary to the aspirations of WPS.

The final chapters foreground care and justice. Chloé Silvestre and Rabab Rabbani explore the connections between climate justice and feminist peacebuilding, while Denise Koh reflects on her experience as a Filipina physician on how WPS must also account for everyday practices of healing, dignity, and survival.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

by Katrina Leclerc, Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic and Sarah Keeler

What emerges across the chapters
Taken together, these contributions paint a picture of WPS at 25 as an agenda under pressure but also alive with possibility. Three cross-cutting themes emerge:

- The gap between rhetoric and resourcing: Canada's policies are ambitious on paper, but without adequate financing and leadership, commitments risk remaining aspirational.
- The centrality of intersectionality: WPS must fully integrate disability rights, queer perspectives, youth leadership, and climate justice if it is to reflect the realities of women in all their diversity.
- The costs of militarization: Rising defence budgets and security-driven foreign policy choices erode Canada's feminist positioning and undermine the credibility of WPS.

These findings reinforce the need for sustained monitoring, stronger political leadership, and genuine partnerships with civil society.

Conclusion: From anniversary to accountability
The 25th anniversary of Resolution 1325 should not be remembered as a symbolic milestone. It must be treated as a moment of accountability. Canada's CNAP3 will ultimately be judged not by its ambition, but by its implementation — by the resources invested, the leadership demonstrated, and the extent to which it centres those most affected by conflict and insecurity.

This publication offers a civil society contribution to that accountability. It provides feminist policy analysis, names gaps and contradictions, and highlights recommendations for moving forward. Above all, it insists that WPS at 25 is not about commemoration, but about renewing the agenda through action, inclusion, and sustained feminist commitment.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

RENEWING THE COMMITMENT: A NEW WPS AMBASSADOR URGENTLY NEEDED

by Bénédicte Santoire and Beth Woroniuk

Canada took an important step with the appointment of its first Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Ambassador in 2019. Jacqueline O'Neill played a key role advising ministers on WPS issues and coordinating the second WPS National Action Plan (CNAP2) implementation across all departmental partners. Given that no replacement has been named, her departure leaves a huge gap.

In this chapter, we argue that the first WPS Ambassador had a tangible impact and that Canada needs to appoint a new WPS Ambassador. To be effective, the new ambassador must bring proven experience working on the full range of WPS issues, not just one sector or area (such as defence). Ideally, they will be a good communicator, understand and support the essential roles of civil society, and be able to mobilize support for CNAP3 implementation - especially the elements focusing on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

We look at some of the highlights, achievements, and gaps of the term of the first ambassador and propose priorities for her replacement.

Today, the need for strong WPS leadership is more urgent than ever. An effective ambassador can mobilize resources and political capital to support the implementation of Canada's commitments. Without an ambassador, there are major risks that the latest WPS national action plan will languish and fail to yield results. This is particularly grave in a time when the global WPS agenda is under threat. Progress is threatened by massive cuts in development assistance and gender equality-related programs, a crumbling multilateral system, the growing force of anti-rights movements and authoritarian regimes around the world, attacks on human rights and civic space, increasing militarization, and historic WPS champions facing "credibility gaps" due to failures to respond to protracted conflicts and ongoing genocides.

by Bénédicte Santoire and Beth Woroniuk

A brief timeline

Civil society has long highlighted the importance of a senior-level champion who could rally support for Canada's WPS efforts. In 2016, members of the WPSN-C <u>recommended</u> that the government appoint a high-level special envoy who would support the implementation of the updated WPS national action plan. The government responded in the fall of 2018 with the announcement that Canada would name a WPS Ambassador. More than eight months later, Jacqueline O'Neill was <u>appointed</u> to the post by then Prime Minister Trudeau. Ambassador O'Neill served until her term ended in March 2025. A replacement has not yet been named.

The first WPS Ambassador: A path-breaking term

The <u>announcement</u> of the WPS ambassador mentioned four tasks for the new appointment:

- Advance Canada's feminist foreign policy by championing Canada's WPS priority commitments at home and around the world
- Work across all federal departments and with partners to advise on the implementation of Canada's National Action Plan on WPS
- Provide advice to ministers
- Recommend actions Canada can take to protect the rights of women facing insecurity and violence and promote their meaningful participation in Canada's development, humanitarian, and peace and security efforts around the globe.

When Prime Minister Trudeau appointed Jacqueline O'Neill as the first WPS Ambassador, civil society was clear: the role was not about traveling around the world praising Canada. It should be about mobilizing action and resources within the government.

Ambassador O'Neill and her office did break silos and build momentum across the government, reinforcing the point that the WPS agenda is a cross-cutting priority. Her office was strengthened with seconded staff from the Department of National Defence. They focused on coalition-building, coordinating ministries and missions, and, building on recommendations from civil society actors. They involved new actors, such as Veterans Affairs Canada.

by Bénédicte Santoire and Beth Woroniuk

The Ambassador and her staff mobilized political support that helped secure the renewal of the third WPS National Action Plan (CNAP3) at the June 2021 ministerial meeting, and she worked to ensure WPS stayed on the political agenda of decision-makers.

Ambassador O'Neill set a new standard for accountability. Given her extensive experience and connections with civil society, she hosted quarterly meetings with Canadian feminist civil society through the WPSN-C, creating one of the only regular, structured spaces where the government listened directly to the input of practitioners, activists and experts. This legacy of direct dialogue and engagement should not disappear.

Through her diplomatic trips, Ambassador O'Neill directly engaged with women peacebuilders in conflict-affected and crisis contexts and amplified their voices to Canadian decision-makers and in multilateral fora, from conference rooms to the UN Security Council. She spent time with Canadian diplomats, advocating for greater attention to WPS priorities. However, there were clear limits to what the Ambassador could accomplish. The role was both advisory and symbolic: she could provide expertise to Ministers but had no authority to set policies, demand action, or allocate budget resources across departments. There continued to be gaps between Canada's stated WPS goals and actual policy directions. For example, some civil society actors were increasingly frustrated over Canada's inaction towards Israel's genocide in Gaza. The position/office also had an extremely limited programming budget, which meant that even flagship initiatives like the GAC WPS Awards were symbolic recognitions without associated monetary prizes.

Conclusion: A suggested agenda for the next WPS Ambassador
Even with these limitations, with the right appointee, Canada's WPS Ambassador can be a valuable and effective position. A new Ambassador is critical to ensuring that CNAP3 commitments do not remain rhetorical, fragmented, or deprioritized, and in mobilizing political attention, resources, and accountability.

In a context of rising defence spending and militarization, the WPS Ambassador also has an important "watchdog" role: making sure that feminist, conflict prevention, and diplomatic approaches and investments are not erased or sidelined. Without this leadership, WPS risks being reduced to (or absorbed by) narrow defence and security priorities, while other vital WPS pillars, like conflict prevention, are overlooked.

Reappointing a WPS Ambassador is not just a bureaucratic detail. It is both practical and symbolic. Practically, it ensures that Canada delivers on CNAP3 at home and abroad. Symbolically, it signals that WPS remains a priority, that Canada is serious about listening to women peacebuilders and activists, and that it intends to uphold its reputation as a leader on gender equality and peace, even in spaces where the very foundations of the WPS agenda are under attack.

Key priorities for the new Ambassador must include:
- Articulate updated rationales and arguments for political and fiscal resources in the full range of WPS goals. There is a need to 'make the case' for WPS investments in times of increased defence spending and new global threats.
- Mobilize political support for CNAP3 implementation. The new Ambassador can lean into their remit to provide advice to the full range of ministers leading departments who have signed on CNAP3 partners. Dialogue with parliamentarians is also important to increase understanding of the WPS agenda among politicians.
- Continue robust engagement with civil society, in Canada and in conflict-affected areas. The next ambassador must clearly commit to upholding Ambassador O'Neill's legacy of understanding and supporting civil society's role in advancing the WPS agenda.
- Focus on building and rebuilding coalitions and constituencies inside CNAP3 government departments. Expertise, champions, learning, investments and exchange across all 10 CNAP3 federal partners are needed.
- Bring the WPS goals, insights, and achievements to broader Canadian discussions of peace and security, reaching new audiences and players. Ambassador O'Neill was able to 'unpack' and make the WPS agenda real to a wide range of people. This outreach and demystification is important to continue in order to strengthen support for these issues.

by Bénédicte Santoire and Beth Woroniuk

In her last statement at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on WPS in October 2024, Ambassador O'Neill said that "Wise women peacebuilders in Canada and around the world remind all of us, that despite being surrounded by crises, dehumanization, and attacks on this very work – we must not become suffocated by negativity. We must also give oxygen to progress and impacts." Failing to reappoint a WPS ambassador risks cutting off this oxygen. It risks undermining Canada's credibility. And it risks losing momentum on a key agenda in this turbulent time.

The Carney government must quickly reappoint a new WPS Ambassador - one capable of supporting the agenda of women peacebuilders around the word. Civil society is watching.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

WAR, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE WPS AGENDA: IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADA'S CNAP3 AND BEYOND

by Nahid Azad

This chapter examines the negative environmental and climate impacts of war within the framework of Canada's third National Action Plan on WPS (CNAP3) and the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. Armed conflict is a key driver of environmental degradation and an overlooked catalyst of climate change. From scorched landscapes and poisoned water systems to the decimation of ecosystems and carbon-intensive military operations, war undermines the resilience of both communities and the planet. One of the biggest culprits for Canada's failure to decarbonise is its costly militarism, with military emissions accounting for 61% of all federal government emissions. Yet CNAP3 does not fully acknowledge these impacts, leaving an important gap in Canada's feminist foreign policy approach.

These consequences disproportionately affect women and girls, especially in fragile and conflict-affected areas. Climate change and conflict are increasingly interconnected: war exacerbates environmental degradation, weakens climate resilience, and often reverses hard-won gains. At the same time, environmental stress and climate-related disasters can intensify underlying social and political tensions. Despite the WPS agenda, women are often excluded from negotiations and decision-making during and after conflicts, while institutions and laws that protect their rights are destroyed. At this 25-year milestone of the WPS agenda, it is vital to recognize that a sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the environmental and climate costs of war, both globally and in Canada's CNAP3.

War as an Environmental Catastrophe

Armed conflicts cause both immediate and long-term damage to the environment. The destruction of natural ecosystems through bombing campaigns, deforestation for military purposes, and land degradation irreparably harms biodiversity and natural habitats.

The use of heavy weaponry, oil spills, chemical contamination, and the destruction of infrastructure pollute air, soil, and water, creating toxic environments that <u>often persist for decades</u>. Warring parties frequently exploit natural resources such as forests, minerals, and water to fund military campaigns, accelerating ecological collapse and <u>deepening the vulnerability of already fragile</u> communities.

In addition to these direct forms of destruction, military operations are among the <u>most carbon-intensive human activities</u>. The big powers such as China, United States Department of Defense, and India are the world's <u>largest institutional emitters</u> of greenhouse gases. These emissions contribute directly to climate change, even as wars undermine the ability of states and communities to respond to its impacts. The environmental destruction caused by war threatens food security, clean water access, and public health. It also undermines the planet's capacity to adapt to climate change. For Canada, this means that its climate objectives and feminist foreign policy ambitions, as expressed in CNAP3, are weakened by the absence of sustained attention to the environmental costs of war.

How War Undermines the WPS Agenda

The environmental consequences of armed conflict erode each of the four pillars of the WPS agenda. War restricts the meaningful participation of women in <u>peace processes</u>, governance, and climate decision-making. Displacement and insecurity severely limit mobility and voice, while environmental stress—such as water scarcity—places additional unpaid labour burdens on women, reducing their opportunities for civic engagement. Militarized spaces are often dominated by male actors, sidelining women from both <u>environmental recovery and peace negotiations</u>.

CNAP3's commitment to women's participation must therefore be expanded to include decision-making on climate and environmental recovery. Environmental degradation also <u>worsens conditions for women and girls</u> in conflict zones, undermining the protection pillar. Diminished access to clean water and sanitation increases health risks, especially during pregnancy or menstruation. Competition over scarce resources can intensify gender-based violence, including sexual violence in conflict, while displacement due to environmental collapse <u>often leads to unsafe living conditions</u> that heighten the risks of trafficking and exploitation.

Although CNAP3 highlights protection, it does not explicitly link environmental degradation to these heightened gendered insecurities. The prevention pillar is similarly compromised. Ignoring environmental and climate factors in peacebuilding undermines long-term stability. Degraded environments and climate shocks can reignite conflict, particularly in resource-scarce regions where competition for survival is acute. When women are excluded from climate and environmental governance, efforts to build resilient societies are weakened. The militarization of environmental resources often triggers cycles of violence that prevent the establishment of sustainable peace. Canada's prevention agenda under CNAP3 would benefit from systematically incorporating environmental and climate resilience.

