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WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING FROM THE DIASPORA AND EXILE IN EUROPE

NORA MIRALLES CRESPO
SUDERGINTZA COOPERATIVA

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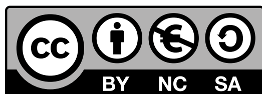

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1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

Growing interest in the influence of non-state actors on conflicts and the promotion of peace has led to a greater focus on diasporas, resulting in twenty years worth of theoretical output on the potential of communities in exile to fuel violence in the country of origin as well as to contribute to prevention, resolution, the recovery of memory and the search for truth, justice and reparation. Phenomena such as the feminisation of migration and broader definitions of identity, violence and community have simultaneously contributed to raising awareness of women in diaspora literature, together with their specific experiences and space and forms for participation. On the premise that the issue of gender impregnates all institutions and social, economic and cultural practices, the same can therefore be said for forced migration and displacement and the communities that this creates in the host country/countries.

The purpose of this report is to review the contributions made in the last twenty years on the issue of diasporas and peacebuilding from the gender perspective through conceptual papers as well as specific experiences of women and LGTBI+ people who have fled conflict, violence and persecution and organised efforts in their host country in order to contribute to peace and assist democratisation in their countries of origin.

The existence of diasporas, together with the debate between more narrow definitions, is first contextualised, in particular those that focus on ethno-national communities and ones that broaden the identitarian universe of diasporas and their constituent elements, mainly through their practices. An analysis is made of the dynamics and hierarchies of gender as a relational, complex and dynamic social construct that operate within diaspora and exile communities and their effects, which are restrictive in the majority of cases, on women's involvement and leadership, as well as being scenarios in which traditional roles are severed. As different authors have shown, the diaspora has emerged as a form or space of control, but also of empowerment, solidarity, co-responsibility and mutual support, that has facilitated forms of organisation specific to and for women.

The report then goes on to consider the dual relationship between diasporas and conflicts in which these communities can operate – sometimes both at the same time due to their internal diversity – as elements that can either fuel conflict or build bridges and strive for the cessation of hostilities, peace-building and the process of democratisation in authoritarian regimes. This dynamic in the case of women and LGTBI+ persons takes on multiple forms that are conditioned by identity and different types of experience they

have when leaving their country, during migration and on arrival in the receiving country, all of which is exacerbated by the violence stemming from the conflict and repression. An intersectional approach that brings together gender analysis and the feminist perspective is used, together with the lessons learned from post-colonial theory, which focuses on North-South inequalities and the dynamics of structural racism in both the country of origin and the host country.

The report also describes the main challenges faced by diaspora women in their efforts to work for peace, with special emphasis on securitisation and the effects of restrictions on obtaining residence and citizenship in relation to their rights and political involvement.

2

MIGRATIONS, DIASPORAS AND PARTICIPATION

2. MIGRATIONS, DIASPORAS AND PARTICIPATION

WHAT EXACTLY IS A DIASPORA?

According to the World Migration Report 2020 by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), there are an estimated 272 million international migrants who live outside of the country in which they were born (McAuliffe and Khadria, 2020), of which 130 million – just under half of the migrant contingent – are women.[1] Nearly two-thirds are labour migrants that migrated for work or economic reasons although the last decade has seen a huge wave of forced migration resulting from armed conflict in places such as Ukraine, Syria and Yemen; extreme ethnic violence, for example, against the Rohingya in Myanmar; and polarisation, instability and political repression, as in the cases of Nicaragua and Venezuela. This division between voluntary and forced migration is neither clear cut nor beyond dispute, however, nor can it be strictly defined on the basis of the global, regional and local dynamics of globalisation, economic crisis, inequality, violence and conflict.

Putting the focus on Europe, there are 82.3 million people living outside of their country of origin, according to the 2019 World Economic Situation and Prospects report, published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. More than half (51.4%) are women, which to begin with provides a key numerical and quantitative factor that underlies the significance of the presence of migrant women in Europe and of their potential for transnational political participation through organisation in diasporas across the continent.

This does not mean that, as migrants who maintain ties with their families, they automatically constitute a diaspora community, especially according to the more common usage of the term, which originally referred to the dispersion of the Jewish people. The term "diaspora" has today become a frequent way of referring to dispersed communities of specific origin, although authors like Gabriel Scheffer strictly distinguish between informal, unorganised "networks" and cohesive organised communities, a reality that would more accurately characterise ethno-national diasporas (Scheffer, 2006). According to the EU Global Diaspora Facility project, funded by the European Commission, the word diaspora refers to "emigrants and their descendants who actively maintain links with their country of heritage and are willing to contribute to its development" and/or cultural heritage, in the case of post-diasporas and the descendants of emigrants. This definition would appear to follow on from that of Rogers Brubaker, who points to three core elements that continue to be understood

1. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. World Economic Situation and Prospects, 2019.

as constitutive of diaspora: the dispersion of a group of people in space, normally separated by state borders; orientation and loyalty to homeland, either real or imagined; and boundary maintenance or the maintaining of ties with the society of origin (Brubaker, 2005).

Post-modern interpretations of diasporas from the nineties onwards, with the fully-fledged emergence of de-colonial thinking and the focus of debate on the formation of identity, go beyond these interpretations and include fundamental issues such as the global and transnational ties that shape the migration experience of migrants, the practices and discourses that demonstrate the transnational identity of a community and the importance of the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions that characterise the trajectory of diasporas and, by extension, their opportunities for participation and political action. As is explained below, going directly from a country of origin to a host country with a work permit is totally different to fleeing a situation of violence and facing human rights abuses along the way, or arriving irregularly in a host country.

For Avtar Brah, sociologist and a leading thinker in the field of identity and migration, the "diaspora space" – as she calls the intersection of diaspora, border, settlement and displacement – is where economic, political, cultural and psychological processes converge (Brah, 2011). According to Brah, this fluctuating and relational dimension of diasporas provides a break with binarisms like native/foreign and homeland/host society, as diaspora space as a conceptual category is equally "inhabited" not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but also by those who are constructed and represented as being "indigenous". These expansive concepts challenge reductionist frameworks on diasporic identity and are key to analysing from a gender perspective the different power and exclusion dynamics within diasporas and how these manifest in terms of voices, participatory spaces and leadership.

DIASPORAS AS POLITICAL ACTORS

Increased attention to diasporas as transnational actors with a capacity for action has been facilitated in recent decades by advances in communications and the globalisation of financial flows, and has become increasingly important for countries of origin and receiving countries. This can take place either through potential contributions to the development and democratisation of governments or maintaining authoritarian regimes, exclusionary nationalisms and insurgent and/or terrorist groups through economic remittances, transfers and campaigns (Kinnvall and Petersson, 2010).

Nevertheless, not all diasporas have the same potential for political, cultural, economic or philanthropic action as they are highly heterogeneous and diverse formations. Some are transnational social networks or movements that lack any formal structure whereas most of them are usually highly politicised or mobilised formations (Werbner, 2002) characterised by a "chaordic" structure (of order within chaos) and a shared sense of moral responsibility embodied in a multitude of material and symbolic gestures. These ties that Werbner calls "co-responsibility", in preference to the terms of 'solidarity' or 'loyalty' that are used more frequently in this field, go beyond fixed borders and the duties of citizenship and its loyalties and take the form, for example, of philanthropic and political mobilisations to defend or protest against injustices and human rights abuses suffered by co-diasporics elsewhere.

In this regard, diasporas have changed the traditional parameters of multicultural citizenship (Busbridge and Winarnita, 2015) and rendered obsolete the traditional views of the territoriality of states as being that which lies strictly within the internal border, along with the concept of nation. This change in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion modifies the status of citizenship and opens up options for mobilisation and belonging for those who, as a result of their legal status, gender, social class, sexuality and/or ethnicity, were second-class citizens in their country of origin. On the other hand, the diaspora can also be a space that further accentuates division and tight control over the bodies of those considered to be "subaltern", or of lower status.

As there are usually no homogeneous structures in terms of either gender, ethnicity or religion, it can be argued that the link between individuals that make up the diaspora and its networks consists of cultural, economic and political interests and commitments that constantly change and rearrange (Scheffer, 2006), in addition to an orientation in time and space towards a different past and a different place (Werbner, 2002). In other words, diasporas have their own forms of common action, but this does not necessarily mean that all participatory spaces for migrants actually amount to a diaspora. For example, individuals who actively mobilise in the diaspora may participate at the neighbourhood, community and/or political level, each space having different – and sometimes even conflicting – objectives to those of their diaspora community. In some cases, this dynamic may contribute to the diversity and heterogeneity of communities in exile.

Far from being mere social groups or movements oriented towards economic development or humanitarian aid, many diaspora groups are highly organised and lobby politicians and legislators (Kinnvall and Petersson, 2010) to influence policy-making in the home country, agreements between the host state and country of origin, regional policies, for

example, in the case of the fishing agreements between European Union and Morocco in Sahrawi/Western Sahara waters, and even international policy. This type of action reflects the relatively autonomous nature of diasporic organisations that have their own agenda (Werbner, 2002), although this does not mean they are no longer dependent on state action.

Quite the contrary, in fact, as governments, international agencies, civil society and political organisations in the host country and the country of origin influence these processes and the relevance and political visibility that a diaspora ultimately achieves, as Silvina Merenson points out in the case of Uruguay, is in part "a product of the institutional framework that is established through the collaborative work of migrants, state officials, politicians, academics and members of international organisations" (Merenson, 2015).

Despite any unity of action these may have as regards specific objectives, this heterogeneity in terms of interests, expectations and demands is compounded by the fact that intra-diaspora relations are not only not neutral (Camp and Thomas, 2008), but are mediated by the dynamics of power, hegemony and inequality that, amongst other things, stem from gender, sexual orientation and the identity, race, ethnicity and/or social class of the people who are included in or excluded from these groups and their representation.

3

PARTICIPATORY SPACES FOR WOMEN IN ACTIVE DIASPORAS

3. PARTICIPATORY SPACES FOR WOMEN IN ACTIVE DIASPORAS

The role of women in diasporas and transnational politics was largely invisible and limited to the "private sphere" up until not so long ago. Migrant women were simply considered to be part of the family reunification of men who migrated in search of another horizon of survival, with disregard for any other reality, and gender not even being considered to be a relevant factor in migration studies. Forms of mobilisation and participation by women in the diasporic space therefore lacked definition. At the present time, however, women migrants are no longer passive subjects who migrate in the wake of their husbands, but actors with agency (Mügge, 2011) whose place in migrant activism is now much more visible.

One factor that has facilitated this profound change is that nowadays more women than ever migrate on their own for work, education or as a breadwinner.[2] As a consequence, one of the most prominent phenomena in the analysis of diasporas and their activity from a gender perspective is the so-called feminisation of migration, which has taken place worldwide – albeit with differences in different territories – in particular over the last thirty years.

This feminisation of migration, or the increase in women in the migrant labour force, is primarily associated with changes in the world economic system, globalisation and transnationalism. The effect in terms of gender is a greater demand for low-cost labour in countries of the North, in sectors such as care work, domestic work and sex work traditionally seen as the sole preserve for women (Marroni, 2006) and for certain gender identities considered outside the norm, as in the case of trans women. As the sociologist Maria Gloria Marroni has pointed out, this type of work, together with others that have more recently attracted attention, such as fruit picking, is consistent with the reality underlying the globalisation of labour markets and new flexible, precarious and unequal labour relations.

The scenario of increased demand for care workers due to an ageing population in the global north, the increased participation of women in the labour market and the progressive disappearance of the welfare state, in turn prioritises the mobilisation of women from the global south in what has come to be called "global care chains" or the global reorganisation of social reproduction (Barañano and Marchetti, 2011).

2. UN DESA (2019). Footnote 1.

One should however bear in mind the on-going debate within gender and migration studies as to whether there is indeed an unprecedented number of women in transit or simply a greater visibility and more active participation of women in transnational displacement following the adoption of gender as a category of analysis, since the number of women living outside their countries of origin in the 1960s was very similar to that of today (Zlotnik, 2003). Be that as it may, what does exist as an identifiable phenomenon with unequivocal significance as regards the possibilities for political involvement is a change in the profile, conditions and purpose of women who migrate, stemming from major social and economic changes and the transformation of gender roles.

The increased prominence of women in migratory processes is therefore due not only to changes in the world of work, but also to cultural and demographic factors related to the increase in female-headed households, the erosion of patriarchal social norms and profound changes in gender relations (Marroni, 2006). The situation is similar with lesbian and trans women who migrate in search of safer and less discriminatory environments where they have more opportunities and their rights are recognized (IOM, 2016) in countries where non-normative sexual orientation and gender identities are neither punished nor criminally prosecuted, although they may experience other forms of inequality.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult to meaningfully measure the scope of these phenomena due to the lack of gender-disaggregated statistical data on migration prior to 1998 and the incidence of undocumented or irregular migration, which is much more complicated to measure (Freedman, 2008) and the specific forms it takes in the case of women and LGTBI+ persons. More restrictive family reunification policies, hasty flight in cases of conflict, violence and persecution and fewer opportunities to legally migrate alone have led to more women in irregular migration flows and increased their vulnerability to human trafficking networks for the purpose of sexual and other forms of exploitation.

This vulnerability stems not from the fact they are women but, as is discussed below, from the mechanisms of landlessness and insecurity related to gender subordination that impact their lives, along with factors like the military build-up and fortification of borders and more restrictive asylum policies (Tyszler, 2019).

The construct of migrant women as political subjects – and their potential to participate and take on a leadership role in diasporic spaces – is determined not only by the objective factors that shape their migratory process, but also by prevailing narratives about them. Dominant conceptions of migration, which still extensively pervade public policies, portray

women as being dependent on male migrants in legal and economic terms and as victims who are devoid of agency. These views reinforce the confinement of women to the private sphere, thereby limiting their opportunities to engage in activism in the public sphere (Freedman, 2008). LGTB+ people mostly remain invisible in these narratives or are assigned to male or female categories, without regard to the specific nature of their experiences.

It is essential therefore to address migration from a gender and feminist perspective, with women and LGTBI+ people being considered as agents of change and full subjects of law and allowing for the recognition of their own particular dynamics of diasporic representation, voice and leadership at both formal and informal levels.

A DIVERSITY OF AGENDAS AND VOICES: WOMEN IN DIASPORIC SPACE

Regardless of the cultural barriers and the subordinate place reserved by patriarchy for women to participate in and lead policy initiatives, migrant women have always played an active role in the organisation of their diaspora and exile communities (De Tona and Lentin, 2011). Any analysis of this role must be based on the heterogeneous nature of migrant women who, while not existing as a single entity, are impacted by a system of social stratification that goes beyond gender to also encompass social class, ethnicity, age capability, and sexual orientation and identity. In line with the theories of intersectionality presented by Kimberle Crenshaw, the vocation to identify all of the causes of oppression and violence that diasporic women experience in their bodies requires complex thought on the dynamics of discrimination and a shift away from the view that such forms of oppression are compartmentalised categories that do not interact with each other and function statically regardless of any specific time or place (Crenshaw, 1989).

All these patterns and structures of discrimination, together with the way they have migrated and their experiences in transit and arrival in the new country and the policies in the country of origin and the host country, can lead to gendered constructions of their subjectivity (Freedman, 2007), making it difficult to speak of a common identity among diaspora women. The reflections of Rachel Busbridge and Monika Winarnita on the lack of women's participation in intergroup dialogues with diasporas from four conflicts, which they conducted between 2009 and 2013 in Australia, are illustrative of the need to situate women according to their experiences and social position. Aside from identifying the glaring under-representation of women in this type of initiative, which the authors consider is a reflection of the public sphere in general (Busbridge and Winarnita, 2015), the data

obtained on the few women who took part in the dialogues show that the majority of women had a higher education, they were qualified professionals and played a very active role politically in their respective communities. For other types of women, however, especially those accompanying men who took part in the dialogues, factors like family obligations, involvement in other more community-based settings and little or no knowledge of the language were an impediment to their involvement.

These references provide a lead towards some of the main obstacles that either naturally or in a normalized way may hold back women's political engagement and even their leadership in diaspora movements, in particular those that are more structured and formal and tend to be the most masculinised (Werbner, 2002). In general, migrant men tend to play an important role in maintaining institutional ties with organisations in the country of origin and at the transnational level whereas women tend to depend more on friends and family networks and community life in the host country (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo, 2005) and keep alive the cultural traditions and practices of their country of origin or ethnic community.

In other words, at the same time that migrant women are unable to break out of the transnational "private sphere", it is the institutionalised and public nature of the organisational ties of migrants that transcend the levels of the private sphere and of the individual that shapes and structures transnational policies (Mügge, 2011). In spite of the fact that the informal networks that women develop within and outside of the community are crucial groundwork that lead to the emergence of formal diasporic spaces and political organisations, the ability of these diasporas to influence policy in the West ultimately depends largely on the existence of organised diasporic political lobbies, with clear agendas, sophisticated diplomacy, large sums of money, access to the media and an ability to influence public opinion through ethnic mobilisation in a united front (Werbner, 2002). Moreover, the more formal and integrated they are at the level of high politics and the more competitive and exclusive they become, the fewer women and other subaltern subjects there are in these "participatory" spaces.

Furthermore, while members of diaspora communities must constantly contend with the invisibilisation of migrants and second-class citizens, in terms of their rights, in policies in the host country, women and dissident gender identities suffer from a "double invisibility" stemming from the prior expulsion of their bodies and voice from the public space.

