



STRONGER TOGETHER

2020
 operation1325
Stronger together

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Fighting for women's rights in Yemen	4
Turkish women working for peace	9
A vision for Palestinian women's rights	14
Twinning Albanian and Swedish national plans	18
Concluding remarks: Beyond 2020?	22

STRONGER TOGETHER

PUBLISHER	Operation 1325
WRITER	Louvisa Grotte
EDITOR	Charlotte Lind
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	Lina Forsgren

This report has been financed by grants from Forum Civ through Sida, but Forum Civ and Sida are not responsible for its content.

INTRODUCTION

For the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325's 20th anniversary, Operation 1325 gathered high-ranking Swedish decision-makers and leaders of local organizations in Yemen, Turkey, Palestine and Albania for four days of seminars. The purpose was to connect local actors with international actors by assessing what has been done and what efforts lay ahead. Each country was designated one day of discussions where a leader of a local organization first spoke about their challenges and efforts. Thereafter Swedish politicians and decision-makers shared their perception of the issue at hand, what efforts that have been carried through to rectify the issue, and what yet needs to be done. Lastly, speakers and participants were divided into small groups and informally discussed what had been said.

Resolution 1325 introduced four pillars: participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery, and has since been strengthened in additional resolutions. The talks leading up to the UNSCR 1325 were the first time after 55 years and 4,213 sessions that the Security Council dedicated a full session to debating women's experiences in the context of conflict.¹

It was a significant milestone at the time and continues to hold relevance as many of its purposes are yet to be fulfilled. It is essential to bring together stakeholders to exchange information and ideas on how we can further the women, peace and security agenda.

Operation 1325 is a Swedish civil-rights organization that was initiated in 2003 and registered as an umbrella organization in 2006.² It works closely with local organizations to promote more inclusive peace-processes that in turn makes peace-deals more sustainable. The organization's objective is to promote the agenda of Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) through information dispersion, competence development and advocacy work.

PETER WALLENSTEEN AS OPENING SPEAKER

The first speaker of the event was Peter Wallensteen from Uppsala University who spoke about his previous experiences working for the UN on the UNSCR 1325. Wallensteen and his team of researchers were asked to get involved in the 1325 agenda to investigate the lessons learnt about gender-mainstreamed peace work for the United Nations. A final workshop was held in May 2000 in Windhoek in Namibia and resulted in an action plan that today is known as the Windhoek Declaration.³ The research and the final declaration paved the way for Namibia so that when it had the presidency of the UNSC it was able to introduce the WPS agenda.

Out of the four pillars, Wallensteen believes participation to be the most important since it emphasizes women as actors with agency. It also refutes any argument that women lack competence to participate. Later resolutions in the 1325 canon have mainly focused on protection and illustrates how much of the resolution not yet has been achieved.

¹ Cockburn, C. (2007) *From Where We Stand: war, women's activism and feminist analysis* London: Zed Books, 152

² Operation 1325. Operation 1325. 2020. <https://operation1325.se/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

³ UN. Windhoek Declaration. N.d. Windhoek Declaration. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/windhoek_declaration.pdf (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

FIGHTING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN YEMEN

Yemen has been named the most severe humanitarian crisis as of today. There are currently 24 million people in need of humanitarian assistance which translates to a third of its population.⁴ 9.9 million people face acute food insecurity⁵, and 3.6 million are internally displaced.⁶ Meanwhile, the economy has nearly collapsed, 600, 000 jobs have disappeared and the price for goods and services has multiplied.⁷ Yemen is facing a dire situation to say the least.



