



IMAGINING A WORLD WITHOUT MILITARISM

GRASSROOTS VISIONS & DEMANDS FOR FEMINIST PEACE & JUSTICE



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia, United Kingdom, United States
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
DMZ	Demilitarised Zone
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G7	The Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America)
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IFI	International Financial Institutions
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and plus
MIC	Military-Industrial Complex
RPA	Regional Plan of Action
TPNPB	West Papua National Liberation Army
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States of America
US-ROK	United States - Republic of Korea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WBG	World Bank Group
WiP	Women in Power
WLB	Women's League of Burma
WPS Agenda	Women, Peace and Security Agenda
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two

I. Introduction

The world is experiencing unprecedented levels of militarisation. As global military spending hit a new record of US\$2.7 trillion in 2024, the continuation of a livestreamed genocide in Gaza and the escalation of geopolitical tensions between the United States and China have illustrated the need to prevent and contest the conditions for what media, politicians and policy analysts have heralded as a 'New Cold War'.¹ Authoritarian and fascist administrations spanning the globe, from the disgraced South Korean Yoon Seok Yeol presidency to the unchecked Trumpism of the US imperial core, have fanned the flames of regional conflict by mobilising ethnonationalist and patriarchal violence against women and other marginalised communities. As ongoing geopolitical tensions between major global powers and the rise of global fascism exacerbate the everyday precarity that people experience in Asia and the Pacific, the pursuit of feminist peace and justice in the region is more crucial than ever.

Militarism, fascism and authoritarianism are not recent phenomena. Rather, they are structural, with roots in the long history of imperialism. Stretching back centuries, the Global North has waged interventionist campaigns into Asia and the Pacific, seizing Indigenous lands, resources and wealth through militarised force and coercion. Imperialism and global capitalism are inextricable from each other, with capital's need to continually locate new markets undergirding imperialism's approach to entire territories and peoples as resources for capital's expansion and circulation. Militarism constitutes the hinge between imperialism and capitalism: if imperialism and colonialism are the extension of one country's power through diplomatic force, territorial conquest and/or occupation, military force is the means for not only the initial act of seizure but also the imposition of regimes of intimidation, fear and control over colonised people.

¹ Reuters, (2025, April 27). World military spending hits \$2.7 trillion in record 2024 surge. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/world-military-spending-hits-27-trillion-record-2024-surge-2025-04-27>





Feminist critics from Asia and the Pacific have underscored that European, Japanese and US imperialisms have structured the conditions of political possibility in the region. Christopher Columbus's declaration of a 'New World' in the Americas marked the coming of apocalypse for Indigenous Nations as the 16th century onward witnessed the British, French, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish 'opening' of the Americas, Africa and Asia to global trade at gunpoint. Imperial Japan waged military incursions into East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands beginning in the 19th century. After Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan cloaked its imperial ambitions in the language of anti-imperialism, calling its expansionist project the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere' while borrowing strategies of torture and surveillance, racialised warfare and eugenicist population management from its European rivals. Japan's defeat in World War II gave way to the Cold War, which witnessed the emergence of the United States as the world's postwar hegemon and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.² Today, the United States helms what Chalmers Johnson called an 'empire of bases' including over 850 overseas bases that stretch from Hawai'i, to Cuba, to the Philippines, to Korea to Okinawa, churning the global war machine.^{3,4}

Women and other marginalised communities under imperialism face multiple marginalisations—one, under imperialism, and two, under the patriarchy of the nation-state and of the home. Imperial governance has historically overridden Indigenous systems of self-governance in which people of diverse gender identities and sexualities hold significant roles in their communities and have political decision-making power, waging cultural erasure and coerced assimilation against Indigenous Peoples in the name of 'civilising the savage'. Imperialists have also routinely used sexual violence against women as a weapon of war, whether by formally implementing militarised systems of sexual slavery, as under Imperial Japan, or through methods of reproductive control and coercion.

Women navigating armed conflict do not only endure militarised violence, but also exercise agency by actively negotiating and working to transform their social, economic and political conditions. Women hold crucial roles in resistance movements and realise pathways for collective survival through a variety of tactics, from strategising and taking on various labors to earn income in circumstances of displacement and economic precarity, to forging grassroots healthcare and education systems with fellow community members to taking on central roles as de facto

² Japan and the United States had long been imperial partners as enshrined in the Taft-Katsura Agreement, wherein the United States recognised Japan's colonisation of Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of the US colonisation of the Philippines.

³ Vine, D. (2023, February 14). *The U.S. Has 750 Overseas Military Bases, and Continues to Build More to Encircle China* [Interview]. *Democracy Now!* https://www.democracynow.org/2023/2/14/david_vine_us_bases_china_philippines#:~:text=About-,The%20U.S.%20Has%20750%20Overseas%20Military%20Bases%2C%20and%20Continues,Build%20More%20to%20Encircle%20China

⁴ World BEYOND War. *Military Empires: A Visual Guide to Foreign Bases*. <https://worldbeyondwar.org/military-empires>



leaders in their communities—roles for which women remain underrecognised and overlooked at the international and national policymaking levels. Despite women's key part in addressing and mitigating the fallout of militarism, national and local governing bodies and global institutions with the political power and capital to architect international norms and policies for conflict and peacebuilding frequently underrepresent and exclude women and other marginalised people from their core memberships.

To rectify this gap, on Tuesday, 31 October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the first of several resolutions that have come to be collectively known as the 'WPS Agenda'. The WPS Agenda calls for widespread acknowledgment of the impacts of armed conflict on women and girls, as well as for the increased inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes. Though Resolution 1325 has been widely celebrated as a landmark resolution, intersectional feminists have questioned whether the terms of the WPS Agenda are adequate for building lasting peace in Asia and the Pacific, emphasising that true peace requires a structural approach to armed conflict. Rather than settling for an 'add and stir' approach to incorporating women into existing peacebuilding processes, feminist peace advocates have stressed the need to dismantle imperialism and colonialism, patriarchy, racism, fundamentalism and other forms of structural violence in order to prevent militarised Gender Based Violence (GBV) from occurring again.

Women and other marginalised groups under militarised occupation have always contested the conditions of their oppression, challenging colonial hierarchies, illuminating connections between patriarchy and militarised violence and forging new pathways for collective survival under duress. These genealogies of resistance coexist alongside the unresolved legacies and ongoing operations of imperialisms that continue to shape the regional political climate in Asia and the Pacific. This report examines militarism's impacts on grassroots women and other marginalised people's political rights by presenting and analysing the findings of a multi-country research study conducted between the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and APWLD's regional partners in Asia and the Pacific. By charting how women and other marginalised groups have navigated, survived and contested militarised violence, this report highlights efforts led by women and other marginalised groups to build shared tools and networks for resistance, care and healing in their communities. This report outlines the pillars of 'Feminist Peace and Justice,' key principles of feminist peace that have been derived from the everyday practices and political demands of multi-country research participants on the ground. Using the Pillars as lenses for assessing the WPS Agenda anchored by Resolution 1325, this report concludes by putting forth concrete demands of international peacebuilding institutions and organisations with the goal of realising true and lasting peace in the region.

II. Building a Framework for Feminist Peace & Justice

While it is undeniable that militarism adversely impacts women's political and democratic rights, the specific challenges that impacted communities face are informed by their historical, geographical, social and political context. In order to understand the gendered impacts of militarism on the ground, APWLD conceptualised a multi-country research study with four grassroots organisations spanning Central Asia, the Pacific, Southeast Asia and East Asia: Public Fund 'JIPAR' (Kyrgyzstan), ELSHAM Papua (West Papua), the Women's League of Burma/WLB (Burma/Myanmar) and PEACEMOMO (South Korea). Each organisation conducted semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) through a feminist lens with research participants from their contexts, documenting individual and collective experiences of how militarism affects people's everyday lives. Women constituted the majority of study participants, which in some cases also included men (ELSHAM Papua), as well as LGBTQIA+ people (PEACEMOMO, WLB). Participants included activists, community leaders, soldiers, ethnic minorities, political leaders and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were and remain impacted by militarised conflict.



