



Estudio del CURI

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**TENSIONS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF
THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN
IN PEACE PROCESSES AND RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS**

*Consejo Uruguayo
para las Relaciones Internacionales*

30 de JUNIO de 2016

Estudio N° 6/16

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Tensions about the importance of the participation of women in peace processes and resolution of conflicts

María Julia Moreyra¹

“Women are the first victims of war, but also hold the key to peace”

Julienne Lusenge, Director of the Congolese Women’s Fund



Women at a round table in the World Social Forum in Senegal. February, 2011².

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Executive Summary

Peace and Security are pivotal in the world.

All over the world, women actively work to find and to create peaceful solutions to violent conflict. However, a low percentage of them could access to Peace Negotiations all around the world.

This article deals with the following questions: Why women do not have access to Peace Negotiations in the same proportion than men? Why decision – making are in most cases only in charge of men? Why are there tensions about women's participation?

It is important that women are considered not only victims, but also peacebuilders and they could bring their needs and experiences to the table.

It is not possible to talk about peace if half of the world population is not represented at a peace table, as it was said by the Representative of Namibia who was in charge of the Presidency of the Security Council on October 31, 2000 when UNSCR 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” was adopted. This Resolution demands the inclusion of women in all peace negotiations. Fifteen years later, this goal could not be reached. Hopes and expectation remain unfulfilled. Peace agreements are at risk since they do not adequately address the needs of local populations.

As it could read at UNIFEM website (2010): *“No woman has ever been appointed chief or lead mediator in UN- sponsored peace talks. Such exclusion invariable leads to a failure to adequately address women's concerns, such as sexual and gender- based violence, women's rights and post- conflict accountability”*.

The article is divided in eight parts. The first one provides an Introduction. The second part deals with the Core Problem, Causes and Effects of the Low Participation of Women in Peace Processes and Resolution of Conflicts, using the Conflict Tree Analysis Tool. The third part refers to Peace and Resolution of Conflicts: Half of the Population is not represented. The fourth part makes reference to UNSCR 1325, a pivotal advance on gender issues. The fifth part deals with the question about the impact on peace if women participate in the resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. The sixth session talks about the successful stories of women in peacebuilding. The seventh segment refers to Women who take up

² The picture was taken by María Julia Moreyra, who attended the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal.

arms. And the eighth and final section ends the article with the conclusion and recommendations for states which have not implemented UNSCR 1325 at national level; for NGOs and for men.

I. Introduction

Armed conflicts have different impacts on women, men, girls and boys. But their experiences, needs and interests are different. Women and girls are usually victims of sexual violence, they are discriminated and they have to hold heavy burdens. Peace involves the commitment of all human beings (women and men) since conflict destroys all lives over time. But the majority of decisions in peace processes are adopted by men, often with military or power interests.

Women's participation is pivotal in order to prevent all kinds of violence. Research has shown that the larger the gender gap, the more likely a state is to be involved in inter- and intra-state conflict, and to use violence first in a conflict. It has also shown that a strong, autonomous feminist movement is the most important indicator and predictor of government action to redress violence against women. States with the strongest feminist movements are more likely to have more comprehensive policies regarding violence against women.

Despite the fact that women do not have participation in peace negotiations, they go on doing their best in order to benefit their communities.

Women are considered agents of change. Therefore they have the right to participate in peace negotiations and to exert influence on the content of peace agreement and reconstruction processes.

It is often said that the most important thing to participate of peace negotiations is the commitment, qualification and good will of people in order to benefit the communities that have faced an armed conflict. It is true, but it is true too that women need to be considered since they have the right to participate. Up to present, only a few percentage of women all over the world could enjoy this right.

As Cora Weiss, a committed peace worker from United States, says: *"Peace is unthinkable without human rights, democracy and gender equality"*.

II. Core problem, causes and effects of the under – representation of women in peace processes and resolutions of conflicts

Core problem: under – representation of women in peace process and resolution of conflicts.

Causes that explain the aforementioned fact:

- Patriarchal society
- Women are considered no qualified to participate of the peace negotiations
- It is said that women do not have experience in order to participate of peace processes and resolution of conflicts
- Lack of knowledge about the importance of women's access to peace processes and resolution of conflicts
- Belief that only the parties who take part in an armed conflict could participate of a peace table
- Inequalities in the economic, social and political arena
- Lack of equal opportunities

Effects of the under representation of women in peace processes and resolution of conflicts

- Half of the population is not represented
- Women's voices are not heard (they are effective voices in combatting violent extremism)
- Lack of recognition of the principle that women have the right to participate in the promotion of peace
- Serious topics (such as sexual violence in armed conflicts; the role of women, among others) are not dealt at peace processes
- Impunity for perpetrators of sexual crimes (in most cases)
- Several community needs are not included
- Gender inequality threatens international peace and security
- It is not possible to talk about peace seriously if women are not represented

The main obstacle that women face in order to participate in peace negotiations is because of the patriarchal society. It is true that women could advance on their rights, but there are no doubts that patriarchy is still alive in several communities. In patriarchal societies men hold the positions of power and they exert power over women. Therefore women cannot enjoy their fundamental rights.

