



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

ISSUE

BRIEF

NO. 1

Winter 2014

The Women, Peace, and Security Act (WPS)

Half of all peace agreements around the world fail within the first five years. One missing component to creating a lasting and sustainable peace is the inclusion of those who are disproportionately and uniquely affected by conflict: women. Women are powerful peace-builders whose efforts to prevent conflict and secure peace are critical yet largely under-utilized as they are excluded from peace processes around the world.

The Women, Peace and Security ACT (WPS Act) was reintroduced in the House of Representatives (H.R. 2874) by Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Mike Honda (D-CA) and Niki Tsongas (D-MA) and in the Senate (S.1942) by a bipartisan group of Senators including Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Mark Steven Kirk (R-IL), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). The WPS Act recognizes the untapped potential and significant value that women bring to the peacemaking table. The Act requires the U.S. to promote the meaningful inclusion and participation of women in all peace processes that seek to prevent, alleviate or resolve armed conflict.

The WPS Act acknowledges that engaging women as agents of peace and security will increase the likelihood of successful conflict resolution. The bill would codify into law the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which calls for women's participation at all levels of decision-making on conflict resolution and peace-building as directed by UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The WPS Act will mandate the inclusion of women's voices in shaping a more peaceful future and help end the cycle of women's exclusion that has been undeniably detrimental to women's ability to access the full spectrum of their human rights.

The importance of including women conflict resolution and peace-building processes can be seen in the ongoing security transition in Afghanistan. Afghan women must be able to participate in the design and implementation of the reconciliation and peace process in Afghanistan. Their participation in shaping their country's future and engaging as equal partners will help improve and secure their political status, security, economic and social well-being, and advance their human rights. The WPS Act will ensure that the US government supports and promotes women's participation during peace processes in Afghanistan and around the world.

Specifically, the WPS Act would:

- Increase women's meaningful inclusion in peace-building and conflict prevention processes;
- Protect women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings;
- Ensure women and girls have equitable access to humanitarian assistance;
- Require the State Department and USAID report to Congress on progress under the US National Action Plan to promote women's participation in peace-building and conflict prevention processes;
- Ensure that each relevant US government agency integrates women as equal partners into all efforts to prevent and mediate conflict, respond to humanitarian crises, promote and build peace and democracy, and rebuild post-conflict;
- Incorporate comprehensive training programs on women's participation in peace and security matters for diplomatic, defense, and development personnel;
- Require robust monitoring and evaluation of the impact of US foreign assistance on women's meaningful inclusion and participation and revise approaches to employ best practices.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✓ U.S. Representatives should co-sponsor the WPS Act, H.R. 2874.
- ✓ U.S. Senators should co-sponsor the WPS Act, S. 1942.

Amnesty International is a grassroots organization with 2.8 million members worldwide working to promote and defend human rights. For information, contact Julia Drost at 202-675-8758 or jdrost@aiusa.org, or visit www.aiusa.org/women.