This section begins by summarising, analysing and situating select findings from the multi-country research within the broader political and social history of Asia and the Pacific. In particular, this section highlights the entanglements of imperialism and colonialism with militarism. These manifest as armed resource, land and water seizure and as cultural and ideological phenomena that enable militarised GBV to occur. Drawing from the multi-country research, this section also charts the strategies of connection, survival and resistance that women and other marginalised research participants have created to cultivate safety and stability in their communities. Contrasting with securitised peace—a defensive vision of peace requiring the continuous buildup of military capacity in the region—the strategies that research participants use to navigate conflict in their communities pave the way for a different vision of peace that challenges the fundamental violence of imperialism, colonialism and capitalism. This section crystallises such practices as the ‘Pillars of Feminist Peace and Justice’: principles that can anchor efforts to realise true safety in Asia, the Pacific and beyond.

a. Militarism and Its Lived Realities: Findings from the Multi-Country Research



- ***Militarism: the nexus of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism***

It is necessary to first identify how participating organisations define militarism and its impact on marginalised people’s democratic rights. On its face, ‘militarism’ might be defined as the presence of armed conflict; yet the multi-country research illustrated how regional armed conflicts do not arise spontaneously, but can be traced back to longer histories of colonial and imperial conquest. In Kyrgyzstan’s case, periodic border clashes with Tajikistan over unresolved territory claims and natural resources have broken out since Central Asia’s independence following the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union. In Oceania, the Indonesian military continues to occupy West Papua—an occupation that implicates West Papua’s former coloniser beginning in 1898, the Netherlands; the United States, which pressured the Netherlands to transfer West Papua to the UN in 1962; and the UN, which turned over control of West Papua to Indonesia in 1963 following Indonesia’s illegal military occupation of West Papua, Operation Trikora. In Burma/Myanmar, militarised ethnonationalism has roots in British colonialism, as colonial authorities exploited existing ethnic divisions by governing Burma/Myanmar as two distinct entities, Burma proper (predominantly Bamar lowlands) and the Frontier areas (predominantly ethnic minority highlands like Karen, Kachin and Chin). 2025 also marks the 80th year of the division of Korea. The Korean War remains unended, conditioned by the unequal terms of the US-ROK (United States-Republic of Korea) relationship, exemplified by the 1953 Korean War Armistice signed not by South Korea but by the US-helmed UN Command, as well as the United States’ retention of wartime operational control over the South Korean military to this very day.



A structural analysis of militarism in Asia and the Pacific that takes the relationship between armed conflict and imperialism into account is crucial for understanding the role of the Global North in facilitating militarised conflict in the Global South. One arena where this imperialist relation shows up is the global arms industry. At a Regional Convening on Militarism, Peace and Women's Human Rights in the Asia and the Pacific, which took place in Thailand in February 2025, APWLD members discussed how the imperialist drive to obtain control over resources drives overseas military violence. **The United States is by far the biggest driver of arms spending globally, with the Pentagon's budget exceeding US\$886 billion.⁵ Total defence spending by G7 members⁶ also rose more than seven per cent in 2024 to US\$1.2 trillion—over 62 times what they collectively spent on humanitarian aid, which has conversely decreased over time.** For the Global North and major regional powers in Asia and the Pacific, war 'over there' presents economic opportunity 'at home' as many of the world's top 10 defence manufacturing corporations are located in the United States, with one in the United Kingdom and four located in China.⁷ While the United States maintains an indisputable global monopoly on war power, rising tensions between the United States and China illuminate their dual if uneven participation in growing the global arms industry. Other major regional powers are also complicit: **Russia and China are the top arms exporters to Burma/Myanmar, collectively exporting US\$673 million in military supplies to the Burma/Myanmar military.⁸ The Philippines and Indonesia are among the top importers of military equipment from South Korea, with war profiteering making up a growing share of South Korea's GDP.⁹**

- ***Militarism as a means for Indigenous dispossession***

It is not only the global arms industry that illuminates militarism's deep entanglement with capitalism. **Across the countries included in the multi-country research study, political regimes and profit-driven investors wield military violence to facilitate Indigenous dispossession and gain control over land and natural resources.** Located between China and India, Burma/Myanmar, which has drawn international attention for its gas and oil reserves, serves as a crucial corridor for

⁵ Wilkins, B. (2024, June 14). 'Scandalous': G7 Nations Spend 62 Times More on Military Than Humanitarian Aid. Common Dreams. <https://www.commondreams.org/news/global-military-spending-2023>

⁶ G7 member countries include the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, and Canada.

⁷ Defense News. (2025). Top 100 for 2025. <https://people.defensenews.com/top-100>

⁸ Human Rights Council, 53rd regular session, (2023, May 17) "The Billion Dollar Death Trade: the International Arms Networks that Enable Human Rights Violations in Myanmar - Conference room paper of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar." <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/myanmar/crp-sr-myanmar-2023-05-17.pdf>

⁹ War on West Papua. (n.d.). South Korea. WagePeace; War Resisters International; Make West Papua Safe. https://www.waronwestpapua.org/south_korea

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connecting Beijing to the Bay of Bengal. The military junta that rules Burma/Myanmar also weaponises force to exploit resources like jade, timber and natural gas, especially in ethnic minority homelands.¹⁰ In West Papua, the Indonesian military conducts security operations in areas targeted for 'significant investment potential', displacing Indigenous Peoples to facilitate illegal logging operations, coal mining and the expansion of palm oil and sugar plantations, among other expropriative practices. In Intan Jaya Regency, one of ELSHAM Papua's research sites and home to one of the country's largest gold reserves, Indonesian authorities have escalated unlawful killings, intimidation and arrests against Papuans in attempts to open the Wabu Block for gold mining.¹¹ Efforts stalled after facing widespread resistance from Papuans and the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB). Where occupation forces attempt to operate with impunity, Indigenous Peoples continue to struggle for sovereignty and self-determination in their homelands.

Resource-driven conflicts are salient in borderlands, where disputes over territory and national identity directly play out in borderland residents' lives. Conducting research with women in Kyrgyzstan Republic from the Batken region, located near the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border, and in the Chui region, to which many from Batken have evacuated following armed border clashes, JIPAR's report demonstrates how ethno-territorial conflicts have escalated since the 1991 independence of the Central Asian republics from the former USSR. In Kyrgyzstan, these disputes largely concern the issue of where the border should be drawn with Tajikistan, as well as the usage of shared water resources flowing from the Isfar River.¹² In Burma/Myanmar, the military junta maintains control over the borderlands of Indigenous ethnic minorities like the Shan, Mon, Kachin, Karen and Chin—colonial names, adopted by the Burmese regime, that obscure ethnic diversity within states—launching military attacks and creating mass displacement. At the same time, Burma/Myanmar, China and Thailand have proposed hydropower development and megadam projects along the Salween River, Asia's longest free-flowing river, threatening Indigenous lifeways in Burma/Myanmar's borderlands.¹³ Many modern borders have roots in imperial

¹⁰ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma* (pp.10-16) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

¹¹ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua* (p.19). [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

¹² Dunganaeva A., Beshkempirova, G. (2025). *Research on Women's Rights to Peace and Security* (p.9) [Unpublished]. Public Foundation 'JIPAR' in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

¹³ Sabillo. K. (2025, August 6). *Asia's longest free-flowing river faces threats of dams and diversions*. Mongabay. <https://news.mongabay.com/short-article/2025/08/asias-longest-free-flowing-river-faces-threats-of-dams-and-diversions>

governance, with Britain and France having drawn close to 40 per cent of the length of all of the world's international boundaries.¹⁴ Imperial interventionism has also shaped the division of the Korean peninsula: the Demilitarised Zone's name obscures its reality as a war zone where the contradictions of a 'peace' that is dependent on permanent ceasefire becomes ever-more apparent. Efforts to mitigate present-day borderland contestations must actively reckon with borders as products of imperial conquest.

- ***Militarism's cultural and ideological dimensions***

The buildup and use of military force is one dimension of militarism, but feminist critics have pointed out that militarism is also a cultural phenomenon that requires normalisation to legitimate itself. Participants in PEACEMOMO's study cited military parades and programmes targeting school-age children in South Korea as examples of militarism's social entrenchment that render 'power, dominance, control and hierarchy' into core qualities of masculinity in South Korea.¹⁵ Due to the system of military conscription, which is presented as a civic duty for Korean men, militarism is inextricable from patriotism and broader notions of Korean citizenship. For example, one transgender PEACEMOMO research study participant recalled how authorities asked for a record of military service completion in order to process her request to have her gender corrected on legal documents—an anecdote that illustrates how 'military service functions as a measure of social recognition' that devalues women and disabled people as second-class citizens.¹⁶

Across the multi-country research sites, the military emerged as a key institution in upholding and bolstering patriarchal, racialised and fundamentalist nationalisms.