All Girls Foundation (AGF) is a partner organization to Operation 1325 that is dedicated to development and humanitarian aid. All Girls Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in Sana'a City, Yemen, in 2003 and was founded on the principle that *“Change is the people and people are the change”*.⁸

In 2014 the AGF participated in Yemen’s National Dialogue⁹ to ensure that women were heard. AGF played an active role in the dialogue by carrying out surveys in 12 regions that reached more than 100, 000 people. The output of this was that AGF could convey messages from ordinary women to decision-makers and to the transitional government. Overall, the National Dialogue was a step in the right direction as women were engaged in a real and concrete way, shaping the deliverables. The most remarkable outcome in the final proposal is the promise that 30% of parliamentarians should be women. Moreover, the National Dialogue resulted in 50 protocols for women’s rights. As such the dialogue was a significant step for women’s rights.

⁴ Unicef. Yemen crisis. N.d. <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/yemen-crisis> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

⁵ Sida. Our humanitarian assistance in Yemen. 2019. <https://www.sida.se/English/how-we-work/our-fields-of-work/humanitarian-aid1/ongoing-humanitarian-crises/our-humanitarian-assistance-in-yemen/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

⁶ International Displacement. Yemen. 2020. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/yemen> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

⁷ Sida. Our humanitarian assistance in Yemen. 2019. <https://www.sida.se/English/how-we-work/our-fields-of-work/humanitarian-aid1/ongoing-humanitarian-crises/our-humanitarian-assistance-in-yemen/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

⁸ All Girls Foundation. About us. N.d. <http://www.allgirls.org/Aboutus.aspx?ID=45> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

⁹ National Dialogue Conference. N.d. <http://ndc.ye/default.aspx> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

When the representative for AGF, Madyan Alwajeih, was asked what message to be sent to Swedish politicians and decision-makers, the answer was simple:

” *Do whatever you can do to end the bloodshed and destruction in Yemen. Open airports, restart education. Cooperate with ruling authorities to allow women and civil society to partake in the peace processes. They are part of the solution. There is also need for financial support to vulnerable women and people. Yes, sometimes there are reasons or justifications for a war but there are hundreds of reasons to stop the war and end the conflict. We need to remember that we share the same blood, land, religion. History has showed us that sooner or later we can decide to end the war: let us do it now. Until we learn how to coexist, no development can be seen. Our countries will continue to be steered by poverty and violence.*

WHAT DO SWEDISH POLITICIANS AND DECISION-MAKERS DO TO AID THE SITUATION IN YEMEN?

ANNIKA STRANDHÄLL

**Member of Parliament
for the Social democrats**

Strandhäll ensured Sweden’s continued support and commitment to Yemen. As a member of parliament, Strandhäll believes that one of her main tasks is to raise awareness and expose the situation that is taking place in Yemen. She stressed the importance of local voices in international dialogues and emphasized the vulnerability of women and children. Sweden works together with organizations like Unicef and Save the Children to prevent children from being recruited as soldiers, suffer from violence, or be married off before they turn 18. When the crisis goes on, all of Yemen’s sectors deteriorate further: health care, the economy, and education to name a few. With that said, Strandhäll underscored the significance of including women as an important step in the right direction.

PETER SEMNEBY

**Special Representative of the
Swedish government to Yemen**

Semneby started out by explaining how Sweden has a long-term humanitarian engagement to Yemen. Throughout the chairmanship in the Security Council in 2017-2018, Sweden used its chairmanship as platform for engagement and hosted the UN-led consultations between the warring Yemeni parties in Rimbo, Sweden, in 2018. The conference was the first UN peace

talk since 2016 and one of few occasions when the conflicting parties reached an agreement.¹⁰ It was a significant event that paved the way for further engagement and bridge building. It also provided a good basis for Sweden to address specific issues concerning the role of women and gender issues in Yemen. Moreover, Sweden is part of a group of countries trying to solve the conflict in Yemen. Permanent members of the Security Council are included. Together they adopted a communiqué in September 2020 concerning the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Yemen.¹¹

“More specifically for the 1325-agenda”, Semnbey continued, “Sweden has played an important role by promoting and ensuring inclusive language the Security Council resolutions as well as other resolutions. Another way of promoting the women, peace, and security agenda is by raising the issue on the global agenda like Margot Wallström together with colleagues did by issuing a joint publication to the Financial Times”.