Finally, relief and recovery are delayed and distorted by environmental destruction. Post-conflict reconstruction frequently prioritises military or economic infrastructure at the expense of ecological restoration. Women's specific needs, such as access to sustainable livelihoods and secure land rights, are often neglected. The loss of ecosystem services—including agriculture, fishing, and water filtration—makes community recovery significantly more difficult. CNAP3's relief and recovery commitments could be strengthened by centring women-led environmental peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods.

Policy Gaps in CNAP3
Despite its cross-cutting commitments, CNAP3 does not systematically integrate environmental security or climate justice. This silence undermines Canada's feminist positioning and limits the plan's transformative potential. Canada, like other signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol / Paris Agreement, does not fully include military emissions in its national greenhouse gas inventories. Without recognizing the environmental dimensions of militarism, Canada risks weakening both its WPS and its climate agendas. At a moment when Canada frames itself as a leader in feminist foreign policy, its failure to grapple with these intersections is especially striking.

Towards Feminist Climate-Responsive Peacebuilding
To align CNAP3 with feminist principles and address the climate harms of conflict, Canada must move beyond rhetorical commitments and adopt concrete measures. Environmental and climate considerations should be mainstreamed across all WPS pillars. Military emissions must be included in national climate policies, and defence budgets should be reallocated toward climate resilience, gender-responsive adaptation, and ecological restoration.

Women's leadership and traditional knowledge[1] must be prioritized in environmental peacebuilding, ensuring that recovery is not only gender-just but also environmentally sustainable. At the same time, state and non-state actors must be held accountable for environmental damage in war, including through international legal mechanisms and reparations. Demilitarizing climate action by redirecting military budgets to climate resilience would not only advance Canada's decarbonization goals but also reinforce the feminist commitments of CNAP3.

Community-led environmental protection in conflict and post-conflict zones should be a cornerstone of Canada's WPS engagement. By supporting women's leadership in these initiatives, Canada can demonstrate the integration of feminist, environmental, and peacebuilding agendas. These steps would transform CNAP3 into a truly climate-responsive action plan that meets both the urgent challenges of our time and the feminist principles it claims to uphold.

[1] Women's leadership and traditional knowledge are intrinsically linked, particularly within Indigenous communities, where women often hold significant authority in environmental stewardship, community governance, and knowledge transmission, a practice often disrupted by colonialism but now experiencing a revitalization and support for Indigenous women leaders.

Conclusion

War is both a human and an environmental catastrophe. It accelerates climate breakdown, decimates ecosystems, and undermines the very foundations of peace. The feminist analysis of CNAP3 offered in this chapter demonstrates that Canada cannot achieve its WPS commitments without addressing the environmental and climate dimensions of armed conflict. By failing to integrate climate justice, CNAP3 risks reinforcing a narrow and incomplete vision of peace that does not match the urgent realities of the 21st century.

In Canada, this means confronting militarism as both a gendered and ecological issue: demilitarizing to decarbonize, redirecting defence budgets toward climate action, and ensuring military emissions are included in climate reporting. As the WPS agenda marks its 25th anniversary, Canada's CNAP3 must integrate climate justice if it is to deliver on the transformative promise of UNSCR 1325. Only by uniting feminist, environmental, and peacebuilding agendas can sustainable peace be achieved.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

CANADA'S RISING MILITARY SPENDING UNDERMINES WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

by Ellen Woodsworth and Tamara Lorincz

When women's organizations came together over twenty-five years ago to lay the groundwork for the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), they called for disarmament and a reduction of military spending. They appealed to governments to financially support women's participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Though Resolution 1325 does not explicitly mention a reduction in military spending, it does affirm the principles of the UN Charter. Article 26 of the Charter requires UN members to maintain "international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources."

However, since the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000, Western governments, including Canada, have dramatically increased their military budgets to record levels, which defies their commitment to WPS. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's 2024 report, global military expenditures have increased to over $2.7 trillion USD.

In 2015, UN Women released a comprehensive global study entitled "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace" to assess the implementation of Resolution 1325. The report expressed concern that there was insufficient progress and re-articulated the urgent need to reduce and re-allocate military expenditures to the WPS agenda.

However, in the past decade, Canadian military spending has increased by over 100% from $20 billion in 2014 to $44 billion in 2024, which accounts for 1.4% of gross domestic product (GDP), according to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Defence Expenditures report. At our current level of military spending, Canada ranks seventh highest on a cash basis among NATO allies and 16th highest globally.

by Ellen Woodsworth and Tamara Lorincz

In June 2025, at the NATO summit in The Hague, allies, including Canada, agreed to the NATO Defence Investment Pledge, which aims to boost military spending annually to 5% of GDP by 2035. Of that amount, 3.5% will be to enhance defence capabilities and buy new weapons systems.

Prime Minister Mark Carney announced that Canada would meet the NATO pledge and make further investments in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), upgrade military equipment and technology, and ramp up Canadian defence production.

Yet, the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) estimated that to reach the 2% GDP target, it would mean a doubling of military spending to $81 billion annually. The PBO also warned that this huge increase would risk higher deficits and more debt.

To achieve NATO's 5% GDP target, Prime Minister Carney admitted that it will mean a rise in military spending to $150 billion annually. An additional $106 billion per year on the CAF will be funded by severe cuts to federal services, including social and environmental programs, as the Prime Minister promised that there would be no tax increases. NATO's Secretary General Mark Rutte also revealed that allies would have to cut pensions and other welfare programs to fund higher military spending.

All of this new spending is to recruit more soldiers and manufacture additional weapons for a patriarchal institution that is premised on the threat and use of force. The federal government's 2024 Statement and Impacts Report on Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion acknowledged that investments in the military disproportionately benefit men over women, according to its gender-based analysis. The report further explained that the "CAF are predominantly White men" (p. 120-125).

Gender inequality is also exemplified in the 2024 Public Accounts that showed that the budget for the Department of National Defence, including CAF, was $33 billion, whereas the Department for Women, Gender and Youth (WAGE) was only $71 million (Table 2a, p. 19).

by Ellen Woodsworth and Tamara Lorincz

Moreover, UN Women commissioned research in 2022 on the impacts of military spending on WPS. One of its reports, "The Impact of Militarization on Gender Inequality," found that "militarization leads to gender inequality, which in turn affects economic growth. Higher military spending reduces the productive capacity of the economy in the long run, by exacerbating gender inequality" (p. 3). The report also explained that military spending "comes at the expense of investments in social spending programs," which leads to greater poverty (p. 5).

The government has already announced cuts of 15% to most federal departments except National Defence and a reduction of 80% to WAGE's meagre budget, which will be devastating to women and youth as well as to related 2SLGBTQIA+ and Indigenous programs. At the same time, $15 billion in public funding is desperately needed to address the housing crisis, and $1 billion is required to alleviate homelessness.

Furthermore, the Government of Canada has never met its pledge to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on overseas development assistance (ODA). Despite its Feminist International Assistance Policy launched in 2017, Canada's current ODA is $7 billion or a mere 0.38% of GNI.

Thus, military spending represents a serious trade-off and opportunity cost for other federal spending. More money on soldiers and weapons means less for foreign aid and development, health care, education, environmental protection, and climate action, which will make women and girls more insecure.

Under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Government of Canada committed to improve the lives of women, children, 2SLGBTQIA+, First Nations, seniors, and people living with disabilities in this country.

WILPF Canada has appealed to the Prime Minister, then Minister of Finance François-Philippe Champagne, and Members of Parliament to prioritize investments that uplift

these vulnerable people in the country who are at risk of greater poverty and violence, as described in the <u>Building understanding: The first report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty</u>, over meeting NATO's arbitrary GDP target.

WILPF Canada has also called on the federal government to fulfill the recommendations of the Commission for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' (MMIWG) <u>Calls for Justice</u> and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's <u>Calls to Action</u>, which require substantial federal funding.

Military spending also comes at a severe cost to the climate and the environment. The Canadian government is procuring new fossil fuel-powered fighter jets, attack helicopters, armed drones, missile launchers, and armoured vehicles that release <u>excessive carbon emissions and air pollutants</u>. WILPF Canada's 2024 <u>research</u> shows that military expenditures and emissions are hindering the federal government from rapidly decarbonizing and achieving the Paris Agreement targets.

In September 2025, the UN's Secretary General released an important report, "<u>The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future</u>." It raised alarms about ever-rising military expenditures and urged states to reconceive security based on human needs, not militarism. It stressed that the climate change targets and sustainable development goals are not on track because of inadequate financial resources. It called on all countries to address the underlying causes of growing military expenditures and instead prioritize diplomacy, peace, and international cooperation.

As well, the UN Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt, Attiya Waris, also issued a report entitled, <u>Financing Peace and Financing War</u>, to the UN Secretary General. She wrote: "Redirecting military spending towards peacebuilding and development is a complex and challenging process, but also a necessary one for all States."

To achieve the aspirations of the WPS agenda, WILPF Canada and other feminist organizations urge the federal government to take action on the UN recommendations and reduce and redirect military spending to a green, care-based economy.

RESOURCING CNAP3: HALLUCINATION OR A PLAN WITH A BUDGET?

by Beth Woroniuk

At the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development earlier this year Bob Rae, then Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations, addressed the opening plenary in his capacity (at the time) as ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) president. He noted "It was a wise person who once pointed out that strategy without resources is better called hallucination."

Dedicated resources have long been considered a prerequisite for the successful implementation of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) national action plans (NAP). However, most WPS NAPs lack budgets and include little clarity on how NAP activities will be financed. Canadian civil society advocates have consistently highlighted the importance of dedicated budgets and resources. The final report on the 2022 consultations, organized by the WPSN-C, feeding into CNAP 3 included a recommendation on resourcing: "Dedicated funds, costing, and budgeting for all CNAP3 activities and goals are necessary."

Despite these recommendations, to date, Canada's WPS NAPs and their progress reports fall short of both allocating and reporting on resources and budgets. If we follow Ambassador Rae's insight, does that make them a 'hallucination' rather than a full-fledged strategy?

Tracking Investments and Resources in Previous CNAPs
Previous CNAPs and their progress reports provided little information on resource allocations and commitments. Initially, CNAP1 reporting on CNAP1 contained almost no detail on budgets, programming expenditures or human resource allocations. In those early years, analysts outside of government attempted to examine data available through other sources. The final reports on the first CNAP (2014-2015 and 2015-2016) provided incomplete data.

by Beth Woroniuk

With CNAP2 there was a new effort to track GAC WPS programming investments. Using a combination of the OECD-DAC Purpose Codes, GAC's gender equality marker and various definitions of fragile contexts,[2] an annex in the 2017-2018 summary progress report provided some information on GAC WPS disbursements. This data looked at overall total and breakdown by country and CNAP2 objective. This practice continued with the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 progress reports. (See the 2017-2018 progress report for an explanation of the methodology used.)

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[2] The OECD-DAC (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee) tracks and monitors development finance. They use a combination of 'purpose codes' and 'markers' to analyze investment trends, including allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment. GAC, and other OECD members report annually and the numbers are available in an online database.

GAC uses a 4-point scale to 'code' initiatives on the extent to which they focus on gender equality outcomes:

- GE - 3 Targeted - Gender equality is the principal objective of the initiative: The initiative was designed specifically to address gender inequalities and would not otherwise be undertaken. All outcomes in the logic model are gender equality outcomes.
- GE - 2 Fully integrated -There is at least one intermediate gender equality outcome which will achieve observable changes in behaviour, practice, or performance that will contribute to gender equality.
- GE - 1 Partially integrated - There is at least one gender equality outcome at the immediate outcome level which will achieve a change in skills, awareness, or knowledge that contributes to gender equality.

GE - 0 None - There are no gender equality outcomes.