Preceded by the 1947 Panglong Agreement that promised autonomy to certain ethnic minorities in Burma/Myanmar, the Burmese government, independent from British rule as of 1948, designated Burmese as the official state language and, later, Buddhism as the state's official religion. Within months of independence, Muslim Arakanese, Karen and Kachin separatist movements erupted throughout the country—tensions that Burmese Army General Ne Win appropriated to justify staging a military coup in 1962. The coup marked the Burmese military's transformation into the overseer of 'territorial unity' and the 'moral and cultural custodian' of Burmese

¹⁴ Sofuoglu, M. (2025, July 31). *Why borders drawn by colonial powers remain flashpoints across the world*. TRT World. <https://trt.global/world/article/95e68178bed9>

¹⁵ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.39) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

¹⁶ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.39) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

Buddhism.¹⁷ Today, proposed bans on interfaith marriage in Burma/Myanmar target women who already face pressure from religious authorities and relatives to preserve racial purity in their families. JIPAR's report lists religious fundamentalism as a central reason for women's exclusion from politics in Kyrgyzstan, with women often requiring permission from male family members or their mothers-in-law to leave the home to participate in community meetings.¹⁸ Under militarised ethnonationalism, women's social and political inclusion is conditional on the deprivation of their rights to their sexuality, mobility and their bodies.

Patriarchal fundamentalisms are neither unique nor inherent to non-Western countries—consider the full-fledged movement for Christian nationalism and white supremacy surging through the United States in 2025, which has roots in the founding racism of settler colonialism and slavery in the Americas. Peacekeeping bodies helmed by the West have explicitly and implicitly cited 'culture,' 'ethnicity' and 'religion' as justifications for interventionism, reproducing colonial notions of the Global South and non-Western countries as 'backwards' and as especially oppressive in the process. Such colonial attitudes not only obscure the persistence of patriarchal and racialised oppression in the Global North, but also fail to recognise how Indigenous Peoples, racialised ethnic minorities, women and LGBTQIA+ people have long been advocates and leaders in their communities for Feminist Peace and Justice and collective liberation. The following section highlights efforts in the multi-country research study aimed at realising peace in Asia and the Pacific. Led by research participants who are community leaders, activists and political representatives, these efforts demonstrate how women and other marginalised people forge institutional networks, build necessary infrastructure and cultivate relationships toward realising true safety and security in their contexts.

¹⁷ Aung, T.S. (2024, September 16). *Saffron Washing: The Myanmar Military's Exploitation of Buddhism*. The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2024/09/saffron-washing-the-myanmar-militarys-exploitation-of-buddhism/>; Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma* (p.10-12) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

¹⁸ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma* (p.12) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.



b. Pillars and Practices of Feminist Peace & Justice

Advocates of securitised peace have long argued that militarism is necessary for conflict prevention. They cite the so-called liberal democracies of the Global North as examples to legitimate interventionist war as means for 'democratising' other countries; argue that nuclear stockpiling will lead to deterrence; and lobby for investments in the arms industry to secure and advance the status quo. On the other hand, advocates for feminist peace have long pointed out that the status quo itself is a violent one that begets further violence. If militarism is not simply the presence of armed conflict, peace cannot be defined simply by the absence of armed conflict between nations or individual parties. **Rather, by connecting militarism and the structural violence that marginalised groups—women, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities and borderland residents—face in their respective contexts, research participants illustrate how true peace requires structural solutions.** The following Pillars and Practices of Feminist Peace and Justice draw from the survival and care practices of marginalised communities under militarism. These Pillars are meant as prompts for future conversations and collaborations to realise long-term peace in Asia and the Pacific, rather than constraints for what Feminist Peace and Justice should entail. They include:

- **Addressing imperialism as a root cause of militarised conflict**

The structural roots of armed conflict include Indigenous dispossession, racial discrimination, patriarchy and resource scarcity, which themselves have roots in imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism also wields the threat of military violence to transform occupied territories into collaborating allies. For example, one participant in PEACEMOMO's study cited the widespread social acceptance in South Korea of the deployment of Korean soldiers to the US war in Iraq as an example of how normalised militarism is in South Korea.¹⁹ Despite its history as a Japanese postcolony that immediately became an occupied territory of the United States, South Korea's support for US military interventionism, including sending Korean troops to the US War in Vietnam in exchange for US postwar aid, has led scholars like Jin-Kyung Lee to argue that South Korea has become a multiethnic 'subempire,' a term Lee offers to name how South Korea has come to perform different "surrogate labors" for the global imperial core, from offshoring and disciplining labor in other postcolonial nations like Vietnam for core economies, to absorbing formerly colonised populations as marriage migrants or industrial migrant workers.²⁰ Such contradictions highlight the need to develop

¹⁹ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.33) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

²⁰ Lee, J.K. (2010) *Service Economies: Militarism, Sex Work, and Migrant Labor in South Korea*. University of Minnesota Press.

nanced frameworks for identifying and analysing the role of regional actors that do not neatly fit into the 'Global North'/'South' dichotomy in fueling militarised interventionism, as well as the importance of establishing mechanisms for decolonisation. Formal and informal means for transitional justice in postcolonial contexts can provide support for collective reckoning with how imperialism shapes the conditions for imagining what security, recovery and survival can and should look like.

- ***Emphasising collective safety over securitised peace***

Frameworks of securitised peace do not adequately account for the structural violence of imperialism, which informs the meanings of race, gender, class and other social categories that render individuals and groups vulnerable to interventionist and state violence.²¹ Imperialism also wages violence by facilitating resource flow from the Global South to the Global North, which has cut down on humanitarian aid and failed to address the role of colonial intervention in producing regional instability and waging war not only on the battlefield, but also on economic and social reproductive spheres. Participants in the multi-country research study emphasised the destruction and havoc that armed conflict wreaked on social services like reproductive healthcare to education access to childrearing support, the brunt of which fell to women to bear. Addressing the root causes of armed conflict in Asia and the Pacific also requires a shift in the scale at which one analyses militarism, from that of diplomatic backrooms and the battlefield to that of the home, the school and the clinic—the spaces of day-to-day life. In PEACEMOMO's study, participants differentiated between 'security', 'understood as a national issue, often linked to military aspects', and 'safety', which is 'more closely related to, though not limited to, individuals' everyday lives'.²² **Feminist approaches to peace aim to cultivate long-term safety, rather than strengthen national security and must be centrally acknowledged and supported within peacebuilding processes.**

- ***Centering affected marginalised people in political decision-making and peacebuilding processes***

Men overwhelmingly make up the membership of political decision-making bodies in the security space, even though women and other marginalised groups are among the most affected by armed conflict. The WLB's study highlighted regional women's organisations' longstanding but unrealised demand for a 30 per cent

²¹ Wilson Gilmore, R. (2007). *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (p.28). University of California Press.

²² Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.35) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

quota system for women's representation in government, as a quarter of Burma's parliamentary seats are already reserved for military personnel—over 99 per cent of whom are men.²³ Despite the country's procedural democracy, in South Korea, women's political participation has remained highly limited in the security sector, with one out of 17 members of the National Defence Committee, one out of 21 members of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee and zero members of the Intelligence Committee being women at the time of PEACEMOMO's study.²⁴ Women make up only 6 per cent of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Defence and 7.6 per cent of all national security agencies.²⁵ In West Papua, though Law No.7 of 2017 concerning General Elections mandates a 30 per cent quota for women's representation in political parties in order for parties to be eligible for election, parties often go on to abandon women candidates during election periods.²⁶ Research participants pointed out that an increase in the number of women in positions of power does not necessarily lead to more just outcomes. WLB study participants for instance cited the example of Burma's National League for Democracy, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, failing to accept the demand for a quota system. Nevertheless, increasing marginalised people's participation in formal political decision-making processes remains an important step to diversifying the viewpoints that are reflected in legislative and state-sanctioned peacebuilding processes.

- **Supporting grounded forms of political participation and conflict resolution**

Participants highlighted the efficacy of grassroots women-led initiatives to encourage the direct participation of marginalised people to participate in political decision-making toward building peace in their contexts. While some of these initiatives are aimed at increasing women's entry into national electoral bodies and diplomatic processes, participants also highlighted grassroots efforts to strengthen women's political participation in their own communities. For example, JIPAR's study highlighted the importance of local Women's Councils in

²³ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma*. (p.17) [Unpublished]. *Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development*.; Byrd, M. W. (2019). *Integration of Women and Gender Perspective into the Myanmar Armed Forces to Improve Civil-Military Relations in Myanmar*. Military Review (pp. 35-39). Army University Press, US Government. <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/November-December-2019/Byrd-Myanmar-Gender-Armed-Forces>

²⁴ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.14) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

²⁵ Dunganaeva A., Beshkempirova, G. (2025). *Research on Women's Rights to Peace and Security* (p.9) [Unpublished]. Public Foundation 'JIPAR' in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

²⁶ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.38) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

the Chui and Batken regions of Kyrgyzstan for bringing together women activists. Operating through informal structures, Women's Councils allowed participants to strengthen relationships with one another by engaging in information-sharing. ELSHAM Papua's study highlighted the role of women IDPs in enacting community support networks in West Papua by conducting informal group discussions, holding prayer meetings forged through church networks and staging protests against police and military brutality. Women undertook these efforts despite the fact that engaging in advocacy and resistance place women at "significant security risk."²⁷ For example, in April 2024, Migani women members of a women's group called Perkumpulan Perempuan Moni-Migani organised a protest at the Intan Jaya Police Office to demand that the military refrain from capturing homes and residential neighborhoods as military posts.²⁸ When faced with disenfranchisement, research participants have taken creative routes toward ensuring that their demands are heard by political decision-makers.

