

# Ireland's Third National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women and Security

## Submission

as part of the process of public consultation by

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## **Will Ireland's next National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 address the reality of the 'War on Women'?**

### *Introduction*

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Ireland has invited public submissions on the formulation of Ireland's Third National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 by 14th December 2018. UNSCR 1325 seeks to address specifically women's security needs in conflict situations. This document is a contribution to that submission process, and aims to problematise the notion of gender-based violence in 'conflict situations' and the role of state borders in understanding the UNSCR 1325 national implementation process, and to argue for a radical feminist approach to gender-based violence, both locally and globally.

### *Violence=violence, regardless of where it is located in relation to border configurations*

The *War on Women* is a term associated with the fourth wave feminist movements, made visible on social media from 2012, that reflects the need for activism to tackle sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, reproductive rights, domestic abuse and violence, and the murder of women as part of a regime of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Terms include #MeToo, #InHerShoes, #BelieveWomen, #WhyIDidntReport, #WhyIStayed, #YesAllWomen, #TimesUp, #EverydaySexism, #NotAskingForIt and #HeForShe, and in Ireland specifically, #HerNameIsClodagh, #IBelieveHer, #RepealThe8th, #TrustWomen, #Savita, and #ThisIsNotConsent, to name but a few.

Gender based violence takes many forms. From the radical feminist perspective I write this submission, it encompasses an entire spectrum from 'street' or 'everyday' sexual harassment to rape and intimate partner murders within states. It encompasses sex trafficking/slavery and rape camps, to conflict deaths 'outwith' states. All forms are an assault on and horrific denigration of the physical and psychological integrity of women with substantive ripple effects on families, communities and the wider society.

I use the Scottish term 'outwith', meaning 'outside of', to interpellate the principle that these examples of 'war on women' *all involve the agency of states regardless of the jurisdictions in which these acts take place*. In other words, even if sex trafficking takes place in a post-colonial African state in conflict 'out'side of Ireland, it takes place 'with' the state agency of Ireland and other states, or lack thereof, in relation to the war on women. This is because the norm of gender-based violence and abuse is a norm shared in the majority of states around the world, and underpins a tragic and complete failure on governments' part to deal with gender-based violence within their own jurisdictions, let alone other jurisdictions experiencing conflict. It is also a norm that informs, and may even predict, types of violence that states traditionally recognise as worthy of state agencies' attention and resources. That being the case, states willing to tackle seriously - through recognition

and resources - the gender-based violent crimes that occur within their borders, will have a higher probability of preventing other forms of violence outside their borders.

*Gender-based violence vs terrorist acts and acts of war: some hard questions*

The norm of gender based violence is manifested as much in Ireland as it is in so-called 'conflict zones' in other parts of the world. The difference is merely related to identification and reporting, which is linked in turn to a willingness to see and recognise the different forms [gender/terrorist/war] of violence as existing on the same moral plane. Unless there is a revolutionary change in the status of women across the globe, little action will be taken to deal appropriately and effectively with the problem of gender based violence. How can a nation-state like Ireland realistically take action against sex trafficking in a conflict zone in Africa when the state does so little to deal with sex trafficking and forced prostitution condoned here in Ireland? How can a state like Ireland condemn rape as a tool of war in a foreign conflict zone, when the laws, programmes, and police and judicial processes in Ireland are completely ineffective in deterring or dealing effectively with the rape of women in Ireland? Why did the premiers of Australia and France announced new measures, new laws, new funding, and new agencies in the wake of lone wolf terrorist attacks such as the appalling incidents in Nice (truck attack 14 July 2016) and Sydney (Lindt Cafe siege 15–16 December 2014) to tackle such crimes, when the same perpetrators had already been reported for alleged sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, or involvement in intimate partner murder to domestic police authorities, with no effective measures implemented to deal with those equally violent and grievous crimes against women? Due to the lack of coherent [inter]national laws and policy frameworks, and a lack of adequate political attention paid to gender-based violence globally, these types of questions can be put with equal veracity to most other states' governing authorities in the world.

To continue with this line of questioning, how is it that in the wake of the horrific 9/11 attacks in the USA, the governing authorities were expected to spend, according to a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, a total of \$2.4 trillion on the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by 2017 - wars that cost the lives of 6,288 soldiers from 2003-2011, in the wake of 2,996 civilian 9/11 deaths, and *yet over the same time period, 10,502 women were killed by intimate partners in the USA?*

There are three primary funding streams in the USA that impact domestic violence programs, victims and survivors - the VAWA, the VOCA, and the FVPSA - which attract an annual budget spend of \$589.50 million, \$3 billion, and \$175 million, respectively. Of VOCA's \$3 billion allocation, \$58,386,785 (1.9%) went to "sexual assault" and \$704,162 went to "human trafficking" for the financial years 2015 and 2016. There were 76524 assault victims in total, of which 75645 (99%) were a result of domestic violence, taking the bulk of the \$340,528,910 budget. There were 3809 homicides, of which 3720 (98%) were as a result of domestic violence, taking the bulk of the \$123,317,055 budget. In total, an annual average of \$257,755,002 of VOCA budget went to gender-based violence victims according to 2015-

2016 data. Adding all three streams together, and assuming a consistency in VOCA expenditure between 2015, 2016 and 2017, gender-based violence was allocated funding of just over \$1.02 billion in 2017 (\$1,022,755,002). If we assume consistent expenditure over the previous 14 years, (there was significantly less spending per annum, so this is an overestimation) then US spending on tackling gender-based violence was roughly \$15.3bn. Notably, the US Center for Disease Control estimated in 2003 that the annual cost of days of employment and household chores lost is \$858.6 billion.