As in other disruptive contexts, however, the experience of migration and diaspora building can also become contexts for politicization, paving the way for scenarios in which traditional

gender roles are questioned and leading to the emergence of other voices, bodies and representations in the public sphere, as well as forms of organisation (De Tona and Lentin, 2011). Lisa Mügge, for example, who analyses immigrant organisations led by women in the Netherlands, points to factors such as values and ideology that have played a central role as a substratum for the survival of the only two organisations with these characteristics, the left-wing Turkish women's organisation (HTKB) and the Kurdish women's organisation (IFWF). In both cases, women seemed to acquire a more central role in transnational politics when political movements in the homeland were outlawed and many of their male members were arrested (Mügge, 2013). It was then that their support, either for the movement in general or for women in the country of origin, became vital.

Moments like this when the number of militants and/or activists dwindles, which can also occur as a result of the repression and persecution of diaspora groups in host countries, can be a time of opportunity for women to participate and in terms of their central importance, as the organisation requires a larger militant corps (Jad, 2014) and recruitment requirements become more flexible. This also happens at times of internal conflict either between factions within the diaspora or any organised group, when each faction fights to be the majority and militant recruitment, regardless of their gender, becomes strategic (Rodríguez, 2017).

At the same time, these contexts of gender exceptionality and politicization can also highlight the different ways women have of 'doing' community politics and transnational activism, by reinforcing the establishment of networks and associations specifically for women within a dynamic that coincides with the expansion in transnational networks of the discourse and framework of women's human rights (Reilly, 2007). As Pnina Werbner points out, women have built up powerful and influential transnational diasporic organisations in some diasporas over the past century that have disputed the gender dynamics that had relegated them to a secondary role, although in most cases the activity of these women's organisations was often blocked or limited by the invasive presence of men in the political space of diaspora and exile and by their head-on opposition to women's transnational activities that claimed an autonomous space of their own (Werbner, 2002). Women migrants may face opposition to their activism from male migrants who feel that women overstep their traditional roles in actively taking on political stances (Freedman, 2008).

When diaspora women organise themselves in a host country, they are able to sever their dual identity as victims without agency – as women and as a racialized minority – and redefine their social status not only in the host country, but also at the global/transnational level and become active citizens who are able to reclaim a place and voice in the public

sphere, whether in the diasporic space or beyond. The feminist perspective and gender analysis help illustrate diasporas as being spaces of political empowerment, solidarity and mutual support that set in motion recognition and shared identity mechanisms that transcend formal and organised forms and expressions (Campt and Thomas, 2008). A fine example of this is Kesha Fikes' account of Cape Verdean migrant women selling fish in Lisbon's markets. Fikes points out that while African migrant women generally do not participate in the public political and cultural activities and expressions that are typically seen as means of forging and creating a diasporic community, they do recognize each other as a specific community (Fikes, 2008).

4

THE DUAL ROLE OF DIASPORAS IN CONFLICTS AND PEACEBUILDING

4. THE DUAL ROLE OF DIASPORAS IN CONFLICTS AND PEACEBUILDING

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, at least 100 million people were forced to flee their homes over the last 10 years, seeking refuge as a result of political persecution, conflict, violence, human rights abuses and other causes of insecurity.[3] 26 million of these are refugees under the protection of international organisations, in addition to the millions who do not have refugee status or international protection.

For authors like Terrence Lyons, communities that organise themselves as a result of forced migration due to armed conflict, which he refers to as "conflict-generated diasporas", have characteristics in common like the source of their displacement (conflict, violence and persecution) and the nature of their ties to the homeland, often with shared memories and traumatic experiences that can amplify identities linked to symbolically valuable territory and an aspiration to return once the homeland is free (Lyons, 2004).

This delimitation of armed conflict as the common denominator of a type of diaspora is however disputed by other authors, who consider that it fails to capture the plural reality of diasporas that are the result of forced displacement due to violence, and that even those that are the result of war cannot be thought of as being homogeneous (Feron and Lefort, 2018). Furthermore, if one of the characteristics of the post-Cold War era is the presence of situations in certain countries of generalized violence and large scale human rights abuses due to the actions of authoritarian governments, transnational criminal networks, organised crime and terrorist groups, which blur the line between war and "peace" (Grasa, 2007), the boundary between conflict-generated diasporas and other types of forced displacement and even voluntary or economic migration is often quite blurred. Among other reasons, this is because these situations of indiscriminate violence, persecution and repression can force people to flee and have an impact on human rights and lead to traumatic experiences comparable to those experienced in armed conflicts.

A materialist analysis shows, moreover, that in such contexts of instability, tension, violence and organised crime there is often a link between delinquency, corruption and elites, which contributes to a worsening of the situation in the country by encouraging privatisation and the cutting back of public services, contributing to a growing inequality gap between rich

3. UNHCR (2019). Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2019. https://www.unhcr.org/5ee200e37.pdf

and poor. There is therefore a continuum between the pre-conflict period, when economic needs and crises force people to search for a better future, and flight in situations of acute danger and hot conflict (Al-Ali, 2007). On the other hand, talk about conflict-generated diasporas usually refers to diasporas originating in conflict areas and as a result of forced displacement whereas, in the case of peacebuilding, diasporas can participate in conflict resolution even before the outbreak of a conflict, as in the case of Northern Ireland (Cochrane, Baser and Swain, 2009), thereby making the peacebuilding process more complex.

From a feminist and intersectional perspective, the continuum that can sometimes make war indistinguishable from peace can also in practice be the link between widespread acts of violence in public spaces that occur within the context of a conflict and are not isolated acts, and those that were already happening before against certain bodies and subjects in a structural and natural way. This thread that links conflict-related violence with socially normalised violence against women, identities of gender and sexual orientation outside the norm, ethnic and religious minorities, racialized people, etc., for whom the boundary between war and peace is not so significant, is what is known as the "continuum of violence" (Cockburn, 2004). Not forgetting that violence against women and LGTBI+ people are two of the reasons why people leave their countries of origin in search of safer living conditions. On the basis of this continuum of violence, one can scarcely affirm that voluntary migration and forced displacement are two indisputable categories and links can be found between the experiences of women who flee the violence of armed conflict and those who leave their countries for other circumstances.

One case that deserves separate mention because it also totally determines the activity and relationship of the diaspora with the country of origin is the case of exile, which refers above all to forced displacement of a political nature, referring to an experience of mobility due to exclusion together with the consequences for those affected by it (Hackl, 2017). Hackl points out how exile reintroduces this context of violent political displacement at a time when the celebrations of 'unrooted cosmopolitanisms' are challenged by the "continuing primacy of the state in determining the nature of mobility" between countries.

As a process of transnational mobilisation, there is a uniqueness to exile comparable to migration as well as forced displacement in that it "involves the purposeful exclusion from national borders – either already established or recreated – of subjects attributed as being the embodiment of a political project, and therefore of people and ideas" (Rojas Silva, 2019). This type of migration involves, for example, formal prohibitions or conditions

that prevent return, are of uncertain duration and/or impose "an undesired and sudden relocation".

MAKERS OR WRECKERS OF PEACE?

Profound transformations in the nature of conflicts, the possibilities for global communication and mobilisation and the emergence of new threats to national and international security have contributed to increasing attention being paid to the dual role that diasporas can play in conflicts and situations of tension and instability in the country of origin (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006).

Diasporas do indeed have great potential to engage very productively and successfully in peace building, building bridges and sending remittances for development and to help contain the outbreak of conflict (Sinatti et al., 2010), and by getting involved in conflict resolution and supporting subsequent reconstruction efforts. On the other hand, they may also fuel conflicts and fund authoritarian regimes and armed breakaway groups by providing tangible and intangible resources and the transfer of arms and money (Smith and Stares, 2007), a process that can be accompanied by the radicalisation of essentialist and exclusive conceptions of identity and community. Active diaspora groups in fact facilitate the spread of identity mobilisations, hostilities and polarisation in a particular country across the globe (Orjuela, 2008). The role of diasporas in conflicts can also be a source of concern for political leaders in the country of origin, for opposition groups, governments of host states and even for other states, when they are involved in diplomatic activities there (Shain, 2007). This can occur regardless of whether they are fuelling hostilities or calling for democratic government in their country of origin.

Not all diasporas however have the capacity, power or potential to intervene either way in conflicts. Influential networks tend to develop when diasporas reach a sufficient size and level of concentration and have enough time to organise (Lyons, 2006), according to not just the capacities of the diaspora (agency) but also the transnational opportunities (structure) available to it (Smith and Stares, 2007). The nature of diaspora intervention in conflict is thus a result of the respective power relations within diasporas and between diaspora, home and host country.

Following on from this line of thought, diaspora intervention can occur, due to its diverse and heterogeneous nature, in support of different causes, sides in conflict or even the continuation of war and peacebuilding at the same time, as is the case of the different

groups that exist within the exiled Kurdish community in Europe (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2006) and ethnically fragmented communities like the divided Rwandan diaspora. Even different generations of the diaspora, arriving either in different waves of a conflict or before or after, may pursue different causes and goals (Feron and Lefort, 2018), influenced by factors such as class, gender, generation, ethnic origin, occupation and religion. Diasporas are therefore not powerless victims of the circumstances of a conflict as they do have agency, albeit limited (Smith and Stares, 2007).

5

DIASPORA WOMEN AND CONFLICT: BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES

5. DIASPORA WOMEN AND CONFLICT: BEYOND THE STEREOTYPES

While tension and violence in the country of origin affect and influence the formation of diasporas and the experiences of migration and settlement in another country, these processes, like any social process, differ and are affected by gender, which defines the position of men, women and other gender identities in a certain way and conditions their behaviour in relation to the conflict and peacebuilding in their countries of origin. A proper understanding of the role of women in conflict diasporas therefore calls for the analysis of the gender regime in place at any given moment, in other words, the combination of gender conceptions, or the ideas and beliefs that influence conceptions about gender; the gender structure, or social and political position of men, women and other non-normative identities; and gender norms, or the collectively held causal and prescriptive belief regarding gender roles (Carpenter, 2002). As gender is culturally specific and its manifestations dependent on each context, space and time, even among groups within the same society, it is important to identify the gender norms operating in the country of origin, the host country and specifically in the diaspora community in order to determine the possibilities for political action and involvement that have been enabled during the process.

Women have traditionally been socially constructed as being victims of conflict, a category that leaves little room for agency and political participation, but which fully conforms to gender stereotypes that are still prevalent in patriarchal societies. At the same time, it is hard for men to break free from their duty to the country as soldiers and warriors, with forms of militarised masculinity occupying the public space and access to decision-making (Miralles, 2016) while excluding other types of voice and male gender identities that are against the use of violence.

Notwithstanding essentialist views of the nature of men and women, which portray men as perpetrators of violence and women as passive victims (Moser, 2011), women can nevertheless play an essential role as peace-builders, although they can just as easily commit to insurgency and defending authoritarian regimes and take part in hostilities by supporting them either directly or indirectly.

Women can contribute to peace from the diaspora in many different ways, by contributing to conflict resolution, the recovery of historical memory, reconciliation and justice, efforts to prevent violence, advocating for the end of hostilities, generating opportunities for dialogue

between opposing sides and promoting democratisation, as well as calling for an end to repression. Women can also spur negative identities and stereotypes that lead to conflict, become involved in supporting the conflict and hinder peacebuilding efforts. In spite of this, it would appear to be true that patterns of socialization determine to a large extent people's disposition to peace or war, and the implications of this can be seen in diasporas, where women have demonstrated their enormous potential (acquired, not innate) for community action, cooperation and dialogue over divisions, as a result of their tendency to conceptualise their identity in a more relational and less static way and to prioritise relations of mutual understanding (Busbridge and Winarnita, 2015). Transnational women's movements, like pacifist feminism, place great value on this distinctive way of handling conflict characterised by empathy, mediation, negotiation and positive otherness, all of which are related to maternal thinking (Ruddick, 1989) and the ethics of care. On countless occasions, however, women have transgressed their position as mothers and caregivers in an ongoing challenge to the idea that war and violence are antithetical to the essence of femininity.

On the other hand, conflicts – whether at the epicentre, the place of origin, or by extension, the diaspora – tend to be contexts that reinforce behaviours, social dynamics, strategies and barriers that militarise the public space and impose the logic of war, further restricting any participatory space. They can offer a window of opportunity to increased gender equality as the logic of conflict can also lead to greater social mobilisation in which women participate and develop empowerment strategies (Miralles and Rodríguez, 2017) for women's rights, peacebuilding and justice and reparation.

One of the factors influencing this response is gender relations and the distribution of inequality and power in the country of origin and the host country, which have a controlling influence on how men and women – and other identities – relate to their "homeland" and to the conflict or situation of human rights abuses there (Al-Ali, 2007). In order to thoroughly analyse the way in which the possibilities for women's mobilisation and participation has evolved in the space provided by conflict, repression, diaspora and post-conflict situations, consideration must be given to the ideologies and gender hierarchies that were prevalent prior to forced displacement and the prevailing ones in the countries of exile and diaspora.

In order to see the contributions to peace, memory and reconciliation made by women in exile, as a result of seeking refuge in another country and migration, it is useful to look at how they have related to conflict and the multiplicity of roles they have played through the example of different diasporas, for example, from Colombia, Venezuela, Bosnia, Rwanda, Chile and the Kurdish and Tamil diasporas.

EXACERBATED GENDER AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

In their study "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", published by the World Bank in 2000, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler asserted that in countries that have experienced violent conflict and have significant diasporas abroad the risk of renewed conflict is up to six times higher (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000). The authors also argue that diasporas tend to adopt positions that are more hard-line and extreme than those in the country of origin regarding armed conflict and the actors involved since they do not personally experience the violence that they help to create. Over and above this prevailing yet contested paradigm, it is true that conflict diasporas, especially ethno-national ones, may undergo a process of reification and radicalisation of their identity and attachment to the "homeland" or nation by retaining and amplifying this adherence, in spite of the physical distance and the unlikelihood of either travelling or returning to the territory of origin (Al-Ali, 2007).

Numerous diasporas are in fact very much involved both ideologically and materially in nationalist projects in their countries of origin, which can be emancipatory and democratic or ethnic, supremacist or exclusive (Werbner, 2002), so that, in the case of the latter, national and ethnic identities continue to play a fundamental role as a functional instrument in being able to define who is part of the community or nation and who is excluded. This imagined community, together with its diasporic replica, is based on a determination to be exclusive in that it seeks to unite an "us" as opposed to a "them" by building a conditional ideology of belonging that is exclusive to members who fulfil certain conditions. Exclusion will relate to pre-existing forms based on gender subordination and this will be an essential factor in the formation of ethnic and national communities and groups for men and women (Fouron and Glick Schiller, 2001).

Gender hierarchies will accordingly need to be maintained and even reinforced to ensure the continuity of the group by limiting the autonomy, freedom of choice and social maturity of the physical and cultural reproducers of the group, namely women. In particular when the right to belong is transmitted through birth, it will be necessary to ensure the survival and "purity" of the community or nation by implementing policies to physically, morally and ideologically control reproduction and sexuality (Yuval Davis, 1997). In the case of LGBTI+ people, this link between reproduction, identity production and commitment to the project will further generate more exclusion as both conservative nationalisms and most nations and ethno-national diasporas have been built with and shaped by a context of almost compulsory heterosexuality (Spike Peterson, 1999). These individuals will be disciplined and/or face punishment along with a jungle of legal and bureaucratic red tape in the form

of ID, citizenship, residence and nationality requirements that reward marriage and other equivalent unions, in addition to immigration regulations (Wesling, 2008).

Not all identity building based on nationalism reinforces traditional roles, however. As discussed above, exceptional circumstances can also extend the range of scenarios in the dispute for space, empowerment and the break with gender stereotypes. Highlighting the complexity of building a participative identity for women, i.e. the position from which each one builds her presence and involvement at a given moment in a particular space, can be helpful in explaining why diaspora women support political causes and enterprises whose methods include insurgency, armed struggle, war and terrorism.

FUELLING CONFLICT FROM THE DIASPORA

Although the many ways in which women relate to the political and premeditated use of violence have historically been overlooked, due to the deep-rooted representation of women as pure and beautiful souls and men as warriors, there are numerous examples that challenge this cliché. In the case, for example, of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, in addition to not adopting the roles assigned to them by patriarchal tradition, women are also noted for their political, social and intellectual activity in solidarity movements with Kurdistan as well as in women's rights advocacy and the denouncing of gender violence. One of the more characteristic aspects of this community in exile is how Kurdish women have become highly visible and participate at both the community level and at the symbolic and formal level through the formulas of male-female co-representation that prevail in the structures under the umbrella, or that share the same ideology, of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). It is also well known that a large part of this diaspora is committed to supporting and funding the Kurdish liberation movement (Baser, 2011), whose HPG and YJA Star autonomous women's guerrilla organisations have been confronting the Turkish government for thirty years, and more recently its support for armed resistance against ISIS in Rojava in Eastern Kurdistan, in what was formally part of Syria.

There are many other examples. As the Independent International Commission on Kosovo pointed out, the Kosovo Albanian diaspora, which includes many women who had previously supported the non-violent civilian movement, played a key role in the emergence and funding of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and in financial donations for the war (Koinova, 2013). Women from the Bosnian and Iraqi communities in exile also actively promoted armed groups in their respective conflicts. In the case of Bosnia, "many women refugees who managed to escape before the onset of the worst violence organised collections

and donations of money and goods" (Al-Ali, 2007) to support the war efforts of the men, together with women who were also in the Bosnian ranks, fighting in the conflict. Women in the Iraqi diaspora have supported different armed actors according to their heterogeneity, some supporting the US-led invasion against Saddam Hussein, others funding the Iraqi insurgency against US forces, and many others in their commitment to peace from within women's parties and organisations or forming part of larger transnational feminist organisations like Women in Black.

