

Call to Action: Reclaiming the WPS Agenda at 25

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. This milestone should have been a moment of reflection, recommitment, and collective mobilisation. Instead, we are witnessing increasing exclusion, backlash, and shrinking civic space. Women's rights organisations, particularly those led by communities most affected by violence and conflict are being systemically excluded from the spaces where this agenda has been shaped and defended.

The WPS agenda was, and remains, a call to action. It emerged from decades of feminist organising, from communities affected by conflict, from women and gender-diverse people demanding power, protection, participation, peace and security.

We cannot celebrate an agenda of inclusion and peace while borders are closing, surveillance is intensifying, and those advocating for gender rights and justice are harassed, intimidated, detained, deported, or shut out. Visa barriers are a longstanding issue, however, we now face an extreme and deliberate narrowing of civic space. Exclusionary travel bans and entry policies have made participation in WPS Week inaccessible and unsafe for many, particularly those from the Global South/Global Majority. Even those holding valid visas are reconsidering travel due to the risk of being detained and deported. These are not theoretical concerns; they are already happening.

This year's UN Security Council Open Debate on WPS takes place under heightened political tension and fragmentation. The WPS agenda is increasingly affected by anti-gender backlash and racialised securitisation which makes visible feminist organising and women's political participation dangerous. We understand the importance of maintaining presence and pressure within UN spaces. But our presence cannot come at the cost of safety, dignity, or principle.

Therefore, to mark the WPS 25th anniversary, we are mobilising collectively. We will not centre New York but will centre the frontline individuals, feminist movements, and the Global Majority who were critical in bringing UNSCR 1325 to the UN Security Council 25 years ago. Throughout October, we will convene a series of regional WPS gatherings in Amman, Nairobi, Geneva, Brussels, and Southeast Asia. Those who are able and want to engage with the UN Security Council Open Debate Week in New York, both to ensure civil society's meaningful presence and to stand in solidarity with those unable to be there, should do so. This will amplify the messages from our regional convenings, making clear that our mobilisation is interconnected and collective.

These convenings will serve as spaces for collective reflection, strategy and advocacy led by civil society - in particular by women-led organisations and those most impacted by conflict and insecurity. They will be open to governments and allies willing to support, listen and act. These events will be politically grounded in this statement and form part of a visible, global reclaiming of the WPS agenda.

We are not withdrawing: we are reclaiming the WPS agenda by re-rooting it in civil society where it continues to be lived, defended and demanded.

We call on Member States, the United Nations system, and international allies to recognise that **participation without access and influence is not inclusion, it is performance.** We urge governments and institutions to engage seriously with what this moment demands. This will mean supporting, attending and resourcing our regional and community-led efforts to mark the 25th WPS anniversary. This means listening to what is being said not just in formal spaces and recognising that civil society is not asking for symbolic gestures or statements but real action. **We are asking for partnership rooted in trust, accountability, and shared responsibility to implement and defend the WPS Agenda now and in the future.**

Signatories:

1. Gender Action for Peace and Security (Secretariat)
2. PAX
3. WO=MEN
4. Conciliation Resources
5. Peace Direct
6. Beni Peace Forum
7. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
8. Peace and Freedom Organisation
9. Resonate Yemen
10. Researchers Without Borders (REWiB)
11. People's Voice for Peace
12. Envision Zimbabwe Women's Trust
13. Mwaka Nawila Foundation
14. Research Initiatives for Social Development
15. Chanan Development Association (CDA)
16. Ladies Empowerment Goals and Support Initiative (LEGASI)
17. Un Ponte Per ETS (UPP)
18. Tawaza for Women's Advocacy
19. Peace and Freedom Organization
20. South East Asia Women Peace Mediators
21. Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
22. AJCAD Mali
23. Le Réseau des Organisations de Jeunes en Action pour la Paix, la Réconciliation et le Développement (REJA)
24. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom UK (WILPF UK)
25. Humanity & Inclusion
26. Saferworld
27. Women for Women International-UK
28. REDEPAZ
29. Oxfam Novib
30. FARAGGER (Women Led Global Forum for Afghanistan)
31. International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
32. The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation
33. Berghof Foundation
34. Rethinking Security
35. Wings of Peace Charitable Foundation for Development and Humanitarian Response
36. ActionAid UK
37. Mother of Hope Cameroon (MOHCAM)
38. Women's Platform
39. Gender Initiative for Change and Social Transformation (GISOT)