

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och Frihet



WILPF

Suggested Recommendations by WILPF for the Second Universal Periodic Review of Sweden 21st Session of the UPR Working Group

Gender-based Violence

A recent survey by FRA, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, found that 46% of women in Sweden have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner and/or a non-partner since the age of 15. The EU average is 33%. In the budget for 2014, the Swedish government supports women's shelters with ca. 42 million SEK. Still, the Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres (SKR) report that in 2013 that they had to say no to 63% of the women who contacted them for shelter. SKR were forced to say no to 1 775 women and 461 children in total. The Swedish government must intensify its efforts to prevent violence against women, as well as support victims and survivors.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- The Swedish government should support the work of relevant government authorities to prevent violence against women and girls and to address individual cases.
- The Swedish government should take further efforts to promote attitude changes amongst men and boys on issues relating to gender and violence. The education sector is a key area for raising awareness and promoting critical thinking on these issues.
- The Swedish government should ensure that protective services, such as women's and girls' shelters, are adequately financed.
- The Swedish government should analyse to what extent women in Sweden are living under threat and/or violence linked to the presence of weapons in the home.

National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325/Women, Peace and Security

The first Swedish National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325 on “Women, Peace and Security” was adopted in 2006. Despite having been revised since then, the Swedish NAP still lacks a number of elements and provisions that are key in ensuring efficient implementation. Amongst other weaknesses, the action plan shows a one-sided focus on government agencies, while failing to address or include the work of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and other departments within the government offices. The Swedish government is currently undertaking a second review of the NAP, with the aim of drafting a new action plan during 2015.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- The new Swedish NAP on Women, Peace and Security should include provisions that strengthen monitoring and evaluation of how the NAP is implemented, including through transparency measures such as annual reports on implementation efforts to parliament.
- The new Swedish NAP on Women, Peace and Security should apply to all relevant government authorities, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and other departments within the government offices, to ensure all political and diplomatic efforts are guided by the principles of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- The new Swedish NAP on Women, Peace and Security should establish earmarked funding for implementation efforts.
- The new Swedish NAP on Women, Peace and Security should adequately consider the General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Arms exports

Swedish arms exports have increased substantially during the last 15 years, notably to states where there are widespread and serious violations of human rights as well as weak accountability mechanisms to stop and prevent such violations. This includes states where women are denied even their most basic human rights, such as Saudi Arabia. Sweden also sells arms to fragile unstable states where the risk of intensified conflict is evident,

such as Thailand. These exports are directly counterproductive to Sweden's efforts in other policy areas to promote democracy and human rights for all people.

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) presents an important opportunity to regulate the international trade in conventional arms and ammunition, ensuring that arm transfers are consistent with international law, securing women's rights, promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence.

WILPF welcomes the recent decision by the Swedish parliament that Sweden is to ratify the ATT. Yet, this ratification should not be seen as an end goal in itself. If the ATT is to be an effective legal instrument in preventing human rights violations and promoting human security, a strict national implementation must follow. This is certainly true for exporter states like Sweden. 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 – such as rapes, human trafficking, enforced pregnancies, and other sexual abuses widely reported by women in many different contexts worldwide – and it is crucial that Sweden apply solid criteria on preventing gender based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) in its process of risk assessment before authorizing any arms transfer.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- Swedish authorities should not authorise any exports of arms (including ammunition, parts and components) to states where human rights are violated on a serious and/or widespread scale.
- The Swedish government should include explicit provisions in their export regulations that make it binding to refuse any export licenses for arms, ammunition, parts and components that could be used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence or violence against women.
- The Swedish government should establish a higher grade of transparency in its reporting mechanisms for arms exports and licensing decisions, including through issuing public explanations for licensing decisions as soon as they are made. This information should be issued more often than annually (monthly or at least a few times/year).

Reproductive health

Recent numbers from the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare show that during the last five years, Swedish councils have reported about an increasing and serious lack of midwives. A study by Radio Sweden (2013) found 8 cases of infant deaths in delivery wards at Swedish hospitals. Investigations show that the lack of personnel, the lack of hospital beds and a stressful working environment for midwives may have been underlying explanations. In addition to this, experts say 4000 women suffer from severe birth injuries every year.

In this context, WILPF suggests the following recommendations for the UPR of Sweden:

- Swedish authorities should ensure that all women giving birth in Sweden receive equal and adequate health care.
- Swedish authorities should ensure that the working conditions for midwives follow all relevant legal and ethical regulations and guidelines in order to enable equal and adequate care for all women.

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