One of the most representative contexts is the conflict in north-western Sri Lanka between the Tamil pro-independence guerrilla, the LTTE, and the government, a civil war that began in the 80s and was fought up until 2009. The Tamil diaspora's support for the LTTE came not only through economic remittances and financial support from abroad, which was estimated at 60% of its funds (Alison, 2009), but also in the use of the image of women fighters and their sacrifices as an element of propaganda and to legitimise their armed activity abroad. As is currently happening with Kurdish women guerrilla fighters and, up until recently, Colombian female fighters through webpages like "Mujer Fariana" that have already been taken down, the LTTE undertook a large number of propaganda campaigns, including a website dedicated to the female fighters of the Tamil Tigers and interviews with the international media, to promote support for the Tamil cause from the diaspora and help ensure the continuity of their economic contributions (Wood, 2019).

The reality in which women relate to their diasporic identity, gender role and violence stemming from conflict is therefore highly complex. Women may decide to distance themselves from peaceful methods and participate in the conflict through military means or even participate in peace movements and promote negotiations to bring conflict to an end, while at the same time providing support to armed actors, as described in the Kurdish diaspora.

6

DIASPORA WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING, MEMORY, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

6. DIASPORA WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING, MEMORY, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Transitional justice processes have historically failed to provide for mechanisms that facilitate the participation of refugees and exiles ("Mujeres de Guatemala", 2015). Moreover, the role of diasporas in peacebuilding and in the opportunities that migration can bring about for conflict resolution and prevention is clearly undervalued in host societies, according to researchers involved in the DIASPEACE project (Diasporas for Peace: Patterns, Trends and Potential of Long-distance Diaspora Involvement in Conflict Settings. Case Studies from the Horn of Africa), who attribute this lack of interest to prejudice and general assumptions about the complex and ambiguous role of diasporas and exiles in conflicts in the countries of origin (Sinatti et al, 2010). Within all of this there is very little literature, apart from the occasional field study, on the role played by diaspora women in peacebuilding, an area in which gender analysis has yet to be normalised.

We do know, however, that in conflict settings, women take advantage of rifts in gender hierarchies to make inroads into the public space, often from the legitimacy conferred by various social categories, such as wives, mothers or widows, and also by dissociating from permitted or expected subjects and acting as spokespersons against war and human rights abuses and violence, as peace activists, union, peasant organisation and community leaders and human rights defenders. One of the distinctive features of the political behaviour of women during conflicts is the frequency with which they organise against militarism and violence, either in peace organisations or separately by forming local and transnational women-only groups (Cockburn, 2007), such as the aforementioned International Network of Women in Black Against War, which brings together numerous women's organisations from around the world under the banner of feminism, pacifism, anti-militarism and women's rights.

Women also play an essential role in restoring interpersonal connectedness and building alliances and bridges that pave the way for achieving peace, seen in the case of intergroup dialogues, in particular in inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, one example being the talks between Hutus and Tutsis, which included women, from the diaspora in Europe. On the other hand, the transformation of gender roles that have facilitated conflict becomes a critical factor in preventing the non-repetition of conflict. In spite of this, gender analysis continues to be largely excluded or marginal (Duncanson, 2016) in peacebuilding and memory activities and in the search for justice in cases of gross and large-scale abuses of human rights. Women continue to face numerous obstacles to their participation in

negotiation processes and recognition of their specific role in peacebuilding, despite the UN Security Council's approval of the ground breaking resolution 1325 in October 2000, which not only recognised the distinct impact of war and conflict on women, but also called for incorporating their presence, voice and experiences in all areas of peacebuilding, including violence prevention, peace negotiations, disarmament, peacekeeping, humanitarian operations and post-conflict reconstruction.[4] This resolution focuses not only on the protection of women, but also their involvement as political subjects. Although the resolution includes no explicit reference to diasporas as relevant actors, they are mentioned in the document published by the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security two years after the approval of the 1325 resolution (UN WPS, 2002), as well as in the National Action Plans of various European countries, as in the case of the Netherlands.[5]

Progress in mainstreaming the presence of women in general in formal conflict resolution procedures over the last twenty years has nevertheless been slow. For example, women accounted for 13% of the negotiators, 6% of the mediators and 6% of the signatories in peace processes between 1992 and 2019.[6] Subsequent to the adoption of the UN resolution, and according to the same sources, women were included among the negotiators, signatories and witnesses in only 3 out of 10 peace processes. And this despite the fact that the participation of civil society groups, including women's organisations, makes a peace agreement 64% less likely to fail (Nilsson, 2012: 258). Their exclusion has also led to the mobilisation of women from, for example, the Afghan, Syrian and Lebanese diasporas to demand their right to participate in all aspects of the peace talks in order to reach agreement and put an end to the wars devastating their countries.

In cases like the diasporas from Chile and Nicaragua, on the other hand, exile resulting from conflict or persecution by dictatorial or authoritarian governments can also be a springboard for feminist networking in the host country, either by eschewing the control that the diaspora may have over their bodies and sexuality, the male dynamics of political organisations in exile or through contact with other feminist organisations and women in the diaspora and in the country of origin and/or host country. Women will thereby have a collective political impact on dialogue, resolution, democratisation and post-conflict reconstruction procedures through initiatives for the construction and transmission of memory narratives whereby they are not excluded from the official narrative or from denouncing human rights abuses during

4. PeaceWomen, UNSCR 1325.
5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (2012). Dutch National Action Plan (2012-2015) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace & Security.
6. Council on Foreign Relations. Data on Women's Participation in Peace Processes.

the war and the search for reparation and justice. In this regard, the most paradigmatic case is that of the contributions made by women in the Colombian diaspora.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

In the same way that polarisation and division can be transferred in a more exacerbated form to communities abroad, distance from the conflict and diaspora mobilisation can provide an opportunity to infuse realistic ideas and other demands and recommendations in peace processes (PILPG, 2009). Likewise, diaspora activism and institutional programmes help to prepare and train migrant, refugee and exile communities to participate in these negotiation processes. Nevertheless, while formal participation of women in peace processes, as mentioned above, is already scarce, the inclusion of diaspora voices and initiatives is even less frequent.

The top-down 'one-size-fits-all' approach of many negotiation processes and formal talks, which follows the worn-out logic of considering just armed men as the actors of war that one sits down with to make peace, often excludes civil society actors, which includes the diaspora, despite the importance of unofficial encounters and initiatives and those that take place in parallel and are much less visible than formal negotiations, for achieving lasting peace (Lundy and McGovern, 2008). This elitism has led to growing criticism of negotiating tables as the focal point in these processes and a shift in the focus towards this other type of more participatory and inclusive encounters that build bridges between representatives and influential individuals in communities in conflict. It is in spaces like these that diasporas often find a way to participate in peacebuilding efforts in their countries of origin.

Some of the most representative cases in this regard are those of Colombian, Afghan and Syrian women, who have played a key role in denouncing exclusion from the respective negotiation processes and been at the forefront in calling for the voice and demands of women to be included in peace building processes in their countries of origin.

In the case of Colombia, the mobilisation of the diaspora and especially of exiles throughout the negotiation process between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government, which formally began in 2012 in Havana (Cuba), were highly significant, although the results achieved have not matched this. In the process towards a negotiated solution, which culminated in the signing of the Peace Agreements in 2016, women played an extremely active role and attained ground-breaking achievements in terms of women's participation in the formal rounds of talks and negotiations, including the appointment of

women plenipotentiaries by both the guerrillas and the government and the setting up of a Subcommittee On Gender that was responsible for incorporating more than 100 specific measures into the negotiation agenda.[7]

In addition to this advocacy capacity, pressure was also exerted from the diaspora and, above all, from the exile community, which had already been organising for their demands to be included in the Victims and Land Restitution Law, passed in 2011. After the start of the peace negotiations, groups of Colombian refugees in EU countries mobilised and organised numerous forums to submit their specific proposals to the negotiating delegations (Garrido and Vidal, 2018). The Subcommittee On Gender's agenda did not however include the participation of exiled women or their needs and demands. Despite the fact that the negotiating committee (Mesa) recognised that the selection of the victims' delegations should "reflect the entire scope of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law throughout the internal conflict and take into account the different sectors of society and populations," it ultimately failed to account for the situation and circumstances of the refugee population and, more specifically, that of the women in exile (Asociación de Mujeres de Guatemala et al., 2015). Faced with this situation, women political refugees and exiles, especially in Spain, as well as in London and Stockholm, undertook a series of actions to denounce, self-organise and advocate that their demands be considered at the negotiating table (Mut Montalvà, 2018), in particular in point number 5 of the Agreements, in reference to the Victims. This experience of self-organisation continues to operate with the aim of including the collective memory of diaspora women in the official reports of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, which was set up in 2017 and thereby contribute to the clarification of the facts.

Until the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021, the Afghan government, the US and Taliban leaders were engaged in a round of talks in Doha (Qatar) in which much of the pressure to include women in the negotiating delegations came from the diaspora. During a high-level meeting in Moscow in 2019, the women's organisation Afghan Women's Network issued a list of six points with demands for the negotiators at the table, which also included the demands of Afghan women in the diaspora.[8] In November 2020, a group of 50 Afghan women from civil society organisations, the government and the Afghan diaspora met in Dubai for the Afghan Women Leaders' Peace Summit, organised by the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and the Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace (AMIP), to discuss the

7. UN Women (2018). '100 measures that incorporate the gender perspective in the Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace'.
8. Afghan Women's Network (2019). "Afghan Women Six Point Agenda for Moscow Peace Talks".

need to include women in the failed negotiation process.[9] A dozen women in exile attended the meeting, including Sonia Ahmadi, a resident of Norway.

The talks resumed in January with hardly any substantive increase in the number of women, however, despite some tentative progress. On March 18, a three-day conference was convened in Moscow that included only one woman, activist Habiba Sarabi, in a 12-person delegation of government and other Afghan political leaders.[10] The unwillingness of the parties to include women put the onus on the international community and its influential actors, including the diaspora, to guarantee their presence at the talks and ensure that progress on women's rights was not made contingent on a potential agreement with the Taliban.[11]

Similar is the situation with the Syrian peace talks, which were started in 2012 by the UN. Syrian women and LGTBI+ people have been active on the frontline since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, documenting and denouncing human rights abuses and violations of international law, promoting local peace initiatives and taking charge of distributing humanitarian aid to displaced people and refugees. They have also condemned the situation of prospective Syrian and Kurdish asylum seekers at Europe's borders and claimed their right to participate in the settlement process and peace negotiations, for which different initiatives have emerged to promote the inclusion of women and their voice and demands in the negotiations promoted by both the UN and the more recent talks sponsored by Russia in Astana (Kazakhstan).[12] One of these organisations is the Syrian Women's Political Movement (SWPM) which, encouraged by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), was established in Paris in October 2017 with the aim of achieving a female participation of at least 30% on all levels and in all spheres of the peace process in Syria.[13]

The setting up of the SWPM was largely undertaken by Syrian diaspora women, many of them living in Canada, the US and Europe. Among the objectives set out in its founding document is the desire to expand the organisation's presence not only in Syria, but also in

9. Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (2020), "Peace needs women! Afghan women are urging for their inclusion in the peace process".
10. Reuters in Kabul (18/03/2021). "Afghan peace summit includes just one female delegate".
11. The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (14/12/2020). "What Afghan Women Leaders Want You to Know about the Peace Talks".
12. Bela Kapur (24/05/2018). "New Syrian Women's Political Movement hopes to bring a feminist approach to peace and transition". Blogs: London School of Economics.
13. WILPF, (2019). "Bringing Syrian Women's Voices to the Table".

neighbouring countries that host the majority of Syrian refugees, and in the diaspora.[14] Other advocacy actions organised by the movement include a side event to the 41st session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2019, where they presented recommendations on peacebuilding in Syria. Despite UN announcements on the need to include women in peace talks, however, women have tended to either play a very small part or have been systematically excluded from the different rounds of negotiations to end the war in Syria (O'Keefe, 2020).

In 2019, the UN finally included 23 women in the group of 50 people from civil society who sit on the Constitutional Committee, which is tasked with drafting a new constitution for Syria .[15]

INTER-GROUP DIALOGUE IN DIVIDED DIASPORAS

The predominance in recent decades of intra-state conflicts, with the increasing involvement of actors and players from other states, together with political factors, including the ethnic and cultural divide (Grasa, 2007), highlight the importance of initiatives that seek to bring together groups from within and across divided societies, as ethnic and/or religious divisions operating in the countries of origin can at the same time be reproduced in the European diaspora and produce similar patterns (Orjuela, 2017), as in the cases of the Sinhalese and Tamil communities in Sri Lanka, and Hutu and Tutsi communities in the case of Rwanda.

It is biased, however, to focus only on the divisions that diasporas export to host countries, as they are equally capable of creating platforms for dialogue and of building relationships not only with external political actors, but also within the diaspora itself. They can therefore play a constructive role in rebuilding the social fabric and fostering co-existence within their own communities in host countries by bringing people together through shared objectives and common values. Even though their aim is not peace building as such, any activities that promote the improvement of general living conditions and those of women in host countries have a unifying effect within the diaspora and can lead to constructive attempts to create shared identities and mobilise people towards common goals, thereby mitigating conflicting identities related to the country of origin (Sinatti et al, 2010).

Intergroup dialogue plays a vital part within these conflict-resolution initiatives as it works to eliminate prejudice, bias and mistrust, overcome the major obstacle of intergroup

14. "Participants of the first conference of the Syrian Women's Political Movement, Paris, 22-24 October 2017".
15. Web Middle Eye Institute (MEI@75), (06/01/2021). "Syria's Constitutional Committee: The Devil in the Detail".

resentment (Tint, Chirimwami and Sarkis, 2014) and break down misconceptions about the "others" and rebuild bonds.

In relation to the role that women can play in these cohesive processes, by prioritising – as noted above – relationships and mutual understanding over conflict there is a greater (socialised) potential for common action, cooperation and relationship building across divides (Busbridge and Winarnita, 2015). Some women appear to be more willing and eager to build bridges and mobilise as women, rather than in terms of their ethnic and religious affiliation or political parties (Al-Ali, 2007). As women are perceived to be less significant in political processes, their transgression of ''talking to the other side'' that can prevail in divided communities is less threatening than if men do it, according to the same author. And yet, as is mentioned above, women are under-represented in intergroup dialogue initiatives in the diaspora.

Women themselves justify the lack of women's participation in these particular initiatives, according to the studies carried out by Busbridge and Winarnita, with the argument that the dialogues are too "political" and that they are perceived as a "male-centred space". This perception may be based on certain constructs of community and the perceived politicization of diaspora projects. The combination of strongly essentialised identities in the context of ethnic and national conflicts, together with highly bureaucratic conceptions of community, may reinforce exclusion from the outset of women in these programmes.

In the case of the inter-ethnic dialogues that took place within the Rwandan diaspora in countries like the Netherlands, France and the US from 2003 to 2011, they were again very male-dominant spaces in which women played a secondary role. The women participants, who were very active at the community and grassroots level in their host countries, requested a forum of their own, which resulted in a day of meetings and dialogue that took place near Barcelona and that one of the organisers and attendees, the Catalan lawyer Jordi Palou-Loverdós, described in an interview for the report as "the most powerful in terms of methodology and different from the rest". Around thirty Hutu, Tutsi and Twa women attended the platform, together with relatives of Catalan and Spanish aid workers murdered in Rwanda and Congo. "The most complicated thing was for them to talk about the past. They said 'we cannot talk about the past as something abstract, without talking about what happened to us, what we've gone through and how it has affected us'. It was like the public hearing of a truth and justice commission, they needed catharsis and to lay bare the pain and suffering," Palou-Loverdós said.

EXILE, TRAUMA AND DIASPORIC MILITANCY

In the early years of exile or forced displacement, the traumatic consequences of violence experienced in the country of origin and during transit to a host country are as much a determining factor for participation as social class, ethnicity or religion, sexuality, gender identity or political affiliation. The trauma, which people can relive in dreams, flashbacks, intrusive memories, post-traumatic stress syndrome or anxiety in situations that take them back to the triggering event, even many years later (Banyanga, Björkqvist and Österman, 2017), can bring about a visceral attitude that is anything but constructive towards conflict, towards the context in the country of origin and in relation to participation in peace and dialogue initiatives, and one that is very different from those who have not directly experienced violence (Al-Ali, 2007).

A significant case in this regard is the recent Venezuelan diaspora in Spain, which has increased twofold in the last six years as a result, to a greater or lesser extent, of a severe economic crisis and the "systematic violation of human rights and civil and political liberties", according to María Teresa Urreiztieta, a university professor and activist from Caracas living in Spain.

Urreiztieta, who has a PhD in Psychology and researches social movements and collective action, believes that, for many Venezuelans, it is too early to even think about diasporic activism. "The people are too hurt and their feelings of dispossession and pain still run very deep. In many cases, we're talking about a middle class that didn't take part politically until the series of protests in 2017-2018 or families separated by social conflict or affected by repression, who tend to get involved in issues related more to humanitarian aid, but don't want to know anything about politics in Venezuela. They are still not ready to start the healing process or overcoming the hatred and resentment; it is all still too heavy. And until that heals, it will be difficult to work from the diaspora towards coexistence and change", Urreiztieta said in an interview for this report.

In addition to this, there are specific situations that women and LGTBI+ people have experienced in conflicts and in contexts of large-scale human rights abuses, such as sexual violence, homophobia, lesbophobia and transphobia, land dispossession, displacement, the breaking of community and solidarity ties and the control of bodies, which can determine an individual's predisposition and possibilities for political and collective action. This is true even in cases in which exiled individuals possess a developed feminist awareness. One textbook case is that of the recent Nicaraguan feminist diaspora, exiled

due to the governmental repression of a wave of protests against the government of Daniel Ortega and its criminalisation of opposing social movements, among which feminism stands out.