An obstacle that is often mentioned to deny women's participation at peace negotiations is that there are no qualified women in order to participate of peace processes and resolution of conflicts. What qualifies a person to participate in peace-building? It is not as if all the men are experts on International Law or Conflict Resolution. Historically, peace is negotiated at the end of hostilities by those who have taken part in the fighting. It is said that as women are not war actors they do not have the right to participate of peace processes. But it is

necessary to consider that the peace that is sought today is far more comprehensive; it includes responsibility, mechanisms for rebuilding the society, an end to impunity and elements that will aid reconciliation. Such a peace is built only by listening to everyone affected and taking into account everyone's experiences and perspective. A peace that is patiently negotiated is a peace that lasts.

If women cannot take part of peace negotiations, they are denied of the right to participate, which is enshrined in important international treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another key reason cited by current power-holders for excluding women from key roles is women's "lack of experience". The lack-of-experience excuse might seem more difficult to circumnavigate: How can people gain experience if their inexperience is used as a reason to exclude them from opportunities to acquire more skills?

They might not have much experience at the peace table, but they do have very specific experiences of conflict and reasons to strive for peace. The experience of those who have suffered the impact of armed conflicts and their violence are as vital to the peace process as the experiences of those who have engaged in such conflicts. In doing so it would significantly improve the opportunity for creating a lasting peace.

Former United States' President Bill Clinton said: *"If we had had women at Camp David, we'd have had an agreement"*.

It is extremely important that women's voices could be heard since women and girls have specific needs that are often ignored during crisis.

Gender -violence takes place in every armed conflict. Women can sense this immediately, but they are rarely a part of any conflict prevention or early warning mechanisms that might be put in place. It is important to highlight that 134 countries have classified sexual slavery as a crime, but the number of convictions remains very low.

Mariano Rajoy Brey, Prime Minister of Spain, said: "In conflict, it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier"³.

³United Nations. Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2242 (2015) to Improve Implementation of Landmark Text on Women, Peace, Security Agenda. October 13, 2015.

Violence cannot be addressed without tackling its root causes in militarism and gender inequality. To counter the cycles of violence, atrocities must be prevented before, during, and after armed conflicts, by transforming patriarchal, violent, and discriminatory spaces into equitable, inclusive, safe, just, and nourishing communities. This transformation of spaces requires investing in women's local peace work to ensure human rights and build resilient communities. In Nigeria, for example, women are organizing from the community to the national level to strengthen women's engagement in peace building, combat gun violence, create early warning mechanisms, build early response structures to cross community interventions; promote non-violence communications and actions; mobilize diverse stakeholders including engaging men and youth; and sustain local peace architectures.

Finally it is not possible to talk about peace seriously if women are not represented at peace negotiations. The campaign #Women Seriously launched by Irene Santiago focuses on demonstrating that women have the capacities in order to be peacemakers and peacebuilders.

In 2009 UNIFEM reviewed 300 peace agreements in 45 conflicts from 1989 to 2008 and found that only in 18 cases and 10 conflicts was sexual or gender – related violence even mentioned. No one of these 300 peace agreements contained measures to rehabilitate or to protect the victims⁴. If women had had the opportunity to participate in the aforementioned agreements, measures to protect the victims would have been adopted.

III. Peace and Resolution of Conflicts: Half of the population is not represented

In this section, it will be analyzed one of the most important effects of the under – representation of women at peace negotiations.

In 2009 UNIFEM reviewed a limited, but reasonably representative sample of 24 major peace processes from 1993 to 2008 and found that only:

- 2,5% signatories were women
- 3, 2% of mediators were women
- 5,5% of witnesses were women
- 7,6% of negotiators were women⁵

⁴“No Women- No Peace”.PeaceWomenAcross the Globe (PWAG). Switzerland. 2010. Page 10.

⁵“No Women – No Peace”.PeaceWomenAcross the Globe (PWAG). Switzerland. 2010. Page 14.

The peace negotiations in Indonesia, Nepal, Somalia, Cote d' Ivoire, the Philippines and the Central African Republic were exclusively meetings of men.