Table 1 - Projects Advancing the WPS Agenda

	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Total disbursed	$679M	$ 497M	$408 M	$221 M
Number of projects	261 GE2 127 GE3	226 GE2 78 GE3	215 GE2 55 GE3	n/a
Disbursements by CNAP2 Objective ($ millions)				
Gender-responsive peacebuilding, peacemaking, and post-conflict state-building, including support to women and women's groups working on peace-related issues	21.8	24.5	27	14.6
Prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, including ending impunity and providing services to survivors, and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse	50.4	55.7	60.4	27.8
Promotion and protection of women's and girls' human rights and empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected settings, including support to a gender-responsive security sector, women's political participation, girls' primary education and combatting violent extremism	205	130	106.3	81.7
Advancing gender equality in humanitarian settings	170	100	100.7	47.7
Sexual and reproductive health and rights in fragile, conflict-affected states and humanitarian settings	222.6	160	113	49.3
Strengthening the capacity of peace operations to advance WPS	9.2	25.5	0.66	0

The <u>final progress report</u> on CNAP2 (covering 2021-2022 and 2022-2023) abandons the annex on resource tracking with no reason provided. It does, however, include some anecdotal examples of WPS funding, including:

- $14 million to support the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women's emergency support to WROs for COVID response in conflict-affected countries;
- 97% of Canada's humanitarian assistance projects integrated gender equality considerations in 2020.
- $41.7 million to support the work of humanitarian partners in sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The failure to continue tracking resources is regrettable. Data provided in the first three reports indicates dramatic increases in funding over the initial period of CNAP2. Given the absence of ongoing reporting, we do not know if this trend continued.

As well, questions can be asked about the reported increases in WPS investment. Were they, in fact, as dramatic as reported, and did they have an impact? Some <u>analysts</u> have questioned the usefulness of including GAC GE2 initiatives when looking at gender equality investments. In theory, this marker tracks progress that successfully "integrates" gender equality consideration (including analysis and results), but these ratings are done internally with no external quality control or accountability. Thus, it is argued, the reported numbers may inflate or exaggerate meaningful gender equality investments.

CNAP2 reporting on WPS investments was an improvement on the CNAP1 progress report. At first glance, there was a significant increase in WPS programming carried out by GAC. However, given the fact that an Annex on investments was not included in the progress report covering the final years of CNAP2 and an overall lack of solidity of the methodology, this conclusion is somewhat shaky.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

What are the commitments in CNAP3?
Turning to the new CNAP, there does not appear to be a significant improvement. Overall, there are few commitments to increased WPS investments and no information on specific budget allocations. The brief mention of "resourcing" in CNAP3 is worth quoting in its entirety:

> *"Commitments in Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security will be delivered through partner programs, practices, policies and operations. In addition to integrating women, peace and security into existing lines of funding, the Government of Canada will continue funding women, peace and security through the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program at Global Affairs Canada. The Government of Canada is also dedicating resources for the coordination of the action plan, including for coordinating and supporting partners, supporting civil society partnership and engagement, and monitoring, evaluation and learning." (p. 35)*

There are general commitments in CNAP3 and the departmental implementation plans to capacity building, new tools, disaggregated data, systematic use of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), and reporting. All of these institutional initiatives require resources, both human and financial, but there are no budgets or new allocations. It is not clear how these activities are to be financed (especially in an environment where departments are being called to reduce expenditures) and where the funds will come from.

In addition to institutional investments, civil society has called for new programming expenditures. For example, support for women peacebuilders, initiatives aimed at preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, investments in SRHR in conflict-affected contexts, partnering with local and global actors working to implement the WPS agenda, and so on. The GAC department plan includes general mentions and commitments in these areas, but there are no promises to increase or track spending expenditures.

CNAP3's monitoring, evaluation and learning framework does include two key performance indicators (KPIs) related to resourcing, out of a total of 13 KPIs:

- KPI 1.1: % of total international assistance invested in fragile and conflict-affected situations for the purpose of supporting women's organizations and women's networks (international and local) and advancing women's rights and gender equality for programming and/or institutional strengthening.
- KPI 4.1: % of total of humanitarian assistance projects that include sexual and/or gender-based violence or sexual and reproductive health and rights components.

These KPIs are important, but they are incomplete and confusing. Will KPI 1.1 include all gender equality investments, as in GAC's GE3 marker, or just investments that support women's organizations and networks? Will KPI 4.1 provide one total that combines both SRHR and sexual gender-based violence investments? Will other GAC WPS investments be tracked and reported on?

As well, these KPIs only related to GAC. There does not appear to be a commitment to track and report investments by other CNAP3 partners.

Conclusion
Despite the ongoing recognition that to be effective, WPS NAPs require dedicated resources and costed budgets, CNAP3 fails to meet this global standard. While it does include two KPIs on resourcing, these indicators lack clarity and only relate to GAC (and only part of GAC's WPS programming). Furthermore, there are no commitments to ensure dedicated staff across all implementing partners, despite these human resources being necessary to ensure implementation.

by Beth Woroniuk

It is not too late to rectify some of these absences. Progress reports could include, for example:

- information on staffing: full-time equivalents in each partner department working at least 50% of WPS issues, for example;
- program expenses: for GAC this could be GE3 initiatives (number and budget) in conflict-affected contexts, number and budgets for initiatives supported by embassies/high commissions (including Canada Fund for Local Initiatives) on WPS. There have also been consistent <u>calls</u> for tracking support for women's rights organizations in conflict-affected contexts/women's peacebuilding organizations;
- major investments in institutional strengthening (development of tools, training, etc.) by each partner department;
- new initiatives with dedicated budgets across partner departments.

With this information (and an analysis of increases or decreases by year), we would have a much better sense of whether CNAP3 is a strategy without resources, a hallucination, or a meaningful contribution to global peace, security, and gender equality.

AFGHAN WOMEN: THE FORGOTTEN FRONTLINE OF PEACE

by Wazhma Frogh

"My mornings begin in a rush to finish chores before 10 a.m., when a group of fourteen women quietly gathers in my home three times a week. Because my mother-in-law dislikes the noise, we meet in the guest room—once reserved for male guests, now reclaimed as a space of survival and solidarity.

Around the circle sit former teachers, school principals, civil servants, and activists. Last week, we debated three urgent matters. First, we needed to find an English teacher for girls banned from classrooms. Second, we discussed Fatima, a teenager being forced into marriage to prevent her abduction by Taliban fighters. One of our members, who has family ties to her relatives, has agreed to intervene. Third, we voiced alarm over local madrasas where girls are increasingly exposed to extremist teachings.

These are not simply conversations. They are lifelines— acts of resistance whispered behind closed doors, stitching fragile yet determined webs of survival. As one facilitator from the north told me: "Every week we come together, we stitch a fragile but determined web of survival and support, because no one else will do it for us." **Hanifa, a member of a women support group actively working inside Afghanistan.**

I engage daily with more than 200 such women across Afghanistan, each carrying the heavy burden of keeping their families, their communities, and the idea of a better future alive.

A Journey Interrupted
Before August 2021, Afghanistan was not perfect, but it was moving forward. The country was in the midst of implementing its second National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, the landmark UN resolution recognizing women's role in peace and security.

Ministries such as Interior and Defense had pledged to recruit 10% women into their ranks starting from zero in 2002. Women held more than 30% of civil service positions. Millions of girls filled schools and universities, and women taught at every level of higher education.

Against enormous odds, Afghan women made visible progress. They opened cafés, launched businesses, created women-only gyms, and claimed public space in ways unimaginable a generation earlier. Their achievements embodied the principles of UNSCRs 1889 (inclusion of women in post conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes) and 2122 (women's participation in recovery and protection from sexual violence), which emphasize women's leadership in post-conflict recovery and governance.

Afghanistan's international partners, themselves guided by WPS commitments and National Action Plans in their home countries, played a key role in supporting Afghanistan's progress toward institutional WPS milestones. Canada was one of them. Canada's 2010 National Action Plan (CNAP1) guided its work supporting women's inclusion, participation, and protection within Afghanistan's National Defense & Security Forces (ANDSF).

To increase the presence of women in the Afghan police forces, I worked as a local partner with the Canadian Embassy, both through its diplomatic and development portfolios. For example, with Canada's financial support, we were able to recruit more than 3,000 women into the police forces, and also worked with the Afghanistan Ministry of Interior to establish its protection and anti-harassment mechanism.

In addition, women's groups and activists in Afghanistan worked closely with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) during their mission to train Afghan forces and foster peace and stability. One example of such engagement was through a local WPS organization, which cannot be named for security reasons. My organization facilitated meetings between women leaders and Canadian civilian and military teams, providing critical insights and advice on community challenges and pathways to peace.

I vividly recall an instance in 2013 when we arranged for 15 women leaders and activists from Kandahar to meet with the CAF at their base. Because the forces were unable to leave the airport, these women courageously traveled together by bus to the heavily armed base. It was a journey that symbolized the risks women were willing to take and their unwavering commitment to supporting peace and stability alongside Canada's mission. Today, however, many of those same women face grave risks for the very leadership and activism that once made them vital partners in building peace. They feel abandoned.

Gender Apartheid Today

The Taliban's return in 2021 dismantled this fragile progress overnight. <u>Women are banned from public life, expelled from schools, universities, offices, and the media</u>. Even their voices are criminalized under Taliban morality laws. Afghan women today live under what legal experts rightly call gender apartheid, stripped of rights both in public and private spheres.

The home is no longer safe. Domestic violence has risen sharply, and the Taliban have abolished all legal protections for survivors. International responses, meanwhile, remain tepid. Regional powers continue to trade with the Taliban. Russia has announced its intent to formally recognize the regime. The normalization of the Taliban disregards the International Criminal Court's finding that the regime is complicit in gender persecution — a crime against humanity.

Over the past four years, Afghan women have resisted the Taliban in a variety of ways, from organizing protests to advocating for international accountability measures, yet these efforts have not yet yielded tangible results. For example, Afghan women are still waiting to see how the potential case under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) at the International Court of Justice will be operationalized and whether it will succeed in bringing the Taliban under the scrutiny of international justice.

Women, Peace & Security: Absent in Afghanistan

Despite erasure, Afghan women have not surrendered. Their organizing may not cite UNSCRs 1325, 1820, or 2106, but their lived realities embody the WPS framework more powerfully than any UN declaration. They continue to mobilize, to create micro-networks of safety, and to sustain one another in the face of systemic oppression.

Yet Afghan women remain absent from the global WPS agenda. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), addressed under UNSCRs 1820 and 2106, is widespread in Afghanistan. Taliban members <u>abduct, rape, and forcibly marry women,</u> <u>often targeting families connected to the former government</u>. These crimes, however, are rarely raised in UN Security Council debates on CRSV or in other fora. This silence is more than a diplomatic failure; it is a betrayal of the very commitments states made under the WPS framework.

Afghan Women, Peace, and the Promise of UNSCR 1325

The WPS agenda was never meant to be confined to conference rooms or diplomatic communiqués. It is also about care, healing, and survival. In Afghanistan, women sustain peace in kitchens, living rooms, and makeshift classrooms. They are frontline peacebuilders without resources, without recognition, and often without hope.

But they cannot stand alone. To honour UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions that make up the WPS agenda, the global feminist movement and UN member states must act in solidarity. From Africa to Latin America, from Asia to Europe, all must amplify Afghan women's voices, insist on their inclusion in international fora, and demand accountability for crimes committed against them.

Solidarity must go beyond statements. It must mean funding grassroots networks, creating safe platforms for participation, and pressing governments to treat gender persecution as the global crisis it is. Afghan women are not victims waiting to be rescued. They are peacebuilders resisting one of the most repressive regimes in modern history. If the world allows them to be erased from the WPS agenda, then UNSCR 1325 becomes nothing more than hollow rhetoric.

Recommendations for Canada on WPS and Afghanistan:

Play a Key Role in the CEDAW Case at the ICJ

Canada should make it a priority to play an important role in the CEDAW case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), ensure it is an inclusive process, and make its efforts known to the women who are actively fighting for this accountability. By doing so, Canada can demonstrate its commitment to global gender equality and justice, and set an example of meaningful participation in international efforts to protect women's rights.

Sustain Long-Term Support for Afghan Women's Organizations

Canada should commit multi-year, flexible funding to grassroots Afghan women's networks, including those operating in exile. Short-term or symbolic projects will not meet the scale of the crisis, and only sustained support will allow these organizations to continue their critical work under challenging circumstances.

Champion Afghan Women in Global Forums

Canada can use its diplomatic weight to amplify Afghan women's voices at the UN, NATO, and other multilateral spaces. Excluding them from negotiations undermines both legitimacy and peace, so Canada must work to ensure that Afghan women are heard and included in decision-making processes at the highest levels.

Protect and Resettle At-Risk Women Leaders

Canada must expand safe pathways for the resettlement of women human rights defenders, journalists, and activists who collaborated with Canadian institutions and now face Taliban persecution. This includes creating more accessible immigration channels and offering comprehensive support for their resettlement.

Prioritize the Codification of Gender Persecution in International Policy & Practice

Canada should lead efforts to recognize gender apartheid and gender persecution as crimes under international law, pressing allies to act on accountability and justice mechanisms. Establishing these norms will strengthen international legal frameworks and protect vulnerable populations.

Integrate WPS Across Canadian Foreign Policy
Afghanistan is not an isolated case. Canada should ensure that lessons from Afghanistan, particularly the risks of sidelining women once international priorities shift, are built into all future WPS programming to prevent similar setbacks elsewhere.