The women of the Feminist Network for Nicaragua ("Red de Feministas de Nicaragua*")*, in which Nicaraguan migrant and exiled feminists in Zaragoza, Barcelona, Madrid, Galicia and Murcia, as well as indigenous feminists who lived in the country, are involved, express themselves in a similar way to Urreiztieta, pointing out that "one focus of the Network is emotional support and self-care, [as we are] convinced that, in order to be an activist, one first needs to work through the trauma and heal the wounds".[16]

Community organisations in the diaspora can help to channel and heal the trauma that stems from violence in the country of origin and violence in transit, although they can also play a role in controlling and restricting the individual possibilities of refugees and exiles to organise themselves beyond the hegemonic interpretations of gender roles and in groups opposed to the government (Al-Ali, 2007).

REPRESSION, SOCIAL CONTROL AND FEMINIST SELF-ORGANISATION OF DIASPORA WOMEN

Leaving behind authoritarianism, conflict and/or the massive scale of the violations of the rights and freedoms of individuals may guarantee new spaces and opportunities for political participation and peace work that are far removed from the "disposition of silence" imposed by violence and repression in the public space. However, transnationalism is not only beneficial to activism by exiles. Government authorities also routinely permeate borders in order to pursue threats and exercise some degree of "governmentality" over their citizens abroad (Moss, 2016). According to Moss, one of the consequences of the relatively little attention paid to diasporas' relations with dictatorial or authoritarian governments in the country of origin is the difficulty of understanding the mechanisms that continue to make these groups vulnerable to state repression after exile by impeding the exercise of their political rights, either officially and formally or through intelligence services and expeditious methods, such as covert assassination. Examples of this are the attempted deportation from Spain, at Morocco's request, of the Saharawi activist Hassana Aalia, sentenced to life imprisonment in Morocco for the Gdeim Izik protest camp[17] and, from the

16. Fernández, June (19/02/2020). "Red Feminista por Nicaragua: 'Nuestro violador es Daniel Ortega'". Píkara Magazine.
17. Olías, Laura and Sánchez, Gabriela (07/10/2015). "La policía pretende expulsar a un activista saharaui condenado a cadena perpetua por Marruecos". *ElDiario.es.*

gender perspective, the execution in Paris of three important female militants of the Kurdish diaspora in 2013 in the middle of the negotiation process between the PKK and Turkey, carried out – although it was never formally clarified – by an agent linked to the Turkish deep state.[18] In the case of Chilean refugees, the tentacles of the Pinochet regime, which caused between 200,000 to half a million people to flee the country between 1973 and 1987, took the form of surveillance and assassination attempts in the host countries where they settled (Rojas Silva, 2019).

In the case of Chile, male-dominant gender norms in the political arena and the subtle exclusion of women activists who formed part of the Chilean diaspora are also very important in that they replicate the division between the private and public/political spheres that operates in society where the presence of women is perceived as an illegitimate intrusion in a space that is alien to them (Pateman, 1997). The Chilean exile occurred at a time when the international migration of women was still conceived as a response to male migration, meaning that from the outset the status of women, as accompanying family members of male refugees of the dictatorship, was secondary to that of men (Rojas Silva, 2019), despite the fact that estimates by Rojas Silva indicate that 33.18% of the stimulus for exile was triggered by women and that exodus as a form of punishment among refugees in France was divided almost equally between men and women (Moreno, 2019). Women were therefore seen to accompany militant activists in spite of their presence in political organisations in exile, which was basically coordinated through associations and the same political parties that had been active during the Allende government and formed the Popular Unity alliance. As Maider Moreno has pointed out, this implied the replication of the hierarchies and inequalities between men and women that existed within the parties, in which demands for gender equality were practically non-existent. Despite the clear differences in status, which gave priority to men as militants with full rights, women were politically active in exile, "especially through a thankless, domestic and invisible militancy", during which they also developed coping strategies as a way to handle their position of lower status (Moreno, 2019), which in many cases involved the separation of militant couples, renouncing joint militancy and joining feminist collectives and associations in the host country.

This conscious coordination within the local women's movement, either through their own organisations or by joining existing ones, which also occurred, for example, in the case of exiles and refugees from Colombia, enables diaspora women to direct their attention to

18. Calejero García, Alba (06/07/2019). "La jineología y el asesinato sin esclarecer de tres activistas kurdas en París". *ElDiario.es.*

feminist mechanisms for bringing an end to the violence, but also to influence institutions and social movements in both the country of origin and the host country (Miralles and Rodríguez, 2017).

DIASPORA WOMEN IN TRUTH SEEKING, MEMORY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

"Women in the patriarchal culture already live a kind of exile from ourselves as we are the 'other', with no memory, no history, without our own genealogy, in a culture made by and for another," quoted Chilean feminist activist Ximena Bedregal in a dialogue with another exiled compatriot and quoted by Belén Rojas Silva (Rojas Silva, 2018).

Memory is considered a mainstay of transitional justice, the extraordinary processes related to truth, justice and reparation that take place after periods of conflict, dictatorship and repression to address the violence and massive human rights abuses that have occurred. In the search for an "official" truth, however, the initiatives and forums are designed and imposed directly from the top down by governments that stem from post-conflict scenarios and are mostly governed by a particular economic, ethnic, religious or gender elite, so that the process of establishing the narrative may serve the particular interests of the government in question and, by extension, either deliberately or inadvertently exclude certain social groups, including diasporas. Even the so-called truth commissions, which is the most important formal mechanism that a state can set up for truth recovery and memory processes, often reproduce structural patterns of inequality and subordination, leading to the de facto expulsion of voices and experiences (Ní Aoláin, Haynes and Cahn, 2011). The immediate consequence of this exclusion is the need to implement popular and participatory initiatives that give rise to the emergence of a collective memory that originates in civil society and that either challenge or supplement the official record and narrative.

In the diaspora, the construction of this memory through the reconstruction of narratives about the events that led to forced displacement is often a way of participating in the process that is taking place in the society of origin. It also offers a symbolic recognition and link to people's lives that were interrupted and a connection to family members who disappeared or were killed and to communities left behind. As in the case of Bosnia, where for example the diaspora in Switzerland organises peace marches every year between Tuzla and Srebrenica during the events commemorating the massacre, exile communities participate in the politics of memory by involving civil society in the host countries, as well as the population in the country of origin (Karabegović, 2019).

Conversely, the continued use in many contexts of violence and repression in the transitional period by the State and armed or paramilitary groups that continue to operate, albeit to a lesser degree, can act to suppress people, especially those who have limited access to the public space, from giving testimony in mechanisms that are established, such as truth commissions. In the case of the diaspora, the distance that can sometimes prevent counter-narratives provided in exile from being taken into account can also facilitate the collection of testimonies, as the threat of violence does not operate in the same way.

Nevertheless, the prevailing social order of gender in which women occupy a certain place in the story is maintained, even in memorialisation initiatives and the construction of counter-narratives that oppose or broaden official initiatives, so that only that which fits the roles and hierarchy of gender and does not disrupt the established order will be recalled (Troncoso and Piper, 2015). The processes of transition to democracy in Argentina and Chile, for example, paved the way for the gathering of other narratives and memories from the diaspora, although the issue of gender was omitted in the initial stage of the memory initiatives just after the transition to democracy began in the 1990s.

In the case of Chile, memories that were constructed in exile with the setting up of the male-dominant National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation in 1992. Men were the militant activists, the bodies and voices who had stories to tell, while women were the co-protagonists, the "other", of exile (Moreno, 2019). The voices of women, as well as those in exile, were not heard until the reports of the National Commission on Political Prisoners and Torture in 2003 and 2011, which provided the testimony of 3,400 women, almost all of whom stated they had been subjected to sexual torture during detention.[19]

But, again, if one context has become an example in terms of memorialisation, it is the entire process carried out by Colombian women and sexual dissidents in the country and from various places of exile in Europe. Against this backdrop, exiles and refugees in Europe promoted projects like the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora,[20] a citizens' initiative that emerged in 2014 with the support of organisations like Conciliation Resources and the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) to document the experience of war and migration with a view to contributing to formal truth, memory and reconciliation procedures in Colombia, which were not set in place until a decree was passed by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and

19. Freixas, Meritxell (10/09/2020). "La última batalla contra la dictadura de Pinochet: tres mujeres luchan en los tribunales para que se condenen las torturas sexuales". *El Diario.es*.
20. Conciliation Resources (2017). 'Comisión de Verdad, Memoria y Reconciliación de las Mujeres Colombianas en la Diáspora'.

Non-Repetition in 2017, within the framework of the agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

The Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora, now renamed Diaspora Woman, collects testimonies in the cities where it is active, including London, Stockholm and Barcelona, using its own methodology called "active memory" that is based on active listening, dialogue between the narrator and the listener/s, and flexible participation.[21]

Other contributions have also been made from exile in Spain, including the publication *Rompiendo el silencio desde el exilio* (Breaking the silence in exile), launched by the Collective of women refugees, exiles and migrants, which was set up in Spain in 2004. "For those of us in the diaspora, high priority needs to be given to the fact that the Colombian government openly ignores our rights as victims of the armed conflict and denies us the right to truth, justice and comprehensive reparation, and instead merely offers reparation through administrative channels. We refuse to remain silent and, as subjects of law, we will no longer stand for being deprived of our legal rights", said the authors.[22] All these experiences, in addition to being based on the idea that memory is a form of social, political and cultural action that is interpretive and relational, not only bring together and reconstruct narratives, but also actively aim at destabilising and questioning hegemonic memories and transforming the gender order and stereotypes of female victims and their capacity for agency.

The construction of counter-narratives by the diaspora can also challenge hegemonic narratives about the situation that women have suffered and continue to suffer in conflicts. In this regard, the work of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo residing in the UK and Belgium who work to offer a more realistic and less disempowering image of their experiences is also interesting, especially given the risk of their being instrumentalised as mere victims (Godin, 2017).

21. Web Mujer Diáspora, "¿Qué hacemos?"/Methodology.

22. A collective website for refugees, exiles and migrants (05/09/2019). Publication of *Rompiendo el silencio desde el exilio*.

7

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FACING DIASPORA WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

7. CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FACING DIASPORA WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING

In a context in which identities are no longer conceived as an indisputable and inviolable whole, and in which the border between what is local and transnational is blurred, there is renewed debate about the contribution of diasporas as social movements and/or organised political movements in terms of promoting or slowing down integration in the receiving countries. The very concepts of integration, assimilation and hybridisation are challenged and complex diasporic loyalties can create mistrust in a context of global securitisation stemming from the fight against terrorism in which migrants and asylum seekers, diasporas and their descendants are seen and identified as potential threats to the values, national identity and security of the country of origin and host country due to their dimension as transnational non-state actors with leverage, ample evidence of which is given throughout this report.

The legal and identity limbo that migrants, diaspora communities and racialized persons experience due to the criminalisation of migration and the hardening of access to citizenship and residence, as well as the fortification and militarisation of borders that constantly violates the right to refuge, increase the incidence and impact of violence and traumatic experiences suffered during transit and create situations of extreme precariousness and existential insecurity, which make participation and mobilisation in the receiving country practically impossible. Moreover, the general curtailment of civil and political rights and freedoms in the EU reflected in the broadened scope of anti-terrorist legislation and condemned, among others, by organisations like Amnesty International, specifically affects those who were already second-class citizens, in particular as a result of the singling out and criminalisation of certain communities like the Muslim population and refugees and those from territories with a high incidence of jihadist groups.

The institutional, everyday and symbolic violence that stems from this stigmatisation has a specific impact on women, as in the case of the debate and prohibition of cultural and symbolic features like the veil in its different forms in certain European countries like France and the consequences of EU directives to control the financing of terrorism, which ultimately affect the funding of women's organisations financed from within the diaspora. As we will also see in this case, the challenges and obstacles facing participation, mobilisation and transnational activism in diasporas and communities in exile as a result of this context have created new scenarios for resistance and for migrant women to organise and demand their rights.

DUAL ALLEGIANCE, CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Much of the current debate on diasporas stems from different approaches to the origin of these formations and what they constitute, for example, with views that give diasporas a pre-political, natural character, derived solely or primarily the direct result of migration or exile to those that consider the formation of diasporas as being a complex process of identity building and political mobilisation (Adamson, 2008). This dissension ranges from more narrow views of diasporas, which give them a distinct dual identity with respect to the country of origin and the host country, marked by the dynamics of assimilation, integration, acculturation and/or self-exclusion, to much more expansive concepts that see diasporas as a phenomenon that goes beyond any causal connection with territorial displacement. According to Tina Campt and Deborah Thomas, notions of origin and authenticity are often deployed in the conception of diasporas that often reflect insufficiently or through excessively strict binary frameworks of analysis like home/host or displacement/homeland that impede a deeper appreciation of the more complex dynamics that undergird dual identity formation in communities in exile (Campt and Thomas, 2008).

For those who are critical of discourses that take fixed origins for granted and recreate identity in terms of essence (substance), identities undergo a process of permanent configuration according to one's background, "the events and experiences which we go through and absorb and that bring and leave us with meaning" (Brah, 2011), including colonial processes, racism, otherness and integration processes. It is bodies that bear borders, as Gloria Anzaldúa and other feminist leaders marked by the diaspora have proposed. This is especially so for queer people, who already dispute the notion of "original identity" and constitute an exile or transit that goes beyond territorial displacement, as in the case of trans women who migrate from Central America to Mexico and the US and "are the product of various intertwined histories and cultures and belong to various 'homes', and to no 'home' in particular" (López Fernández, 2018).

Nevertheless, the dual identity of diasporas formulated in classical terms of loyalty to the country of origin and the host country and measured by concepts such as integration, assimilation and identity essentialisation remains a source of suspicion and triggers reactions that impact the diasporic ability to mobilise and participate. Some authors argue that first-generation migrants and refugees tend to be less interested in integration as long as they have support networks and resources that allow them to maintain their cultural identity, so they may only choose to participate in the host society through their financial and educational needs. The burden of finding a balance between the pressure to assimilate from

the “host” culture and the pressure from their families and communities to maintain their historical identity would therefore fall on post-diaspora groups and the younger generations of migrants (Tint, Chirimwami and Sarkis, 2014). Nevertheless, several studies cited by José Itzigsohn and Silvia Giorguli Salcedo show that first generation migrants maintain numerous ties with their societies of origin while adapting to the host country, thereby creating transnational social spaces that cross physical borders (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Salcedo, 2005), so that approaches like the above would continue to reflect very limited views regarding the behaviour of diasporic identities, their complexity and everything that they are subjected to.

In the words of the researcher of Saharawi origin, Emgaili Jatri, “the home of the diaspora is the identity, the homeland, the place of belonging and origin. Yet surely for second and third-generation Sahrawis, home and country are a dream that may not exist, other than in our imagination. The ‘homeland’ is an idealised place that arouses feelings of sadness and anger, a country that exists only in the memory of grandmothers and grandfathers. Many of us live and have lived in different cultures, adapting [to] new customs and ways of life, constructing varying and different identities from those of our parents and ancestors. Diasporas are heterogeneous spaces and experiences, even though they are involved in the construction of a common ‘we’”.

Diaspora behaviour with respect to the host country is also gendered due to the fact that the encounter with the host society is usually different for men and women, and the status of diaspora women may undergo a change for the better when the gender regime in the receiving country is less strict. On the other hand, many men experience the migration process as a loss of status and a threat to the recognition of everything that masculinity stands for (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Salcedo, 2005), like power, obedience, hierarchy and the obligation to financially support the family. As a result, men tend to focus on the longing to return to their society of origin and to regain the status and privileges lost through migration, whereas women adapt more quickly to the norms and values of the host country, fearing that more traditional gender roles in their country of origin will deprive them of their independence and autonomy if they return.

For those who live the diaspora, this dual or even triple identity, which is characteristic of the transnational condition, implies distancing themselves from the commitment to and concept of the nation that the nation-state requires of its citizens, at the same time that, despite their willingness to integrate, they are also called to be loyal to their unique identity (Ben Rafael, 2013). According to this author, the different individual and collective loyalties

cultivated by diasporas can represent a conflict for the states involved, which in response will modify the regulations according to which diasporas and their forms of participation can develop. Initiatives aimed at encouraging diasporas to focus on peacebuilding, such as the aforementioned DIASPEACE, highlight the importance of the diaspora obtaining the recognition and guarantee of fundamental rights in the country of residence as this will condition ways and possibilities for transnational engagement with the country of origin (Sinatti et al., 2010).

These regulatory standards in the receiving state confer a different status to diasporas (temporary residence, permanent residence, refuge, illegal immigrant status), which will have a correlative effect on the degree of integration into the exile community and on individual political participation, and thus a collective impact on the possibilities these groups have of becoming politically active diasporas (Al-Ali, 2007). For example, access to dual citizenship allows or facilitates a high degree of mobility and political involvement, and this feeling of political and economic security in the country of refuge, according to the author, can generate the confidence necessary to create and maintain transnational ties, whereas the feeling of anxiety that refugees and migrants experience in relation to their legal status can play a highly significant role in obstructing their opportunities for engagement and participation. Without the right of permanent residence in the country of refuge, diaspora women will tend to avoid anything that might jeopardize their status and they will be vulnerable to a state's response to activities it considers to be problematic.

