Statement to UN Human Rights Council 42nd session (9 - 27 September 2019)

Item 2: Interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner’s report on Yemen

Statement on Yemen

The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom commends the Group of Eminent Experts’ (GEE) efforts to bring to light the blatant violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. We are concerned that the Government of Yemen has not granted the GEE permission to enter the country, thereby hindering adequate access to victims and witnesses.

The GEE’s report and its 274-page long supplement constitute a significant departure from last year’s report in terms of gender-sensitive analysis by highlighting how women, girls, men and boys are differentially affected by the conflict, and how pre-existing structural discrimination against women and girls has been exacerbated by the armed conflict and is leading to the emergence of “new oppressive gender norms.” We welcome the GEE’s efforts to include such gender-sensitive analysis and urge them to adopt a consistent gender-responsive approach throughout their work, as this is crucial to document the full extent of human rights violations.

We also note that the GEE findings underline broad patterns of sexual and gender-based violence committed by all parties to the conflict, but are also cognizant of the fact that the stigma associated with reporting these crimes makes the documented cases a mere sample of the actual extent. WILPF calls on all parties to immediately stop such violations and to ensure investigation and accountability of perpetrators at all levels of the chain of command.

We call on all states and relevant actors to exert pressure on warring parties to immediately release all arbitrarily detained and forcefully disappeared persons in Yemen. Civilians must never be used as bargaining chip for military gains. WILPF underlines the importance of the GEE’s comprehensive documentation of cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances.
Mr. President,

The severe human cost of the conflict on civilian lives, infrastructure and protected objects has been exacerbated by the extensive proliferation and use of arms, ranging from explosive weapons - notably used by the Saudi-led Coalition - to guns, firearms, and anti-personnel landmines used by Houthis. This disproportionately impacts on women and girls’ access to medical and education services, social protection and livelihoods, and jeopardizes their security and freedom of movement. We echo the GEE’s observation that a continued supply of weapons to warring parties perpetuates the conflict and suffering of the population. We call on states transferring arms and providing military support to the Saudi-led Coalition, particularly France, the UK, both parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as on Iran and the USA, to immediately cease such transfers so as to abide by their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

In this regard, we would like to ask a question to the GEE: in the report to this session of the HRC on economic interests of the military, the Independent International Fact Finding Mission (IIFFM) on Myanmar highlights in detail how arms transfers may have contributed to gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law; they did so including by identifying States and companies responsible for such transfers. We would like to ask whether the GEE would consider taking such an approach in future reports?

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3 September 2019: Conference Room Paper - Report of the detailed findings of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen A/HRC/42/CRP.1. This is a 274-page long report submitted as a supplement to A/HRC/42/17 and setting out the detailed findings of the GEE.

Both reports are available on this webpage:
https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/YemenGEE/Pages/Index.aspx

2 28 August 2018: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights containing the findings of the Group of Independent Eminent International and Regional Experts and a summary of technical assistance provided by the Office of the High Commissioner to the National Commission of Inquiry A/HRC/39/43