- **Respecting and upholding peoples' sovereignty and the right to self-determination**

Militarised occupation and rule by military force infringe upon the rights of peoples to their homelands. Respecting sovereignty and the right to self-determination entails: affirming the legitimacy of people's struggles for independence from occupation, for territorial integrity and for liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means. Highlighting the failure of Special Autonomy to affirm the right to self-determination of Papuan people as Indonesia continues to deploy troops to West Papua, ELSHAM Papua's study emphasised that Indonesia must withdraw non-organic military troops and engage in constructive dialogue with the TPNPB (Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Papua Barat or West Papua National Liberation Army) toward coming to an agreement to end armed conflict in the region.²⁹ Reflecting on the Burmese military junta's self-appointment as the guardian of Burma/Myanmar's national integrity, WLB study participants expressed hopefulness that younger generations might carry forward the charge to democratise political participation toward dismantling the incorporation of Indigenous Peoples through marginalisation—that is, as ethnic minorities—within Burmanised Buddhist nationalism. Research participants also cited examples of political decision-making bodies in which women comprise nearly half the

²⁷ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.8) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

²⁸ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.41) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

²⁹ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.53) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

membership like the Interim Executive Council (IEC) of Karenni state, established in June 2023 as the provisional government of the state, and the Ta'ang Political Consultative Council (TPCC), established in 2021 with the goal of challenging tyranny, establishing self-determination and creating a federal democratic union.³⁰ Recognising Indigenous autonomy over land and resources is fundamental in challenging the violence of colonial militarism, patriarchal ethnonationalisms and fundamentalisms.

- ***Investing in community-led social infrastructure, welfare programmes and public resourcing***

Across the multi-country research sites, participants consistently understood the outbreak of armed conflict as both a cause of and response to lack of access to resources such as land, shelter, food, education and medical services. **Colonial entities and their corporate descendants seize resources in order to accumulate them, producing resource scarcity and leaving community members to forge their own pathways to survival.** An interviewee in JIPAR's study recalled returning home after having fled during violent clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Speaking of how she and other women who returned home worked to rebuild day cares, fitness clubs and medical support facilities—all in the midst of the concurrent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic—she said, 'these women are true patriots, they work without a salary...and there are many elderly women among them, because young women are busy with housework all day'.³¹ She recalled how women sewed masks for residents, prepared food for the elderly and trained as psychologists to hold counseling meetings with war-affected women and children. In West Papua, women IDPs from Maybrat Regency established community gardens after losing economic opportunities due to displacement, growing produce to feed their families and to sell for income.³² The multi-country research consistently articulated the need for international peacebuilding institutions to support women and marginalised people's grassroots efforts to ensure access to food, healthcare, education and healing in their communities.

- ***Recognising and redressing harms of colonial and militarised GBV***

Research participants stressed the need for mechanisms to remember, recognise and redress militarised violence. The WLB report pointed out that the 2008

³⁰ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma* (pp.46-47) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

³¹ Dunganaeva A., Beshkempirova, G. (2025). *Research on Women's Rights to Peace and Security*. (pp.23-24) [Unpublished]. Public Foundation 'JIPAR' in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

³² Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua* (p.8) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

Constitution that accorded Burma's military a quarter of parliamentary seats does not have provisions to redress state-sponsored crimes committed under previous military regimes. This is an absence that has the 'most devastating impact on women as it allowed ongoing impunity for sexual violence and GBV committed by military personnel'.³³ ELSHAM Papua's study underscored how women IDPs who had suffered sexual violence at the hands of the Indonesian military faced the double violence of stigmatisation as victims of rape, 'particularly from their families and husbands'.³⁴ From West Papua to South Korea, misogyny emerged in the multi-country research as an active obstacle to redressing the legacies of colonial violence. In PEACEMOMO's study, a participant organising with the global movement for victims of Japanese imperial sexual slavery highlighted how male perpetrators have repeatedly vandalised the memorial for comfort women, a memorial statue located in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. The participant pointed out how such vandalism is only made possible by the persistence of a broader culture of patriarchy that '[allows] women to be consumed as commodities'.³⁵ Furthermore, the participant connected the GBV of the comfort women system to other forms of gendered sexual exploitation such as sex trafficking and the camptown sex industry, in which women provide sexual services catering to US military personnel under conditions of duress. Redressive mechanisms are crucial for not only acknowledging the consequences of militarised GBV but also for preventing its recurrence. Such mechanisms might include, but are not limited to, monetary reparations, legal recognition, consequences for perpetrators, memorials and justice-oriented education on imperial and state-sponsored violence.

³³ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma*. (p.17) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

³⁴ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.35) [Unpublished]. ELSHAM Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

³⁵ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.45) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.



III. Is WPS an Emancipatory Approach for Achieving Feminist Peace & Justice?

On October 31, 2000, the UNSC announced its unanimous adoption of UNSCR 1325 on WPS. Proponents hailed Resolution 1325 as a landmark for gender equality, as it was the first time that the UNSC formally recognised the unique and disproportionate harms that women and children experience in armed conflict. The resolution, along with several thematic WPS resolutions that the UNSC has adopted since, stresses the important role that women play in preventing and resolving conflict, calling on parties to conflict to take active measures to ensure the systematic participation of women in peacebuilding efforts. The WPS Agenda has four pillars: (1) **prevention**, defined as '[p]revention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations'; (2) **participation**, defined as '[w]omen's equal participation and gender equality in peace and security decision-making processes at all levels'; (3) **protection**, defined as '[w]omen and girls are protected from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence and their rights are protected and promoted in conflict situations'; and (4) **relief & recovery**, defined as '[s]pecific relief needs of women are met and their capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are strengthened in conflict and post-conflict situations'.³⁶



³⁶ United Nations Development Programme. (2019). *Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. A Global Handbook*. United Nations. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/Parliament_as_partners_supporting_the_Women_Peace_and_Security_Agenda_-_A_Global_Handbook.pdf

While the WPS Agenda contains provisions for amplifying the roles of women in conflict navigation and peacebuilding processes, the agenda has also received substantive critique from advocates for feminist peace, especially from a postcolonial vantage point. Critics have underscored the liberal piecemeal—as opposed to structural—approach to peacebuilding embedded in the agenda and questioned its capacity to realise lasting peace in Asia and the Pacific. The following section outlines a number of these critiques, beginning with the agenda's conflation of 'security' and 'peace'. Other critiques include the agenda's general silence on disarmament and on imperialism, which conditions not only militarised violence but also the international peacebuilding sphere itself. Critics have also problematised the agenda's failure to deconstruct the notion of gender—an oversight that risks reproducing simplistic notions of men as perpetrators and women as victims of militarised violence that may hinder the agenda's capacity to realise sustainable peace through structural solutions.

a. Failure to challenge securitised peace frameworks



Critics have widely agreed that the WPS Agenda does not adequately challenge securitised notions of peace that are endemic to the liberal space of international security and peacekeeping. Proponents of Feminist Peace and Justice have challenged the conflation of peace with international and national security, emphasising how such conflation risks exacerbating regional insecurity by encouraging further investments in military capacity. Despite the agenda's emphasis on the inclusion of women into peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes, in 2013, the UN Global Study on Women, Peace and Security, commissioned by the UN Secretary General to assess the WPS Agenda's efficacy, pushed the agenda to shift its focus to the first of its pillars: the prevention of war. **'The women, peace and security agenda is about ending conflict, not about making conflict safer for women.'**³⁷ **Rather than the 'add women and stir' approach of the agenda, the study emphasised the need for a structural analysis of armed conflict in order to build a longer-term vision for safety that draws from the women's peace movement, which has long demanded disarmament, nonviolent conflict resolution and building toward a culture of peace.** The study incorporated feedback on the agenda from UN Member States, regional organisations, civil society groups and academics.