UNSCR 1325 has meant an advance as regards the participation of women in peace negotiations. It is important to highlight that women are largely absent from chief mediating roles in UN- brokered talks.

From 2005 to 2007 33 peace negotiations took place. Only 4% of participants- 11 out of 280 – were women. The average participation of women on government delegations was 7%.

Only 16% of the 589 peace agreements concludes between 1990 and 2010 contained any references to women.

- 9 agreements specified quotas for women in legislative or executive bodies
- 5 supported women's representation in the police or gender – sensitive police reform
- 4 referred to gender equality in the judiciary
- 4 mentioned women or gender equality in the context of public – sector restructuring ⁶

At the United Nations, no woman has ever been appointed as Secretary General. To date, there are few Special Representatives of the Secretary General. In addition, very few peacekeeping missions have been led by women.

In 2010, in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, women made up only 2, 7 % of the UN peacekeeping force, 7% of the UN police force and 30 % of the civilian personnel.

IV. UNSCR 1325: a groundbreaking advance on gender issues

UNSCR 1325 is a landmark on women's issues since for the first time in history the Security Council recognizes the importance of the inclusion of women in all peace negotiations. Women's presence at negotiating table will significantly improve the chances of achieving a sustainable and lasting peace.

As it was mentioned United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000. It acknowledges the need for and contributions of women to international peace and security. It also deals with the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls. It calls for the adoption of a gender perspective to consider the special needs of women and girls during conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

⁶Ibid. Page 15.

In spite of the fact that UNSCR 1325,

- *Urges* Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision – making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict
- *Encourages* the Secretary – General to implement his strategic plan of action calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision making levels in conflict resolution and peace process
- *Urges* the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard *calls on* Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary-General, for inclusion in a regularly updated centralized roster;
- *Further urges* the Secretary-General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

only 58⁷ countries of 193 have National Action Plans (they have implemented at national level the contents of UNSCR 1325).

In the last paragraph of UNSCR 1325 it is established that the Security Council “*Decides to remain actively seized of the matter*”. Following this commitment the Security Council adopted these Resolutions: 1820 (2008); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2009); 1960 (2010); 2106 (2013); 2242 (2015); 2250 (2015)⁸.

⁷These countries are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Congo (Kinshasa), Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea- Bissau, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Lituania, Macedonia, Mali, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, S. Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leona, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America. Source: www.peacewomen.org

⁸ UNSCR 1820 condemns the use of sexual violence as a tool of war, and declares that “*rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide*”. UNSCR 1888: The Security Council decided to specifically mandate peacekeeping missions to protect women and children from rampant sexual violence during armed conflict, as it requested the Secretary-General to appoint a special representative to coordinate a range of mechanisms to fight the crime. UNSCR 1889: The Security Council called for a wide range of measures to strengthen the participation of women at all stages of peace processes, focusing on the period after peace agreements have been reached, as it began an intensive day-long discussion on the topic. UNSCR 1960: The Council requested information on parties suspected of patterns of sexual violence during armed conflict to be made available to it. UNSCR 2106 reiterates that all actors, including not only the Security Council and parties to armed conflict, but all Member States and United Nations entities, must do more to implement previous mandates and combat impunity for these crimes. UNSCR 2242: The Council decided to integrate women, peace and security concerns across all country –specific situations on its agenda.

V. What is the impact on peace if women participate in the resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding?

Women have a meaningful impact on peace. Research shows that the participation of women in peacebuilding increases the probability that violence will end by 24%. However, restrictions apply. Including a woman from outside the conflict, like from the United Nations or the African Union, does not necessarily result in a more durable peace agreement. Rather, local women from the conflict are vital for creating a lasting peace agreement. This distinction is extremely important because it reveals that female presence does not necessarily provide the key to peace⁹.

Reconstruction is very important in order to guarantee a lasting peace. This could be achieved institutionalizing gender equality which ensures the participation of women in a peace agreement.

It is extremely important to empower women and to enable them to have leadership positions. It could provide the elements in order to have a more peaceful society.

It is pivotal that governments develop public policies which support women's participation. If women are empowered they could make their valuable contributions in the transformation of the conflict and in the achieving of a lasting peace.

It is important to mention the real impact of women's engagement in the resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. In Sri Lanka women reclaimed a political solution to the armed conflict on several occasions. With the beginning of peace talks they demonstrated publicly their support to the agreement of cessation of hostilities that was reached by the government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Therefore, at the beginning of the peace talks in 2002 women had experience and mobilization capacities for their demands for an increased participation of women in the peace process.