Afghan women once boarded buses in Kandahar to meet CAF officers inside fortified bases, risking their lives to share knowledge, offer solutions, and strengthen a fragile vision of peace. Today, those same women continue their struggle under extraordinary repression. Their courage demands more than admiration; it demands action.

For Canada, honouring the WPS agenda now means turning legacy into ongoing accountability. It means refusing to let Afghan women disappear from the story of peace.

Because without Afghan women, there will be no Afghan peace.

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA: IMPACTS ON WOMEN AND THE IMPERATIVE OF THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

by Mary Bridger

The Gaza Strip, home to approximately 2 million people, has endured decades of conflict, economic blockades, and political instability. The current genocide has been built upon an already dire humanitarian situation, with women bearing a disproportionate burden. To understand and build sustainable solutions, we must first examine the gendered impacts of the crisis and the implications of pre-existing occupation. While doing so, we can also explore the relevance of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, highlighting how humanitarian responses aimed at addressing the needs of women are pivotal, but political will must ultimately be at the core.

Gendered Impacts of the Gaza Humanitarian Crisis

1. Loss of Life and Displacement
The ongoing conflict has resulted in significant loss of life. Between October 2023 and July 2025, women and girls were estimated to account for 67% of the 57,680 Palestinians killed. This figure likely underrepresents the true toll, as many women remain unaccounted for under rubble. Additionally, since the collapse of the ceasefire in March 2025, over 1.1 million people have been reported displaced across the Gaza Strip, with a substantial number being women and children, leading to the collapse of family structures and support systems.

2. Food Insecurity and Health Challenges
At least 557,000 women in Gaza are facing severe food insecurity, with many reporting weight loss and frequent dizziness. Over 80% of women rely on food assistance as their primary source of nutrition, yet 87.3% believe that aid distribution is not equitable.

This disparity exacerbates existing gender inequalities, as often the primary family member responsible for food preparation and care-giving within a household are women, who also face the added time burden and mental sense of responsibility for providing for their families when insufficient food is available. Time and time again we see women in crisis often prioritize feeding their families over themselves.

3. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation
The humanitarian crisis has led to an increase in GBV, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in overcrowded shelters and displacement settings, where a lack of privacy and security heightens the risk of violence. In addition, we have seen reports of women being sexually exploited in exchange for food, money, or job promises. These incidents highlight the vulnerabilities women face in accessing humanitarian assistance and the need for stringent safeguards against exploitation.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda
The WPS agenda emphasizes the importance of women's participation in peace and security efforts, their protection from violence, and the integration of gender perspectives in humanitarian responses. In the context of Gaza, the WPS agenda underscores the necessity of four key components.

- **Participation:** Ensuring women's involvement in decision-making processes related to peacebuilding and humanitarian aid distribution.
- **Protection:** Safeguarding women and girls from violence, including sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Prevention:** Addressing the root causes of conflict and gender inequalities to prevent further violence.
- **Relief and Recovery:** Providing gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance that meets the specific needs of women and girls.

Humanitarian Response and Challenges
Humanitarian organizations have been working tirelessly to address the needs of women in Gaza, not only for the last two years, but for decades, working to respond to this crisis that is both acute and historic. Prior to the blockade of aid by Israeli authorities, CARE and our local partners reached over 930,000 people with water, food, shelter items, protection services and medical support.

Today, despite the challenging conditions, our staff and partners continue to operate healthcare centers and mobile health clinics and distribute clean water. But our supplies in Gaza are quickly running out.

We remain ready to scale up our response to provide life-saving aid—but to do so, we need a permanent ceasefire and full, unhindered access to supplies at a scale that matches needs.

And we are not alone. Organizations in Gaza have been instrumental in providing support, with 83% of them remaining operational despite the challenging environment. These organizations provide critical services, including core health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service delivery, as well as counseling, legal aid and advocacy. However, they receive a disproportionately small share of humanitarian funding, with only 0.09% allocated to national or local women's rights organizations in the 2023 Flash Appeal.

Policy Recommendations
To address the unique challenges faced by women in Gaza and to align with the WPS agenda, the following policy recommendations are proposed for both donor governments as well as the organizations they fund:

Increase Funding to Women-Led Organizations
Allocate a significant portion of humanitarian aid to women-led organizations in Gaza to enhance their capacity to provide essential services and support to women and girls.

Implement Gender-Sensitive Humanitarian Programs
Design and implement humanitarian programs that specifically address the needs of women and girls, including access to reproductive health services, protection from GBV, and economic empowerment initiatives.

Ensure Women's Participation in Decision-Making
Incorporate women's voices in all levels of decision-making related to humanitarian aid distribution and peacebuilding efforts to ensure that their needs and perspectives are adequately represented. Even though women are vital to community resilience, they remain largely excluded from formal peace negotiations and political decision-making. This exclusion undermines the potential for sustainable peace.

Canada's Role
Canada has a proud tradition of <u>defending international humanitarian law</u> and responding to crises with compassion and conviction. And throughout this crisis, we have seen the government routinely speak out, condemning what is happening in speeches and statements. Likewise, they have negotiated progress in boardrooms and UN Assemblies, declaring Palestinian statehood and supporting peace processes. Much of this comes about after sustained advocacy from civil society, including members of the <u>Women, Peace and Security</u> community. But words, without sufficient action, do not bring about progress for those most in need; in fact, they risk emboldening further violations.

It's past time for Canada to uphold our legacy and take action. The Canadian government must leverage every diplomatic avenue to secure an immediate and lasting ceasefire, while also committing to holding all parties accountable for complying with international humanitarian law. In addition, the implementation of sanctions and economic consequences is critical, placing pressure on Israel to secure an unconditional lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and its full, safe, and unhindered distribution. And finally, Canada must examine its own complicity, close arms trade loopholes, and halting all direct and indirect arms transfers to Israel.

Conclusion

The genocide and resulting humanitarian crisis in Gaza have had a devastating impact on women, exacerbating existing gender inequalities and creating new vulnerabilities. The implementation of the WPS agenda offers a framework for addressing these challenges and ensuring that women are not only protected but also empowered to contribute to the rebuilding of their communities. By increasing support for women-led organizations, implementing gender-sensitive programs, and ensuring women's participation in decision-making and the peacebuilding process, the international community can help mitigate the impacts of the crisis and promote a more inclusive and sustainable peace.

The recent escalation in violence has further intensified the humanitarian crisis, with over 67,000 deaths reported since October 2023, the majority being civilians. The destruction of infrastructure and limited access to basic necessities have compounded the hardships faced by women and girls.

In this context, the WPS agenda remains a critical framework for ensuring that the needs and rights of women are prioritized in humanitarian responses and peacebuilding efforts. The active involvement of women in these processes is essential for achieving lasting peace and security in Gaza.

The international community must continue to advocate for the protection and humanity of women in Gaza, ensuring that their voices are heard and their rights upheld amidst the ongoing crisis.

By adhering to the principles of the WPS agenda, there is hope for a future where women in Gaza can live free from violence and discrimination and actively participate in the rebuilding of their society.

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF RESOLUTION 1325 & SUDAN: PROMISES, REALITIES & POTENTIAL

by Rita Morbia

The Promise

Twenty-five years ago, when the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), activists, feminists, and peacebuilders concerned with women as autonomous, independent actors capable of changing the world must have had full hearts. The resolution was ground-breaking, positioning women at its core. The Security Council has never been known for its radical feminist perspectives. But this resolution was a fulsome promise, with the powers that be centring women's protection, rights, roles and agency in a formal, legal commitment. It must have felt like a triumph.

Fast forward almost two decades to the period from 2019 to 2021 with Sudan in the midst of a heady democratic political transition brought on by a popular women and youth-led revolution. Its 30-year dictatorship deposed. Citizens experiencing new-found freedoms. Civic dialogue at an all-time high. And women's rights being discussed, debated, and even implemented (occasionally and imperfectly) through laws and policies. In Sudan, the potential for realizing the goals and spirit of Resolution 1325 in a way that fundamentally impacted the daily lives of women was vast. For women's rights activists in the country, it was more than a moment; it was the culmination of a generation of hard-fought struggles. Sudanese women's rights activists caught a glimpse of Resolution 1325 made manifest.

So, what has happened to that promise today?

The Reality

There are not enough superlatives to describe the devastation brought on by the current conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, which began in April 2023. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports 11.9 million people have been forcibly displaced. Of those, 7.5 million have relocated within Sudan, and another 4.1 million have left the country altogether. This is the largest displacement crisis in the world.

Over 30 million people require humanitarian assistance. This is the greatest level of need recorded within a single country. Children are dying from conflict-related famine in Sudan. In total, there are over 600 thousand people experiencing famine, while half of the population faces severe hunger. This is the highest level of food insecurity being documented in any country. Civilians have been killed, assaulted, held hostage, and sold into slavery with impunity, the scale of which is massive, but under-reported. Health facilities and health workers have been targeted. The RSF has committed genocide. The toll of the conflict on all aspects of life, from disruptions in the banking and communications infrastructure to the high price and lack of accessibility of basic goods to the collapse of many educational facilities, is unbearably heavy.

The WPS Agenda
Resolution 1325 and the WPS agenda as a whole have never been more relevant to Sudan. Nor have they been further from reach. It is as if each and every aspect of Resolution 1325 has been dismantled. The lives of women and girls in Sudan are extremely precarious in areas directly experiencing armed conflict (such as Darfur in Western Sudan or Khartoum), but also in areas that have seen less gunfire (such as Kassala in Eastern Sudan) – and everywhere in between. The social fabric that often supports women has been shredded. State services for women are severely lacking. Representation of women in political decision-making is virtually non-existent. And furthermore, women and girls are being targeted in the conflict with unspeakable brutality.

Resolution 1325 "calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse..." Sexual violence targeting women and girls has been a constant and unrelenting feature of the conflict in Sudan. Documentation by human rights organizations, women's rights advocates, and UN bodies has overwhelmingly featured the RSF as perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence that is widespread and systematic in nature, though the SAF have also been named. Given the logistical constraints, social stigma, and political barriers faced by survivors, the scale of this phenomenon is significantly under-reported and difficult to estimate.

Women and girls have been raped in their homes, <u>when fleeing attacks</u>, in refugee camps, or while in the streets, simply searching for food and basic necessities to survive. Women and girls have been kidnapped and repeatedly raped by multiple armed attackers, sometimes for ransom, in incidents of sexual slavery or through forced marriages. <u>Young children</u> (under five years old) and boys have not been spared. Social stigma, lack of healthcare services or trauma-informed counselling, and the daily restrictions of living in a conflict-affected area have all resulted in very few survivors being able to access physical or psychological care.

<u>UNSCR 1325</u> "emphasizes the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls…" With the justice system severely constrained, survivors cannot access the legal system (inadequate as it was before the war). There are few to no safe spaces from which they can act without fearing retaliation from armed actors or their trauma being instrumentalized by the opposing side. As a result, impunity reigns. Accountability initiatives such as the <u>Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan</u> are woefully under-resourced with "<u>a secretariat whose capacity is approximately 40 per cent due to the United Nations liquidity crisis</u>." Despite this, the Mission's <u>latest report</u> states that both sides are responsible for atrocities against civilians, but that the RSF has "committed myriad crimes against humanity, including murder, torture, enslavement, rape, sexual slavery, sexual violence, forced displacement and persecution on ethnic, gender and political grounds." The SAF has also <u>denied repeated requests</u> for the Mission to enter Sudan. The state-sponsored protection measures called for in 1325 are nowhere to be found in Sudan.

<u>UNSCR 1325</u> stressed the "importance of [women's] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution." Women in Sudan toppled a dictator. And yet the legitimate and carefully considered attempts of the women's movement and women leaders at being engaged in any of the previous ceasefire negotiations or dialogues have been <u>tokenized</u> or outright ignored by the belligerents.

None of the warring parties include high-level representation by women. Major geopolitical players in the conflict, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates also do not prioritize women's involvement in peacemaking. The prospects for any peace negotiations or ceasefire talks have dimmed, given the RSF's ambitions to carve the parts of the country under their control into a separate state, and what appears to be a lack of political will by regional and international powers.

The Potential
Despite the chaos and destruction, or maybe because of it, Resolution 1325 has immense potential as a strong, guiding framework for the WPS agenda in Sudan. In a recent report by Sudanese Organization for Research and Development, SORD (Feminist Peace & Security Agenda in Sudan, 2025, unpublished), based on research with internally-displaced and refugee women, as well as those from six different states in Sudan, women who were aware of Resolution 1325 strongly emphasized its relevance. Even under the current circumstances, they wanted it to be popularized and for its provisions (protection, peacebuilding, participation, etc.) to be localized.