Women from the Congolese diaspora in Belgium, for example, have said that they are not interested in getting involved in peacebuilding initiatives in their countries of residence until they obtain permanent residence so as not to jeopardize their legal status (Godin and Chideka, 2010). At the same time, "increasingly restrictive immigration and asylum regimes in European countries mean that many migrants now have no "legal" residence status or work permit in their host country. This "illegality" clearly limits activism in that it makes it more difficult and more dangerous for migrants to occupy a visible place in the public sphere" (Freedman, 2008). Migrant and asylum-seeking women, who reside illegally in countries in Europe but are potential diaspora members, have fortunately continued to lead and organise their own campaigns and mobilisations to demand rights, as in the case of the occupation of former schools,[23] churches and gyms in Spain and France.

23. Catà, Josep (22/04/2018). "Un colectivo de refugiados ocupa la antigua Massana". *El País*.

SECURITISATION OF DIASPORAS, WAR ON TERROR AND THE GENDER IMPACT

"In existing beyond the nation-state with its fixed boundaries and clearly defined categories of inclusion and exclusion, of participatory rights and duties, citizenship and loyalty, diasporas as scattered, uncontained and uncontainable minorities have historically been the target of racialized and xenophobic nationalist imaginings" (Webner, 2002). This dynamic has become more acute and institutionalised as a result of twenty years of the so-called global war on terror, in which ideological and discursive paradigms have emerged that have had a material effect on the way in which certain diasporas are viewed, such as Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" and the "Islamisation of Europe", which is even supported by the Left in countries like France.

Since the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, there has been an intense securitisation of the external borders of the European Union in the face of external migratory flows from non-EU countries, as well as the diasporic and racialized communities already living in Europe. This process of securitisation has led, in the name of the fight against terrorism, to the fortification of Europe's borders, which have become opaque in terms of the safeguarding of human rights and the right to asylum; prolonged states of emergency and the presence of the army on the streets of several European countries; and a process of discourse radicalisation that has led to the mass surveillance of Islamic communities and organisations, the arrest of Arab and non-Arab Muslims, tight control over financial flows to transnational organisations and the country of origin (Adamson, 2006) and the stigmatisation of certain diasporas and specific neighbourhoods where they reside, stoking fear against these communities and making them an "other" that poses a permanent threat to the security and way of life in their host countries (Orjuela, 2017).

Suspicions about the impact of refugee flows on the security of host countries and the roles that active and mobilised diasporas can play in supporting violence already existed prior to the war on terrorism (Adamson, 2006), however, fostered above all by views expressed in reports like the abovementioned one published by the World Bank in 2000 that "diasporas are dangerous because they sometimes harbour rather romanticised attachments to their group of origin and may nurse grievances as a form of asserting continued belonging" (Collier, 2000). They are also usually wealthier than the people in their country of origin and, according to this perspective, a ready market for rebel and insurgent groups touting vengeance and thereby a source of finance for renewed conflict (Omeje, 2007). According to Kenneth Omeje, this idea of diasporas, migrants and refugees as a "danger" rather than

an opportunity for diplomacy and peacebuilding is one that many policy makers in Western governments and major international organisations tend to accept as valid, and the one that often guides migration and diaspora policies.

The construct that some diasporas are an "enemy within" paralyses the social life of the population that is being stigmatized (Rigouste, 2017), in addition to measures specifically carried out to curb any activity perceived as being criminal that may ultimately encompass their political, social and even philanthropic activities. This securitisation of the transnational activity of diasporas has led, for example, to the banning of organisations that also operated in exile in Europe, such as the Kurdish PKK, which is included on the EU's list of terrorist organisations.[24] This prohibition has facilitated the persecution, arrest and imprisonment of Kurdish activists, as well as those of other nationalities, in countries including Germany[25] and Spain.[26]

This apprehension has, in turn, led to a broadening of the scope of opinion-related offences laid down in the criminal code of several European countries in order to prosecute – in theory – attempts to justify terrorism, propaganda and recruitment messaging by violent extremist groups. These criminal reforms have ultimately worsened the exercise of civil liberties in these countries considerably (Amnesty International, 2017) and instilled fear in the more critical members of Muslim diasporas of being watched or persecuted for denouncing state racism and Islamophobia, for example, in social networks (Douhaibi and Amazian, 2019).

The securitisation of Muslim diaspora communities in Europe and their descendants also affects financial flows between political and social organisations in the country of residence and transnational organisations and those of the countries of origin, stemming from so-called "counter terrorism funding" policies, which broaden the legal powers to penalise and prohibit remittances, donations and financial agreements believed to be facilitating money laundering or funding criminal networks and insurgent groups. These global and national policies stem from the recommendations of the Final Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental mechanism established at a G7 summit in 1989 to combat international money laundering and which, after 9/11, also focused on terrorist financing. Their

24. Official Journal of the European Union (08/01/2019). Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/25 of 8 January 2019 amending and updating the list of persons, groups and entities subject to Articles 2, 3 and 4 of Common Position 2001/931/CFSP on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2018/1084.
25. *Associated Press* (18/08/2020). "Germany sentences member of Kurdish PKK group to prison".
26. Sáiz Pardo, Melchor (27/01/2016). "La Policía detiene a ocho españoles y un turco en una operación contra el PKK kurdo". *El Correo*.

implementation has had a significant impact on the right of association and the ability of non-governmental organisations to access funding and aid (Hayes, 2012). Although this has affected the ability of civil society in general to access economic resources that are critical for their continuity, these policies have specifically affected women's, feminist and LGTBI+ activist organisations that receive remittances from Western countries. Highly dependent in general on external funds and often with strained resources, these organisations have very little economic resilience and generally face economic exclusion in their own countries, either because of their small size or because they represent a challenge to the prevailing gender and sexual regime (Duke Law IHR Clinic and Women Peacemakers Program, 2017). Following the lead of countries like Sweden and Norway, the FATF recently began to review policy making and the design of anti-terrorist financial policies to avoid the "unintended consequences[27]" that they have had in civil society and in diasporic women's, feminist and LGTBI+ organisations and their countries of origin, especially the freezing of assets and delays that paralyse the activity of these associations.

This is not the only way in which the securitisation of Muslim diasporas in Europe hits women particularly hard. In the aftermath of 9/11, a dual and incoherent image was projected on Muslim women whereby they were depicted as both victims without agency to be saved from the oppression of men in their communities and as a security threat for wearing different types of headscarf or what in the West is called a "veil". This has resulted in a growing legal and regulatory trend towards the restriction and even prohibition of the veil in public spaces (Ati, 2019), led mainly by France, which in 2004 banned religious symbols in public primary and secondary schools, in 2010 prohibited the wearing of garments that conceal the face in public and, in 2021, continues to debate the use of the hijab, the most common form of veil, and proposes prohibiting its use by minors.[28] The judicialisation of Muslim women's bodies in Europe "contributes to the normalisation of racial and colonial violence" (Edmunds, 2020) and adds to and reinforces the exclusion of the voice and bodies of these women in the public space, thereby seriously affecting their ability to participate.

This process has occurred in several countries in Europe, but again in a particularly representative way in France, in the midst of an intensive debate among feminists and the diaspora and post-diaspora itself and accompanied by protests and resistance by Muslim groups and women, as well as several pioneering white French feminists, such as Christine Delphy and Elisabeth Badinter (Edmunds, 2020).

27. Skoric, Vanja and de Londras, Fiona (23/03/2021). "Protecting Civil Society in Global Counterterrorism: FATF Leads the Way, UN Should Follow". *Just Security*.
28. Val, Eusebio (27/10/2019). "Francia reabre el debate sobre el uso del hiyab y la defensa del laicismo". *La Vanguardia*.

8

DIASPORA ARTICULATION: BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST BONDS

8. DIASPORA ARTICULATION: BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST BONDS

The connections and ties between diaspora women's, feminists and LGTBI+ organisations in the country of residence and the country of origin, together with the global transnational feminist network, clearly help to break the isolation imposed by the abovementioned obstacles –the traumatic experience of migration, "the disposition of silence", machismo, institutional racism and stigmatization – and the barriers to gaining access to the public space and the political agenda (De Tona and Lentin, 2010). This process is often spearheaded by women who were already in leadership roles or feminist activism in their countries of origin (Mügge, 2011).

The end of this report focuses on several examples of how the links that are created between such spaces can greatly enhance the visibility and advocacy capacity of the diaspora in general and the women and LGTBI+ people and their experiences and demands that form part of it. The bonds of solidarity have in particular become more noticeable in the wave of global feminist protests that have become popular in the media and political agendas that both blur and reemphasise the tensions existing at transnational and local level in these struggles. Examples include demonstrations and mobilisation against gender and sexual violence in situations of conflict and in times of "peace"; feminicide; the "Ni una menos" and "Me, too" movements; against the murder of Berta Cáceres, Marielle Franco and other activists, environmentalists and human rights defenders; the fight for legal access to safe abortion in Latin America, which has fixed in people's minds around the world the image of Argentinian diaspora feminists wearing their symbolic green scarves and "manning" the barricades with other feminists from Ireland, Poland, Andorran and El Salvador; the organisations and unions of women domestic workers and care-workers, mostly from diaspora communities and increasingly organised in countries like the UK and Spain, to defend their workplace rights; the rise of anti-racist and decolonial feminism in Western Europe, with very active participation by women from Latin American, black and North African diasporas and post-diasporas, who hold up an uncomfortable mirror on practices and discourses that were hegemonic in European feminism, as in the case of the ban on the veil; European and Latin American networks of sex workers against clandestinity and stigma; international movements against the persecution of non-normative sexualities and for the depathologisation of transsexuality; along with numerous other fronts that begin in distant territories and unite and merge their efforts into local women's and feminist movements through commitment and engagement in the diaspora.

Of particular note in this regard is the institutional and associative support for the demands for justice, memory and reparation for diasporas such as the Colombian diaspora in countries like Sweden, the UK and Spain, as well as the strong foothold of Colombian women's collectives in the associative and militant environment in places like the Basque Country, Catalonia and Valencia. There are however many more unknown cases in the struggle for gender justice originating in places that are culturally more extraneous here, like East Asia, where transnational articulation was one of the key aspects in the campaign for the recognition and compensation for former sex slaves, or so-called "comfort women[29]", of the Imperial Japanese Navy from 1931 to 1945. From the time it was started in the nineties up until today, this movement has expanded not only to the countries in question, but also other parts of the world including the US, Canada, the UK and Germany, with the emergence of associations and initiatives led by the diasporas originating in countries that suffered from Japanese imperialism (Álvarez, 2019). María del Pilar Álvarez, in her report for CIDOB on the public awareness and outreach campaign carried out by these women, considers that these ties with the international community and the diaspora were key to legitimising the network's demands and framing the case within the context of the dominant approaches to human rights and violence against women in times of war.

Unfortunately, not everything concerning links with local groups in the country of origin or host country is easy for diaspora women, feminists and LGTBI+ people. In the case of Kurdish exiles, feminist movements and the left in European countries are more openly supportive of their demands and campaigns, such as #WomenDefendRojava, whereas for others, like the Nicaraguan diaspora, the blind support of some sectors, even among feminists, for the government of Daniel Ortega has significantly reduced their advocacy capacity in their host countries. This is precisely the main obstacle that exiled feminist activists in Spain point to when denouncing human rights abuses,[30] despite the fact that the Red de Feministas de Nicaragua and its local groups have also established numerous links of solidarity with feminist and anti-racist groups, especially in the Basque Country, Aragon and Catalonia, and have garnered the support of Latin American women's associations in exile.

Notwithstanding the changing reality of transnational migration, the nature of new exiles and new sources of conflict that will undoubtedly lead to the emergence and/or growth

29. For a more in-depth coverage: Morris-Suzuki, Tessa (2007). Japan's 'Comfort Women': It's time for the truth (in the ordinary, everyday sense of the word). The Asia Pacific Journal, Japan Focus, Volume 5 | Issue 3.
30. Cámara, Julia. (02/04/2019). "Nicaragua está explicitando y visibilizando una dinámica y un problema que ya estaba presente en los movimientos".

of diasporas in Europe and, above all, in spite of the obstacles that the activities of these diasporas will face, the links that women and sexual dissidents have with organisations and movements in the country of origin and the host country will continue to be one of the major assets in their engagement with and leadership of peacebuilding initiatives and their demands for truth, justice and reconciliation.

CASE STUDIES

SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS GAINED IN POST-CONFLICT TRANSITIONS: THE CASE OF THE AFGHAN DIASPORA IN EUROPE IN VIEW OF THE RECENT FAILED PEACE TALKS

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

Afghanistan is now four decades into a fluctuating conflict whose resolution was discussed in a round of talks that began in October 2020 between the Afghan government and Taliban leaders. The outlook for the negotiations, which also involve the United States,[1] were not overly optimistic as the Taliban repeatedly failed to fulfil its commitments to reduce its attacks and to publicly cut ties with Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in Afghanistan,[2] at the same time that it continued its advance and increasingly occupied more territory. The frequency and intensity of their attacks on civil society, journalists and women peace activists[3] also escalated dramatically and deadly attacks on women by Taliban and jihadist groups, by state forces as well, increased threefold in 2020 compared to the previous year.[4] One example is of Fawzia Koofi, one of just four women who took part in the peace negotiations as part of the government delegation, who was attacked by unidentified gunmen.[5] In June 2021, coinciding with the increasing pace of the withdrawal of the US military contingent, a worst-case scenario began to unfold with the Taliban advancing rapidly into the major cities, with the ultimate fall and capture of the capital, Kabul, in August.[6] The group's continued attacks on women politicians, activists, journalists and men in civil society leave little doubt about the threat that this new-old regime will pose to human rights in Afghanistan.

With the focus on the failed negotiation process, the under-representation of women in all formal spheres of peacebuilding took place in a context in which Afghan women's rights were again under the threat of being undermined, and which by now has become a reality. Women's rights in Afghanistan had already become problematical when they were used as a political weapon during the 2001-2002 invasion of Afghanistan by the US, which heralded the liberation of women as a justification[7] for carrying out the "Enduring Freedom" military operation. Calls for the respect for Afghan women's rights and their involvement in negotiation delegations came mainly from the diaspora in Europe, where the Afghan community is mainly based in the UK, Austria, Netherlands and Scandinavia and mostly in Germany, which is home to some 250,000 Afghans,[8]. A significant number returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 although there was a significant increase in

the number of new arrivals in recent years, with almost 200,000 Afghans applying for asylum in Europe between 2015 and 2016.[9] This large displacement of Afghans has produced a meaningful diaspora community in Europe, consisting to a large degree of first generation migrants, which determines the focus and priorities of their organisations and ties to the country of origin.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

There are more than 550 Afghan diaspora organisations in the five countries where this diaspora community is mainly concentrated, all of them very diverse and fragmented[10] and mainly providing social services to refugees, children and women, offering language classes and funding, and promoting educational and health projects in the country of origin, as well as assisting the integration of Afghan women refugees in the host countries and promoting the empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Subsequent to the announcement of the recent round of talks, various diaspora organisations campaigned to defend the formal achievements and progress made by women after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and to express their concern that concessions made to the fundamentalist Sunni group for the sake of reaching an agreement might entail a setback in this regard, a concern also shared by the main human rights organisations.[11] According to an article at the time by the Afghan exile and activist Sonia Ahmadi[12] who lives in Norway, "Afghan women want to retain their rights and ensure that their voice is heard in the peace process and the Taliban must accept the current position of women in Afghanistan and stop the violence. Peace cannot be made at the expense of women's rights and freedoms". Ahmadi, who leads the **Afghan-Norwegian Women for Change** association, was one of twelve women exiles who participated in the Afghan Women Leaders' Peace Summit organised by the **Afghan Women's Network** (AWN) and the **Afghanistan Mechanism for Inclusive Peace** (AMIP) in Dubai in November 2020.[13] At the meeting, a group of fifty women from civil society organisations, the government and the Afghan diaspora discussed the need to include women in the negotiation process where people could discuss their fears and expectations about the process, including concerns about the increase in violence since the signing of the peace agreement between the US and Taliban leaders in February 2020.

In turn, the network organising the summit, the **Afghan Women's Network**, which brings together 123 women's groups, NGOs and organisations, promoted women's participation

in the peace talks at regional, national and international levels, where it was supported by diaspora-led campaigns like "No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan".[14]

Also engaged in international action were groups like **Afghan Women in the Diaspora,** a group of Afghan diaspora women based mainly in the UK, whose mission is to challenge patriarchal customs, break down stereotypes and empower women.[15] One of the more active groups, also based in the UK, is without doubt the **Afghan Youth Association**,[16] which brings together a young, highly feminised diaspora and post-diaspora community. Founded in 2015 by a group of students, the association works to provide a platform for Afghan youth to socialise, network and work together across ethnic and political divisions. Both of these groups promoted actions in countries across Europe to raise awareness of the need for women to be involved in negotiating delegations.

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

In addition to offering a mentoring programme among Afghan students, giving classes in Farsi, organising poetry and writing competitions and funding courses for young people in Afghanistan, the Afghan Youth Association was actively engaged in the international call for women to participate in the peace negotiations. The group accordingly organised a panel discussion on the role of women in the progress of the peace talks within the context of International Women's Day last March, with the participation of the abovementioned Sonia Ahmadi, among other activists of the Afghan diaspora.[17]

Also highly significant was the work of the "Banu" (Woman) magazine, founded in 2000 by the Afghan diaspora in Europe and published in the two official languages of Afghanistan,[18] which publicised and promoted women's involvement in the peace negotiations. The purpose of the influential publication, with its more than 60 contributors in exile across Europe, is to help Afghan women integrate in their host countries and connect and network with each other. On the magazine's 20th anniversary in September 2020, a relatively large group from the Afghan diaspora in Vienna gathered to discuss the role of women in the peace talks, along with their fears and expectations.