PETER LUNDBERG

Head of Regional Development Cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa, Sida at the Swedish embassy in Amman

Lundberg shared the understanding of a Yemen in need of immediate aid. Sweden is contributing 36 million USD to various partners including local Yemeni organizations. The objective is to strengthen political processes and provide support by providing essential tools for peace mechanisms, both bilaterally and with the aid of UN and UN’s special convoys. One such mechanism is to educate and increase the number of gender advisors present in peace dialogues.

Despite the many difficulties the country is facing, Lundberg remains optimistic: “*Yemen has many opportunities for long-term assistance and recovery*”. A significant development for women’s rights was the establishment of women’s unions in the 1960 that today has more than 1.5 million members and operates all over the country. Lundberg finds it impressive how the unions have contributed to lower gender-based violence. Lastly, he underscored the importance of pursuing to do more and believing that there are many opportunities available.

¹⁰ Government Offices of Sweden. Stockholm Agreement gives hope of peaceful solution in Yemen. 2019. <https://www.government.se/articles/2018/12/stockholm-agreement-gives-hope-of-peaceful-solution-in-yemen/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

¹¹ Government Offices of Sweden. Joint communique on the conflict in Yemen. 2020. <https://www.government.se/statements/2020/09/joint-communique-on-the-conflict-in-yemen/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

QUOTA SYSTEMS

A reoccurring theme in the small group discussions was the topic of using quota systems, which was used in the National Dialogue. Some of the questions raised was the level of efficiency, degree of legitimacy and challenges to implement it. Moreover, a participant mentioned that including women does not necessarily mean a change in politics although there might be prejudice that all women support a feminist or liberal agenda. This shows how there are different understandings of what diversity means – diversity of background or diversity of political opinion. When speaking about legitimacy, it was mentioned that quota systems are legitimate by the fact that it was supported in the National Dialogue.

GENDER EXPERTISE

Some discussions focused on the need of including gender experts in peace-keeping missions and peace-negotiations. Concerning peace-negotiations, research has shown that the inclusion of women means that the agreement is 64% less likely to fail and 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.¹² Madyan Alwajeih, Peter Lundberg, and Peter Semneby mentioned this in their panel talks, and underscored that is strong support for providing expertise on the issue.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The cooperation between the local and international levels were another topic under discussion. Alwajeih, representative for AGF, voiced his gratitude for Swedish commitment in the region and emphasized the need of continued support. He believes international support to be crucial to stop bloodshed, supply medical aid and for women to be fairly represented. The discussion about the local and international aspects also focused on what good cooperation looks like. How to best use expertise and resources were two of the questions considered.

¹² Inclusive Security. Why women? 2015.
<https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Why-Women-Brief-2020.pdf>
(Downloaded 2020-12-08)

**TURKISH
WOMEN
WORKING
FOR PEACE**

Turkey finds itself in a critical situation as it has been governed by the AKP party for the past 18 years. “The government is the most oppressive that Turkey has yet experienced, partly because of the transfer of power from parliament to president that makes representation of the people impossible”, representative of Equality and Justice Women’s Platform (SES), Gülseren Onanç explained.

The local organization SES is a Turkish women’s rights platform that was founded in 2017 after a national summit brought together women’s organizations, collectives, units, communities, associations, and foundations.¹³ The organization aims to support women and women’s organizations to raise their voice more effectively in the struggle for equality and justice. Amongst other, the organization offers an online journal, coordinates meetings with experts, and annually organizes the Equality, Justice and Women’s Summit. Operation 1325 has a longstanding commitment to SES as it contributed the organization’s establishment in 2017.

