

Center for Women's Global Leadership



Intersections of Violence Against Women and Militarism

Meeting Report

June 9-11, 2011

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Executive Summary

This report chronicles the key discussion points of the *Strategic Conversation on Militarism and Violence Against Women*, convened by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University from June 9-11, 2011. The meeting brought together thirty feminist activists, academics and experts from around the world to: (i) identify and explore feminist perspectives of militarism; (ii) examine the intersections between militarism and violence against women; and (iii) develop global feminist strategies to challenge militarism.

Discussions were structured around participants' responses from the 2010 16 Days Campaign: ***(I) political violence against women; (II) the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence; (III) sexual violence during and post-conflict; (IV) the role of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence; and (V) the roles of women, peace, and human rights movements in challenging the links between militarism and violence against women.***

The theme of political violence against women covered the factors that contribute to violence against women in the period during and after elections, as well as the nexus of violence against women, militarism and women's participation in political processes.

Discussions on the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence revealed that militarized societies often see higher rates of domestic violence, in particular, and violence against women, more generally, as a result of the larger process of normalization of violence.

The theme of sexual violence during and post-conflict explored both the role of sexual violence as a significant barrier to women's safety and security and the effectiveness gap between international treaties to address sexual violence and implementation.

Discussions of the role of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence highlighted the issue of impunity.

Finally, the meeting concentrated on identifying strategies that the women's, peace, and human rights movements can employ to both address and eliminate the links between violence against women and militarism. This report highlights specific, agreed upon strategies for action under each thematic area.

In conclusion, two broad strategies to address violence against women and militarism emerged for CWGL's work on violence against women in general and the 2011 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Violence campaign in particular:

- I. Conduct a global campaign to define human security; and
- II. Link the results to analyses of government budgets to better illustrate gaps between the ways in which civilians define security and state security.

I. Introduction

During June 9-11, 2011 thirty feminist activists, academics and experts from around the world convened at the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University to discuss the nexus between militarism and violence against women. For the three days of the *Strategic Conversation on Militarism and Violence Against Women* they also developed global feminist strategies to challenge militarism and the ways in which it perpetrates violence against women in homes and societies at large.

This report highlights the discussions and outcomes related to the five thematic areas of inquiry: (I) political violence against women; (II) the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence; (III) sexual violence during and post-conflict; (IV) the role of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence; and (V) the roles of women, peace, and human rights movements in challenging the links between militarism and violence against women. It also offers the specific, agreed upon strategies for action under each thematic area.

II. Violence Against Women, Militarism and Feminism

Militarism as an ideology creates a culture of fear and supports the use of aggression, violence and military interventions for settling disputes and enforcing economic and political interests. Militarism privileges violent forms of masculinity, which often has grave consequences for the safety and security of women, children, men, and society as a whole. Attacks on civilians participating in social movements, military interventions and ongoing conflicts exemplify the ways in which militarism influences how we view women and men, our families, neighbors, public life, and specific countries.

A culture of militarism is built over time through the construction of the "enemy," the indoctrination of children, and the creation of myths about the nation as well as "the other". As a result, militarism is linked to nationalism. Feminist theory and action provide means of both analyzing and opposing militarism and its links to violence against women. It enables an analysis of the power relations that buttress militarism and exposes the ways in which male violence is constructed as a legitimate form of control. In addition to providing analytical tools for deconstructing militarism, feminism also challenges normative views of peace. For feminists, peace is the absence of all violence, including all forms of gender-based violence.

Violence emanating from war, and everyday violence experienced by women and girls, are components of a broad spectrum of violence that occur throughout women's lifecycles. Understanding the correlations between militarism and violence against women requires an appreciation of the psychological processes that enable violence to occur, the socio-cultural norms that legitimize the use of violence, and the structural hierarchies that perpetuate violence. These processes, norms and hierarchies are present during war and peace times. Violence prior to conflict may inform violence against women during conflict, and violence against women during conflict impacts violence against women in post conflict societies.

III. Towards a Feminist Critique of Militarism

Participants focused their discussions around the five themes that emerged from CWGL's global campaign to end gender violence (16 Days of Activism to End Gender Violence): (I) political violence against women; (II) the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence; (III) sexual violence during and post-conflict; (IV) the role of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence; and (V) the roles of women, peace, and human rights movements in challenging the links between militarism and violence against women.

(a) Political Violence Against Women

From electoral violence that target women with sexual violence, to harassment and/or sexuality baiting of female protesters and political candidates, the use of violence to achieve political goals has profound gendered implications. States employ militaristic ideologies that attempt to pass off violence as security measures when they use force against their citizens, suspend the rule of law in emergencies, use anti-terrorism laws to suppress pro-democracy movements, and/or silence human rights defenders.