One of the campaigns that more explicitly channelled demands for the inclusion of women in the peace process was run by the abovementioned "No Peace Without Women's Rights in Afghanistan" campaign, launched in 2020. Led by the transnational network Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), the purpose of the campaign was to build international

solidarity in support of Afghan civil society; give voice to grassroots women and make more visible their demands regarding the peace negotiations and the denunciation of attacks on and the killing of Afghan activists. Among other demands, the initiative called for the cessation of armed hostilities prior to any negotiations, the substantive participation of women in all stages of the peace talks in line with UN resolution 1325, the involvement of gender experts in the verification of compliance with international legislation and the autonomy of and support for the Independent Committee for Human Rights in Afghanistan.

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Advocacy campaigns either led by or involving the Afghan diaspora in Europe started to become visible, above all during the spring of 2021 with the increased media attention to the situation in the country. Afghan women also placed high expectations on the international community and engagement within the diaspora to ensure their presence at the talks and to make certain that the gains in women's rights over the last 20 years were not made contingent upon a potential agreement with the Taliban.[19] The new round of negotiations launched in January 2021 only made very limited progress. Four women from Afghan civil society took part in a 21-member government delegation at the first meeting of the failed round of negotiations in September and October 2020,[20] whereas at the three-day conference convened in Moscow on March 18, 2021 only one woman, the activist Habiba Sarabi, was included in a 12-person delegation made up of members of the Afghan government and other political leaders.

In addition, the growing role of Russia, China and Pakistan in the negotiations gave rise to concern among women activists of even greater obstacles in their struggle for inclusion due to the interests of and between these governments and the conflicting parties, the delegations of which all consisted of men. Women negotiators feared that this would further diminish the role of the few women involved in the peace process in favour of traditional male-dominant leadership.[21] The current situation, with Russia and China looking the other way in terms of the Taliban victory, has only confirmed the negotiators' worst fears and suspicions.

As far as obstacles to self-organisation by the diaspora and women's rights in Afghanistan is concerned, one also needs to bear in mind the restrictive laws on residency for third-country nationals from outside the EU and the difficulties this creates, especially for the

young diaspora that has arrived since 2015, which include deportation and the threat of expulsion. In this regard, the diaspora had denounced the agreements between the EU and Afghanistan, including 6 billion euros worth of conditional aid, to facilitate the return of exiles to Afghanistan, despite the situation of instability and violence that could safeguard neither the welfare nor the rights of asylum seekers.[22] Mention is made here of the mobilisations in Norway and Germany against the collective deportation of Afghans, in some cases young people who had never even lived in Afghanistan.[23] This permanent threat of expulsion is, as described in the main report that accompanies these individual country reports, one of the main obstacles faced on a daily basis in the self-organisation and work of diasporas.

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ADVANCING WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS THROUGH ARGENTINE DIASPORA ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPE

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

A triangular green scarf has been the symbol of a national campaign in Argentina since 2005 to evoke the right to legal, free and safe abortion. Popularised initially by the Argentine feminist movement, the green scarf then spread throughout Latin America to become the most visible symbol of the mobilisation by the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion, an Argentine alliance of social organisations, unions and political parties united for this common cause. Although legislation to legalise the voluntary interruption of pregnancy was blocked by the Senate in 2018 following large scale demonstrations across Argentina, meaning that women continued to be subject to an outdated law from 1921,[1] abortion within the first fourteen weeks of gestation was finally legalised in December 2020 with 38 votes for the motion and 29 against.[2]

During all this period of time and, in particular, following the unsuccessful vote in 2018, feminist groups of the Argentine diaspora organised support for the campaign and to disseminate the cause abroad, effectively publicising it in Europe, especially in countries where the diaspora was sizable like Spain, where the largest community of Argentines abroad resides, accounting for approximately 30% of the total number of just over one million Argentine emigrants.[3] Although Argentina has been a recipient country of European migration over the last two hundred years, mainly from Spain and Italy, the number of emigrants increased during three different periods in the country's recent history[4] that marked the diversity of the diaspora: following the military coup of 1966; during the military dictatorship (1976-1983) when more than 30,000 people went into exile; and following the serious economic crises in 1989 and 2001, the latter under the government of Fernando de la Rúa, which saw 800,000 people leave the country for Spain and the US.[5] During the dictatorship, Catalonia was one of several privileged destinations for this heterogeneous diaspora of people that consisted of many who were fleeing torture and both legal and clandestine imprisonment. It was also a place where, according to some accounts, they received solidarity from both the left and anti-Franco Catalanism.[6] Barcelona, which continues to be one of the more desirable cities for the Argentine diaspora to settle, is where one of the main groups that has promoted the struggle in Argentina for legal abortion from abroad has emerged.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

The Argentine diaspora is in general very diverse in terms of gender, sexual orientation and age. According to a study by the "Colectivo Ioé" (an organisation involved in sociological intervention), the people who migrated during the dictatorship were mostly young, like those who migrated in the later decades, so there are at least two different generations in the diaspora,[7] in addition to the descendants of those who migrated, or the so-called post-diaspora, that is also involved politically in supporting the feminist struggle in Argentina.

This diaspora is also marked by its diversity in terms of interests, politicisation, mobilisation and participation, depending, among other factors, on the reason for migration or exile. For example, the same study associates "associative militancy" more with those who fled the dictatorship than among the so-called "economic migrants". This tendency is surpassed however by groups like "Marea Verde Barcelona", a platform which brings together Argentine feminists living in the city that has managed to attract a wide diversity of profiles and generations, a feature that the platform shares with the campaign in Argentina.[8] According to Marina Seco, an activist and one of the founding members of "Marea Verde Barcelona",[9] "there are various different realities that co-exist in our collective, from people who have been living in Barcelona for decades to people studying or working here more recently, "with or without papers. People who are passing through, people who are more settled, with or without a family, there are also colleagues who were born in Europe to Argentine parents and have felt drawn to "Marea Verde". We were united by the fact that it felt like something very big was happening and we wanted to be part of it, to go beyond social networking and engage at the grass-roots level in the street, which we believe is where people stand up for and achieve their rights, together with the common goal of feminism, the legalisation of abortion in Argentina".

It is similar with other platforms based in the UK and France, for example, the case of "Ni Una Menos UK" (Not One Less/UK), a network of different collectives, groups and individuals that takes its name from "**Ni Una Menos**", another feminist campaign that was born out of the massive protests in Argentina in 2015 following the femicide of Chiara Paez, a 14-year-old pregnant girl, which rallyied against institutional inaction and a social structure that was lenient on gender violence and the murder of women.[10] Ni una menos UK defines itself on Facebook as "the UK branch of the 'Ni Una Menos' campaign[11]".

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

As a result of this “anti-violence against women movement”, which is becoming increasingly important worldwide and has so far led to several feminist general strikes on March 8 in 2016, 2018 and 2019, the feminist movement plays an integral part in the political agenda in Argentina. This surge of advocacy and mobilisation has also affected the National Campaign for the Right to Abortion, which has been running for 15 years and extends outside of Argentina and has been taken up by groups and collectives in Spain, like the “Marea Verde Barcelona” platform, as well as in Valencia, Galicia and Bilbao, which all come together to push for legalisation in Argentina, as well as organising individually, some for the first time, either as migrants or as diaspora. According to Marina Seco, “the purpose of what we were doing was to attract world attention to [what was going on in] the legislative chamber and thereby influence the vote. It’s difficult to know how much influence the diaspora had on things in Argentina, but we took part in a way that went beyond one’s personal desire to merely be part of what was going on. It took two years of painstaking advocacy following the unsuccessful vote in the Senate in 2018 but in the end we did play our part in making the world aware of what was going on in Argentina”.

Once this goal was achieved, however, the group decided to continue fighting for the right to legal and safe abortion as well as other causes in Argentina, in Latin America, in the country of residence and other places. “We wanted to continue because there were all of these other issues, because our fight is not just for Argentina, it’s for women in all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean where abortion is prohibited and punishable by law, as well as for access [to abortion] here because legal, safe and free abortion in the public health system is not guaranteed for migrant women or those who live in certain countries. So the green scarf continues”.

It is along these lines that the group accompanies women who wish to terminate a pregnancy and have doubts and fears about the difficulties they may face in the process.[12]

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Institutional leverage is evidenced by the partial decriminalisation of abortion in the Senate, in which the diasporas contributed by raising awareness at international level and bringing the attention of the media in their host countries to the movement and what was happening

in Argentina. The groups linked to these campaigns are also actively involved, together with the feminist movement as a whole in the host country, in influencing abortion rights for all groups in society, including migrants.

The obstacles to the group's activities have specifically to do with different legal frameworks that deal with migrants and create vast differences in each group's potential and engagement. "The major obstacle is the immigration law, you want to take to the streets, hold demonstrations, but the truth is that there are colleagues out there without papers (who are undocumented) or who have issues with their residence permit, or who depend on job stability that doesn't exist, and all of this conditions their political involvement, their militancy and their lives as a whole", lamented the "Marea Verde Barcelona" activist.

The social influence of Argentine diaspora groups in feminism has been amplified by the wave of global feminist engagement and transnational links that has allowed these efforts to unite, together with groups and campaigns in other Latin American countries, as well as Ireland, Poland, Spain, the US and wherever the sexual and reproductive rights of women and LGTBI+ people have been threatened as well as in places, for example Ireland, where debate has led to legal advances. Events that stand out in connection with this include the women's strike co-organized by "Ni Una Menos UK" (Not One Less/UK) and UK Women in Bethnal Green, London, in 2018[13] in what is a good illustration of the international alliance between grassroots feminist groups with the participation of activists from the Argentine campaign. In the case of "Ni una menos UK", the links with activism in the country of residence are also very similar in that they form part of the dynamics of local feminism, as shown by the support for the rallies and protests denouncing the feminicide of Sarah Everard by a London Metropolitan Police officer in March 2021. This engagement also unified the Argentine campaign's message to raise awareness of the fight against gender and sexual identity-based murder with the use of the same slogan on the opposite side of the Atlantic.[14]

This group, as well as "Marea Verde Barcelona", maintains links with movements and groups from other Latin American countries that fight for abortion rights, for example, in Chile, as well as the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network of Abortion Companions. The Barcelona group has been well received by the large and diverse Argentine diaspora in the city and, despite the fact they maintain few formal links with other organisations of this type, they have participated in specific meetings and initiatives in the fight against police impunity, for example, the Santiago Maldonado Commission and HIJOS Barcelona, a human rights organisation that brings together in Argentina and at international level the children

of disappeared persons, exiles and people imprisoned during the dictatorship.[15]
It has also been well received by non-mixed groups and platforms in Barcelona. "We take part in feminist forums and gatherings, like the demonstrations on November 25, as well as other protest initiatives. We also maintain close links with women of the campaign for legal abortion in Andorra, where we follow events closely. We basically get involved in different campaigns and initiatives here from our perspective as feminists and migrants", Seco concluded.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN EXILE AND THE DIASPORA IN EUROPE TO MEMORY, TRUTH AND JUSTICE IN COLOMBIA

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

The situation of socio-political violence, armed conflict and paramilitarism in Colombia over the last 50 years, which in part originated as a result of the model of territorial development inherited from the colonial period,[1] has resulted in more than 7 million internally displaced persons[2] and hundreds of thousands of refugees and exiles in 51 countries around the world. It is estimated that, between 2002 and 2012, with the intensification of the armed struggles with the FARC and ELN guerrillas and the operations of the military forces and the intervention of paramilitary groups under the mandate of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, half a million Colombians crossed the border in the face of a threat to their lives.[3] Most of these asylum seekers went to the adjacent countries of Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, Brazil and Peru, but many also went to Europe, where today they are concentrated mainly in Spain, as well as in other countries including Switzerland, Sweden and the UK. A UNHCR report published in 2011 estimated that there were almost 400,000 Colombian refugees in different countries although only 113,233 of them (28.6%) had been officially recognised at that time. According to unofficial figures from civil society organisations, the number of Colombian refugees and exiles abroad, including the second generation, is over 800,000.[4]

Aside from the obvious significance of the figures, the blanket of silence and ignorance surrounding the Colombian exile is one of the main obstacles in clarifying the truth about the armed conflict and widespread violence.[5] Although their demands were channelled through other organisations, the true situation of the refugee population was never formally incorporated into the negotiations[6] between the Colombian Government and the FARC, which culminated in the signing of the Peace Agreement on November 24, 2016. This incomplete peace process was even more distressing for women exiles, refugees and migrants who in very specific ways suffered the consequences of violence by all of the armed actors.[7] Although gender disaggregated data are not available, Colombian women are also a key actor in exile, which in part is related to the social and political background in Colombia and the circumstances under which they left the country. In this context, Colombian women exiles and refugees in European countries have launched organisational processes to defend their rights as victims and ensure that their individual and collective

voice, memory and testimony is heard before the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Co-existence and Non-Repetition, which was set up in 2017.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

The specific circumstances of exile, as a tangible reality in the migration of people from Colombia, have affected the ways in which exiles have perceived and reacted to participation. In general, and in the case of women as well, those who are involved in the diaspora groups discussed here mostly belonged to peasant, indigenous, guerrilla and women's movements, and social and political organisations in Colombia that suffered first-hand the onslaught of violence. Prominent among these were the **National Association of Black and Indigenous Peasant Women of Colombia** (ANMUCIC) and the **Popular Feminine Organisation** (OFP). The case of ANMUCIC, for example, is highly illustrative of the situation of many Colombian women political exiles who fled the country, with the number of militant activists in the organisation plummeting from 90,000 in 2000 to less than 1,000 members in ten years due to the violence, especially by paramilitary groups. "Many women had to flee the country, others were murdered or just couldn't continue the struggle because they were too scared," said ANMUCIC's Gloria Amparo Arboleda, in an article in the El Salto newspaper.[8]

Despite the fact that the threats and fear continued to be ever-present abroad, Colombian women exiles and refugees quickly began to engage in processes to demand recognition and space in their fight for victims' rights, justice, truth and an end to the violence in Colombia from the diaspora. One of the most significant organisational processes in this regard has been the so-called Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora,[9] now renamed Diaspora Woman ("**Mujer Diáspora"**), a citizens' initiative that emerged in 2014 with the support of organisations like Conciliation Resources and the International Catalan Institute for Peace (ICIP) which seeks to heal the trauma caused by both the armed conflict and the migration process and document the impact of war and migration on women in order to contribute to formal truth, memory and reconciliation initiatives in Colombia. The group's has hubs in Barcelona as well as inin London and Stockholm, two cities with a large Colombian community in exile.

Also of special interest is the Collective of Women Refugees, Exiles and Migrants ("**Colectiva de Mujeres Refugiadas, Exiliadas y Migradas"**), which was set up in 2004 by four Colombian women human rights defenders who went into exile in Spain, with links

in other European countries such as France, the UK and Denmark.[10] Many of its members are women with an organisational background. According to Alba Teresa Higuera Buitrago, one of the project's proponents, "we've all been involved in different types of community work, social development and women's rights, among other things".[11]

The members of both groups became actively involved in peacebuilding and the reconstruction of collective memory prior to the peace process with the FARC, in line and in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's participation in peace processes.

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

The advocacy work of these women-led social organisations precedes the peace negotiations between Santos and the FARC and was forged in the debate on the Victims and Land Restitution Law passed in 2011, which stipulated the right to reparation, in the form of compensation, and the restitution of appropriated land during the period from 1985 to 2010 for victims of human rights violations committed in the context of the conflict and socio-political violence. The pace of advocacy accelerated after the start of negotiations in Havana, when Colombian refugee groups in EU countries mobilised support and organised numerous forums to present their specific proposals to the negotiating delegations.[12]

This was the context within which the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora started a process of collecting testimonies of women exiles and refugees in London, Stockholm and Barcelona, in reference to a report by a truth and memory committee sponsored by Women's Peaceful Way ("Ruta Pacifica de Mujeres"). This report had compiled the testimonies of more than 1,000 women victims of violence by armed actors in Colombia,[13] which underlined the importance of psychosocial support for those taking part in these processes. The Commission carried out a procedure using a specific "active memory" methodology based on active listening, dialogue between the narrator and the listener/s, and flexible involvement. This experience of self-organisation continues to operate under the name of "Mujer Diáspora", the aim being to collate the memories of diaspora women and include their testimonies in official reports by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Co-existence and Non-Repetition.

For its part, the Collective of Colombian Women Refugees, Exiles and Migrants in Spain, together with the Spanish Network of Women Human Rights Defenders, in June 2019

submitted the report “The Truth as told by Women Refugees, Exiles and Migrants[14]” for the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition (SIVJRNR) and to the Constitutional Court in Bogota. This was the first document to be drawn up regarding the situation of women refugees, exiles and migrants and referred directly to a Truth Commission.

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the difficulties inherent to migration and the frequently insurmountable bureaucratic requirements and paperwork for obtaining refugee status, the Colombian exile population also faces the fear of persecution. They get instilled with fear before fleeing the country that has a lasting impact on them in the country where they seek protection, directly affecting their engagement and agency. “I wanted to be inconspicuous because I didn’t want to relive the same situation of harassment, persecution and fear. The first year I went out very little, I didn’t get involved in the social movement or the women’s movement, I gave a few talks and continued to talk about human rights and women’s rights, but in the place where I was living I was pretty much hidden. After a year, I could feel it in my body, the life choice I had made, I had to do something as I couldn’t go on seeing and experiencing the injustice, the inequality and the unfairness of the situation here in Spain and following the socio-political conflict in Colombia and just do nothing”, explained Alba Teresa Higuera Buitrago. For Betty Puerto, who lives in Barcelona and is the founder along with other leaders of the International Forum of Victims of the armed conflict in Colombia and of Women Refugees, Exiles and Migrants in Spain, this fear of her life again being threatened has marked her experience of exile. “In the face of danger, when you’re being threatened, when you have no place left to go, when your children are being threatened, fear sets in and grips you, even though you’ve helped other victims overcome their fear[15]”.