Though the aforementioned study underscored inequality, climate change and natural resources as root causes of conflict, 'inequality' does not adequately capture how imperialism and colonialism have historically conditioned ongoing racialised, gendered,

³⁷ UN Women. (2015). *Chapter 8: Preventing Conflict: The Origins of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*. A Global Study on the Implementation of United States Security Council Resolution 1325. <https://wps.unwomen.org/preventing>

nationalist and fundamentalist violence in Asia and the Pacific. The intensification of the climate crisis and struggles over natural resources cannot be disentangled from imperial war and occupation. From 1750 to 2020, the United States and the European Union combined produced over 53 per cent of the world's carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel combustion.³⁸ As documented in Section II of this report, cases of militarised natural resource seizure have roots in the colonial dispossession of Indigenous Peoples of their homelands; funneling of capital from the Global South to the Global North; and creation of territorial borders and social categories that sow greater regional instability. Regional peace can only last if it is just, requiring an explicit reckoning with imperialism as a driver of armed conflict.

b. Silence on disarmament and halting the global arms race



One of the anchoring demands of feminist peace advocacy is the stoppage of the global arms race. Today, the international arms industry, driven by weapons companies that benefit from the surveillance, incarceration, torture and killing of women and other marginalised community members across the world, is more profitable than ever: **In 2024, global military expenditure hit US\$2,718 billion, an increase of over nine per cent from 2023 alone.³⁹ Yet Resolution 1325 and the WPS Agenda are resoundingly silent on feminist demands for demilitarisation and disarmament. The issue of disarmament only appears in the WPS resolutions in relation to the disarmament of former combatants—a post-conflict, rather than a preventative, measure capable of dismantling the arms industry itself.⁴⁰ The agenda's lack of reckoning with war's profitability—that war is a global business model—is a significant weakness in the agenda's capacity to prevent armed conflict.**

Realising disarmament requires more than just demanding a halt to the global arms industry; it also requires engaging in a critique of global capitalism. As Carol Cohn and Claire Duncanson put it in a 2020 article on the WPS Agenda, '[C]rucially, the enjoyment of rights requires more than just a belief in those rights; it requires a set of *material conditions*'.⁴¹ The authors highlight the generalised silence of international agreements on armed conflict resolution. They also pointed out how political economic factors can operate as obstacles to realising demands for peace and security contained

³⁸ Das, D., Ghosh, J., & Chakraborty, S. (2022, July 1). *Climate Imperialism in the Twenty-First Century*. Monthly Review. <https://monthlyreview.org/2022/07/01/climate-imperialism-in-the-twenty-first-century>

³⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2025, April 28). *Unprecedented rise in global military expenditure as European and Middle East spending surges*. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2025/unprecedented-rise-global-military-expenditure-european-and-middle-east-spending-surges>

⁴⁰ Otto, D. (2018). *Women, Peace and Security. A Critical Analysis of the Security Council's Vision*. In F. Ni Aoláin, N. Cahn, D. F. Haynes, N. Valji (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict* (pp.105-118). Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ Cohn, C., Duncanson, C. (2020). *Women, Peace and Security in a changing climate* (p.9). International Feminist Journal of Politics, 22(5), 742-762 doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2020.1843364.

within such agreements, citing examples of post-conflict peace negotiations that stressed women's rights to inherit and own land, or Indigenous Peoples' right to their ancestral homelands—demands that hit a wall when met with the rampant extractivism of transnational agricultural corporations that are permitted to operate with few, if any, legal restrictions. As the global climate crisis continues to escalate, with its immediate consequences accruing to the Global South, the movement for Feminist Peace and Justice must target corporations attempting to turn Indigenous lands and waters into profitable resources. As corporate greed and resource grabbing create and aggravate militarised conflict, true peace necessitates disarmament that is also grounded in a critique of capitalism.

c. Upholding of the international policymaking sphere's colonial hierarchy



The WPS Agenda's silence on the colonial roots of many of the militarised struggles that fall under the UN's definition of 'armed conflict' is a symptom of a broader, structural reticence: the silence of international peacebuilding bodies on questions of imperialism and colonialism. In 2018, Oxford University Press published *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, an anthology that reflects on the WPS Agenda's significance since the adoption of Resolution 1325. Swati Parashar's contribution critiques the 'Western centric nature of WPS', arguing that the agenda implicitly positions the Global North and its peacekeeping institutions as purveyors of democracy, conflict resolution and peace. By contrast, the agenda represents the Global South as a series of 'case studies' where people and societies are framed in a perpetual state of conflict and violence' that can only be resolved through external intervention.⁴² Some successful grassroots efforts in the multi-country research have received support from organisations like UN Women or Doctors Without Borders (MSF), such as Ayaldar Tynchtyk Tiregi cited in JIPAR's study, a project that aims to build institutional capacity for addressing challenges like the climate crisis and for strengthening women's political participation. At the same time, other participants expressed that the international community can be meaningfully and materially supportive of community-led efforts, but must understand that it cannot on its own fundamentally shift the institutional structure of the contexts in which grassroots organisers work. Ultimately, the international peacebuilding sphere must be accountable to those directly affected on the ground who are working to enact lasting peace in their communities.⁴³

⁴² Parashar, S. (2018). *The WPS Agenda: A Postcolonial Critique*. In S. E. Davies, J. True (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security* (pp.829-839). Oxford University Press.

⁴³ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma*. (p.47) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

The coloniality of international peacekeeping manifests in the largely external orientation of the WPS National Action Plans (NAPs), which are 'practical documents that detail the actions a government is taking to meet its obligations under the ten UN Security Council Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) resolutions and other internationally agreed-upon resolutions'.⁴⁴ The 1325 NAPs of many liberal-democratic countries in the Global North and Asia are outward-looking, promoting the role of said countries in supporting the rights of women and girls in conflict contexts 'over there' in lieu of looking inward to their own histories of militarised violence. In 2022, after adopting its Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS, ASEAN drew critiques from women in Burma/Myanmar for overlooking the military junta's systemic sexual violence in the RPA, as well as for continually legitimising the military government by offering its representatives a seat in ASEAN human rights bodies.⁴⁵ In the case of Japan, APWLD Women in Power Programme Organising Committee Member Hisako Motoyama has pointed out in an article that Japan's first 1325 NAP, adopted under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2015, conveniently absented not only the remilitarisation path Japan pursued concurrent to the adoption, but also the Abe administration's active obstruction of justice for former comfort women victimised by Imperial Japan's militarised sexual slavery system.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ UN Women Asia and the Pacific. (n.d.). *National Action Plans: Women, Peace and Security*. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/national-action-plans>

⁴⁵ Ohmar, K. (2025, June 3). *ASEAN's Women, Peace and Security Agenda: A moral and political failure for Myanmar women*. Democratic Voice of Burma. <https://english.dvb.no/aseans-women-peace-and-security-agenda-a-moral-and-political-failure-for-myanmar-women/#:~:text=But%20for%20the%20women%20of,of%20war%20with%20horrific%20regularity>.

⁴⁶ Motoyama, H. (2018, January 8). *Formulating Japan's UNSCR 1325 national action plan and forgetting the "comfort women"*. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 20(1), 39-53. Taylor and Francis. doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2017.1413582.





d. Reduction of women to victims or peacemakers without deconstructing gender

Women's civil society organisations have long called for the meaningful inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes, and it is largely due to their demands that the provisions of Resolution 1325 have become an internationally recognised benchmark to account for how gender shapes armed conflict. Yet the agenda's model of incorporation risks essentialising women in ways that render those categorised as women vulnerable to militarised violence. Women play two main roles in the agenda, emerging on the one hand as victims of conflict—which obscures women's inherent agency and ability to protect themselves and one another from militarised GBV—and as peacemakers on the other, whose inclusion in peacebuilding processes will naturally translate to the prevention of armed conflict—a view that obscures how women can also be perpetrators of violence. The agenda's focus on women also precludes its reckoning with the role of masculinity in fostering militarism, and how it is patriarchy that renders women, children and other marginalised people vulnerable to militarised violence.

In falling short of deconstructing gender itself, the WPS Agenda also misses an opportunity to reckon with how gender intersects with other social categories, like race, and to address how militarised violence harms LGBTQIA+ individuals. ELSHAM Papua's research participants emphasised, for example, that Indonesian military, police and administrators in Intan Jaya profile Papuans who are dark-skinned and/or have dreadlocks, typologising them as 'criminals' or as associates of the TPNPB. This process of racialisation renders Papuans more vulnerable to 'acts of violence, assault and discrimination, particularly against women'.⁴⁷ The study also explained how Indonesian authorities have subjected women in Intan Jaya who have dreadlocks to harassment and intimidation, presuming such women to be wives of resistance fighters. In South Korea, the military entrenches binary gender norms that increase the susceptibility of people of all gender identities, especially LGBTQIA+ people, to GBV: For example, Criminal Act 92-6 criminalises sexual intimacy between same-sex soldiers, while nationwide conversations about the military's discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals prompted by the 2021 suicide of Byun Hee-soo, a trans soldier, have yet to be resolved. In the WLB's study, two participants of 'gender-diverse backgrounds' named how they face compounded discrimination within resistance movements—a reality that illustrates the need for international and regional peacebuilding institutions to reckon with how gender interacts with race and other social categories.

