

A Report

From a presentation

Media Coverage of Women, Security, and Peace Issues

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Aden, Yemen

December 2019

Preamble:

Media plays a significant role in ending war and armed conflict at both the local and national levels. We, both as individuals and workers, call for ending this war and conflict.

The important role of women in realizing and keeping peace has been overlooked, not because of their suffering. We will not show women only within the frame of suffering. We do know that women, and civilians in general, bear the brunt of war, and we are aware that war has a triple impact on women, redoubling their responsibilities, which we are not here to talk them over. However, we want to talk about women playing an active and influential role and the need to engage them from the premise of exercising their rights and protecting them and acknowledging their strengths. This reality must be so vividly present in our minds when talking about women and the issues of security and peace, more specifically their role in establishing and keeping peace.

The important role of women in realizing and keeping peace has been overlooked but not because of their suffering. *بمعني اننا لن نظهر بدور نساء في إطار المعاناة وعكسها* We do know that women, and civilians in general, bear the brunt of war, and we are aware that war has a triple impact on women, redoubling their responsibilities, which we are not here to talk them over. However, we want to talk about women playing an active and influential role and the need to engage them from the premise of exercising their rights and protecting them and acknowledging their strengths. This reality must be so vividly present in our minds when talking about women and the issues of security and peace, more specifically their role in establishing and keeping peace. By no means can we set apart the immediate and indirect effects of war and armed conflict from the general situation that is marked with violence and discrimination.

By no means can we set apart the immediate and indirect effects of war and armed conflict from the general situation that is marked with violence and discrimination nor from peace building oriented issues that ultimately lead to changing the prevailing attitude of marginalizing and excluding the women's role in building peace, which, in fact, embodies a core value in the media content and discourse. Here, we are seriously talking about an accumulative legacy of discrimination and violence passed down to the different generations of women of all ages. After all, this is a broad topic to be addressed through media. However, with regard to promoting peace, women do not cause wars neither do they have the choice to cease them but are obligated to deal with the repercussions imposed on them by war. And because of the conflict caused and led by men, women nowadays face on different abuses a daily basis, which contradict

all the values, norms, religion, national and local laws, and the international conventions. It is unquestionable that men also suffer the consequences of war; however, discrimination and violence as a historical era is always associated with women. Discrimination and violence against women are passed down through authority and control: the control of families over women is passed to the institutions. If we think about it, we will always reach the conclusion that men are the moving wheel behind all the armed conflict for power and authority. Women are out of men's consideration and are of zero value to men who always agree on one thing which is keeping women outside their games.

The main concern here is to focus on creating media discourse, programs and content that takes the efforts in putting insights into the issue of changing the dominant masculine attitude of marginalizing and eliminating women's participation in building peace. When discussing women issues and media, usually the rhetoric takes two parts:

The first part: This centers on the presence of women in the media institutions and their influence on shaping the policies rather than only having them in leading positions. Even if women reached the top leading positions, they are still cuffed by authority. Every content produced by these media outlets is based on a masculine culture. Women have not held any high rank positions in media and so cannot reflect the real role of women or take political decisions for women in the light of their role in media.

The second part:

This is about the image of women on both the institutional and societal level which is reflected by the various media outlets.

Here, we will go over the conditions of war. Today, all media outlets are outbidding each other when portraying women as victims. Just like all the victims to this war, women are used by the warring parties to elevate the strategic position of each party. Warring parties' ill-use of the issue of women victims is also their approach in winning the society's trust through highlighting women's suffering. As a matter of fact, with the absence of women, warring parties do not carry out an efficient analysis to the conflict, which reflects the status quo of discrimination practiced against women. Media outlets do not report on these issues, nor do they talk about any real reasons of the conflict reflecting on the participation of women.

Requirements of the role of media in the issues related to women, peace and security.

Media outlets are required to adhere to values of professionalism, daring, freedom, and independence so that they are able to exercise their role without putting up with any external pressures on them or their employees. They are also required to avoid using their potentials to serve the interest of any of the warring and conflict parties.

When we talk about the media role in promoting issues of women, peace, and security, we majorly refer to the fact that media needs to adopt comprehensive and more professional policies and strategies towards women issues in both peace and security and everything that has to do with women existence and activities and whatever obstacles and challenges that may stand before women's efforts. Media must also be professional in portraying all factors that can help better understand women, their rights and demands as well as discuss the challenges accompanying the ever-changing reality. Additionally, media should not always talk about women as victims only, rather it should also talk about women's role as eyewitnesses to the current events.