Far from being unfounded, this fear is also the result of repressive action by the Colombian government abroad, which was condemned, among others, by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Willy Meyer in the European Parliament[16] in 2011, where he drew attention to acts of illegal surveillance and monitoring of Colombian exiles and refugees in Europe by the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) on behalf of the Colombian Government of Álvaro Uribe.[17]

LINKS AND ALLIANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

Many of the activists in these groups still maintain strong political, associative and emotional ties with their country of origin, generally with the OFP and ANMUCIC, but also with the organisational situation of native peoples and other types of organisation. At the same time, several of them continue to defend human rights in associated movements and NGOs in the country of residence, for example, in women's collectives like Mujeres Pa'lante and the right to housing activism, as is the case with Alba Teresa Higuera Buitrago. "Nothing from before prepared us for what we have to face here where we're nobody, we have to rebuild our lives from scratch and reclaim our self esteem. But our choice is to resist, in spite of the economic hardship", she told us.

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THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE AND THE END TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE THROUGH NON-REVICTIMISATION NARRATIVES: THE CASE OF CONGOLESE WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPE

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

Much has been written about the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which began in the mid-1990s with violence spilling over from the Rwandan genocide and the region becoming the cradle of rebel activity and the formation of numerous armed groups linked to inter-ethnic violence.[1] At the present time there are around a hundred armed groups operating in eastern DRC, especially in the regions of Ituri, Kasai and North and South Kivu, from where an estimated 4.5 million people have been forcibly displaced to other areas and more than 800,000 have taken refuge in other countries.[2] In Europe, the Congolese diaspora can mainly be found in Belgium and the United Kingdom. In the case of Belgium, the features of the Congolese diasporic community are also atypical in that it is neither an economic migration or a flow of refugees from a conflict in the strict sense of the terms, but is also a product of the dynamics of the relationship between the former metropolis and the colony maintained by Belgium and the present-day DRC.[3] The pre-conflict Congolese diaspora was mainly made up of students and diplomats, until the arrival – following the deterioration of both the economic and security situation – of migrants in search of better living conditions, together with thousands of asylum seekers. It is estimated that, in 2006, the Congolese diaspora in Belgium was made up of around 80,000 people.[4]

However, the armed conflict in the DRC is known worldwide, above all, for the persistence of cases of sexual violence and mass rape of women in the context of the conflict (with 8,000 women being sexually assaulted in eastern DRC in 2009 alone[5]), which led the United Nations Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, to describe eastern DR Congo as the "rape capital of the world" and "the most dangerous place on Earth for women".[6] This discourse, which has been repeated and replicated ad nauseam by politicians, journalists, NGOs and activists, has had a decisive influence not only on the purpose to which international aid to the region is directed, but also on the activity of the European diaspora, which runs programmes to support women in the country of origin, while confronting the predominant narratives on the issue, which reinforce gender

and colonial stereotypes with Congolese women being construed as agency-less victims of sexual violence and the Congolese population in general as barbarians and savages.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

Beyond essentialist constructs of women, what appears certain is that women are particularly well organised and mobilised for justice and peace within and outside of the Democratic Republic of Congo,[7] to the point that it is one of the African countries with the largest number of women's organisations, not just fighting against sexual violence, but also for education, health, political representation, democracy and the deployment of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It is similar in the European diaspora, where Congolese women, especially in Belgium and the UK, lead numerous women's associations. In Belgium, these include **Action des Femmes pour le Développement** (AFEDE), which carry out projects aimed at schoolchildren and women survivors of violence in eastern Congo; the **Forum interrégional des femmes congolaises** (FIREFEC2), which brings together Congolese women in general, whether they are from regions of conflict or not, and carries out projects to improve the social, economic and political conditions of women in the country of origin and the host country; and **Caravane pour la Paix et la Solidarité** (CPPS) which works to facilitate the integration of Congolese diaspora women into Belgian society and the building of transnational links with other women in the DRC.[8]

There is, however, an experiential and generational component among Congolese diaspora women in Europe with major differences depending on whether they come from areas of the country where there is conflict and whether they belong to the first generation of women activists based in Belgium and the UK or to the post-diaspora. According to Marie Godin, a researcher who has focused much of her work on the mobilisation of Congolese diaspora women, the younger groups involve both men and women whereas involvement among the first generation is based more on gender identity,[9] "especially in the case of women who were active beforehand in the country of origin and who have had to resist and fight male dominant gender norms[10]" at home and in the diaspora. These differences are also evident in the purpose for action, the types of campaign launched by the wide variety of diaspora platforms and the critical component of the discourse about the ex-metropolis.

PURPOSE FOR ACTION IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

In the case of women's associations, several of the main objectives are the fight against sexual violence and rape as a weapon of war; raising public awareness and that of Congolese, Belgian, European and international institutions concerning the problems faced by women in the DRC; and the mobilisation of Congolese women in the reconstruction of the country.[11] In addition, the platforms and movements established by second generation and young people from the diaspora and post-diaspora, especially in Belgium, tend to focus on the host country and they become involved in anti-racist movements and the movement against the vestiges of colonialism, such as the statues of King Leopold II, as well as redress for the injustices committed during colonisation.[12]

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

Organisations like Action des Femmes pour le Developpement (AFEDE), which was set up in 2004 following the uproar after the publication of testimonies of sexual violence by armed groups, focus a large part of their campaigns on denunciation and the prevention of this type of violence in the DRC. The association's fight is aimed at supporting survivors to "regain their dignity and integrity by developing the means to survive and to become agents for change and development within the community, the region and nation[13]". This approach, which similar to that of many women's organisations that work with survivors of violence, stands out however in contrast to the prevailing narratives regarding sexual violence in Congo, which tend to ignore the agency of women and portray them solely as victims.[14] One of the most obvious problems with this phenomenon is the fact that, within the framework of the United Nations and some international governmental and non-governmental organisations, sexual violence in Congo is presented as an incomprehensible phenomenon, isolated from the context and from the gender ideologies and hierarchies that facilitate the occurrence of this violence in everyday life. As the associations point out, this decontextualisation does not help to stop this type of violence.

This spectacularisation of sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups has in turn led to consequences that run counter to the intended purpose, making women and girls in the eastern parts of the country even more vulnerable. Moreover, many victims of other human rights abuses find themselves in the position of having to declare themselves survivors of rape in order to gain access to the most basic services and resources, which are otherwise

denied to them.[15] Another perverse consequence of the prevailing narratives is the fact that certain armed actors have learned that mass sexual violence gains so much attention that it can be used instrumentally as a factor that must be taken into account at the negotiating table, leading to its promotion as a conscious strategy.[16]

In the face of reductionist and disempowering discourses, Congolese diaspora women work on projects to raise awareness of the after-effects and stigma related to sexual violence, which in many cases involves rejection, isolation and poverty for women survivors of sexual violence, and provide health care, psychological support and alternatives to victims of sexual violence, while at the same time offering more complex frameworks to address this phenomenon at the grass-roots level from a peace-building perspective. For example, by refusing to perpetuate the use of language that represents Congolese women as victims in need of protection and rescue, by confronting the imposition of a top-down institutional peace agenda that excludes women as key players in peacemaking processes, and by challenging colonial stereotypes relative to the causes of this phenomenon.[17]

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Although their voice and their perspectives have sometimes been marginalised, the development projects promoted by diaspora women's organisations in Congo have a remarkable capacity for transformation and local empowerment. Furthermore, the transnational links between Congolese and diasporic associations and the strong presence of both in the transnational platforms of the international women's movement have been conducive to their influence on international and national institutions. This has resulted in the participation, for example, of Congolese activists in the UN Security Council on several occasions.[18]

On the other hand, the obstacles that these women encounter in their activities include the difficulties that the diaspora has in relation to arousing interest in the DRC from local, national and international institutions aside from the mass rape by armed groups, which is frequently the only way to raise funding.[19] Diversity within the diaspora and between the diaspora and women in the country of origin also leads to different perceptions of peace, the role of women in Congolese society and how to deal with sexual violence.[20] Complex bureaucratic processes to obtain permanent residence, which have become more stringent in Europe over the last ten years, can also dissuade women who are afraid to risk their

legal status in Belgium due to their political involvement, especially when the groups and platforms hold views that blame Belgian colonialism for being responsible for the situation in the region.[21]

LINKS AND ALLIANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

Links between diaspora organisations and women's groups in the DRC are evident, for example, through the Caravane pour la paix et la solidarité (CPPS), which in addition to working for the integration of Congolese diaspora women into Belgian society, also encourages the building of transnational links with other women in the DRC. The diaspora communities also participate annually in the International Women's Day marches held every March 8 in Belgium and the UK, along with other feminist platforms in the host countries.[22]

At the same time, Congolese women's organisations in both the DRC and the diaspora are well represented in international women's movements, where connections go beyond those established merely between the country of origin and the host countries. They are well represented, for example, in the World March of Women, an international feminist movement made up of grassroots groups and organisations from 52 countries, which, in October 2010, held the final Action of its annual march in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo.[23] The event was attended by 42 delegations from around the world and around 20,000 participants, one of the largest being the delegation of the Congolese diaspora in Belgium, supported by the CPPS.[24]

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THE BAN ON THE VEIL, STATE ISLAMOFOBIA AND POST-DIASPORA FEMINISM IN FRANCE

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

Since the 9/11 attacks, one manifestation of the securitisation of the Muslim and Arab population in Europe has been the growing tendency to prosecute and ban the hijab or Islamic veil in public spaces.[1] This process is part of the hyper-legalisation of the lives of more than 30 million Muslims[2] living in Europe and especially of the diaspora and post-diaspora communities originating from the former French colonies in North Africa, which has clearly impacted their rights and freedoms.[3] Although this tendency is fairly widespread across the European Union, the case of France is of particular significance due to the legislative quest in the name of the Republic, secularism and gender equality against cultural, religious and political expressions of Muslim communities, which has even included the forced dissolution of anti-racist associations.

Although the public debate on the need to regulate and/or ban the veil in France began in the late 1980s, restrictions on the wearing of the hijab began to escalate and become normalised from 2004 onwards when legislation banned religious symbols in French public schools.[4] Thousands of Muslim women, with and without the hijab, took to the streets in a protest organised on Internet social media under the slogan "My veil, my choice".[5] In 2010, the wearing of the nicab, burqa and any other type of face-covering veil (sometimes referred to generically as a headscarf) in public was banned and in March 2021 the Senate approved a ban on teachers and assistants wearing the veil on school outings and excursions. These measures and the concerns justifying their introduction have generated a fierce debate between those in favour of the ban – mostly white French women, but also Muslim women's groups – and anti-racist feminists and descendants of the North African and black diasporas, supported by several historic members of the movement like Christine Delphy.[6]

Similarly, the singling out of the Muslim population has led to an increase in attacks and hate crimes against Muslim and Arab communities in recent years. In 2019, 70% of the victims of Islamophobic attacks in France were women.[7]

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

The restrictions on the use of the veil in France, which have been progressively extended since 2004, have provoked a firestorm of social debate and been a catalyst for protests and engagement by North African and black diaspora and post-diaspora women, mainly but not totally against these measures. The reality of the situation is much more complex, however, as it also involves groups that include French Muslim women, like **Ni Putes Ni Soumises** (NPNS) and the association **Femmes Contre les Intégrismes**, established in 1995, which have defended the banning of the veil in schools as part of their fight against religious fundamentalism.[8] In opposition to this, various initiatives have emerged since 2004 led by people, mostly women, who consider that these restrictions form part of the colonial order that still prevails in France and that they diminish the agency and involvement of veiled women in society, as well as isolating them. These groups condemn state racism and fight against the manifestations of machismo and patriarchy in their communities and in society as a whole, appealing to a broad-based and diverse feminism far removed from the *"French white nationalist feminism, the beneficiary of centuries of imperialism"*, as defined by Françoise Vergès, the veteran feminist.[9]

There are also mothers' groups and associations, like **Mamans toutes égales**, which was established in 2011 following the publication of a government notice banning veiled women from accompanying children on school outings and excursions,[10] and the **Collectif Féministes pour l'Égalité**, set up in 2004 as a result of the public manifesto, "A veil on discrimination".[11] This group rejects the imposition of a one-size-fits-all approach to women's emancipation and liberation, it defends the freedom of choice to wear a veil or not and fights against legislation that leads to exclusion and stigma for certain groups of women. Another group is the **Collectif féministe du Mouvement des indigènes de la République**, led by the well-known anti-colonial activist Houria Bouteldja, who argued as early as 2008 that the veil does not necessarily have to be a symbol of oppression, but that women can choose to wear it out of religious belief, modesty or as a symbol of resistance against assimilation and neocolonialism;[12] and another one is the **Lallab** association**,** established in 2016, which is a platform that gives Muslim women a voice and empowers them according to the premise that being feminist is not contradictory to wearing a veil.

In 2018, a hashtag campaign on social media helped the **Nordafem** movement, consisting of young Maghrebi diaspora and post-diaspora women, to become a fully-fledged feminist movement. A splinter group of this is the **Nta Rajel** women's collective, who define themselves as anti-racist, de-colonial and anti-capitalist feminists and take their name

from an expression in Darija, an Arabic dialect in the Maghreb, meaning something like "Hey, are you a man?", the aim being to provoke and dispute the hegemonic model of masculinity. The emergence of this collective was triggered by the opposition of young Muslim women to having to choose between their feminist struggle and their community, with the difficult mission at the same time of denouncing intra-community machismo without being used and manipulated as tools for racist purposes.[13] According to Kenza, a Nta Rajel activist, "sometimes it's difficult to make our demands heard without provoking racists and Islamophobes, but machismo is not something specific to North African men, which is the impression they want to give, it exists in all sectors of society".[14]

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

Nta Rajel is one of the most active groups on social media and in grassroots-level networking and it attracts young women in particular. In July 2019 it launched an online campaign with the hashtag #PasVosBeurettes ("We are not your *beurettes*"), a derogatory and degrading term associated with sexism and the colonial sexualisation of North African women.[15] The campaign drew critical attention to the use of this term for a fetish category on certain porn websites, although its use transcends this specific sector, and condemned the violence associated with this heightened sexualisation. Lallab is also one of the more organised groups and has held a feminist and anti-racist festival (Lallab Birthday) every year since 2017. It also acts as a political collective by, for example, publicly supporting a woman who took legal action for having been sexually assaulted by the imam of Montpellier and calling on all Muslim women victims of violence to break the silence,[16] and by joining the "Don't touch my veil" (#PasToucheAMonHijab) campaign against restrictions on the wearing of the veil.

These groups, in addition to promoting their own activities and campaigns, have responded collectively and jointly to the legal assault against the use of cultural and religious elements of Islam in public spaces. The most recent example, in the spring of 2021, was the series of protests against draft legislation for the so-called "Law against separatism", which is theoretically meant to address religious fundamentalism but contains a number of points that constitute an attack on fundamental rights and freedoms and would adversely affect civil society, according to the National Advisory Commission for Human Rights (CNCDH).[17] Several of the groups, including Nta Rajel, Lallab, the Commission Féminisme du Front contre l'islamophobie and the Mouvement des Femmes pour la Justice et l'Equité, another Muslim women's group, held a protest demonstration in May 2021 outside the French

Senate,[18] with the slogan "State Feminism = State Islamophobia" and the hashtag #WeWillGoWhereWeWant to condemn the clauses in the law that they consider either Islamophobic, sexist and/or racist, such as the ban on wearing the veil for female employees in the private sector working for public institutions. The groups consider that measures like this lead to the progressive expulsion of Muslim women from public spaces, "reinforce the precariousness and economic exclusion that many of them already suffer and instrumentalise patriarchal violence to further stigmatise the Muslim community[19]", in addition to reinforcing restrictions such as the headscarf ban on minors in public spaces, mothers and companions in school outings and the prohibition of the so-called *burkini* in public swimming pools.

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The issue of integration in France, as pointed out by Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larjing, has basically meant assimilation to French culture and nation and the imposition on migrants and ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities to abandon any form of cultural identity.[20] This has been achieved, as mentioned above, through both legal and punitive provisions that hinder the possibilities of political and social engagement in diasporas and post-diasporas and takes the form of the repression of these groups and even the enforced disbandment of the main anti-racist associations working against Islamophobia in France, like the Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF),[21] which has been condemned by organisations like Amnesty International and anti-racist feminist groups.[22]

This criminalisation, together with the stigmatization of Muslim women and, within mainstream French feminism, of feminist anti-racist voices, leads to further exclusion and barriers to participation and engagement. In addition, the groups have also denounced the closure of social media accounts, for example, for having condemned white supremacism in the wake of the attack in Christchurch, New Zealand.[23]

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THE DUAL ROLE OF DIASPORAS IN WAR AND PEACE: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE KURDISH WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

The Kurdish population, today estimated to be between 36 and 45 million,[1] has lived divided between Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey since the borders of these four states were artificially drawn in 1924. It has therefore been more than 80 years that this stateless people has been demanding recognition of its culture and languages, together with its own forms of non-state political administration (such as Democratic Confederalism) that go beyond the concept of a modern state, a formula considered to be an imposition by the West.[2] The repression of the political and cultural reality of the Kurds has led to an armed conflict that is fought in each country in different ways, with the war between the Turkey and the Kurdish liberation movement being one of the most active and bloody. As a result of the fighting and Turkey's persecution of the Kurdish population, thousands of people have lost their lives, more than four million have been internally displaced and, beginning in the 1980s, more than one million Kurds migrated or fled to Western Europe,[3] mostly to the UK, Sweden, Germany and France.