Political violence against women is also used as a tactic to frighten women from joining political movements. In many patriarchal societies, female victims/survivors of political violence face threats from the State and their communities, which may not support them or recognize them as victims. Women are vulnerable to political violence as it is a means to both dishonor and devalue the male members of their families as well as them as women and as citizens. They are often abused for the activities of male relatives and political opponents.

Political violence against women has consequences for women's participation in politics. Women may become reluctant to participate in elections because of fear they or their families may be violently targeted. In some cases women are involved in the initial changing of political systems but once the process begins to formalize women are left out and in many cases women's rights are undermined by new political systems established from political change and mass social movements within which they participated.

Strategies for Action in Response to Political Violence Against Women

The following strategies were suggested to specially address political violence against women and increase women's participation in elections:

- Engage external parties to investigate political violence against women so that local organizations can be protected from becoming targets of violence for conducting such investigations
- Locate polling stations in safe, accessible locations to reduce the incidence of violence against women during elections
- Ensure that there are gender-aware election monitors and peacekeepers at polling stations in conflict and post-conflict situations
- Ensure gender sensitivity trainings of police to enable them to better respond to gender-based violence cases pre, during and post elections

- Ensure that survivors and families of victims of political violence have access to legal services to mitigate impunity.

(b) the Proliferation of Small Arms and their Role in Domestic Violence

Militarized societies often see higher rates of domestic violence and violence against women. Militarized societies experience a normalization of the presence and use of small arms that permeates all layers of societies. One example of this is the presence of toy guns.

Arms a symbol of the masculine identity, are often used to both commit and facilitate violence against women. Small arms are one of the major causes of civilian casualties in modern conflicts. It is estimated that 25% are in the hands of States, while 75% are in the hands of non-state actors, including private security firms. In some societies, such as the United States, guns are not only a symbol of protection but are seen as part and parcel of civil and political rights.

Domestic violence is a reality in every country of the world. This violence becomes even more dangerous when guns are present in the home as they can be used to threaten, injure, and/or kill women and children. According to the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), women are three times more likely to die violently if there is a gun in the house. Regardless of the context - conflict or peace - the presence of guns invariably has the same effect: more guns mean more danger for, and violence against, women and girls.

Strategies for Action

Four key strategies to address small arms, militarism and violence against women emerged:

- Use “Gun Free Kitchen Tables” as a slogan for a campaign about small arms in the home
- Target toy stores and manufacturers to encourage them to ban the sale of violent toys
- Hold toy trade-ins where children can return a violent toy in exchange for a non-violent one
- Document the monetary cost of domestic violence.

(c) Sexual Violence During and Post-Conflict

Sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations is used to reinforce gendered hierarchies. It is also used as a tactic of war to drive fear, humiliate and punish women, their families and communities. While more attention has been paid to this crime in recent years, sexual violence remains a major barrier to women’s safety as its effects are physically, psychologically, and socially harmful. However, there remains a gap between international frameworks and policies that address post-conflict sexual violence and the implementation of these policies at the local and national levels.

Strategies for Action

To address conflict and post-conflict sexual violence the following strategies were discussed:

- Create special courts and provide free litigation centers for survivors of sexual violence and families of victims

- Encourage community-based commemoration days to recognize that sexual violence has occurred and impacted women, their families and communities
- Use new technologies to gather stories, collect data and monitor and map incidences of sexual violence
- Encourage men who oppose sexual violence
- Build a campaign on success stories to illustrate that there are ways of addressing conflict related violence against women.

(d) Sexual Violence by State Actors

High rates of sexual violence within the military, threats by police to women reporting cases of violence, violations committed by peace-keeping forces, and violence against women living and working around military bases make sexual violence by state actors a critical issue when addressing the links between militarism and violence against women. In addition, States may commission non-state actors to commit violence on its behalf, thereby absolving itself of responsibility and accountability for such crimes. Individuals in positions of authority, including those in the military, often commit crimes and face no repercussion for reasons including diplomatic immunity and the culture of secrecy. As a result, prosecuting crimes is often difficult.

Strategies for Action

- Link up with the peace-building movement to promote the issue of ending violence against women during conflict
- Use naming and shaming of perpetrators of sexual violence to leverage sanctions against them
- Conduct scenario based training for peacekeepers on ways to respond to violence against women
- Engage with state actors by identifying moderates and finding commonalities to begin strategic initiatives
- Create an international network to support female survivors of violence and provide a safe haven for those seeking asylum.

(e) Bring Together Women's, Peace, and Human Rights Movements

For decades the women's, human rights, and peace movements have advocated for the use of peaceful strategies to end violence and conflict and achieve peace and social justice. These movements challenge the social structures that enable violence and discrimination to continue. While each movement may have different approaches to creating a more just and peaceful world, related advocacy is inherently tied to challenging militarism and facilitating feminist alternatives. To this end, activists and experts in the women's, peace and human rights movements can benefit from collaboration and the exchange of analyses, tools, techniques and strategies.