⁴⁷ Sorabut, A. M., Sipa, A. (2025). *Women and Their Rights in the Midst of Armed Conflict: Intan Jaya and Maybrat Cases in West Papua*. (p.29) [Unpublished]. Elsham Papua in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

e. Implementing the WPS Agenda compounds its limitations

Resolution 1325 and the WPS Agenda together mark an important turning point for the recognition of gender in armed conflict and the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Currently 107 countries and territories worldwide have adopted NAPs, with 13 countries that UN Women includes in its definition of Asia and the Pacific: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.⁴⁸ ASEAN also has a Regional Plan of Action (RPA) on WPS. Yet women from different contexts in the multi-country research expressed feeling distance from the WPS Agenda. For example, in JIPAR's report, participants reported that they had not known about Resolution 1325 or how the resolution could help them, demonstrating 'the need for a realistic and accessible understanding of the "Women's Rights to Peace and Security" agenda.'⁴⁹ At the same time, the WPS Agenda's limitations cannot be resolved simply by creating more opportunities for educating 'local' women and organisers about the Agenda, the regional adoption of which requires further scrutiny.⁵⁰

It is necessary to attend to how the various junctures of the Agenda's implementation have become opportunities for national governments and institutions to pursue their own interests overreckoning with the structural causes of militarised GBV. Governments often cherry-pick provisions of the WPS Agenda to include in NAPs and limit meaningful consultation with grassroots women's organisations in the process. **Regional and NAPs often reflect national political interests rather than deeper commitments to preventing GBV, reproducing the agenda's securitised approach to peacebuilding.** For example, an assessment that ASEAN published in 2022 of its RPA cited the increased participation of female soldiers, police officers and other agents of law enforcement among member states as examples of progress on women's political participation.⁵¹ Indonesia's NAP (2020-2025) makes no mention of Indonesian occupation of West Papua.⁵² Regional bodies and national governments also circumvent structural causes of militarised GBV in their NAPs.

⁴⁸ UN Women. (n.d.) *National Action Plans: Women, Peace and Security*. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/focus-areas/peace-and-security/national-action-plans>; APWLD does not include Afghanistan in its categorisation of 'Asia and the Pacific'.

⁴⁹ Dunganaeva, A., Beshkempirova, G. (2025). *Research on Women's Rights to Peace and Security*. (p.33) [Unpublished]. Public Foundation "JIPAR" in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

⁵⁰ Cohn, C., Duncanson, C. (2020). *Women, Peace, and Security in a changing climate*. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 22(5), 742-762. Taylor and Francis. doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2020.1843364.

⁵¹ ASEAN Secretariat. (2022). *ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security*. (p.16). https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/FINAL_ASEAN%20Regional%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Women%2C%20Peace%20and%20Security.pdf.

⁵² The Republic of Indonesia Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultures. (2023, August 8). *National Action Plan for Protection and Empowerment of Women and Children in Social Conflicts for 2020-2025*. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/permenko-pmk5-tahun-2021-ttg-ran-p3aks_english-version.pdf.

IV. Grassroots Women's Political Demands to Bring About Feminist Peace and Justice



In order to realise the Pillars of Feminist Peace and Justice outlined in Section II of this report, international and regional peacebuilding bodies must adopt an intersectional feminist lens when approaching armed conflict. For UN bodies and international NGOs in the international peacebuilding sphere, this means beginning with deconstructing their own positioning within or adjacency to the Global North, where peacebuilding efforts have often focused on resolving wars or armed conflict 'over there' rather than examining their own complicity in upholding imperial and colonial violence. This is not to say that organisations should ignore wars and conflicts that transpire 'over there', but rather to point out that the Global North and Global South are interconnected through shared histories of imperialism and conquest, as are their possibilities for future survival. International institutions and organisations must respect and be accountable to regional grassroots demands that are necessary for realising the mutual safety of marginalised groups 'over there' and in the imperial core. As feminist movements from the Global South have emphasised, meaningful and lasting solidarity emerges not from appeals to universality, which risks papering over the varied and specific challenges that marginalised groups face based on positionality and context, but by recognising and working alongside difference.⁵³

The following section presents several political demands that expand the provisions of the WPS Agenda. These demands are intended to foster discussion about international peacebuilding norms. They highlight accountability within the international peacebuilding sphere to women and other marginalised people directly affected by militarised violence. The demands are deliberately broad in scope and address themselves to a range of actors from national and local governments that must be accountable to the people they serve, corporations involved in the business of war, international and regional peacebuilding institutions and international NGOs and regional organisations with commitments to peace and women's human rights. Demands include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Dismantling of the Military-Industrial Complex (MIC)



The MIC poses an existential threat to peoples everywhere and to the planet. Since World War II, the MIC has only become further entrenched within regional politics as military, defence corporations and their lobbyists wage outsized influence over legislative policy, resource harvesting and peoples' right to determine their futures. Big Tech's entry into the war industry only highlights the MIC as an existential threat. In addition to the US military's bald-faced appointment of Meta, Palantir and OpenAI executives as lieutenant colonels to the US Army Reserves this past July,

⁵³ Liu, R., & Shange, S. (2018). *Toward Thick Solidarity: Theorizing Empathy in Social Justice Movements*. *Radical History Review*, (131), (pp. 189-198). <https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-4355341>

the rise of digital surveillance practices like algorithmic policing and facial recognition technologies has witnessed companies make claims that such technologies possess greater accuracy and 'objectivity' when, in reality, such technologies further encode oppression along the lines of race, class, caste, gender, disability and religion.⁵⁴ With the simultaneous proliferation of securitising initiatives in Asia and the Pacific that are actively exacerbating geopolitical tensions between the US and China, such as AUKUS—a trilateral security pact formed in 2021 between Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom towards building up military weaponry and naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific—peacebuilding efforts must push back against military encroachment and the global arms industry as a key obstacle to realising lasting peace in the region.⁵⁵ Dismantling the MIC entails:

- **Removing all foreign military bases from Asia and the Pacific:** Today, at least 19 countries operate foreign military bases, with the United States having far more than any other nation. Of these, at least five countries operate bases in 10 or more nations: the United States, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, Russia and India. **The United States has the most, with over 740 bases worldwide, followed by Türkiye, with 133 overseas military bases, and the United Kingdom with 117.**⁵⁶ **The adverse impact of foreign military bases on the well-being of Indigenous communities, the local economy and the environment is undeniable. Foreign bases serve as the infrastructure for military occupation, allowing for the stationing of troops and equipment overseas.** Foreign military installations also displace communities for facility construction and base expansion; create noise pollution; and contaminate vital land and waterways from Red Hill in Honolulu, to Subic Bay in the Philippines, to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, to Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, to Camp Humphreys—the largest single

⁵⁴ U.S. Army Public Affairs. (2025, June 13). *Army Launches Detachment 201: Executive Innovation Corps to Drive Tech Transformation*. U.S. Army. https://www.army.mil/article/286317/army_launches_detachment_201_executive_innovation_corps_to_drive_tech_transformation; for more on the relationship and overlaps between race and technology, see Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race After Technology*. Polity Books.

⁵⁵ 'Indo-Pacific' is a strategic concept and term used to describe the region that spans the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Circulated as an alternative to the 'Asia-Pacific', the United States and US allies like Australia, Japan and India have increasingly used the term to characterise their policies and interests in the region. For more, see Clark, B. and Foster, J.B. (2024). *Imperialism in the Indo-Pacific: An Introduction*. *Monthly Review*, 76(3). <https://monthlyreview.org/articles/imperialism-in-the-indo-pacific-an-introduction/>

⁵⁶ World BEYOND War. (n.d.). *Military Bases: A Visual Guide to Foreign Bases*. <https://worldbeyondwar.org/military-empires>



overseas US military base—in Pyeongtaek.⁵⁷ The legacies of militarised GBV in camptowns that form around overseas bases, hosting robust prostitution industries staffed by local women that cater to the stationed military clientele, are also well-documented. Earlier this year in South Korea, after a 2022 landmark victory in the South Korean Supreme Court that acknowledged that the government knew about and encouraged camptown prostitution, 117 South Korean women filed a new lawsuit against the South Korean government aiming to hold the US government accountable for its role in facilitating violence against women in camptown industries.⁵⁸