The Turkish government has placed increasing pressure on civil society and women’s movements have been specifically targeted. The Kurdish feminist party (HDP) achieved 13% of support in 2015 and was therefore perceived as an eminent threat to the current government. As a response, the HDP was criminalized, meaning that any show of support for the movement carried the same meaning as supporting a terrorist group. “Since the elections of 2019 dozens of elected mayors from HDP have been removed from their offices”, Onanç explained. The government continues to exclude women from legislative consultation processes, and even places restrictions or detains activists. This became even more imminent when the present government voiced intentions to withdraw from the Istanbul convention.¹⁴

Onanç went on to discuss the relevance that Sweden and the EU hold as long as Turkey remains a candidate country to the EU. She says this grants women’s organizations legitimacy since their objectives are directly related to the EU candidacy agenda:

” *If Turkey’s relations with the EU improves, it also improves the situation for women in Turkey. The women’s movement needs the international community’s support to put pressure on the government. So far, the EU has been very helpful in improving the capacity of women’s organizations by sponsoring us and giving us social support. The relationship has been very good. Internally the Turkish legislation on women’s rights has improved significantly although full membership is our goal.*

¹³ Equality and Justice Woman Platform. N.d. <http://esitlikadaletkadin.org/english/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

¹⁴ DuvaR, Erdogan signals withdrawal of Turkey from Istanbul Convention. 2020. <https://www.duvarenglish.com/women/2020/08/13/erdogan-signals-withdrawal-of-turkey-from-istanbul-convention/#:~:text=President%20Recep%20Tayyip%20Erdo%C4%9Fan%20on%20Aug.%202013%20signaled,on%20its%20own%2C%20rather%20than%20using%2%E2%80%9Ctranslated%20texts.%E2%80%9D> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

WHAT DO SWEDISH POLITICIANS AND DECISION-MAKERS DO TO AID THE SITUATION IN TURKEY?

OLLE THORELL

**Member of Parliament
for the Social democrats**

Thorell explained that his role as a parliamentarian is to raise awareness and protest publicly when they see violations of human rights and women's rights. *"Human rights and women's rights are always at the center and that is the way it should be"*, he continued. Having a feminist foreign policy does not mean that women's rights are an isolated section of policy, but that it is integrated in all aspects of government.

Thorell is also chair of the parliaments voluntary human rights group that amongst other write letters of appeal to governments and presidents, which they have seen makes a difference. They also arrange seminars on various topics. Lastly, Thorell mentioned the importance of also having "white men" stand up for women's issues when meeting Turkish officials since the diversity of support signals greater legitimacy.

MALIN BJÖRK

**Member of the European Parliament of the Swedish left party
and the European United Left-Nordic Green left**

Björk emphasized how worrisome it is to see Turkey and other countries threaten to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. The Convention is also questioned as some EU member states not yet have ratified the convention. Björk therefore argued for the importance of upholding the convention and making sure that it is seen as a framework for peace. Concerning EU's stance towards Turkey, Björk voiced her concern and criticism towards how the EU is tolerating and even paying Turkey due to the border disputes.

It is important to continue to work bi-laterally with Turkey and not only through the EU so that development is not dependent on multilateral negotiations alone. One can see how the bond between Turkey and Hungary favors policies that are damaging to human rights, women's rights, and refugees' rights, and that this should be a reason to pull Turkey in the opposite direction. Björk then went on to state that peace is being undervalued given that we live in a time of armament, calling for actors to realize that Turkey's actions are a question of peace.

MALIN STAWÉ

**Counselor at the Embassy of Sweden
in Istanbul**

Stawé explained that an important task carried out by Sweden is to give access to settings that otherwise would be closed to women: *"We have prioritized women and support women's organizations"*. The embassy and the consulate also works closely to provide funds, networks and facilitate meetings that aid civil rights organizations and women's organizations. The goal is to strengthen the capacity and amplify their voices. Foreign minister Ann Linde demonstrated this priority when her first visit in Turkey was to independent civil rights organizations before meeting with counterparts from opposition parties. Meeting with the

opposition is an opportunity to speak about the Swedish feminist foreign policy, the Drive for democracy and the Global green deal.