Moving forward, the challenge for the women's movement is to think about inclusion differently in order to diversify the movement and effectively link with the peace and human rights movements.

Strategies for Action

The following strategies to better engage the human rights and peace movements to end militarism and violence against women were discussed:

- Design a joint campaign message - we cannot have peace if we have gendered violence
- Reframe sexual violence as torture to better engage the human rights movement
- Conduct a global campaign to define human security and link results to analyses of government budgets to illustrate gaps between the ways in which civilians define security and the type of security provided by States
- Create spaces that are open to men and reinforce positive ideals of manhood and masculinity.

IV. Cross-Cutting Strategies

This section outlines the three major cross-cutting strategies identified for better addressing the links between violence against women and militarism. They do not intend to be comprehensive or reflective of all of the strategies discussed.

(a) Define Human Security

This strategy aims to generate an understanding of what security means for women worldwide.

(b) Estimate the Costs of Militarism

Bring attention to the costs of militarism by exposing state military expenditures. First, conduct research to demonstrate where, how and how much money is spent by States for military reasons. This data could then be used to advocate for the realignment of budgets to reduce military spending and increase social spending.

Examining States budgets could be part of a worldwide campaign to advocate for the realignment of budgets, by exposing the amounts spent on military expenditures as compared to public services. This campaign could also target those who profit from military expenditures, such as corporations.

This strategy could be linked to the defining human security strategy by demonstrating the gaps between how people define security and related government expenditures.

(c) Erode the Culture of Militarism

In order to effectively address militarism within our societies we must expose the ways in which it permeates our cultures, e.g., by assessing educational systems and the ways in which children, particularly boys, are socialized.

Related advocacy campaigns can move towards ending militarism through implementing peace education projects such as “Rainbows not Rambos” campaigns, toy trade-ins where children can return violent toys for peaceful ones, and conducting anti-militarism fashion shows to demonstrate the ways in which war is portrayed/promoted.

V. Conclusion

Informed by the conclusions and recommendations of this meeting, CWGL will continue to support the development of a global, coordinated, feminist critique of militarism and the violence it perpetuates. To this end, our 2011 16 Days Campaign theme is ***From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let’s Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!*** This Campaign focuses on the five issue areas identified as priorities for those working on the intersections of violence against women and militarism:

- (i) political violence against women;
- (ii) the proliferation of small arms and their role in domestic violence;
- (iii) sexual violence during and post-conflict;
- (iv) the roles of state actors as perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence; and
- (v) the roles of women, peace, and human rights movements in challenging the links between militarism and violence against women.

While militarism is often discussed in terms of conflict situations, the 2011 ***16 Days Campaign seeks to broaden our understanding of the many ways militarism influences our daily lives and lived realities.*** By focusing on the ways in which “peace in the home” extends to “peace in the world,” we reveal the ways in which values of nonviolence can influence attitudes about violence against women by families, friends, communities and governments. A crucial aspect of the 16 Days Campaign involves listening to the stories of women worldwide and standing in solidarity with each other to end violence against women. It also emphasizes the importance of working locally to promote peace.

More specifically, the Campaign is an opportunity for reflection about what the global women’s rights movement can do to challenge the structures that enable violence against women to continue. It is also an opportunity to reach out to, and involve, more men, boys, faith-based and traditional leaders, and other key stakeholders to build a more just and peaceful world so that women and girls can live lives free of violence.

Appendix 1: 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence originated from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute held at the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL) in 1991. The 16 Days Campaign runs annually from November 25th (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) through December 10th (International Human Rights Day) to make the symbolic statement that violence against women is a human rights issue. Since the Campaign's inception CWGL has served as the international coordinator and each year it collaborates with hundreds of women's rights organizations from around the world.

The 16 Days Campaign is a mobilizing tool for activists to raise awareness at the local, national, regional and international levels; strengthen and link local and global work to end violence against women; provide a forum for dialogue and strategy-sharing; pressure Governments to implement commitments made in national and international legal instruments; and demonstrate the solidarity of activists around the world to end violence against women.

Over the past two decades, the Campaign has expanded its reach with enormous success and recognition. To date, more than 3,500 organizations in 164 countries have participated, and the numbers continue to increase annually as more groups join.

The Center for Women's Global Leadership consults with women's organizations around the world to determine an annual international theme for the 16 Days Campaign. Themes typically focus on intersectional work, such as violence against women and women's health, the spread of HIV/AIDS, racism, and women's political freedom, and emphasize the need for accountability through international human rights mechanisms, such as CEDAW, gender-sensitive budgets, domestic laws.

Appendix 2: Participants List

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