Women's heroic leadership at the grassroots community level remains critical in Sudan, as both a practical intervention as well as a form of political mobilization. For example, this can take the form of women's emergency response groups or community kitchens, providing critical food, healthcare, psychosocial counselling, hope, and so much more. The community kitchen movement (also known as emergency rooms) largely grew out of the Resistance Committees, decentralized political organizing bodies that formed during the 2019 Revolution. They are largely made up of young activists who act in the public interest. Since geopolitical powers are failing to work towards a genuine peace – starting with a complete ceasefire – it is the women of Sudan who carry the torch of Resolution 1325 today, holding space for its untapped potential.

CANADA'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY MILITARIZES ASIA AND UNDERMINES WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

by Tamara Lorincz

In November 2022, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly announced Canada's new Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). The federal government did not hold any public consultations to develop the new strategy. Canadian and Asian women's groups were not invited to participate and provide input even though the strategy has grave implications for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in the region. The IPS was also released in the absence of a Canadian foreign policy review, which has not been held in twenty-one years. This lack of consultation defies Canada's commitment to increasing women's participation in decision-making as required by the United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1325.

Canada's IPS is heavily influenced by and coordinated with the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It came out nine months after the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific Strategy and five months after NATO's Strategic Concept. NATO, the U.S.-led Euro-Atlantic alliance, mentioned for the first time in its plan that the "Indo-Pacific" is a strategic priority despite the fact that the region is out of the alliance's geographic ambit.

Like the U.S. and NATO strategies, Canada's IPS is based on a highly militarized approach to the Indo-Pacific and an aggressive stance toward China. The 26-page document references China over fifty times, more than any other country. The IPS asserts "Canada's evolving approach to China is a critical part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy" (p. 7). It discourteously characterizes the People's Republic of China (PRC) as "coercive" and "an increasingly disruptive global power" (p. 3 and 7).

Yet, it is Canada that is coercive as the IPS states by "investing in expanded military operations, training, intelligence and capacity building" in the Indo-Pacific. Over the past three years, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have increased their "war-fighting" drills with allies, such as Exercise ALON, Exercise RIMPAC, Exercise Mobility Guardian, and Exercise Talisman Sabre, in the region.

Under Operation HORIZON, the Royal Canadian Navy regularly deploys its frigates alongside American warships as they transit through the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Canada's military presence in the Indo-Pacific degrades the marine environment from live-fire weapons testing and sonar use. Canadian frigates are fossil fuel-powered and emit excessive carbon emissions, worsening global warming in a region vulnerable to extreme weather events, such as super typhoons.

Worse still, these joint exercises are also dangerously provocative to China, a nuclear-armed state, and must be considered in the broader geopolitical context. Months after the release of the American and Canadian Indo-Pacific strategies, U.S. General Mike Minihan circulated a memo within the military to enhance its presence in Asia and prepare for war with China. The U.S. Senate is also "beating the drums for war with China." As the IPS states, the U.S. is Canada's closest ally, so there is a serious concern that the CAF is contributing to the U.S.'s war readiness (p. 3).

The U.S. is moving more medium-range and long-range missile systems to its bases throughout the Indo-Pacific. Currently, there are 120 U.S. military bases in Japan and 73 bases in South Korea. The U.S. has recently boosted the number of its bases from four to nine in the Philippines. It also has bases in Guam, Micronesia, and Singapore. These American bases encircle China, threaten its security, and destabilize the region.

The CAF uses "the U.S.-controlled Kadena Air Base and White Beach naval port on Okinawa for their operations in the Asia Pacific," as scholar John Price and activist Satoko Oka Norimatsu described in their 2022 article. Yet, by using the base, Price and Norimatsu argue that the CAF is exacerbating tensions and contributing to the dispossession of the land from the people of Okinawa, who have tried for decades to close the U.S. bases on their homeland.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

As well, the American bases in Japan and across the region are notorious sites of sexual violence and exploitation against local women. The Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC) stated in a 2021 briefing: "Sexual assaults by US soldiers have remained as a serious threat to women and girls living in communities hosting military bases." Thus, Canada's use of the American bases compounds this militarization, making local women more insecure.

Moreover, since the IPS was launched, Canada's military exports to Taiwan have doubled from $15 million in 2021 to $34 million in 2024. Ottawa has issued export permits for military aircraft and naval vessels, ammunition, imaging, software, hardware and other technologies to Taiwan over the past four years, according to the Global Affairs Canada's Exports of Military Goods reports.

Imagine if China were supplying ammunition to separatist forces in Canada. This foreign interference is what Canada is disconcertingly doing with the U.S. reinforcing the China-Taiwan dispute.

Canada's IPS claims that it is "defending the rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific," but Canada and the U.S. are disrespecting international law by undermining UN General Assembly Resolution 2758. The resolution was passed in 1971 and recognizes the one-China principle that Taiwan is part of China. Canada should be upholding the UN resolution and supporting the peaceful relations between Taiwan and mainland China instead of intensifying divisions.

Further, unlike the U.S., China and Canada have ratified the UN Convention on the Law of Seas (UNCLOS), which provides the legal architecture to peacefully settle all maritime disputes. Canadian warships sailing off China's coast are not necessary for "freedom of navigation," but are antagonistic maneuvers that undermine UNCLOS.

China has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which the U.S. has failed to do. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing. The 1995 conference brought together over 17,000 delegates and concluded with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to advance the goals of equality, development, and peace for all women.

In pursuit of those goals in the past thirty years, China has lifted 800 million men, women and children out of poverty, including in Xinjiang province, while creating the second-largest economy in the world. The United Nations and the European Union have praised China's remarkable achievement. By contrast, in Canada, a higher proportion of people live in poverty and rely on food banks, and there are more tent encampments in cities across the country. Yet, under the Beijing Platform for Action that Canada endorsed, the federal government made a commitment to eradicate poverty and improve social development.

The UN and the International Energy Agency have also recognized the PRC's leadership on climate change, as the country has become the largest producer of renewable energy technologies. China has also expanded its public transit with over 50,000 kilometres of high-speed rail (HSR), a network that Canada and the U.S. do not possess. Canada and the U.S. should be investing in HSR and other green infrastructure instead of militarism.

Canada's latest National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security claims that the IPS aligns with WPS, but this is not the case. Through the IPS, Canada is contributing to the militarization of the Indo-Pacific, escalating conflict with China, and increasing instability in Asia. These Canadian military actions do not align with UN Security Council Resolution 1325's obligations to prevent conflict and build peace.

To genuinely implement WPS, Canada must demilitarize its IPS and ensure that it follows Resolution 1325 and fulfills the Beijing Platform for Action. A new IPS must aim to enhance the security, human rights, and well-being of women and girls on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Canada must also immediately terminate all military exports to Taiwan, and the CAF must cease its military drills with the U.S. and NATO in the region to reduce tensions and avoid a war with China.

Finally, Canadian officials should learn more about China's "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" and its new "Concept Paper on the Global Governance Initiative" and partner with this important country on projects that promote peace and sustainable development throughout Asia and the world.

FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION: QUEERING CANADA'S WPS COMMITMENTS AT 25 YEARS

by Alexandria Bohémier, Kim Vance-Mubanga and Sarah Clifford

Twenty-five years after the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda stands at a critical juncture. Canada's third National Action Plan on WPS (CNAP3), covering 2023 to 2029, explicitly names gender-diverse people as stakeholders. However, recognition on paper does not automatically translate into meaningful change. Too often, 2SLGBTQI+[3] communities are acknowledged rhetorically but remain absent from implementation, funding, and accountability structures. Marking the 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, this moment demands not only reflection on past exclusions but also bold commitments to transformation. CNAP3 presents an opportunity to move beyond tokenism and toward co-creation, embedding queer and trans voices in the heart of peace and security practice.

The WPS agenda has historically centred cisgender, heterosexual women, reproducing cisnormative and heteronormative assumptions about "whose peace" is worth protecting. Queering WPS challenges these assumptions by interrogating who defines security, whose experiences are rendered invisible, how queer and trans bodies are policed, and what peace might look like if it centred those voices in current security frameworks. For CNAP3 to fulfil its promise, it must embrace this broader, intersectional vision of security.

While CNAP3 has made discursive progress compared to earlier Canadian WPS action plans by explicitly naming diverse gender identities and signalling openness to intersectionality, significant gaps remain. The absence of measurable benchmarks makes it impossible to assess whether queer and trans communities are substantively included.

[3] We use the acronym 2SLGBTQI+ to represent Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and broader community members.

*by Alexandria Bohémier, Kim Vance-Mubanga
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The gap between rhetorical acknowledgement and practical implementation underscores the ongoing disconnect between policy language and the resources needed to sustain meaningful change. Without dedicated funding, 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion risks remaining symbolic. Furthermore, queer and trans participation in consultation processes too often takes the form of tokenism, with limited influence over priorities, budgets, or decisions. Inclusion without resources, accountability or decision-making power cannot be considered genuine inclusion.

Why is Queering WPS Necessary? A Grassroots Response to Queering WPS in Practice

Meaningful queer and trans inclusion in the WPS agenda is not just to demonstrate a point of inclusion but is necessary due to the unique and heightened risks that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals face in spaces where the WPS agenda is implemented. Across crises and conflicts, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals are <u>frequent targets of violence</u>, <u>discrimination</u>, and harm. Even during crisis responses, legal and cultural stigmatization persists, leaving aid and services <u>inaccessible and unsafe</u> for 2SLGBTQI+ people. The confluence of legal, social, and <u>institutional exclusion</u> leaves 2LGBTQI+ people with few avenues for safety or redress, compounding their exposure to harm during precarious and dangerous situations.

The Canadian government has <u>recognized this vulnerability</u> and provided resources to improve the situation. In 2018, Canada hosted the <u>Equal Rights Coalition conference</u> in Vancouver. During the conference, pressure was exerted by state and civil society actors for Canada to increase their global commitments to 2SLGBTQI+ communities. One outcome of that pressure was a <u>1 million dollar targeted commitment</u> under Canada's Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs). This enabled Canadian 2SLGBTQI+ organizations, such as <u>Egale Canada</u>, to collaborate with partner organizations in Ukraine to pilot a highly successful police training program from 2020 to 2022, resulting in the production of a <u>training manual and a hate crimes investigation handbook</u>. Unfortunately, despite its success, what was anticipated to be an ongoing PSOPs program ultimately became a one-off investment, with no follow-up, justification, or long-term strategy.

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Even during times without overt war, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals experience exclusion that places them in vulnerable positions. According to the <u>Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</u> (IE SOGI), many 2SLGBTQI+ individuals are forcibly displaced while searching for safer environments. The number of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals experiencing forced displacement will only increase in the coming years, due in part to the adverse effects of socioeconomic fragility and climate degradation.

Since 2023, <u>Pride7</u> (P7), an informal G7 engagement group comprising global queer and trans activists and allies, has exemplified how to embed community-led efforts and grassroots 2SLGBTQI+ voices into global processes on WPS. Pride7 has successfully developed into a thought leader in identifying the connections between 2SLGBTQI+ inequities and conflict, democratic fragility, health injustice, and economic turmoil. In 2025, Pride7 gathered in Canada to envision what the G7 political space could look like when 2SLGBTQI+ human rights are not only considered but also viewed as essential for the success of negotiations. In bringing together global practitioners who sit at the intersections of gender justice and conflict eradication, Pride7 created a space that took seriously the needs and experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, situating 2SLGBTQI+ human rights as necessary for the eradication of global issues. What resulted was a series of policy recommendations that centred on calls for justice, care, and equality, challenging how, even in times of global upheaval, it is possible to come together and develop practical solutions that consider the needs of the world's most marginalized.

The <u>P7 Communique</u> affirmed the right to refugee protection for those fleeing persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics, asserting that 2SLGBTQI+ persons should live free from violence and never be used as justification for violence, and calling on all G7 nations to enter <u>The Hague Group</u> to reaffirm the importance of international law for all, regardless of an individual's identity or relationship status. Together, by placing queer and trans bodies at the center stage, P7 worked to challenge traditional discussions of conflict and security that are commonplace in G7 spaces, and emphasized how inclusive practices with 2SLGBTQI+ individuals can be part of the solution.

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Due to the current geopolitical divides within G7 nations, even topics that may seem commonplace or agreeable, such as gender equality, have become contentious, resulting in limited progress.