USCR 2250: The Security Council urges Member States to consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in local, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, and, as appropriate, to consider establishing integrated mechanisms for meaningful participation of youth in peace processes and dispute-resolution”.

⁹Stone Laurel. “Can women make the world more peaceful?”The Guardian. August 2014.

The government of Norway facilitated the peace process. In February 2003 was established a Gender Subcommittee in the negotiations. Astrid Heiberg was appointed as advisor of the aforementioned Subcommittee. She was in charge of facilitation the understanding among women that integrated it – both Tamil – LTTE combatants- and Sinhalese – representatives of the Government, but with activist and academic background. Mrs. Heiberg, due to her capacity, knowledge and experience could facilitate the integration of gender in the peace process.

Women who participated of the subcommittee could achieve the inclusion of issues that were extremely important for the negotiation: sustaining the peace process, resettlement, personal security and safety, infrastructure and services, livelihood and employment, political representation and decision – making and reconciliation.

This example helps to understand the impact of the participation of women in resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. When women could bring their experiences and needs to a peace negotiation, it is possible to talk about real peace and security.

VI. Successful stories of women's participation in peacebuilding

Liberia is an example where women were successful in peacebuilding. The women's movement was directly involved in the disarmament of combatants when the UN's disarmament program was on the brink of failure. They negotiated with men in the demobilization areas and they promoted messages of peace and forgiveness.

In April 2003 a group of Liberia women launched a non-violent campaign for peace. It is important to remark the words of their leader Leymah Gbowee: "We would take the destiny of this tiny nation into our own hands". Women from Muslim and Christian organizations, of both indigenous and elite Americo – Liberian classes, formed together "Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace".

They claimed for peace and declared that they were going to hold a sex strike. The decision was taken by women in order to pressure their husbands to become involved in promoting peace talks.

Women's mass mobilization and fear of ostracism convinced dictator Taylor to promise to participate of peace talks in Ghana. When Taylor agreed to attend the talks, the Mass Action for Peace had to deal with the task of persuading the rebels.

Under the women's demands and threats from the international community to deny funds for Liberia, peace talks culminated in an agreement. C. Taylor was exiled to Nigeria, the UN peacekeeping operation entered Monrovia and a transitional government was established.

In 2005 women supported Ellen Johnson – Sirleaf, who became president of Liberia. In 2011, Mrs. Johnson- Sirleaf was one of the winners of the Peace Nobel Prize.

President Johnson – Sirleaf appointed women in the new state institutions. In addition, a tough rape law was adopted. She also promoted the implementation at national level of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820.

Liberia is a country that has achieved more success than other countries in similar conditions. To a significant extent, this is due to braveness of the women.

Other example that I want to highlight is Rwanda. Women played a vital role in the peacebuilding and in the reconciliation and transformation of the country. Approximately 800.000 people died in the Rwandan genocide. Women represented 60% of the population since a lot of men passed away or fled to other countries and others are in prison since they committed crimes against humanity.

Rwandan women's fundamental rights were violated. In addition, they had to deal with poverty, unemployment and inequality. However, they have emerged as the strongest force in the country.

Rwanda has a high rate of congresswomen and women have important positions at the Executive. Economy has grown year by year, after the genocide in 1994 since women became a driving force of socio- economic development. Women played an outstanding role in providing empowerment initiatives. Socio – economic development is used as an entry point for peace building and reconciliation. Women participated of activities that lead to building their empowerment and it contributed to the sustainable development.

Due to the socio-economic empowerment of women after the conflict in Rwanda, community has perceived women in a different way. Community has redefined roles and responsibilities for women.

This success is due to the actions performed by women. They could achieve the transformation of economy and politics and they have been successful in their fight against poverty. The community benefits when women have access to education. In addition, people in Rwanda could understand the advantages of gender equality,

particularly as regards the education of boys and girls. Younger generations value the role played by women.

Initiatives taken by Rwandan women are an example for women of other African countries who face similar situations. Rwandan women understood that the reconstruction of the country could not be based on revenge.

VII. Women who take up arms

Another topic that it is important to mention is that at present women take up arms. In the Palestinian conflict an important number of attacks were in charge of young women. A fifth of attackers or alleged attackers were women.

Men and women are affected by vengeance, anger and violence. Some authors think that when women take up arms it is because of the great social constraints placed on women, particularly in traditional societies.

Some women believe that their gender can make them more radical than men. "Women give life [...] When they are involved, they are more faithful to the revolution because they defend the lives of their children too," said Leila Khaled, the first woman ever to hijack an aircraft, who has become the icon of Palestinian armed resistance, even though she has claimed publicly that she never intended to harm, nor ever did in reality, any passengers.

