

WILPF's Recommendations for the Pre-Session of the Universal Periodic Review of Sweden

WILPF's mission is to end and prevent war, ensure that women are represented at all levels in peace- building processes, defend the human rights of women, and promote social, economic and political justice.

Gender based violence and violence against women

We welcome the Government's announcement about increased financial support to women's shelters in 2015. However, each year, about 17 women and girls are killed in Sweden by a current or former partner. 50% of the reported cases of deadly violence could have been avoided, had the authorities reacted adequately. 46% of all women in Sweden have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner and/or a non-partner since the age of 15, while the EU average is 33%. The Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres (SKR) reported that in 2013, they had to deny shelter to 63% of the women who contacted them for help.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- Support the work of relevant government authorities to prevent gender based violence and violence against women, and to address individual cases.
- Take further efforts to promote attitude changes amongst men and boys on issues relating to gender and violence. The education sector is a key area for raising awareness and preventing violence.
- Ensure that protective services, such as shelters, are adequately financed. Services must also give protection and professional support to transgender persons, persons experiencing violence in same sex relationships, violence related to honour, undocumented persons, persons with physical and psychological disabilities as well as persons with addiction problems.
- Analyse to what extent women and others in Sweden are living under threat and/or violence linked to the presence of weapons in the home.

Racism

We welcome the announcement by the Swedish Prime Minister in his 2014 Statement of Government Policy that a national knowledge and resource centre for research on racism will be established. In addition to this, we welcome the White Paper on abuses and rights violations of Roma during the 1900s, as issued by the Government in March 2014.

Nevertheless, concerns remain. In 2010, the political party Sverigedemokraterna (SD), springing from the neo Nazi movement and whose politics rest on a fascist ideology, was elected into the national parliament for the first time. In 2014, this party won almost 13% of the votes.

Furthermore, according to a report by the Afro-Swedish Association, while hate crimes are decreasing in general, afro-phobic hate crimes are increasing. In addition,

the Roma remain very exposed to discrimination in the Swedish society, including institutionalised discrimination such as the Roma register established by the police in southern Sweden in 2013.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- Prevent and counteract both structural racism and extremism through public educational campaigns about Sweden's racist and colonial history, through the educational system, and through increased representation.
- Work at the EU level to address the growing fascist movements in Europe.
- Strongly support and closely work together with civil society where a lot of the expertise on racism, fascism and discrimination is to be found.
- Prioritize social justice investments, including for minorities who generally are discriminated against in the job and housing market.
- Ensure that human rights of all undocumented persons living in Sweden are fully respected, including the right to health care.

Arms trade and human rights

The Government previously accepted the recommendation n°95.5 by Mexico, relating to the trade and transit of arms to states where it is suspected that children are used as soldiers. In its report, Sweden provides information on the current legal framework for Swedish arms export, as well as references to the parliamentary committee that has been tasked with drafting a proposal for stricter regulations in this area.

Swedish arms exports have increased substantially during the last 15 years, notably to states where the risk of intensified conflict is evident, and/or where there are widespread and serious violations of human rights, as well as weak accountability mechanisms to stop and prevent such violations. These exports are directly counterproductive to Sweden's efforts in other policy areas to promote democracy and human rights for all.

WILPF welcomes the decision by the Swedish parliament to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) at an early stage. However, this ratification should not be seen as an end goal in itself but as a means to promote stricter regulations and controls for Sweden as well as for other States Parties. To this end, it is essential to include a solid assessment of the specific potential impacts that a range of conventional arms have on human rights and gender equality.

The proliferation of arms is linked to a broad range of acts of violence against women, and it is crucial that Sweden apply solid criteria on preventing gender based violence and violence against women in its process of risk assessment before authorizing any arms transfer.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- Swedish authorities should not authorise any exports of arms and ammunitions to states where human rights are violated on a serious and/or widespread scale.
- The Swedish government should include explicit provisions in their export regulations that make it binding to refuse any export licenses for arms, ammunition, parts and components that could be used to commit or facilitate gender based violence or violence against women.
- The Swedish government should establish a higher grade of transparency in its reporting mechanisms for arms exports and licensing decisions, including through issuing public explanations for licensing decisions as soon as they are made. This information should be issued monthly or at least several times a year.
- The Swedish government should reprioritize resources from military spending to prevent and resolve armed conflict globally, as well as to promote social justice abroad and at home.

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