Policy Pathways: Recommendations to Strengthen Queering WPS in Canada

The Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security (CCYPS) has made significant contributions that demonstrate how 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion can transition from rhetoric to practice, and how community-designed tools can inform institutional change. The No Peace Without Pride policy brief highlights that existing frameworks frequently fail to meaningfully integrate 2SLGBTQI+ voices and experiences, and identifies concrete entry points and policy recommendations to ensure queer voices are effectively embedded across funding, monitoring, and the implementation of decision-making processes. These recommendations include promoting 2SLGBTQI+ representation in peace processes, institutionalizing intersectional approaches, and countering anti-rights movements - the latter of which WAGE has committed to in its work plan. The policy brief also emphasizes the crucial importance of ensuring 2SLGBTQI+ representation in decision-making bodies, particularly within peace and security frameworks.

The policy brief also demonstrates that the lack of data collection plays a critical role in the existing exclusion, and there is a strong need for better research and data collection to help advance queering frameworks, such as CNAP3. 2SLGBTQI+ actors in the peace and security space have called for the development of best practices to ensure data is collected and disaggregated in a meaningful and community-centric way. Security concerns also need to be addressed in terms of how data is stored and accessed to prevent heightened risks for the 2SLGBTQI+ peacebuilders.

As the WPS agenda marks its 25th anniversary, No Peace Without Pride stands as a promising example of how community-led recommendations can chart a path toward transformation. It illustrates how tokenism can be replaced with structures of accountability and power-sharing, where communities define priorities, set indicators, and evaluate outcomes alongside government actors.

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Moving forward, CNAP3 can draw on these recommendations to operationalize its rhetorical commitments by resourcing queer-led programming, embedding accountability frameworks, and adopting participatory approaches that recognize the contributions of 2SLGBTQI+ peacebuilders.

From Rhetoric to Reality: Queering WPS at 25 and Beyond
In 2022, the federal government launched Canada's first 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan. One of the key goals was to bring together present and future federal action under a unified, whole-of-government approach to help improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Embedding 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion into CNAP3 in a substantive way requires the type of policy coherence promised by the Action Plan. The lack of these interlinkages between WAGE's 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan and their CNAP3 departmental plan highlights critical gaps and oversight.

In addition to policy coherence, dedicated funding streams must be established for queer- and trans-led peacebuilding initiatives, designed to be accessible to grassroots organizations that often face barriers to traditional funding. Measurable indicators of 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion are needed across all pillars of CNAP3, with public reporting requirements to strengthen accountability. Canada's diplomatic platforms can be leveraged to challenge anti-2SLGBTQI+ laws globally while ensuring leadership remains with affected communities. Implementing departments should integrate training on 2SLGBTQI+ rights, intersectionality, and queer feminist peacebuilding to ensure that rhetorical commitments are translated into practical action. Most importantly, CNAP3 should institutionalize long-term co-creation partnerships with queer-led organizations in Canada and in conflict-affected contexts, rather than relying on episodic consultation.

Canada frequently positions itself as a feminist foreign policy actor, yet without addressing the resourcing gaps and risks of tokenism, such positioning risks being perceived as a box-ticking exercise. Genuine leadership requires integrating queer and trans perspectives as essential to feminist peace and security rather than as supplementary. Few states have explicitly embedded 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion into their WPS action plans.

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Canada, therefore, has an opportunity to set a global precedent by demonstrating how queering WPS can strengthen feminist foreign policy, improve coherence across peace and security efforts, and respond to interconnected crises.

The 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 is both a moment of celebration and of reckoning. Feminist gains over the past quarter century deserve recognition, but we must also address the impacts of exclusion on those who have been left behind. For 2SLGBTQI+ communities, this milestone underscores the need to move beyond rhetorical acknowledgement toward systemic change. Existing work being led by 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and organizations already provides roadmaps for how to centre queer and trans voices, dismantle tokenism, and embed co-creation into Canada's WPS implementation efforts. Together, 2SLBGTQI+ actors and the Government of Canada can not only address historic and ongoing exclusions, but also realize the full transformative potential of the WPS agenda in its next 25 years.

INVISIBLE NO MORE: WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, rooted in UN Security Council Resolution 1325, emphasizes the crucial role of women in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and post-conflict recovery. Despite its comprehensive framework, the agenda often overlooks the specific needs, experiences, and insights of women with disabilities—rendering them invisible despite the fact that they represent 20% of the world population of women. This makes them a significant yet frequently neglected demographic, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings, where disability rates can surge to nearly 25%. Conflict increases the incidence of diasabilities through the use of bombs, landmines, and similar devices, and through the use of violence, particularly sexual violence, as a weapon of war, impacting the bodily autonomy of women and girls.

Women with disabilities face double discrimination, simultaneously excluded from women's rights movements and male-led disability organizations. In nearly every domain—employment, education, healthcare—they experience heightened difficulties. Societal stereotypes and prejudices are just one example of the systemic barriers that often confine women with disabilities to low-status, poorly paid roles and restrict their access to essential services and participation in decision-making. Moreover, most women's rights policies tend to neglect their unique intersecting needs, rendering them invisible within broader gender and disability frameworks.

Violence and vulnerability

During conflicts, women with disabilities are disproportionately vulnerable to violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which has been weaponized in times of war. Displacement, destruction of essential services, and the breakdown of protection mechanisms further increase their risks. Women with disabilities can be separated from caregivers, lose access to assistive devices, face physical and attitudinal barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance, and be physically and socially isolated.

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

Humanitarian responses often lack accessibility considerations, leaving women <u>dependent on aid that may not meet their specific needs</u>. Development strategies frequently ignore the intersectional realities faced by women with disabilities experiencing displacement, resulting in <u>limited opportunities for social participation and reintegration</u> in host countries. Women's stereotypical gender roles as caregivers can add additional burdens on women with disabilities who are also caregivers, especially in contexts of displacement. Internally displaced women with disabilities face increased risks of neglect, abandonment, and further marginalization, hindering recovery and social inclusion.

Policy and Decision-Making Gaps

Women with disabilities are frequently absent from civic, peacebuilding, and governance spaces, especially during wartime and in post-conflict rebuilding. Their voices are rarely included, and their participation is often marginalized or <u>overlooked in peace negotiations</u> or peacebuilding initiatives, despite evidence indicating that <u>inclusive participation of women, including women with disabilities, fosters more sustainable peace agreements.</u> Policy responses aimed at preventing conflict-related violence seldom address the particular forms of violence and discrimination faced by women with disabilities. Moreover, <u>the exclusion of women-led organizations of persons with disabilities from</u> decision-making processes limits the development of inclusive prevention strategies.

There are a number of reasons that women with disabilities are marginalized in decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Invisibility is reinforced by societal stereotypes and stigma that view women with disabilities solely as victims, denying them their role as active agents of change. Post-conflict interventions are often no better, adopting charity or medical models of disability, portraying women with disabilities as passive recipients of aid rather than recognizing their <u>agency and capacity for leadership</u>. This is driven in part by outdated understandings of disability within humanitarian law and practice, which <u>continues to define disability as synonymous with "infirmity" or "sickness."</u> In addition to perpetuating stigmatizing perceptions of disability, this approach erases the <u>rich history of struggle</u>, community, and identity that has formed around the global disability justice movement in recent decades.

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

Insights that come from within this community, which demonstrate the numerous ways in which leadership is particularly adept at creating adaptive, agile systems and <u>practices of self-help and mutual aid in times of crisis</u>, are thus lost in situations where they could benefit wider humanitarian and WPS approaches.

Organizations of women and girls with disabilities are chronically underfunded, <u>limiting their capacity to engage fully with the WPS agenda</u>. As they are both excluded from women's movements in WPS as well as male-led disability movements, they are limited in their access to leadership positions, capacity strengthening and training opportunities, and ability to travel safely. This exclusion from civic life and leadership opportunities diminishes their ability to influence peace processes and recovery efforts in multiple ways. Furthermore, structural barriers—such as <u>inaccessible environments and communication challenges</u>—impede their meaningful involvement.

Another critical obstacle to advancing the rights of women with disabilities within WPS is the paucity of disaggregated data. Without detailed information distinguishing women and girls with disabilities from other groups, policymakers lack a clear understanding of their specific challenges, needs, and contributions. This data deficiency leads to their underrepresentation in decision-making, peacebuilding initiatives, and the formulation of inclusive policies. Addressing this gap requires systematic collection and analysis of disaggregated data, as well as a <u>deeper understanding of the diversity of disability identities</u> and experiences, to ensure that women with disabilities are adequately represented, their voices amplified, and their rights integrated into peace and security strategies.

Women with Disabilities in UNSC Resolution 1325

While resolution 1325 is a landmark resolution that recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and emphasizes the importance of their participation in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding, it does not once mention disability. Few Security Council resolutions (e.g., <u>UNSCR 1960, 2010</u>; <u>UNSCR 2106, 2013</u>) do so, and then, only portray them as victims needing protection from sexual violence rather than recognizing their agency or participation.

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

The absence of disability in these resolutions may be due to limited expert and activist briefings from women with disabilities before the UN Security Council and other global security forums. A notable improvement in the more recent resolution on UNSCR 2475 (2019) emphasizes that states must enable meaningful participation and representation of persons with disabilities, including their organizations, in humanitarian and peace processes, and consult experts on disability mainstreaming. In practice, however, we have yet to see any significant impact, and there is no evidence, such as a report or study, on the implementation of UNSCR 2475.

Most National Action Plans (NAPs) for WPS also exclude women with disabilities. For example, an analysis of 10 NAPs in the Arab region shows that disability is mentioned only in protection contexts, not participation. However, some improvements are worth noting. Countries like Jordan and Somalia show some inclusion of women with disabilities in decision-making. South Sudan's 2015-2020 NAP, which involved consultations with women with disabilities, includes over 30 references to women and girls with disabilities and makes a commitment that activities undertaken need to take into consideration the "unique conditions and the priority interests and the needs of women and girls with disabilities."

Women with Disabilities in Canada's National Action Plan on WPS

In Canada, women and girls with disabilities are rarely consulted, if at all, on the development of NAPs on the WPS agenda and are poorly represented in civil society organizations. In Canada's third NAP on WPS (2023-2029), entitled "Foundations for Peace," disability is only referenced in footnotes, as examples of an intersectional approach, or in the annex, which describes key terms such as Canada's Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+). This approach is consistent with the first two action plans which lack any integration of approach inclusive of women with disabilities. The commitments outlined by the CNAP for "Focus area 1: Building and sustaining peace, regarding women and gender-diverse peacebuilders and human rights defenders," lack specific inclusion and consideration of women with disabilities.

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

While the commitments emphasize advocating for meaningful participation, capacity building, protection from security threats, and improved engagement systems, they do not explicitly address the unique barriers faced by women with disabilities. This approach risks tokenization of disability identities at best, and at worst can lead to erasure of women and girls with disabilities, as they are pushed to the literal margins during Canada's NAP implementation.

Recommendations

Incorporate Women with Disabilities into Canada's WPS agenda

Advocate for the explicit inclusion of women with disabilities in Canada's approach to WPS, recognizing their agency, leadership, and unique barriers they face. Ensure explicit reference to their meaningful participation and address their specific needs in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and recovery efforts. Make targeted efforts to engage with and learn from disability-led organizations serving women, including grassroots groups.

Enhance Inclusive Data Collection and Disaggregation

Develop and implement systematic mechanisms for collecting disaggregated data on women and girls with disabilities, covering aspects such as violence, access to services, participation in decision-making, and social inclusion. Use this data to inform policies, tailor interventions, and monitor progress effectively.

Harmonize the WPS agenda with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant policy frameworks.

A disability lens needs to highlight not only the specific and unique vulnerabilities that women and girls with disabilities face, but the insights coming from the disability community in terms of building agile, human-centred systems.
Implementing these recommendations will foster a more inclusive, equitable, and effective WPS agenda that recognizes and leverages the agency of women with disabilities in peace and security efforts.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

by Anne Delorme and Sarah Keeler

Integrate the Social Model of Disability into Knowledge and Systems

Promote knowledge and mechanisms for inclusion in WPS based on the social model of disability, which recognizes the disabling barriers embedded in systems, attitudes and structures rather than in bodily or cognitive differences that need to be "fixed," as per the prevailing medical model. This approach aligns with contemporary standards in human rights-based approaches to disability justice, and avoids unintentional perpetuation of stigmatizing views of disabled women and girls as merely vulnerable subjects lacking agency.

Strengthen Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in all their Diversity in Decision-Making and Peace Processes

Create accessible platforms and support structures that actively involve women with disabilities and their organizations in peace negotiations, policy development, and post-conflict recovery initiatives. This includes removing environmental, institutional, attitudinal and communication barriers and ensuring their participation is meaningful, genuinely valued and influential.