Sweden also engages with UN agencies that have a clear and strong normative mandate on gender equality and children's rights, that engages at the technical and political level. Stawe goes on to emphasize the commitment of UN agencies: *"UN Women is very keen at sustaining important platforms, for example when standing up for the Istanbul convention"*.

KAROLINA WRETHEM

**Deputy director, Conflict and Security Division,
Department for UN Policy, Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs,
at the Swedish Foreign Office.**

Wrethem emphasized the role of including women at the official, the semi-official and the unofficial level of decision-making, since having women at different levels at the same time seem to be the key ingredient for successful peace:

” *We see women participating in different levels because of their role as politicians, activists or community leaders or academics.*

It is therefore important to promote female participation in delegations, mediation, and specific advisory groups, to mention a few. There is also a need for gender expertise within peace processes and peace talks. Sweden has institutionalized the commitment to civil society by stipulating that national agencies cooperate with civil society in their National Action Plan. Amongst other, this was put to practice during Sweden's time in the United Nations Security Council when civil society was actively invited to brief the security council on specific issues.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE

One of the small group discussions focused on the importance of dialogue to understand one another. In her small group, Onanç said: *"When we sit together as women's organizations, we understand each other very quickly. We see the same problems and solutions. We need to keep up solidarity and we need meetings like these to express ourselves"*. She continued by saying:

” *This is what I saw from you today, a great solidarity and I feel so empowered.*

The importance of seeing one another empowers civil rights activists to remain committed to the cause at hand, despite the many challenges that lay ahead. It was also mentioned that solidarity is efficient when combating authoritarian systems.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EU AND TURKEY

Discussions also brought up the relationship between the EU and Turkey. One group mentioned the challenge of Turkish law in theory being almost equal between men and women, but that it is not the case in practice. An issue that needs to be addressed and be worked on thoroughly to challenge the social structures. Joining the EU would mean that Turkey would have to make further legal commitments to equality since EU frameworks are further developed than national legislation. However, there are many hurdles to address before that, and Turkey has many times signaled its disinterest in promoting women's rights specifically. In addition to the examples already mentioned in the seminar, Turkey does not want to develop a national action plan on women, peace and security.

THE NEED FOR EDUCATION

Other discussions mentioned the need to provide education for women and girls in Turkey, both in terms of increasing access to national education and to increase awareness of civil rights. This also relates to a point concerning women's economic power and how civil rights, economic power and education are all intertwined. Since one feeds into the other, they need to be strengthened simultaneously. Another point brought to a group's attention was the diversity within the Turkish society and how that also has a risk of increasing polarization.

A VISION FOR PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Wi'am is a Palestinian grassroots organization that promotes peace and justice through a culture of acceptance and reconciliation in the Palestinian community. The founder of Wi'am, Zoughbi al-Zoughbi, was the keynote speaker of the day. One of the things al-Zoughbi said was that:

” Women do not only compose one half of society, but they raise the other half. We make it together.

al-Zoughbi starts out by explaining the current Palestinian context. The country suffers from a weak institutional setup, women's rights are undermined, and the number of refugees in Palestine and neighboring countries reaches 6 million.¹⁵ "As civil society is facing significant repression, the need for strong voices is more important now than ever", he says.

As a civil rights organization, Wi'am works to increase awareness and provide lawyers, psychologists, and consultation to women in need. Amongst other, Wi'am hosts a women's group in the Bethlehem governorate that advocates for gender rights and women's issues. The organization's mission is built on the urgent need to address the marginalization of women in the region, and to instead push an agenda of inclusion.

Placing Palestine into the political context of the Israeli occupation, means that most issues are inherent to the occupation and thus needs to be addressed as the root cause, continues al-Zoughbi. The main issue of Palestinians losing their land causes high friction and makes the number of weapons increase. The occupation has caused unemployment, violence, displacement, only to mention a few. As a result, gender-roles of traditional male and female responsibilities are being reinforced.

