



# INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

## Statement of the [ICDR Working group on Women, Democracy, Human Rights, Peace and Security](#) on the Global Regression of Gender Equality Commitments, Funding Obstacles, and the Normalization of Militarized Conflict Resolution

*Submitted in response to the open call by Gina Romero (UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association) for her thematic report to the 80th session of the UN General Assembly, to be presented in October 2025.*

*As of June 16, 2025*

Around the world, we are witnessing a dangerous regression in gender equality commitments, accompanied by persistent funding freezes and obstacles that severely undermine women's rights and human security. These setbacks come at a time when global crises—armed conflicts, authoritarianism, forced displacement—are intensifying, and women's leadership is needed more than ever.

In response to these crises, **states and institutions increasingly promote militarized “solutions” rooted in the expansion of weapons, surveillance (AI), and hard borders.** These approaches fail to provide real protection. Instead, they normalize violent conflict resolution, deepen insecurity, and entrench power structures that exclude women and marginalize civilians.

Women continue to demand a seat at the peace negotiation tables. Yet peace agreements are still too often negotiated by and for those who have taken up arms—excluding women, civil society, and victims of SGB violence. The result is not peace, but the reinstatement of militarized orders: more weapons, more military spending, and more insecurity. **Militarization creeps into schools, public and civic institutions, and communities, shaping a world where violence is expected and normalized.**

The impacts of these policies are devastating, especially for **refugees and forcibly displaced people**, 80 % of whom are women and children. Militarized borders and exclusionary migration policies now criminalize those fleeing violence rather than offering protection. Displaced women face heightened risks of **trafficking, sexual violence, statelessness, and economic exploitation**—yet they remain sidelined from the very processes that decide their safety, lives, and futures. The deteriorating security situation in many parts of the world also **pushes many women and children into economic migration flows which, due to insufficient international and regulatory oversight, put them at risk of modern slavery** (as documented with the cases of women from Uganda and Kenya coming to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Qatar).



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Meanwhile, **grassroots women's organizations**—often the first and frontline care responders in times of crisis—are operating under intense pressure and great personal security risks, now often **without the funding or protection** they need to continue their essential work. Against all such odds, these groups continue to sustain communities, promoting peace, defending human rights, and supporting displaced populations. Yet, they are **systematically overlooked** and sidelined in policy, funding decisions or opportunities, and are also **increasingly stigmatized** (and proclaimed to be a security risk) **through association with foreign funding or partnerships** (as is the case with transparency or foreign agents laws in e.g. in Russia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia), or **through reforming the legislative autonomy and accountability** in clear disadvantage to CSOs (most recently in Zimbabwe under the Private Voluntary Organizations Amendment) or **through de-gendering by authoritarian regimes**. All of this happens in clear discrepancy with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and though not restricted to women's rights and security organizations, these are hit particularly hard through the accumulation of structural challenges, thus eroding much of the wins and gains they have achieved thus far.

The continuation of such a global pattern must stop.

We call on governments, institutional and private donors, international institutions and the broad global democratic community to:

- **Reject militarized and exclusionary policies that fuel further conflict and displacement, thus breaking communities apart and making it significantly harder to act collectively** - and uphold the commitment to work against such behaviour in the global governance arena
- **Commit to taking special heed in supporting internally and internationally displaced women and children, to protect them from trafficking, sexual violence, economic exploitation, etc.** This does not concern solely refugees but also women and children fleeing to foreign lands for questionable work offers.
- **Commit (or stop regressing from previous commitments) to feminist, inclusive, and human-centered approaches to peace, security, but also foreign policy** as they are best positioned to guarantee freedom and security for all. This encompasses **listening to and promoting feminist narratives/women's stories** (in the spirit of “what makes me feel safe”) to inspire a multitude of preventive measures that value local knowledge in creating cross-cultural contexts and amplifying voices muted by dominant hegemonies.



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Care ethics are to be claimed as a critical asset for a renewed WPS framework.

- **Ensure sustained, flexible, and long-term funding for NGOs and CSOs that support women's rights, security, and leadership** - not least through establishing new funding opportunities to replace what has been lost with the U.S. withdrawal from much of global democracy support, but also by strongly denouncing any stigmatization of foreign funding for civil society and calling for legislative reforms to rectify the situation. Every government and international body should review what they can do in this regard.
- **Guarantee the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and displaced populations in peace processes**, without which lasting peace cannot be found.

**Real protection is not secured by weapons or borders, nor limiting societal action by spreading fear of assembly or other structural barriers. It is built and founded on justice, inclusion, and the recognition of our shared humanity. Women, minorities, and marginalized communities must be at the centre of shaping an inclusive, non-militarized and safe future.**