Increase Funding and Support for Women with Disabilities' Organizations

Allocate targeted funding and capacity-building resources to organizations of persons with disabilities and women with disabilities. This will empower them to advocate for their rights, participate effectively in peace processes, and design and implement inclusive programs aligned with WPS objectives.

Much has been learned over the last 25 years of WPS resolutions – time enough to see the full inclusion and meaningful participation of women with disabilities, who represent 20% of all women globally.

DETOKENIZING CIVIC SPACE: LEVERAGING WPS–YPS SYNERGIES FOR FULL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN CANADA

by Shayne Wong

Canada is at a pivotal moment in shaping the future of its peace and security policy. A new federal government in Ottawa and the adoption of Foundations for Peace, the third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), open the door to rethinking how civic spaces are structured and who gets to meaningfully participate in them. At the same time, global frameworks such as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda offer complementary visions for inclusive participation in peace and security. The challenge for Canada is not simply to consult women and young people, but to ensure that their engagement is detokenized, moving beyond symbolic representation and toward genuine power-sharing in decision-making, resource allocation, and accountability.

Framing Tokenism in Canada

Tokenism in civic engagement has long been a concern for young people, whose inclusion in political and policy spaces often comes without real influence, power, or voice. This problem is even more acute for youth from marginalized communities. Youth engagement in Canada has frequently been reduced to advisory roles, short consultations, or public relations exercises. However, youth engagement must be more than a checkbox exercise; it requires creating structures and opportunities where young people are not merely present but are able to influence outcomes that affect their lives. With a new federal government seeking to refresh Canada's role in global peace and security, and with domestic institutions such as the Youth Secretariat and the State of Youth Report consultations, which concluded in March 2025, the political and policy conditions exist for a significant shift.

Detokenizing Peace and Security

Detokenization must go beyond aspirational language. Without concrete actions and commitments, the possibility of developing a more inclusive system remains out of reach. Furthermore, the inclusion of young people must reflect the diverse identities that make up Canada's youth population. The meaningful inclusion of marginalized young people—such as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), 2SLGBTQI+, and newcomer youth—ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are incorporated into policy and practice. One essential step in detokenizing youth engagement is addressing compensation. Tokenism thrives when young people are invited to participate but <u>expected to do so voluntarily, reinforcing structural inequalities and power imbalances</u>. <u>Establishing a dedicated Youth and WPS fund within the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program</u> (PSOPs), with clear stipend and honoraria norms, would signal that youth contributions are valued and professionalized. <u>Dedicated funding for youth-led and intergenerational policy and practice</u>, both domestically and internationally, would strengthen civic space and allow young people to design and test new approaches in peace and security.

Measurement and accountability are crucial. <u>Foundations for Peace</u> already acknowledges the limits of activity-based metrics, such as counting the number of individuals trained, and instead emphasizes behaviour change and results (p. 30-33). This shift creates space to embed youth-defined outcomes in monitoring frameworks. For instance, measuring the proportion of WPS programming co-designed with youth, or tracking the extent to which youth recommendations influence program design, would make their impact more visible and accountable. <u>Previous network publications</u> have highlighted the importance of WPS-YPS synergies, noting the intersecting identities of young people and their central role in sustaining Canada's peace and security commitments. To strengthen this, indicators should be co-developed and co-interpreted with youth evaluators, turning monitoring into a shared process of knowledge production rather than a bureaucratic exercise. In this way, synergies between the agendas are not only considered but fully integrated into policy and practice.

The CNAP3 emphasizes action at home, particularly in combating racism, advancing Indigenous partnerships, and addressing hate and polarization (p. 14, 32-33). Young people are already at the forefront of movements addressing these dynamics, underscoring the importance of recognizing and supporting their contributions.

Protection is another critical area where WPS and YPS agendas converge. Both frameworks stress the importance of safeguarding participants from harm, whether in conflict settings abroad or civic spaces at home. For youth—particularly those who are racialized, Indigenous, or gender-diverse—participation in peace and security work can entail risks of harassment, burnout, or digital insecurity. Safeguards to ensure that young people can safely engage in this work are essential; however, these must be co-developed with youth themselves to ensure they meet the needs of those they are meant to protect. A co-development model would see various sectors, including government, civil society, and the private sector, collaborating to create inclusive policy and practice. However, to be truly co-developed and inclusive in the context of YPS, this would mean that young people are meaningfully included in the development—and beyond, including implementation and monitoring—of these models.

Intergenerational co-leadership is also central to detokenization. Rather than situating youth as a separate "add-on" to WPS processes, a more ambitious model would create opportunities for collaboration, feminist mentorship, and shared leadership. As outlined in Beyond Tokenism, a toolkit developed by the Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security (CCYPS), many young people have felt silenced or sidelined by older adults within decision-making spaces, resulting in their perspectives being absent from key policies. Normalizing intergenerational decision-making, where youth and senior policymakers share responsibility, would shift these spaces into becoming more inclusive while fostering more sustainable policies and practices.

Canada and the World in 2025

Following the federal elections in mid-2025, a new government in Canada has naturally led to shifts in priorities. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Women and Gender Equality (WAGE), like other departments, now face major budget cuts. Beginning in spring 2026, federal departments must "find savings of 7.5 percent in their budgets." The direct impact this may have on work related to peace and security remains uncertain. Other departments, such as WAGE, face even greater financial risks with a reported 80% budget cut. Women's organizations across the country have raised concerns over Canada's ability to meet gender equality standards and needs within the country. Additionally, these funding cuts undermine the ability for Canada to implement the WPS agenda domestically. For YPS, which does not have its own dedicated action plan but is instead recognized under the CNAP3, these constraints pose particular risks—especially for young women, who already face barriers to meaningful participation. Reduced funding further increases the likelihood that youth engagement will be relegated to symbolic, low-cost consultations rather than substantive roles. This underscores the urgency of detokenizing civic and decision-making spaces to ensure the full and meaningful inclusion of youth voices. Furthermore, these financial cuts can potentially have devastating impacts on peace and security in Canada, which comes on the heels of the temporary removal of WAGE earlier in 2025. This erasure of WAGE—albeit temporarily—similarly resulted in outcry from feminist organiations calling for the reinstatement of the department. Although WAGE was reinstated with the introduction of the new cabinet following the election, the devaluing and defunding of feminist work in the subsequent months have continued to raise concerns about the sustainability of peace and security in Canada.

These dynamics underscore what is at stake for Canada. Globally, women's participation in peace processes remains below 10%, while youth are disproportionately affected by conflict and political violence. Domestically, the country faces rising polarization, online harms, and the ongoing imperative of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. A policy approach that meaningfully integrates youth into WPS governance to address these issues would therefore strengthen not only Canada's international credibility but also its resilience at home.

Next Steps

By embedding youth as co-decision-makers in peace and security structures, dedicating budget lines to youth-led initiatives, institutionalizing youth-led monitoring, and codifying safeguard standards, Canada can take concrete steps toward detokenization. Building intergenerational co-leadership and ensuring stronger domestic–international policy linkages will further enhance the credibility and sustainability of this approach. These changes move beyond symbolic gestures towards a redistribution of power that recognizes youth as essential actors in peace and security, while also valuing the work young people are already doing.

As Canada adjusts to a new federal political context and reviews its international commitments, the synergies of the WPS and YPS agendas offer a unique opportunity to redesign civic space. Detokenization is not about optics; it is about shifting from youth presence to youth power. The full and meaningful inclusion of young people within civic and decision-making spaces promotes inclusive practices and policies that can ensure the building of sustainable peace.

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 intersectional[4] 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.

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[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 mesures 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.

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.

NAVIGATING THE PERFECT STORM: LEVERAGING GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

by Chloé Silvestre and Rabab Rabbani

Wildfires raging across Canada, destroying ecosystems, displacing families, and threatening public health serve as a painful reminder of the urgent need to systematize efforts to limit global temperature rise. The recent launch of the G7's Kananaskis Wildfire Charter was a promising step, but the failure to frame climate change as a critical, intersectional priority—both in the Charter and the Chair Summary—was a missed opportunity.

From Sustainable Development Goal 13 (climate action) to Canada's latest Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (CNAP3), the need to centre climate justice has long been acknowledged. The international aid and peacebuilding sectors are no exception. The 25th anniversary of the WPS agenda offers a timely opportunity to reflect on progress—and gaps—in addressing the interconnected crises of climate change, conflict, and gender inequality.

Canada's climate commitments under CNAP3

Over the past decade, the Government of Canada has embedded climate commitments within its broader foreign policy framework, including on the WPS agenda and its Feminist International Assistance Policy (2017). For the first time, the CNAP3 and departmental implementation plans explicitly recognize the rise in climate emergencies and their intersection with conflict, displacement, and gender inequality. Climate change is recognized as a global security risk and a cross-cutting threat to WPS outcomes.

However, recognition alone is not enough. Climate change remains insufficiently integrated into WPS programming as an operational priority. This is the gap we must close if Canada, and its aid and peacebuilding partners, are to effectively tackle the climate crisis.

by Chloé Silvestre and Rabab Rabbani

Gender-responsive climate justice is not just an environmental necessity, but a strategic catalyst for driving change across gender equality, peace and security.

The realities of the WPS-climate nexus

We are facing a "perfect storm": a convergence of climate change, conflict, and gender inequality with devastating effects on the safety and rights of women and girls. A 2024 study done by CARE found that 4 out of the 5 top crises reported by women were directly linked to climate change. From massive internal displacement to the collapse of livelihoods and social protection systems, these interconnected crises are compounding protection risks for women and girls while undermining their political participation and long-term recovery. While often overlooked, Indigenous, LGBTQI+, and people with disabilities face additional layers of climate risks due to systemic exclusion.

In Ethiopia's Tigray region, hit by war and successive droughts, 120,000 women reported experiencing gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Despite the peace agreement, girls face further attacks while forced to walk longer distances for water as sources dry up.

In India, climate change is deepening food insecurity and poverty among marginalized farmers, especially rural women and ethnic minorities, heightening tensions over livelihood resources. Women, who play a key role in farming, are often excluded from agricultural groups and subsidies, lacking technology and support.

In South Sudan, women and girls have lost the safety of their homes and access to food due to a mix of droughts, flooding and heatwaves—climate events that have fuelled community conflicts driven by competition over shrinking land and water assets.

Across these contexts, gender inequality systematically limits women's access to land, credit, and technology, key resources for preparing and adapting to crises and building resilience.

Lessons from CARE Canada

At CARE Canada, climate justice and resilience are recognized not only as an environmental imperative but as a priority for gender equality. Programs in Honduras and Tanzania funded by Global Affairs Canada offer valuable lessons on how gender-responsive climate action can amplify results on women and girls' resilience and agency, reduce inequality, and foster stability.

In the Honduran Dry Corridor, the rural economic development project "PROLEMPA" supported over 3,000 coffee farmers and entrepreneurs, with a focus on Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and youth. PROLEMPA addressed the intersection of climate vulnerability, poverty, and gender-based violence. This included leveraging partnerships with local organizations to strengthen municipal women's networks and to establish the Regional Network of Indigenous Lenca Women, engaging nearly 10,000 women. Innovative approaches such as Local Agricultural Research Committees and Environmental Management Plans enabled communities to identify agricultural challenges and mitigate climate risks.

In Tanzania, CARE and its partners launched the "Her Resilience Our Planet" project, targeting farmers, pastoralists, and agricultural entrepreneurs who rely on the Great Ruaha River ecosystem and are exposed to the effects of climate change. Women-centred, climate-smart agriculture techniques, delivered through the Farmer Field and Business School, are paired with biodiversity protection and climate information services.

Women's leadership in climate governance is a core component of this project designed to build women's advocacy skills, ensuring safe participation in activities, and connecting them to policy spaces, among others. A feminist evaluation approach using participatory monitoring and accountability tools, including CARE's Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) tool and CARE's Climate Resilience Marker, ensures the tracking of gendered impacts of climate action and climate resilience integration.

by Chloé Silvestre and Rabab Rabbani

Conclusion and recommendations

Greater visibility is urgently needed on the effects of climate change on those most affected: women and girls in the global majority world. CARE Canada's experience shows that climate justice, gender equality, and the WPS agenda are inseparable. Climate justice must be recognized and leveraged as an "opportunity multiplier": programming that reduces climate risks and their gendered impacts also contributes directly to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

To navigate the "perfect storm" of climate change, conflict and gender inequality, Canada must turn recognition into action—embedding climate justice as a core operational priority across all pillars of the WPS agenda. Here are key recommendations:

1. Climate justice must be embedded as a measurable priority into WPS National Action Plans. This requires developing **specific climate-gender outcomes, performance indicators, timelines, and budget lines** that reflect the urgency of the environmental crisis. Interventions should systematically be grounded in **intersectional, gender-based, and climate-sensitive analysis** capturing lived realities of women and girls. To increase cross-government accountability, a **specific outcome** anchored with the Interdepartmental WPS Working Group would ensure all departments report against it to Parliament.