WHAT DO SWEDISH POLITICIANS AND DECISION-MAKERS DO TO AID THE SITUATION IN PALESTINE?

YASMINE POSIO

Member of Parliament for the Left party

Posio stressed the importance of working closely with Palestinian women in politics and to make sure to raise relevant issues in the parliament's chambers. It is an opportunity to ask questions to responsible ministers and remind them to stay devoted to the issue area. The left-party also organizes study trips to Palestine with the organization Diakonia where they have a chance to meet local men and women. Civil society organizations and political organizations play an important role since they carry the voices of the people. The left-party also provides development aid to youth left parties in Palestine so that they can organize seminars and trainings on topics like self-defense, masculinity norms, the use of psychological and physical violence, to mention a few. Posio said that it is important to include not only women but also men in the process of making society more inclusive.

¹⁵ State of Palestine, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. On the occasion of the International Day of Refugees. 2016. http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_InterRefugDy2016E.pdf (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

JANINE ALM ERICSON

Member of Parliament for the Swedish Green party

Women's rights are facing challenges in many aspects, not least in the context of Israel's occupation. *"As long as the occupation is there, there cannot be any equal human rights for anyone"* said Alm Ericsson. As a member of parliament, Alm Eriksson reiterated what Posio had said regarding raising the issue of women's rights and Palestine in the chambers but also mentioned the responsibility of the ruling government. To achieve change, it is important that the government sets clear goals of high standard, but also provides the necessary means to reach those goals. Sweden has an important role in promoting dialogue because of the feminist foreign policy and how it illustrates clear priorities. Alm Eriksson then mentioned the importance of civil society organizations: *"Without civil society, meeting people, doing things, raising awareness from the inside – there would not be much for us in Sweden. The work that you and others are doing is of course crucial to make progress, so I want to thank you very much"*.

PYRI NEMI

Member of Parliament for the Social democrats

Nemi highlighted the role Sweden played in the UN security council in 2017-2018 in bringing forward women's voices. An important act was how Sweden worked with peace processes, delegations and shaping resolutions. Sweden and the international community have important roles in order to maintain pressure and condemn all forms of escalating violence, such as bombardments or terrorist actions. Nemi said that the Swedish government has been very stern on this front and that it is important to send clear signals when actions outside of the normal political scope are made. An example is in the beginning of the summer of 2020, when the EU threatened Israel with sanctions if they were to occupy any more land.

Nemi also mentioned Sweden's commitments through the EU, such as when Sweden and France participated in promoting civil-society organizations in a project that aimed to find a better solution to the conflict on both sides. They have also supported women in Palestine at the local political level as well as in peace-processes.

MARIA ARDAJI

**National program officer
at the General Consulate in Jerusalem**

” *The role of the Consulate General is to implement the instructions, resources and goals that the parties that spoke before me have set out.*

Said Ardaji. An ongoing project that the Consulate General is working on is to relate family law to an international context of gender equality. Amongst other, the general consulate has initiated training sessions for judges to sensitize them to international standards of gender equality, enforcement of family counseling units within departments, and for lawyers to learn more about gender-based violence responses. The project feeds into the messaging between the development cooperation and political dialogue. Partners and civil society are thus closely consulted and have a direct impact on the message that the consulate then convey to key actors. Religious actors that shape the discourse on the ground are also consulted.

Sida's new strategy for Palestine has four goals: democracy and human rights, climate change, inclusive economic development, and peaceful societies. An ongoing project of Sida is to have women and children participate in the shadow council, where representatives from both the West bank and Gaza are engaged. This inclusive approach is important to bridge the intra-Palestine division. UNSCR 1325 is an important tool in peace-processes since it has a broader approach to conflicts and include all parties of conflicts. With that said, it is important to contextualize the resolution to national conditions to realize implementation.