It is crucial to activate these policies and strategies on ground and work on strengthening the partnership of media institutions amongst themselves and with the women groups and organizations.

There are three main tasks media should take on to promote issues of women, peace, and security. These tasks are:

Spreading the culture of Peace:

The role of media in clarifying and focusing on the concepts of peace reaches the public opinion through employing media outlets. In this context, media has a significant responsibility with the main goal of positively directing the public opinion through raising awareness on the importance of peace. Media has this responsibility because it plays a pivotal and essential role in shaping an accumulative societal awareness that assimilates the values of equality, justice, and respect for human rights. And here, all media outlets must pay enough concern to the way they perform and function towards the society in whatever way that suits their specialization and use whatever way that enables them to positively direct the public opinion. Add to that, media should shape the public opinion positively and effectively to accomplish the lofty goals that include the society's understanding of the concepts, phases, and objectives of comprehensive and sustainable peace.

Acting with a joint responsibility with the national agenda for women, peace, and security

That being said, media plays a substantial role in presenting the agenda to the public opinion and focusing on goals related to women, peace, and security in the context of national priorities. It is important here to note that the positive role of media lies in doing in partnership with women groups, formations, and organizations and in advocating women issues in peace agendas.

Supporting local peace initiatives:

In this task, media outlets should have a role in taking an interest in the women leadership roles in local peace initiatives that aimed at preserving the civil peace in the society in which women presume a proactive and major role due to their special concern for peace and security. It is also because women are always concerned with creating and starting a road map from the inside. Today, we are missing peace in the inside, and so following up on media implementation of these tasks should always be consistent and concurrent with the established agreements.

(Let me give you an example: one of the initiatives was the initiative to release detainees. Media outlets only knew about the launch of the initiative. And after all the efforts made, negotiations, and considerations all parties reached a decision. However, the discussed conditions of human rights, women's conditions and role women played in this initiative were all kept in the dark from the media. Challenges and hardships were always there but going forward and ignoring the hardships without seeking remedies only deepens the crisis we are living today.)

And the questions that impose themselves today is: where is the media role in peace issues in Yemen? Are there any initiatives or steps taken by media or media professionals to shape the public awareness of the 1325 resolution regarding women, peace, and security as well as the follow up resolutions? Has the society been educated about these pressing issues? And to stay within our topic, has media done any work on these resolutions after we knew about them, read about them, and trained on them? Has the media transferred them into a helpful content? Was there any decision made? Let us reflect on it on the general level. Were reference resolutions based on the United Nations, and the Security Council that built negotiations and sponsors peace processes inside Yemen taken into consideration when comparing the women role in media. Were these reference resolutions taken after a professional media reading and description of the women relationship to peace?

The role of male and female media professionals in spreading the issues of women and peace

Women working in the media has a great role, no matter how hard others try to marginalize or eliminate it. There are women and girls working in media with all courage whether they work with public or private newspapers. We are still trying to reflect our vision as women media professionals who must stay neutral in our work. We must stay professional and neutral even if we may believe in one side more than the others. The current situation does not take any more inciting of disputes or problems.

There was a training held under the title of Conflict Sensitive Journalism. And as media professionals and journalists, we must have a role in analyzing the problem and how to build peace as pointed out by Professor Maha Awadh. We must be the bright side of building peace, promoting issues of women, peace, and security. We are trying hard to have many of male and female journalists who are well informed about women issues and to address these issues in our investigations, work, and tasks. Whether positive or negative, women's role must be highlighted. We must stay open and honest in putting our efforts the right way and not be a pre-directed media. It is better to have no pre-directed media which ignites unnecessary conflicts. The society is in dire need for pens that promote peace and spread love. People in Aden are drained due to wars and troubles and cannot continue living in a place where war is a continuous face of life. You may take the following as my will, as media professionals we have the responsibility in taking the lead in spreading peace. We have to be honest even if we believe in one side and not the others. We are the ones who ignites conflicts with what we write whether on social media or any other platform, even if it was just a way to secure some income for ourselves.

This publication is part of activities under the project "Supporting Women Journalists and Human Rights Defenders in Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, West Bank and Gaza Strip".



 Alternatives

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