

Statement to the Press Prior to the Adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325

Eugenia Piza-Lopez
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At this morning's session with the Security Council, we spoke on behalf of the hundreds of women's groups and local organizations that struggle every day to prevent war and to bring peace and security to their ravaged communities in the midst of the most horrendous conflicts.

In ethnic conflicts, women and girls are sexually assaulted, raped and murdered, promoting ethnic cleansing and genocide. In many regions, women have endured decades of military occupation, in constant threat of violence.

Women are also the indirect victims of warfare. Armed forces attack their homes. Their crops are destroyed. They are forcibly displaced to refugee camps where they are forced into prostitution, trafficking and criminal activities in order to survive.

There should be no silent witnesses to these abuses. All too often, peacekeepers and military forces turn a blind eye or contribute to the exploitation of these women. A culture of silence and impunity prevails.

Yet even in the most dangerous of circumstances, women have shown their courage and leadership as problem solvers and peacemakers.

In Latin America, wives and sisters dared to question the military juntas about their "disappeared" relatives. In Mali and Liberia, women rallied together to call for disarmament. In the Philippines, women run peace zones around villages protecting their children.

Their work is rarely acknowledged nor recognized. Time and again when it comes to peace deals and high level negotiations, women's voices and experiences are excluded and marginalized. Even though women head the majority of households after war and know what is needed to rebuild peace, they are neglected by their own governments and the international community.

This morning we asked the Security Council to ensure that women have equal representation in all peace processes. We also asked that they consider the plight of women in war zones, to give them the protection they need and end the culture of impunity that exists around crimes committed against women in war.