Sida addresses root causes of gender inequality also by including both men and boys and discussing discriminatory gender roles. A survey was carried out investigating men's attitude towards gender equality that then led to a broader campaign considering paternity and labor laws. It also relates to wider topics like economic development and women's economic empowerment.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

THE NEED FOR STATISTICS

An issue that was mentioned was the need for information and statistics since the occupation has made the collection of data more difficult. Data is needed for actors to know where to focus their efforts so that nothing is done blind. One participant reiterated this, mentioning the importance of knowing *"what the situation is like in order to know what needs to be done"*. This was then related to the role of civil society and how civil society organizations raise questions needed to be heard. *"I would not have anything to raise in parliament [if it were not for civil society organizations]. Your demonstrations gives me an opportunity to participate and raise these questions further"*, said Yasmin Posio.

THE NEED TO ENGAGE YOUTH

Tarek Zoughbi, also from Wi'am, said that a lot of youth have high expectations of the international society to influence Palestine's future, and to change the way Israel behaves. Zoughbi al-Zoughbi also mentioned the importance of Sweden and the international community in his group discussion.

TWINNING ALBANIAN AND SWEDISH NATIONAL PLANS

The Association of Women, Peace and Security is a non-profit organization operating throughout Albania. It was created in 1998 in the Kosovo crisis as an urgent response to support the Kosovar population. It aims to promote gender equality in society and to protect the rights of marginalized women across the country.¹⁶ Edlira Shima participated as a representative of the organization and shared insights regarding the many challenges women's organizations face.

Edlira Shima said that Albania has made significant efforts in the last decades to improve the status of women in the country. Some of the government's commitments are to end domestic violence and improve legal and institutional equality mechanisms.¹⁷ One area of focus has been to promote equal participation in political and economical decision-making. This push has increased the number of women by 12% from 2015–2019.¹⁸ Albania today has one of the most equal minister cabinets in Europe, with approximately 50% women ministers.¹⁹ This has led to the World Economic Forum naming the country as one of three that have improved the most in its gender-gap index.



Despite this progress there are still many challenges that not yet have been resolved. While there is progress at national levels of government, the local levels are seeing little change. Another issue is that women still carry many of the traditional gender roles related to household responsibilities, making it difficult for them to enter the labor market or gain political and economic power. For example, women's wages are about 18% lower than men's, and only 19% of women own property. As long as traditional gender roles rule, women will have little chance to have a say in matters related to economic or political power.²⁰

Albania's National Action Plan on women, peace and security has strength in the fact that it is inter-institutional and touches upon several ministries, increasing its significance since it is mainstreamed through all of government rather than restricted to a single entity. The National Action Plan seem to be a commitment and a priority from the government, but there are clear limitations to those efforts, said Shima. In her analysis of the government's efforts, it appears as if they are doing little themselves when it comes to implementation and support. Instead it appears that national and international organizations are doing most of these efforts. Shima therefore urged for close cooperation between government and civil society when developing a new national action plan.

¹⁶ Association of Women, Peace and Security. About us. N.d. <http://www.siguria-paqja.al/?q=en/content/about-us-0> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

¹⁷ UN Women. Albania. N.d. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/albania> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

¹⁸ Speaker facts

¹⁹ Speaker facts

²⁰ Amnesty. Report Albania 2019. N.d. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/albania/report-albania/> (Downloaded 2020-12-08)

WHAT DO SWEDISH POLITICIANS AND DECISION-MAKERS DO TO AID THE SITUATION IN ALBANIA?

KENNETH G FORSLUND

**Member of parliament
for the Social democrats**

Regarding Albania joining the EU, there are many factors to consider and balance, to make sure that the right decision is made when it comes to new member states. For example, Forslund mentioned that there have been occurrences of focusing too closely on the previously agreed timeline and not to what extent the state in question is ready or fulfills the member state criteria. Forslund then went on to say that the EU needs to remain committed to the statues of equal rights and opportunities it cherishes while still helping potential member states reach the relevant requirements.