In Syria a small but determined force of women fighters has formed to battle the Islamic State.

"I am a practicing Christian and thinking about my children makes me stronger and more determined in my fight against Daesh (ISIS)", said Babylonia, a mother of two young children whose husband encouraged her to join the unit. A fighter himself, he urged her to take up arms to "fight against the idea that the Syriac woman is good for nothing except housekeeping and make-up", she said¹⁰.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Armed conflicts have high costs that are paid by generations over time.

It is important to reach a lasting peace. If women cannot have access to peace negotiations peace is at risk since an important group of the society is not represented. Governments have to provide mechanisms to ensure women's full and equal participation in all peace agreements. They have to refuse to support any

¹⁰ Christian Women take up arms against ISIS in Syria. Women in the World. The Guardian.

peace negotiation if women cannot participate and their rights are integrated into the process.

As it was said UNSCR 1325 has meant an important advance on women's participation in peace processes and resolution of conflicts and a valuable tool in order to protect women in conflict situations. But after 15 years and taking into account that UNSCR 1325 has succeeded in raising general awareness of the gender perspective as an essential element for contributing to international peace and security, only 58 countries have implemented the main contents of the aforementioned resolution at national level. There is a long way to go and many challenges lie ahead. As March 2014, 97% peacekeeping military staff and 90% of the police officer were men, percentages that have not changed since 2011¹¹.

In addition, women continue to suffer, in a systematic and recurrent way, sexual violence in armed conflicts (such as in Ivory Coast, Mali, Syria, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and are victims of new forms of violence (such as that carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria)¹².

Recommendations for States that have not implemented UNSCR 1325 yet at national level:

- It is important to draft a National Plan (with commitment and coherence) with the participation of government stakeholders and representatives of NGO's who work on Women, Peace and Security.

This Plan should focus on the following topics:

- The Prevention of all forms of violence.
- The Promotion of Women's political participation, access to justice and access to legal, health and psychological services, including issues of sexual and gender – based violence.
- The empowerment of women.
- The Equal Participation of Women in peace negotiations and political processes at national, regional and international levels along with politicians and other actors in order to express their needs, interests and experience.
- The respect, protection and fulfillment of women's fundamental rights. It is important to ensure effective implementation of all the available mechanisms including CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of

¹¹Solanas, María. "Women, Peace and Security: a long way from fulfilling the aspirations of Resolution 1325". ARI 56/2015. 27/10/2015 (English Version)

¹²Ibid.

Discrimination Against Women), especially CEDAW General Recommendation 30.

- The removal of discriminatory, social, legal, political, and economic barriers to gender equality and peace.
- The ending of impunity and the prosecution of those who commit genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of war.
- The support for the International Criminal Court by sharing expertise and providing funds to the Court's Trust Fund for Victims.
- Proper funding in order to deal with all the topics of the National Plan.

Recommendations for NGO's which at present fulfill some duties that were in charge of the States in the past:

- To go on promoting women's rights such as: to take part in peace negotiations; to access to justice, to empower them; to improve women's leadership, among others.
- To join to the Global Campaign "Women Seriously" launched in 2014 by women's activist Irene Santiago. The goals of this campaign are:
 - To build a large global peace constituency that believes that if "we are serious about peace, women must be taken seriously"
 - To increase the significant participation of women in peace negotiations and other peace processes
 - To influence the formulation and implementation of National Action Plans on women, peace and security as mandated by UNSCR 1325

The main strategy of this campaign is the formation of Women's Peace Table where women could "denounce and announce"¹³. They could denounce practices that lead to violence and armed conflicts and they could announce their visions about a peaceful world.

Recommendations for men:

- To share responsibilities with women and to participate in every action aimed to achieve equality
- To raise awareness that women have special needs and interests and they should be taken into account
- To support the participation of women in decision-making positions and their involvement in peace negotiations
- To encourage women's education since this benefits society as a whole

¹³PeaceWomenAcross the Globe (PWAG), a Swiss organization created after the nomination of 1000 women to the Peace Nobel Prize in 2005, supports this campaign. Up to present, PWAG organized Peace Tables in Indonesia, Nicaragua, Brazil, Mali, Kenya, Sudan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand and Palestine.

- To listen to women's voices, particularly in these matters that affect them

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At present human beings have only one alternative: to build a new world of sustainable peace based on gender justice. Gender should not be ignored any more.

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International Treaties

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)

United Nations Security Council Resolutions

Resolution 1325

Resolution 1820

Resolution 1888

Resolution 1889

Resolution 1960

Resolution 2106

Resolution 2242

Resolution 2250

Internet

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