2. Women and girls, in all their diversity, must be meaningfully involved in **climate-related decision-making**—from grassroots to national policy spaces. This requires long-term dedicated funding to **women's organizations, Indigenous stewards, and women peacebuilders.** Donors should ensure that these organizations have a seat at the table, including at COP climate negotiations, and provide **flexible small-grant mechanisms** that are available both during and after climate shocks, enabling rapid and community-led responses.

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3. **More research**, including on climate change as a driver of gendered insecurity and displacement, is needed. Global Affairs Canada should sponsor independent **public studies** exploring these dynamics and assessing how foreign policy and aid have addressed climate-specific gendered impacts and local empowerment. Initiatives like the WPS Civil Society Leadership Award for Gender, Climate Change and Conflict in 2022 should be replicated.

4. **Stronger institutional linkages** must be fostered between Global Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, provincial adaptation plans, and climate finance mechanisms. This would ensure that WPS actors have access to technical expertise and funding for climate adaptation.

5. International and local NGOs must be equipped **with financial, human, and technical resources** to further integrate climate justice into gender equality work, systematically mainstreaming it across programming. CARE's innovative **Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CVCA) tool and Climate Resilience Marker** are promising starting points, ensuring that Canada's funding is more resilient and responsive to climate shocks.

Prioritizing gender-responsive climate justice is not only a moral and environmental imperative—it is a strategic investment for Canada to meet its gender equality, peace, and security goals. Integrated programming that is feminist, locally led, inclusive, and climate-resilient offers the clearest path to building safer, more equitable futures for all.

PEACE IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WAR: A FILIPINA DOCTOR'S REFLECTION ON CARE, POWER, AND EXCLUSION

by Denise Koh

I shouldn't need to prove I belong here.

I was born in Canada. If I spoke to you on the phone, you'd picture a wholesome lily-white fresh- faced prairie gal with rosy cheeks, maybe the next-door neighbour you grew up with. I am a trained public and occupational health physician. I hold multiple specialty designations, have held senior leadership roles in our government, and have advised on some of the most critical public health and worker safety decisions for 15 years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, like so many Filipina care workers (FCWs), I have had to fight to the bone to be heard, seen, and valued in systems that are happy to use our labour but reluctant to honour our knowledge.

In some ways, *I am* the system. And yet I am not immune to the same silencing, dismissal, and moral injury that so many racialized women in care roles experience across Canada. This tension — of being both inside and excluded — is where I write from.

The Peace We Talk About vs. the Harm We Live Through
Canada's third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (CNAP3) is, on paper, a step forward. It expands the WPS agenda beyond overseas conflict zones to include domestic commitments, reinforcing its relevance by aiming the spotlight on the problems Canada sees now, here. It talks about intersectionality, disaggregated data, and gender-based violence. It acknowledges systemic racism, the colonial legacy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and gender-diverse people. This helps, since the average Canadian may not be familiar with WPS terminology, let alone get behind the cause and modify behaviour. Some may have felt CNAP2 was a bit too esoteric and "out there" to get on board with WPS: *Why should I care about the dying women and kids in (insert foreign country here), when we're dealing with X, Y, Z crisis on Canadian soil?*

Even though the global human rights picture is not a Poor Me competition, CNAP3 appropriately takes on a bigger world view, including from Canada's own backyard, thus decreasing squabbles over whose cause is more worthy. We are all connected, after all.

But despite its broadened scope, CNAP3 still fails to recognize the structural violence experienced by women who look like me, and the countless FCWs who make up the invisible backbone of health and care systems across the world. The plan does not reflect what we live through. It does not account for the knowledge we bring. And it certainly does not protect us when we speak up. Widening CNAP's scope on vulnerable women worker groups from the frontlines of conflict to include the frontlines of the care crisis not only acknowledges the inequities care workers face, but also recognizes the unique paradox they experience. Care workers should expect the same, if not more health and safety protections afforded in other sectors. Simultaneously, functioning society relies on their vital work, and thus they are the first to be exempted from safety standards and mandated to work. The people most needed are also the ones most likely to burn out, get sick from their work, and die from work-related causes.

Care Work is Peace Work
Filipina women are among the largest internationally deployed care labour forces globally. In Canada alone, tens of thousands of women of Philippine heritage work in health and care roles — from doctors to nurses, aides, caregivers, and live-in staff — though credentialing barriers often force them to work well below their training levels. In 2021, Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs) in Canada numbered over 259,000, with women making up 71.2% and Filipinos making up 25.5% of this group. Approximately 100,000 more working-age Filipina women than men live in Canada, revealing that this is very much a gendered issue.

Care work is risky work. These workers often endure long hours, unstable contracts, poor working conditions, and systemic discrimination — all while their wellness is deprioritized, and their voices dismissed. Meanwhile, the families and communities they leave behind also pay the price. Separation, remittance-dependency, and intergenerational strain are just some of the silent burdens placed on those upholding this care economy.

The fact that the majority of globally deployed care workers are Asian women reproduces colonial hierarchies and keeps racialized women in subservient roles to white households, institutions, and governments. In the most extreme cases, employers have confiscated passports, restricted movement, and inflicted abuse — practices disturbingly similar to human trafficking.

In this light, the historical exploitation of Filipina women — such as the "comfort women" system under U.S. and Japanese military regimes — is not so distant. Filipina women's bodies have long been sacrificed to uphold white patriarchal comfort, often at the cost of their own agency and health. The legacy of this continues in modern-day care work.

And yet, we FCWs are rarely seen as peacebuilders. Despite working daily in spaces of human fragility — illness, death, recovery, trauma — we are left out of the national narrative on peace and security. We are not considered experts. Our credentials are questioned. Our advocacy is dismissed. Our names are forgotten. Sometimes the violence isn't loud; it's in the quiet refusal to acknowledge our contributions.

As a physician trained in Canada but "othered" as a racialized woman, I've experienced and written about this dissonance myself. I was often assumed to be a trainee, a nurse, housekeeping staff, anyone but the doctor. The burden of always having to prove one's worth more than others and code-switching for others' comfort takes a toll on the marginalized individual and significantly limits career trajectory/potential. The same power structures that devalue FCWs globally are alive and well here at home.

Credentialism, Racism, and Wasted Potential
One of the most insidious forms of systemic discrimination is the devaluation of non-Western credentials. Canada's medical regulatory bodies routinely recognize training from traditionally white Anglo-Saxon countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while requiring professionals trained in the Philippines (despite its education system largely based on the American model) and other Asian countries to redo credentials through time-consuming, costly processes.

The result? Highly skilled Filipina doctors and nurses are cleaning hospital rooms or working as aides, while the system claims a shortage of health care workers. It's not just a labour issue. It's a racist policy choice that wastes human potential, worsens inequities within Canada, and makes Canadians less healthy.

The absurdity of holding back Canada's biggest current care resources while simultaneously crying about the health care crisis Canadian policies created and sustained reflects a deeper gap in CNAP3: its failure to challenge the systems that stratify whose knowledge counts. Peace and security are not just about conflict prevention. They're about dignity, recognition, and justice. And by failing to confront the reality that FCW stories, knowledge, and ways of knowing aren't seen as valid — especially when we come from communities that have always been excluded from the table — Canada is undermining its own goals.

Moral Injury in the Pandemic Era
During the COVID-19 pandemic, I was the province of Manitoba's Chief Occupational Medical Officer and a Medical Officer of Health. I advocated tirelessly for vaccine prioritization of frontline workers, often racialized. Manitoba had started to collect race, ethnicity, and indigeneity (REI) data in healthcare settings; COVID data showed that these workers were disproportionately getting sick and suffering worse outcomes.

I pushed for policy change. I had the data. I had the expertise. I had the mandate. Still, I was ignored.

Age-based vaccine eligibility remained the policy. And later analyses showed what I already knew: this decision cost lives.

That experience shattered me. Not because I didn't get my way. But because I was in the room screaming and still not heard. Because leadership roles for racialized women often come without power, and speaking truth comes with punishment.

It seemed purposeful, even spiteful—I was in everyone's faces. How could they not hear me? It started to feel like the very people I was trying to protect may have worse health outcomes because the powers that be didn't like the messenger's vibe. That was the moment I realized I had to throw in the towel on this fight, because the moral injury had turned into an existential crisis I could only write about.

Health is a Missing Piece of Canada's WPS Agenda
CNAP3 is structured around six focus areas: peacebuilding, security and justice, crisis response, sexual and gender-based violence, leadership, and inclusion. These are important. But what's missing is the language of healing. The emotional, psychological, and communal repair that true peacebuilding demands.

As a hypnotherapist and trauma-informed practitioner with a special interest in work-related mental health issues, I see what data can't capture. The long tail of silencing. The quiet resignations. The acceptance that it'll always be like this. The unresolved rage. The bodies breaking down from swallowing what should be spit out, carrying what should be let go. If peace is the goal, then *care* must be part of the strategy. Not just as labour to be regulated, but as a political act. A feminist act.

Canada needs a WPS agenda that includes trauma-informed systems, culturally grounded healing, and a shift from punishment to restoration. This is as true in workplaces as it is in post-conflict zones.

The Surveillance We Need
In addition to including racialized women care workers, CNAP3 should broaden its lens to include occupational data. As an occupational health physician, I know how little data we have on work-related illness and disease in Canada. Despite how much of our lives are spent working, we lack a comprehensive national occupational disease surveillance system.

We can't address what we refuse to measure. And I clearly saw how this lack of capturing supporting data led to marginalized worker groups we could have better protected remaining unprotected. We need to go further than disaggregating the data; we need to start measuring data sources that already point to inequities we can see.

If we're capturing REI data, capturing work-related data (which has more direct causal links to health) is a no-brainer; we're way past due. I fought to have workplace, sector, and occupation included in COVID case investigation forms in Manitoba, but was denied.

Toward a Feminist Policy of Care and Recognition
What I brought home from my recent WPSN-C mission to Malaysia was a renewed sense of possibility. There, I witnessed the early steps toward a country's first National Action Plan, facilitated through sessions between civil society and government. There was concerted effort to ensure diversity in civil society organizations included and feedback sought. I saw care. I saw hope. We could use more of this, both in our CNAP and follow through.

As a historically humanitarian country, Canada has the experience, based on decades of trial and error and can talk a big game. But are we walking that talk? Canada has recently allocated markedly decreased funding to Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) work, while increasing investment in national defense. Our new WPS Ambassador has yet to be named. We are not living the spirit of UNSCR 1325 at home — not in budget, and not in policy.

The privilege of living in the best nation on earth is that the majority will never have to experience the extent of inequity/human rights abuses that necessitate CNAP globally. In peace-loving, first-world Canada, it's easy to take our protections for granted and focus on what may look like bigger more urgent problems.

But our Haves still get to select what they acknowledge. The greater the power differential, the bigger their blind spot for the marginalized, further exacerbating the divide.

WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3

The brewing polarization in our populace that became apparent during the pandemic has only become worse-- more entrenched and, frankly, scary. This is "over privilege." We live in a time when "woke" has become a weaponized insult, and the very act of naming injustice is branded as divisive. This backlash isn't just political theatre — it has real health consequences. The Whitehall studies have shown that unequal power and social stratification are strongly correlated with worse health outcomes across populations. And in societies where polarization deepens, the stress of social exclusion and systemic inequality is biologically embedded, increasing disease burden, especially among racialized groups.

We see a disturbing normalization of misinformation/ disinformation campaigns, a rapidly changing political landscape with extremists proudly displaying their hate, affronts to what were once believed foundational North American values and institutions, everyday senseless violence, a dual reality that breeds an acceptance of the egregious in favour of the fast, convenient, and flashy. Truth is being distorted and our collective humanity eroded. We are not unified, and the slope is pretty slick.

We don't need to look far to see where this leads. The chilling frequency of book bans, anti-DEI rollbacks, reproductive health restrictions, blatant bullying with staunch defenders, and whimsical dismantling of long-revered institutions in the U.S. is a mirror we'd do well to face. Canada may not be there yet — but if we continue silencing care workers, denying data on workplace inequities, and defunding gender-based programming, we will be.

Peace is not just the absence of war. It's the presence of justice *for all*. It's recognizing the caregivers, the healers, the leaders who don't fit the boxes they've been shoved into. It's creating space for women like me and my FCW sisters to lead and be part of the solution, not despite our identities, but because of them.

If we truly want peace, we need to stop wasting the brilliance that's already here. It's time Canada's WPS approach caught up.

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