Forslund then mentioned the importance of the feminist foreign policy that the Social democrats launched in 2014, and how it has been a tradition of values that is supported regardless of what government has been in power. An issue that unfortunately and sadly still needs to continue is to end all sexual violence and violence within families. These two are both included in the agenda of the feminist foreign policy and Sweden will remain committed to the causes until resolved.

The discussion then went on to mention the use of quota systems to ensure female participation. Forslund explained that Sweden only has voluntary quota systems but that it so far has been sufficient to ensure somewhat equal levels of participation. However, how to solve the issue of equal participation is up to the individual country since conditions might look very different.

MARTIN DEXBORG

**Advisor on Gender Issues
at the OSCE Gender Section**

Dexborg works in the gender section and his mandate is to advice the organization from a gender approach. He and his team work internally on programs and projects and offers support for member states with implementing their commitments.

One of Dexborg's first comments regarding Sweden as a chair for 2021 was that the term for the chairmanship will be changed to chairperson to make it more inclusive. He then went on to explain the terms of the OSCE and its function as a security network between 57 states. In 2021 Sweden will serve as acting chair and during that time has the possibility to set the agenda and influence the ongoing activities.

When asked what change has taken place or what successful cases to speak of regarding women's inclusion, Dexborg highlighted that high-level meetings today almost always involve gender-perspectives. Both Albania and Slovakia, the current and the previous chair of the OSCE, have both seen considerable change in implementing the WPS-agenda. The OSCE organizes round-table discussions where member states can share good practices and lessons learned which is an efficient way of increasing competence across the organization. The OSCE also had a policy that prevented any male-only panels, which increased the diversity of panels

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

“DEALING WITH SPOILERS”

One of the questions that were voiced during the small groups discussions was how to deal with “spoilers”. The question was asked to Martin Dexborg who agreed that it is difficult having certain actors trying to minimize or even stop change. A way to address the problems these actors bring forward is by considering the objectives they carry, since only by gaining an understanding of them would one be able to change them.

FREE OF CONFLICT BUT STILL IN NEED OF A NAP

Another issue that was brought up was that Albania is not considered a conflict country and as a result, that the WPS-agenda has been questioned. The participants agreed that there is a need to focus on the qualities the four pillars carry despite the level of conflict, and that not being in a conflict cannot be seen as a reason for not prioritizing equality.

Other discussions focused on Albania’s NAP and how it will be used moving forward. Edlira Shima suggested that one of the most important factors about the NAP is that it offers a mean to integrate the agenda in all parts of government. Dexborg mentioned that having NAP’s is useful and that the OSCE is working to have more countries develop them, but also that the quality of the NAP’s is improving. Relating to the importance of having a NAP, Dexborg said that it is an advantage since it is a document that can be referred back to in that sense use as a benchmark.

SWEDEN AND OSCE

Sweden’s role as the chair of OSCE was also brought up during the discussions. It was said that Sweden has an opportunity to promote cooperation across borders, but Kenneth G. Forslund mentioned that it is not an easy task considering the resistance posed by conservative powers.

As a final note, Forslund added that

” Sweden is happy and proud to become the next president. It comes with responsibility and expectations that sometimes might be a little bit too high. As a chairperson you cannot put forward you own agenda, but it has to be one of the OSCE. The foreign minister does not represent Sweden, but all of the countries.



CONCLUDING REMARKS: *BEYOND 2020?*

Operation 1325's conference was hosted in order to raise awareness of the efforts done to achieve resolution 1325 in Yemen, Turkey, Palestine and Albania. Together with its partner organizations in respective country, Operation 1325 brought together civil rights defenders, diplomats, decision-makers and the general public for four days of discussions. Although 20 years have gone by since the resolution first was passed in the Security Council, the conference has illustrated that there still is much to be done.

Moving forward, Operation 1325 and its partner organizations remain committed the inclusive peace processes. Only when all of society is included can decision reflect the will of the people and generate lasting peace deals.