Comparing this \$15.3 billion budget allocated to gender-based violence to the \$2.4 trillion budget allocated to the Afghan and Iraq Wars by the US government, spending on gender based violence is roughly **half of one percent** of the spending on the Middle East wars. Yet gender-based violence is implicated in the deaths of more women in the USA than American civilian or soldier deaths due to terrorist attacks or wars over the past 15 years.

#### *Radical view on gender based violence: integrating internal and external policy perspectives*

Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights violation in the world. It is a profound health problem, sapping women's energy, compromising physical health, and eroding self-esteem. In addition to causing injury, violence increases women's long-term risk of a number of other health problems, including chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression. Despite its high costs, almost every society in the world has social institutions that legitimise, obscure and deny abuse. The same acts that would be punished if directed at an employer, a neighbour, or an acquaintance, often go unchallenged when men direct them at women, especially within the family.

Unlike soldiers, none of the women killed through intimate partner violence were trained, armed, and legally permitted to fight against an enemy that was identified and recognised by the state. Women are left defenceless in the face of abusers, who are able to carry out what effectively amounts to terrorism of women within the home for years, whilst many eventually murder these women and face little or no proportionate sanctions, and the survivors and their families are left without adequate support from the state or society.

My own research into the relationship between *Individual-Level Security Dispositions* and the *International Use of Force*, presented at the International Studies Association annual conference on April 4th, 2013 in San Francisco, California, USA, suggested that personal security dispositions – e.g. trust in others, the importance of living in secure surroundings and associated 'avoidant' security behaviour - might condition an individual's preferences for the use international force or diplomacy in US foreign policy. The first model showed that increases in levels of trust in others do predict a preference for diplomacy in an individual's orientation towards a generalised and hypothetical US foreign policy scenario, whilst increasing identification with a person believing in the importance of living in secure surroundings and engaging in avoidant behaviour predict a preference for US foreign policy

to be oriented towards diplomacy over being ready to use force. Overall, I found there is some interesting preliminary evidence that the levels of 'internal' violence within a state that impact on security dispositions of individuals, have an effect on public attitudes to foreign policy and consequently on the security of 'external' others, and international security generally.

Justifications for violence evolve from gender norms—i.e. social norms about roles and responsibilities of men and women, e.g. cultures where men have the right to control their wives' or partners' behaviour. Where the family is considered 'private' and outside public scrutiny, rates of wife/intimate partner abuse are higher. A radical approach directs the state to invest heavily in educational awareness and training programs designed to prevent young people from becoming victims of abuse, assault, sexual assault, and homicide within the intimate partner violence framework at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education. It also demands a mandatory awareness programme for all elected representations, medical practitioners, social workers, educators, and other classes of professions that can either influence policies and norms, or come into contact with [potential] victims and perpetrators.

Whether through lone wolf terrorist attacks domestically, or prolonged wars abroad, soldiers injured or killed in combat are recognised and supported through state-run, premier-attended memorials, along with media coverage, etc. A radical approach to gender-based violence demands that similar levels of state-level official memorials, along with media coverage, are afforded to victims of gender-based violence to the same extent they are to casualties of state military violence. Finally, a zero-tolerance approach to the perpetuation of the norms and practices of gender-based abuse and violence through social media channels, entertainment, and traditional media forms must be adopted at national and trans-national levels.

The reflex response to gender-based violence must never engage in victim-blaming. As Don Hennessy has argued, "When we look for any explanation for the continuing abuse by analysing the character or the behaviour of the sufferer we not only further abuse the woman but also begin the process of colluding with the abuser." (2012: 22-23) The reflex response must instead provide an empathetic and compassionate response; for survivors, 'Compassion is going to open up the door. And when we feel safe and are able to trust, that makes a lot of difference'. A common trait of women's precarious security whether in a domestic or foreign context, is the fact that women constitute the 'absent referent' in governmental analyses and policy responses. A radical perspective on the epidemic of gender-based violence puts women and their experiences at the centre of every initiative - the 'add-women-and-stir' approach is understood as simply perpetuating 'malestream' norms and practices that underpin women's insecurity. These aforementioned approaches towards women's security are required for to respond to all forms of gender-based violence, and are appropriate whether the context of the violence is domestic or foreign.