



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM
SWEDEN

**Statement of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on the
Report of the Human Rights Council on the Universal Periodical Review of Sweden UPR**

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Swedish Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). WILPF's mission is to end and prevent war, ensure that women are represented at all levels in peace-building processes, defend the human rights of women, and promote social, economic and political justice.

Redistributing Resources to Work Against Gender Based Violence

A number of states have recommended that the Swedish government continue its work against violence against women. We welcome Sweden accepting these recommendations. Still, around 17 women and girls are killed in Sweden each year by a current or former partner, a number that has stayed on the same level for many years. Women's shelters have been forced to deny women support due to lack of resources. In this regard, we welcome the increased funding for local women's shelters as announced by the Swedish government in April this year. At the same time, the allocation of resources for gender equality and women's security remains very low compared to what the Swedish government is spending, and planning to spend, on military security investments.

We strongly urge the Swedish government to redistribute resources from the military sector to human security in order to forcefully work to prevent men's violence against women and gender based violence by focusing on gender norms, especially among boys and men. We also urge the government to ensure that everyone living under the abuse of a partner or former partner gets the right to protection regardless of where in the country they live. Services must also give protection and professional support to transgender persons, undocumented persons, persons with physical and psychological disabilities, persons with addictions, as well as persons experiencing violence in same sex relationships or violence related to honour.

Racism

A number of states have given Sweden recommendations with regards to stopping racism and strengthen the rights of minorities, the indigenous people and migrants. Sweden repeatedly gets criticised for not having declared racist organisations illegal in Sweden. We are very critical of and worried about the opportunities for racist and fascist organisations to spread their ideology and hate through public manifestations. Even though Sweden has a law against hate speech, it is not adequately enforced and few people are convicted. We stress that Sweden must focus on prevention of hate crimes as well as assistance to victims, and all efforts in this respect must have a gender perspective and take into consideration how different power structures in society interact, such as around race and gender.

We urge the Swedish government to forcefully work to ensure people's sense of, and de facto, safety, by not allowing racist manifestations in public places and working actively against the recruitment and increased influence of these movements within the democratic system. A clear gender perspective must be applied in this work to address the underlying problem of violent and stereotypical norms around masculinity that often are at the centre of these movements.

Access to Healthcare and Education for All

We welcome Sweden accepting the recommendation made by Togo (145.135) about ensuring that undocumented children can benefit from healthcare and education. We are concerned, however, that this recommendation only applies to children. Undocumented people, adults as well as children, live under very difficult circumstances. This is a threat to human security and increases the risk of exploitation, not least for women. The right to healthcare and education does not depend on one's age or any other factor, and must be respected and ensured as such.

Respecting the Rights of the Sami People

Sweden has accepted the recommendations concerning the rights of the Sami, Sweden's indigenous people, which we welcome. However, the state continues to exclude the Sami people and the discrimination is ongoing. We urge the government to bring to light Sweden's colonial and brutal history, and strengthen the rights of the Sami people when it comes to land, resources and influence over policy. Unequal power relations between the state and the Sami people, as well as between national/international companies and the Sami people, have to be addressed.

The north of Sweden, where the Sami ancestral land is found, is used for military activities. Private companies test their weapons, and this year a large military exercise took place with 8 other nations participating. This is not respecting the rights of the Sami as an indigenous people. At most, around 90 military planes were flying at the same time, in May when the reindeers calve (reindeers are an important resource and cultural identity factor for one group of Sami people).

Arms Exports and Human Rights

Swedish arms exports have increased substantially during the last 15 years, notably to states where the risk of intensified conflict is evident, and/or where there are widespread and serious violations of human rights, as well as weak accountability mechanisms to stop and prevent such violations. These exports are directly counterproductive to Sweden's efforts in other policy areas to promote democracy and human rights for all.

A Swedish parliamentary group was appointed in 2012 for the purpose of making the weapons export regulations stricter, with a focus on arms export to non-democratic states. In late June the group will present its recommendations to the parliament and to the government. We ask the Swedish government to urgently process the proposal from the committee into a bill for the parliament with new provisions that will de facto sharpen the regulations and praxis of Swedish arms export as well as increase transparency in decision-making relating to arms sales and risk assessments. Civil society should be included in all steps.

To this end, it is essential to include a solid assessment of the specific potential impacts that a range of conventional arms have on human rights and gender equality. The proliferation of arms is linked to a broad range of acts of violence against women, and it is crucial that Sweden apply solid criteria on preventing gender based violence and violence against women in its process of risk assessment before authorising any arms transfer.

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