- Disarmament and defunding of military expenditure:** Advocates of Feminist Peace and Justice have called for disarmament and the defunding of military budgets as a key condition for realising true security. Yet, disarmament is nearly entirely absent from the WPS Agenda. Disarmament is a crucial step towards not only breaking the mutually reinforcing cycle of militarisation and GBV, but also halting the environmentally destructive impacts of militarisation. **The international peacebuilding sphere must reckon with its own entanglements with colonialism and imperialism toward realising disarmament: The five permanent members of the UNSC rank among the largest weapons spenders, exporters and manufacturers in the world.**⁵⁹ The trillions of dollars spent on militarisation and armaments must be redirected toward ensuring peoples' access to basic resources, social services and knowledge to which armed conflict and instability rooted in imperial and colonial exploitation have inhibited people's access.
- Redirecting expenditure to social justice causes:** Militarisation disproportionately harms women by diverting crucial expenditure from the care economy to military budgets, leaving the burden of social reproductive labor to fall disproportionately upon women and reinforcing gender roles. International and regional authoritative bodies must redirect spending to social services and basic resources for women and other marginalised communities who have been dispossessed of land, barred

⁵⁷ Ka Wai Ola Staff. (2022, January 1). *Crisis at Kapūkakī*. Ka Wai Ola o OHA - The Living Water of OHA. <https://kawaiola.news/aina/crisis-at-kapukaki/>; Shimoji, Y. (2011, October 26). Futenma: Tip Of The Iceberg In Okinawa's Agony. *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 9(43). <https://apjif.org/2011/9/43/yoshio-shimoji/3622/article>; Chen, A. X. (2024, August 11). *The US Military Has Polluted Guam for Decades. This Year, It Could Get Even Worse*. Truthout. <https://truthout.org/articles/us-military-has-polluted-guam-for-decades-this-year-it-could-get-even-worse>; Kim, N. Y. (2022, January 3). 63,000 residents of Pyeongtaek to receive compensation for military noise pollution. Yonhap News Agency. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220103007500315>

⁵⁸ Women Cross DMZ. (2025, September 25). *Call for Veteran Outreach: Korean Women File Landmark Suit Over Sex Trafficking and Human Rights Violations Against the U.S. Military*. <https://www.womencrossdmz.org/call-for-veteran-outreach-korean-women-file-landmark-suit-over-sex-trafficking-and-human-rights-violations-against-the-u-s-military>

⁵⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2025, April). *Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2024*. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504_fs_milex_2024.pdf

from accessing basic resources and disenfranchised through exclusionary formal decision-making processes. A crucial step for redirecting expenditures is governmental and corporate transparency about the operations of national defence and security sectors, as well as about other military-related expenditures. For example, in Sri Lanka, a recent finding noted that most of social welfare spending—which the government has already slashed while expanding the nation's defence budget—goes towards pensions and welfare for services pertaining to members of the Sri Lankan military.⁶⁰ Governments and corporations also frequently reference 'national security secrets' to justify refusing expenditure disclosures. In the case of South Korea—the world's eighth-largest weapons exporter—PEACEMOMO research participants expressed the desire for information transparency from the national and corporate defence sectors on military carbon emissions given militarism's role in facilitating the global climate crisis and the international arms trade.⁶¹

- **Stopping of military exercises, war games and nuclear testing:** Every two years, the United States convenes tens and thousands of troops from 29 nations in Hawai'i to conduct RIMPAC, the largest naval exercise in the world. **These exercises wreak havoc upon vulnerable local ecosystems by involving live fire training on sacred burial sites, aircraft crashes that damage important shoreland and naval sonar that destroys oceanic reserves.** While Feminist Peace requires the withdrawal of foreign military bases, the withdrawal of permanent bases does not guarantee the stoppage of military exercises in the region, as seen in the Philippines. After the Philippine Senate rejected a new base agreement following the 1991 expiration of the 1947 Military Bases Agreement, in 1998, the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) became the basis for the re-entry of US military troops in the Philippines, where US troops remain for training activities.⁶² The same is true of other nations where the United States has claimed no permanent base presence such as Indonesia, which co-hosts multinational military exercises with the United States called Super Garuda Shield, drawing the participation of

⁶⁰ Tamil Guardian. (2025, February 18). *Sri Lanka's 2025 Budget: Increased military spending amid economic challenges*. <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/sri-lankas-2025-budget-increased-military-spending-amid-economic-challenges>

⁶¹ Jang Park, G., Kim, E., Kim Han, M. (2024). *Armed Patriarchy: Militarism's Grip on Women's Democratic Rights in South Korea* (p.47) [Unpublished]. PEACEMOMO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

⁶² In 2014, the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the United States and the Philippines operationalised provisions in the VFA, including the increased rotational presence of the US military in the Philippines, as well as allowing the US military to preposition military equipment and supplies. For more on the history of RP-US military agreements, see: Naval History & Heritage Command. (n.d.) *Naval Bases in the Philippines*. <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/organization-and-administration/historic-bases/philippine-bases.html>; Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. (2025, January 20). *U.S. Security Cooperation with the Philippines* [Fact sheet]. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-the-philippines>

Australian, Canadian, Indian, Japanese, Singaporean, South Korean, British, German and Dutch units; as well as Singapore, which hosts an array of bilateral military training exercises with the United States, the oldest of which, Exercise Tiger Balm, dates back to 1980.⁶³

- **No more production of weapons:** At a time of rising tensions in Asia and the Pacific driven by major powers in and beyond the region, the cessation of weapons production is a crucial step towards deescalating regional conflict. While regional tensions push everyday people, especially marginalised communities, into greater precarity, governments and arms dealers continue to profit from advancing technologies designed to maim, torture and kill. **The weapons industry is one of the most lucrative global industries in the world, with sales revenues of the world's top 100 arms dealers reaching \$632 billion in 2023.**⁶⁴ **The Global North holds the majority of the world's nuclear stockpiles, the dismantlement of which had been steadily outpacing the deployment of new nuclear warheads-until recently, as dismantlement is slowing while new production is accelerating.**⁶⁵ Regional peace cannot be achieved so long as the systematic and state-sponsored targeting of marginalised communities, for dispossession and for death, remains profitable.

2. No extraction of resources for the war economy:

Upholding peoples' sovereignty over resources, labour and markets



The Global North continues to extract resources from the Global South in order to fuel its war economy, exploiting peoples and their homelands for raw materials and devaluing cheap labour, all while rendering the world increasingly unlivable for all its inhabitants. For example, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order in April 2025 to push ahead with commercial deep-sea mineral mining in international waters, spurning multilateral conventions and regional efforts and putting threatened marine ecosystems at even further risk.⁶⁶ Impossible Metals, a deep-sea mining company based in the United States with an Australian CEO, is poised to be the first to exploit the US executive order in the waters of the Samoan

⁶³ Mahadzir, D. (2025, August 27). *A Dozen Countries Drill in Indo-Pacific Exercises*. USNI News. <https://news.usni.org/2025/08/27/a-dozen-countries-drill-in-indo-pacific-exercises>; U.S. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. (2025, January 20). *U.S. Security Cooperation With Singapore* [Fact sheet]. U.S. Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-singapore>

⁶⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2024, December 2). *World's top arms producers see revenues rise on the back of wars and regional tensions*. SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/worlds-top-arms-producers-see-revenues-rise-back-wars-and-regional-tensions>

⁶⁵ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2025, June 16). *Nuclear risks grow as new arms race looms-new SIPRI Yearbook out now*. SIPRI. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2025/nuclear-risks-grow-new-arms-race-looms-new-sipri-yearbook-out-now>

⁶⁶ D. Ackerman. (2005, June 30). *This company wants to be the first to mine the ocean floor, with Trump's help*. NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2025/06/30/nx-s1-5450336/trump-nickel-cobalt-pacific-ocean-deep-sea-mining-environmental-concerns>

Islands, the division of which began in 1889 with the Tripartite Convention in Berlin between Germany, the United States, and Great Britain.⁶⁷ The US government has framed these attempts as an effort to 'counter China's growing influence over seabed mineral resources', while others like the head of nonprofit group Samoa Economic Development Council have ironically framed seabed mining as an antidote to the exploitation historically faced by Pacific Islanders. These narratives disavow the fierce opposition by Samoans who have insisted that overturning the seabed would be greatly damaging to the ocean and to Indigenous lifeways.⁶⁸

Post-WWII trade liberalisation policies continue to conscript the Global South into a dependent relationship with the Global North through International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank Group (WBG). These IFIs have promoted neoliberal deregulation toward privatisation and the interests of foreign capital while facilitating further precarity in the Global South by collaborating with dictatorships in countries like the Philippines; imposing austerity measures and surcharges upon the Global South; and funding mega-infrastructure projects in places like Laos, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka which are disproportionately affected by IFI agreements, have routinely highlighted and resisted the inequity of such policies.⁶⁹ Marginalised communities, which are disproportionately affected by IFI agreements, have routinely highlighted the inequity of such policies. In 2020, Pakistani farmers and Roots for Equity launched a campaign against the WTO's corporate capture of the dairy sector, which disproportionately impacts women farmers.⁷⁰ A decade and a half prior, in 2005, APWLD held the Asia-Pacific Women's

