



8 March 2019

UN Human Rights Council 40th session (25 February – 22 March 2019)

Statement on International Women's Day

Women are working at the frontlines of peace, disarmament, development, humanitarian aid and human rights. Women's movements offer alternatives to realpolitik. Women activists do not shy away from addressing internationalised and localised militarism. They organise and fight exclusion, discrimination and patriarchy.

Over one hundred years ago, suffragettes designated this day to celebrate and to protest. And like the suffragettes, we have a lot to celebrate — women's leadership here in this room and around the world, and the gains that we have made in the past decades.

We remember all the women and girls who can't be with us, those who lost their lives in their own homes or in unjust wars; those who have been murdered or disappeared for being human rights defenders or because of their identity. For them, and for us all, we need to continue the protest.

Women challenge and dismiss the assumption that only men with guns have legitimacy to negotiate peace. Women are mobilising for participation in peace processes on the Korean peninsula, and in Libya, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Western Sahara, Syria.

The persistent underfunding of women's organisations creates significant barriers to our work. Austerity measures impact the economic and social rights of women, which in turn limits their participation. Militarism and corporate greed further squander valuable resources instead of making financing available for the realisation of human rights and, indeed, the attainment of the SDGs.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom calls on all States and the UN to take bold actions to counter chauvinistic nationalism and use your political will, human rights norms, and the Human Rights Council to address and transform inequalities.

Though women are oppressed, we are not powerless. We will continue to speak out.

The struggle for human rights continues every day in our home, in our workplace, in schools, in refugee camps, in conflict areas and here in UN. We urge people everywhere — wherever you are — to join the protest.