

Resolution: The Provision of Gender-Sensitive Support to Syrian Women Refugees

The International Board of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, meeting June 2016,

Recalls WILPF's opposition to military intervention as a means to bring about regime change, our call for an unconditional ceasefire in Syria as well as an arms embargo and the cessation of any and all military sales and assistance to all parties in Syria's civil war;

Recalls that as war and conflicts continue to rage in many parts of the world, as arms are proliferated, and as the use of explosive weapons in populated areas continues, patriarchal suppression, domestic violence, as well as multiple forms of sexual exploitation and economic disempowerment tend to increase, and that rape and sexual assaults are well documented weapons of war;

Notes that women and children make up the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria and that discriminative family and civil laws that limit women's access to family documents and that prevent Syrian women from passing their nationality onto their children or husbands further hinders the capacity of women and children to leave the territory and seek asylum outside;

Recognising that those who escape the Syrian conflict still face threats of sexual violence and harassment along the refugee route; that while attempting to cross borders, women are often the target of smugglers and traffickers to be sexually and economically exploited, including being sold into prostitution networks, forced into early marriages, and exploited into domestic servitude; and that women and girls are frequently at risk of violence, sexual harassment, assault, and rape, with no recourse to justice and legal mechanisms;

Finding that a basic lack of fundamental rights at EU borders and subsequently in detention centres is the reason why an alarming number of cases of women abused by aid workers and guards with full impunity has been reported, and noting in this connection that refugee or detention centres are cramped, without separate washrooms for women and men, and without secure and separate sleeping areas;

Believing that the masculinisation of the humanitarian sector and the asylum system is a crucial factor that leads to sexual re-victimisation and re-traumatisation of women and others who have already experienced male violence, and that European states fail to establish minimum standards of providing gender-sensitive emergency measures and responses such as female interpreters, safe rooms, information on rights and asylum procedures, complaint mechanisms, safe accommodation, and accessible health and psychological services;

Calls on European governments to:

- Guarantee safe and legal access to European countries (EU) and support to Greece (and Italy);
- Stop the EU-Turkey refugee agreement, which allows Greece to return Syrian asylum seekers to Turkey without evaluation of their protection claims, and abstain from deals with the Libyan governments and Egypt
- Maintain a welcoming climate for refugees, focusing on respect of human rights and international conventions;
- Start positive campaigns, together with civil society, to support integration measures and positive media;
- Sign, ratify and commit to implement the Istanbul Convention in order to guarantee fundamental rights for protection from gender-based violence, at individual, structural, and institutional levels regardless of the legal status of the victim;
- Guarantee access to justice and ensure violence is recorded and reported;
- Involve refugee women in peace talks and support the refugee community to take an active role in decision-making and to have the capacity to strategise a safe, dignified, and voluntary return;
- Update UN Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan on refugee women, use the Honeywell report in national legislation;
- Stop transferring arms to any actors in the conflict; and
- Take measures to combat impunity of war criminals and those committing crimes against humanity.

Calls on local authorities to:

- Provide gender-sensitive responses in infrastructure and access to legal advice for refugees;
- Provide female interpreters, child care, individual interviews, separate reception and sleeping areas, and mandatory training for interviewers on sexual violence and trauma; and
- Provide adequate support and women's rights training for refugee women and men, responding to their needs and requests.

Calls on civil society to:

- Promote participation of refugee women in social and political debates;
- Challenge hostility and fear against refugees and highlight the root causes of a global situation which forces people to migrate by initiating positive campaigns involving art, literature, and cultural exchanges;
- Continue to challenge weapons exports, military interventions, and gender-based violence;
- Build networks with women in all European countries against poverty, new patriotism with strong tendencies to exclusion and growing fascism, and against new walls; and
- Fight against economic imperialism as root cause of the economic crisis on the basis of feminist economy, care policies, and empowerment.