⁶⁷ Coloma, R.R. (2025, May 7). *American Samoa poised to lead US push for ocean mineral extraction*. Pacific Island Times <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/american-samoa-poised-to-lead-us-push-for-ocean-mineral-extraction>; Menka, N. (2024). *Native Nation Resistance to the Machinations of Settler Colonial Democracy*. Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review 59(2). https://journals.law.harvard.edu/crcl/wp-content/uploads/sites/80/2024/06/05_HLC_59_2_Menka.pdf

⁶⁸ The White House. (2025, April 24). *Unleashing America's offshore critical minerals and resources*. Executive Orders. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/unleashing-americas-offshore-critical-minerals-and-resources/>; Coloma, R.R. (2025, May 7). *American Samoa poised to lead US push for ocean mineral extraction*. Pacific Island Times <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/american-samoa-poised-to-lead-us-push-for-ocean-mineral-extraction>; Rozga, H. (2025, October 15). *To Plunder the Abyss: Revived US Deep Sea Mining Ambitions Meet Fierce Pacific Opposition*. Earth.Org. <https://earth.org/to-plunder-the-abyss-revived-us-deep-sea-mining-ambitions-meet-fierce-pacific-opposition/>

⁶⁹ Talaat, S., & Beeton, D. (2024, October 4). *The Global South's poor should not be subsidising the IMF*. Al-Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/10/4/the-global-souths-poor-should-not-be-subsidising-the-imf>; Abdyldeaeva, F. (2021, July). *Cashing in on Conflict: ADB's impact on the state of peace and security in Asia Pacific*. The Reality of Aid Asia Pacific and CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness. <https://realityofaid.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Deep-Dives-Cashing-in-on-Conflict.pdf>

⁷⁰ Sayeed, A.T. (2021, July 17). *The Fight for Food Sovereignty in Pakistan and the role of Women*. Brennpunkt Drëtt Welt, Action Solidarité Tiers Monde. <https://www.brennpunkt.lu/en/the-fight-for-food-sovereignty-in-pakistan-and-the-role-of-women/>

Tribunal in protest of the sixth ministerial meeting of the WTO, which was held that year in Hong Kong. At the Tribunal, rural women from Thailand, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Indonesia, the Philippines and India testified to the destructive effects of the WTO on local living costs, food sovereignty and the environment.⁷¹

It is imperative for governing bodies at all levels and scales, from the international to the local, to prioritise upholding peoples' sovereignty over resources, labour and markets. This entails: fulfilling peoples' demands to return autonomous control over their homelands and resources; uplifting community leadership in caring for their land, waterways and the broader ecosystem; and establishing people's access to their basic needs, including food, technology, education, health and bodily autonomy.

3. Accountability to the peoples (reparations and justice)



Peacebuilding requires providing recognition and support to victims of systematic and state-sponsored violence including genocide, forced disappearances, criminal business activities and GBV. Pillars of transitional justice—which include investigation and documentation of human rights violations, holding perpetrators of violence accountable such as through tribunals, providing monetary reparations to victims and memorialisation efforts—serve as important guidelines for acknowledging the reality of militarised violence. Because of the tendency for highly visible atrocities to be accorded transitional justice, structural accountability measures can avoid exceptionalising atrocities by situating them within the broader landscape of everyday structural violence faced by women and marginalised communities. For example, in 2014, the Women's Tribunal convened by the Nepalese National Human Rights Commission and several Nepalese women's rights organisations, connected the sexual violence that women survived during Nepal's decade-long armed conflict to everyday forms of discrimination rooted in gender, class, caste and ethnicity.⁷² Real transitional justice is transformational, and transformation requires addressing militarised violence at its root in colonial dispossession, capitalism, racism, patriarchy and fundamentalism.

- **Ensure women and marginalised people's meaningful political participation:** Legislative bodies and peacebuilding institutions have historically excluded the meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups. Examples of measures to increase women's political participation may include electoral

⁷¹ Cordillera Peoples Alliance. (2005, December 21). *WTO Guilty of Numerous Crimes Against Rural Women - Asian Women's Tribunal*. <https://cpaphils.org/campaigns/wto-2005%20WOMEN.htm>

⁷² Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) and National Alliance of Women Human Right defenders (NAWHRD). (2014, December 12). *Women's Tribunal in Nepal hears from survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict* [Press release]. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development. <https://apwld.org/womens-tribunal-in-nepal-hears-from-survivors-of-sexual-violence-in-armed-conflict/>

quotas. At the same time, a feminist approach to peacebuilding also broadens the scope of practices and policies that fall under the umbrella of 'gender equality' and 'peacebuilding'. Beyond appointing women to formal government bodies, peacebuilding institutions and political decision-making bodies must move beyond securitised understandings of peace by following the lead of grassroots organisations making demands to realise peace and justice in their communities.

- **Center community demands for just peacebuilding:** The demands, needs and contexts of communities directly affected by militarised violence are also all too often excluded from or selectively reflected in transitional justice processes. Peacebuilding should include directing material support to grassroots organisations and prioritising community-led, community-centered conflict resolution. JIPAR's report recommends investment in community-built peacebuilding mechanisms in Kyrgyzstan like Women's Councils and Elders' Courts.⁷³ The WLB study also underscores the need for international networks and organisations to demand that humanitarian aid to Burma/Myanmar be channeled not through the State Administration Council (SAC), but through grassroots community organisations to better ensure that international assistance 'can align with local needs and priorities without overriding community agency'.⁷⁴
- **Support for truth-telling history and conflict prevention education:** Justice education and truth-telling initiatives are also crucial to expanding access to knowledge and intergenerational memory—key conditions for preventing the recurrence of militarised violence in the future. Transformative education led by community members, for community members can assist people working towards building a collective understanding of the roots of militarism and GBV in their communities. In contrast to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and its attendant NAPs, which often focus on implementing the pillars of the WPS Agenda in different international contexts, educational initiatives using a Feminist Peace and Justice framework proceed from the recognition that community members themselves have grounded knowledge to mitigate and prevent conflict where they live. Education is also a means to preserve intergenerational knowledge about war and resistance movements, collectively analyse the structural causes of violence, learn and practice nonviolent forms of conflict resolution and cultivate solidarity across regional struggles for peace and justice.

⁷³ Dunganaeva A., Beshkempirova, G. (2025). *Research on Women's Rights to Peace and Security* (p.32) [Unpublished]. Public Foundation 'JIPAR' in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

⁷⁴ Women's League of Burma. (2025). *Militarism's Grip on Women's Political Life in Burma* (p. 50) [Unpublished]. Women's League of Burma in partnership with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development.

4. Decolonise the definition of 'peacebuilding'

The international peacebuilding sphere must reckon with its own entanglements with colonialism and imperialism. Dismantling the structural causes of militarised violence requires international peacebuilding organisations and institutions to reassess how imperial and colonial ideas have influenced criteria used to allocate material resources like monetary aid, as well as common language and frameworks used to describe and assess the significance of different peacebuilding efforts. Liberal peacebuilding—which problematically presumes that free markets, the rule of law and liberal democracy will realise peace—remains the predominant model for peace. Liberal peace frameworks, however, often overlook community knowledge. Instead of imposing liberal frameworks for peace that are then 'localised', the peacebuilding sphere must move towards accountability to community-led efforts to realise peace in different contexts.



The experiences and demands of grassroots women and feminist advocates demonstrate how justice must be at the core of efforts to realise lasting peace in Asia and the Pacific. Highlighting how imperialism and colonialism have shaped the international systems, norms and terms of conflict resolution, this report reckons with the reality of peacebuilding today and the tools aimed at assessing the gendered impacts of war and conflict like the WPS Agenda, as one that depends on and reinforces securitised notions of peace. Advocates for Feminist Peace have long emphasised that securitised peace reinforces the growth of military spending, the development of military infrastructure and the normalisation of militarised force, when true peace requires peacebuilding efforts to participate in dismantling the very conditions of militarised violence: imperialism and colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, neoliberalism and fundamentalisms. Drawing on accounts from grassroots women and other marginalised communities in Asia and the Pacific and the demands of the global feminist peace movement, this report outlines key principles and demands to realise lasting peace and justice in the region. From prioritising Development Justice to upholding peoples' right to resist oppression and self-determination, to centering community demands for redressing the enduring effects of colonial and militarised violence, our vision for Feminist Peace and Justice aims to build a world that is not 'secured' by threats from occupying militaries, war games and corporate extraction, but a world where the people and the planet are made safe from structural violence—where people are thriving, supported and free.





The **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)** is the region's leading network of feminist and women's rights organisations and individual activists. For over 35 years, we have been carrying out advocacy, activism and movement-building to advance women's human rights and Development Justice.

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