Although the Kurdish exile is heterogeneous, comprising economic migrants, students, family reunification, asylum seekers and exiled intellectuals and activists,[4] a large proportion, originating mainly in Turkish Kurdistan and Syrian Kurdistan, has become politicised in the diaspora and linked to the national liberation movement rooted in the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to put an end to their persecution and situation of permanent diaspora, even in their countries of origin.[5] Two of the most notable features of this diaspora are the level of women's mobilisation and organisation, especially after special attention was drawn during the defense of the Kurdish-Syrian cities of Kobane and Afrin against the ISIS invasion, and their active and dual role in the conflict, both supporting the guerrillas[6] and advancing the peace negotiations held with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdo an, from 2012 until they broke down in 2015.[7] Women's organisations in the Kurdish liberation movement in Europe have also played this dual role, and they have in turn suffered the consequences of criminalisation by EU countries, which includes the PKK on its list of terrorist organisations,[8] together with repression by the Turkish deep state, which in 2013 covertly executed three Kurdish militants in Paris.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

From the very beginning of the liberation movement, and in particular from the late 1990s onwards, the empowerment of women has played a key role in the construction of Democratic Confederalism, the political project according to which Kurdish organisations, including those of women, are organised. This has led, according to the women themselves, to a substantial increase in the level of women's engagement in political and social life in both Kurdistan and the European diaspora,[9] with an increasing number of Kurdish women organising grassroots, cultural, political and diplomatic activities, in particular in connection with three areas of oppression: the Kurdish national resistance, the fight against gender-based violence and an end to racism in the diaspora.[10]

One of the external factors that has shaped the women's movement and its core organisation is its difficulties in maintaining the level of its activities and even keeping its name. During the military offensive following the breakdown of the truce and the process carried out by the Turkish army in the main Kurdish cities in 2015-2016, numerous political and social initiatives were outlawed or forcibly dissolved, including women's organisations like the **Free Women's Council** (KJA), which was set up in 2015 as an umbrella group for women who also belonged to different entities, NGOs, and local parties and government bodies. In 2016, following a decree adopted under a state of emergency that dissolved the KJA, the organisation was renamed the **Free Women's Movement** (TJK), the European branch of which is called the European Kurdish **Women's Movement in Europe** (Tevgera Jinên Kurd Li Ewropayê, TJK-E).[11]

Under the umbrella of TJK-E, one of the most interesting initiatives is Cenî Kurdistan, the **Women's Peace Bureau**, which was founded in May 1999 by Kurdish and Turkish women living in Europe, with the aim of strengthening international solidarity among women for peace processes in Turkey and Kurdistan, and in the Middle East in general.[12]

One of the core activities of TJK-E and Cenî in Europe is dissemination of the so-called Jineolojî, referred to as an alternative women's science or paradigm based on a critique of the positivist and androcentric forms of knowledge production together with liberal feminism. The paradigmproposes going beyond feminist methodology by rediscovering the histories of women, activists and academics whose voices have been and are marginalised, with the aim ofrestoring the central role of women in society.[13]

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

Since the start of the peace process in 2012, the symbolic leader of the Kurdish movement and founder of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned on the island-prison of Imrali since 1999, addressed the diaspora on several occasions, calling on them to contribute to the negotiations that were under way by organising debates, mobilisations and by pressuring European institutions and governments into getting involved in the peace talks.[14] Women participated in the negotiations as a single united women's movement, their usual form of organisation, both in the Kurdish territories and in the diaspora, convinced that the new scenario presented opportunities for women's rights, whereas only a few women were deployed as negotiators on the Turkish side. "Kurdish women are involved in the peace process, as they strongly believe that a constructive and sustainable process for all Kurds and Turks alike will be achieved by addressing this gender inequality, and ensuring that women gain the emancipation they seek",[15] reported the Fair Observer non-profit media organisation in 2014.

In 2015, the process peace broke down after more than two years of truce due to the lack of progress and compliance with commitments, the boycott by the Turkish deep state and internal pressure from the youngest and more radical sectors of the Kurdish liberation movement.[16] Since then, the women's movement has either pursued its own campaigns or joined with other Kurdish political organisations, ranging from mobilisations and protests calling for the freedom of Öcalan,[17] public support for Kurdish guerrilla resistance in the mountainous border area between Iraq and Turkey,[18] and an intense international campaign in defense of the political and community project that Kurds have built, together with other ethnic minorities, in the three autonomous cantons of Rojava in Syrian Kurdistan. This campaign, under the slogans Rise Up for Rojava[19] and Women Defend Rojava,[20] has managed to unify a large part of the diaspora, including those who are not so politicised, and has had a notable following of support from left-wing organisations and feminist groups in Europe, in the form of political and economic support for the defense of the territory against ISIS attacks and subsequently against the Turkish invasion.

The Kurdish women's movement in Europe has also been promoting the "100 reasons to condemn the dictator" awareness campaign since 2020 to collect signatures, in which they point out 100 reasons why they consider that Erdogan, the Turkish president, and his government should be prosecuted for having committed abuses of power, women's rights abuses and human rights abuses through what they consider "feminicidal policies that have led to the persecution and murder of thousands of Kurdish women since 2009".[21]

Highlighting this link between state political repression and gender violence is one of the movement's main priorities.

ADVOCACY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Advocacy by the Kurdish women's movement in Europe takes the form, for example, of the media presence and political visibility of its struggle, especially since the liberation of Kobane. Prior to this, the European Parliament had recognised the violation of rights to free expression by Turkey when in 1995 it awarded the Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought to Leyla Zana, a Kurdish deputy (parliamentary representative) imprisoned for speaking Kurdish in the Turkish parliament, who has become an international symbol of the struggle for the freedom of Kurdistan.[22]

The assault on and efforts to wipe out legal Kurdish organisations and parties in Turkey and the increased visibility of the Kurdish women's movement have been accompanied by increased state repression in the form of arrests, accusations and, as a last resort, covert physical elimination. In January 2013, in the midst of the peace process, a man linked to the Turkish deep state[23] shot dead Sakine Cansiz, one of the founders of the PKK and a symbol of the Kurdish women's struggle, as well as Fidan Dogan, a representative of the Kurdish National Congress in Europe, and Leyla Soylemez, a member of the youth movement, at the Kurdistan Information Centre in Paris. These assassinations had an enormous impact on the Kurdish diaspora, as well creating a feeling of insecurity in them in Europe.[24]

LINKS AND ALLIANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

The Kurdish women's movement in Europe maintains close ties, as well as organisational links, with the country of origin by providing economic and political support for establishing women's shelters, municipal councils, cooperatives and academies in Turkish Kurdistan as well as in the cantons of Rojava in Syrian Kurdistan. The Kurdish liberation struggle is also increasingly popular among feminist and left-wing groups in countries like Germany, the UK, Sweden and Spain, and has given rise to numerous solidarity associations, for which the driving force is the Kurdish diaspora in Europe.[25]

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WHEN EXILE STRIKES DIRECTLY AT THE HEART OF POLITICAL AND COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT BY WOMEN: THE CASE OF THE NICARAGUAN NETWORK OF WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE IN SPAIN

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

The case of the present-day Nicaraguan exile took place within the context of a wave of repression against social activism that began in April 2018, when thousands of demonstrators took to the streets to protest a series of social security reforms, a stark reminder of the crisis of legitimacy that the government of Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo was experiencing.[1] The protests were brutally repressed by security and vigilante forces, leaving at least 300 dead.[2] According to UNHCR data, the wave of arrests and human rights abuses and the tightening of criminal laws aimed at punishing dissidence has led in two years to more than 100,000 Nicaraguans seeking safe haven mainly in Costa Rica and, to a lesser extent in Europe, where around 9,000 people have sought asylum.[3] The majority of these live in Spain, where 5,483 Nicaraguans sought protection[4] in 2019.

As for its make-up, the Nicaraguan exile community is young, it includes a high proportion of women and is made up of students, former civil servants, opposition politicians, journalists, human rights defenders, farmers and environmentalists. Another thing that also stands out is the incidence of feminist and LGTB+ activists among the women exiles, due in particular to the criminalisation of these movements by the Ortega government, which naturally resulted in a very significant involvement and leading role played by women among recent Nicaraguan exiles.

The confrontation between the feminist movement and the Ortega government is not a new phenomenon as it was originally based on allegations against the president in 1998 of sexual abuse by his own stepdaughter,[5] a case that had and continues to have the strong support of the women's movement. Issues like the strategic illegalisation of therapeutic abortion in 2006 to obtain the support of the Catholic Church for the FSLN ("Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional") in the elections, together with the repeated harassment and repression of the March 8 demonstrations and on numerous subsequent occasions,[6] are just two examples of the hostility of the repressive apparatus of the State against women

organising outside of the official Sandinista movement. During his term in office, Ortega has also eliminated the commissioners for women and the family (*comisarías de la mujer*), which were fundamental for the enforcement of legislation against violence towards women. It is therefore not surprising that the feminist movement, together with environmentalism, played a leading role in the protests in 2018 and feminist activists form part of the contingent of exiles and asylum seekers.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

One of the main actors that continue the protest against the Ortega government from exile in Europe is the Nicaraguan Network of Women ("**Red de Feministas por Nicaragua**"), whose main task is to act as "spokesperson" in Spain for **Articulación Feminista de Nicaragua**, a broad-based movement of feminist organisations throughout Nicaragua.[7] Comprised of Nicaraguan feminist migrants and exiles, together with indigenous feminist exiles who lived in Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan Network of Women[8] is based in cities including Zaragoza, Murcia and Madrid and autonomous regions including the Basque Country, Galicia and Catalonia, where there are core groups like **Nicas Euskal Herria** and **Nicas Catalunya**. There is also a large number of combined initiatives of exiled people nationwide, including the Network of Nicaraguan Student Exiles in Spain ("**Red de Estudiantes Nicaragüenses Exiliados en España**") and the **SOS Nicaragua** platform, which brings together the Nicaraguan community, as well as Nicaragua solidarity committees in various European countries, including Spain, Italy, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, in which a large number of women and feminists are involved.

PURPOSE FOR ACTION IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

As with other Nicaraguan exile organisations, the goal of the Nicaraguan Network of Women ("Red de Feministas por Nicaragua") is to intensify the denunciation of repression and human rights abuses by the Ortega government, the lack of institutional safeguards and the demand to free all political prisoners, to ensure that Nicaragua remains on the political agenda of the host countries, to be the voice of those continuing to protest from the host countries and to formalise the position of EU institutions. The Network also specifically condemns the persecution and attacks on women activists and other gender-based political violence, such as the increase in feminicide and the criminalisation of abortion. "Our aim

is to achieve an international response to everything that is happening in Nicaragua and for women here in Spain to join forces, show solidarity with women in Nicaragua and raise people's awareness of the struggle that is taking place there," explained members of the Network on March 8.[9]

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

After the crackdown on the protests in April 2018, activists detected a surge in violence and attacks on women and LGBT+ people in general[10] (including femicide, forced pregnancies of girls and adolescents, gang rape), and in particular against women activists. An Amnesty International report detailed the sexual torture of political prisoners during their imprisonment,[11] and the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders/IM-Defensoras ("Iniciativa Mesoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de Derechos Humanos") in September 2020 reported 165 attacks in 15 days on women activists and human rights defenders,[12] including threats on social media. This situation has led to permanent campaigns like the hashtag campaign #FloreceráNicaraguaLibreyFeminista, and "Yo escucho a Nicaragua", an awareness campaign that calls for democracy, justice for more than 300 people who have been killed and freedom for the hundreds of imprisoned activists.

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The campaigns of solidarity with Nicaragua have been successful in broaching the issue of the blind support advocated by part of the European left for the government of Daniel Ortega, in the name of the Sandinista Revolution, which led to an increase in what was low-level advocacy engagement in the host country, which has steadily increased, giving rise to declarations questioning the government's repression in Nicaragua by academic, activist and political circles, including Zaragoza City Hall. The main obstacle that exiled women activists in Spain draw attention to when advocating from the diaspora is the romanticisation of Ortega as the representative of the official Sandinista movement, despite the political fragmentation of the Sandinista legacy, part of which is in opposition to the government. This was particularly so in the case of political actors like the Communist Party of Spain and certain feminist groups under its sphere of influence that endorsed the official version of events, according to which the protests and insurgency were part of a coup attempt financed by the CIA, and they blocked initiatives condemning the government

and expressing solidarity with the exiled women's organisations.[13] This occurred in several cities including Zaragoza and Gijón, where several Nicaraguan refugees lobbied for a public declaration in support of the country's feminist movement, but the women from the Communist Party opposed the motion and in the end attempted to boycott the plenary debate.[14]

Other common hurdles are the inability to gain refugee status, economic hardship and scarce job opportunities for migrants and exiles, which inevitably end up in the social care sector. A noteworthy case is that of Silvia Zúñiga, a feminist activist and member of Feministas por Nicaragua-Euskal Herria exiled in the Basque Country who, in Nicaragua, "worked for a women's organisation promoting sexual and reproductive rights with young people"; in the Basque Country her only job opportunity has been to clean houses and care for the elderly.[15]

LINKS AND ALLIANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

Despite the partially negative reception and/or rejection of the Nicaraguan exile by left-wing organisations in Spain, and particularly also within a sector of white feminism in the host country, the Nicaraguan Network of Women and its local affiliate groups has also established numerous ties of solidarity with feminist and anti-racist groups, especially in the Basque Country, Aragon and Catalonia, and among Latin American exiled women's associations. In September 2020, following the mobbing and attacks by security forces on three important women's organisations in Nicaragua, around 200 feminist associations and groups from Latin America and Spain issued a statement condemning the events and in support of the feminist movement in Nicaragua.[16] This initiative illustrates very well the transnational aspect of feminism since it is promoted by the movement in Nicaragua, which is supported by women's organisations in other parts of Latin America and Spain, the main host country after Costa Rica. Within this support, there are groups specifically formed by networks of the Nicaraguan diaspora made up of women ("Morada Feminista Nicaragua UK", in the UK), mixed groups ("Nicaragua Libre" and "SOS Nicaragua Europa"), as well as exiled women's organisations from neighbouring countries like Honduras ("Red de Hondureñas Migradas", Spain).

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WOMEN'S ALLIANCES AND RECONCILIATION EFFORTS: THE STRUGGLE FROM EXILE TO FREE VICTOIRE INGABIRE, IMPRISONED IN RWANDA

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

The genesis of the Rwandan diaspora was in 1959, although most of those who make up the diaspora today left the country following the 1994 genocide,[1] which led to the death of an estimated one million people, the vast majority of them Tutsis, together with moderate Hutus and those who were against the massacres. It is currently estimated that the Rwandan exile in Europe consists of more than 50,000 people, concentrated mainly in Belgium (almost 15,000), the UK, the Netherlands, France and Germany.[2] It is also one of the most active and mobilised African diasporas in Europe, not just politically, but also economically, with remittances that give it significant influence in the country's economic development.

The official narrative promoted by the government and widely accepted in the Western imagination is that Rwanda is today one of the safest, most peaceful, democratic and prosperous countries in Africa and that it has successfully overcome one of the cruellest and most inhuman episodes of the 20th century to re-emerge as a united society. The political opposition and critics of President Paul Kagame inside and outside the country, however, accuse him of silencing, persecuting, imprisoning and even murdering those who dare to confront the government or dissent from the official version of the genocide[3] – even when this is done without the intention of stirring up inter-ethnic hatred – through the partisan use of legislation that prohibits genocide denialism and revisionism, and anti-terrorism legislation. This situation has also been documented in numerous reports by organisations such as Human Rights Watch[4] and institutions like the European Parliament, which, in its 2018 annual report on the human rights situation in Rwanda, expressed its concern about forced disappearances, the use of torture and restrictions to the politically-related rights and freedoms of expression and the media, association and assembly in Rwanda.[5]

Although there continues to be a certain level of disengagement between the two majority ethnic groups in the diaspora,[6] some voices consider that the real division however is today between the supporters and opponents of Kagame's government. This is the view supported, among other opposition groups, by associations largely led by diaspora women

that are promoting the campaign for the release of the politician Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, who was imprisoned in 2010 after returning from exile in the Netherlands to run in the presidential elections.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

Rwandan women in exile in Europe are very active in the community, especially in supporting other diaspora women to integrate and be autonomous and in support of development in Rwanda.[7] At the formal level, however, women often play a more subordinate role as highlighted by one of the promoters of the Inter-Rwandan Dialogue, a series of meetings in Europe and the US involving more than 120 people from the three main ethnic groups (Hutu, Tutsi and Twa) in Rwandan society.[8] Within the framework of this initiative, the objective of which was to contribute to the true reconciliation of society in Rwanda and in the diaspora, which they considered had not taken place, two platforms for dialogue between women were organised in 2008 in Barcelona. "Our idea was to bring together around 20 women, including Rwandan women and relatives of Catalan and Spanish aid workers killed either there or in Congo. It was difficult for them to talk about the past, but much less about the present and the future, because one bond that they shared was that they didn't want to return to Rwanda. They were all very active agents for peace in their diaspora communities, but with very little inter-ethnic contact so the platform was an effective way to bring them together", explained Jordi Palou-Loverdós, a lawyer, international mediator and one of the proponents of these dialogues.[9]

One of the joint conclusions from this meeting was the direct criticism of the Rwandan government "and the absence of justice, which prevents effective reconciliation and is leading to the gradual impoverishment of the population[10]". One of the more committed participants in the dialogues, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza, would go on to see this through to the end. Following a conference in Amsterdam that brought together all of the Rwandan opposition political organisations and civil society groups under the umbrella of the **Unified Democratic Forces** (FDU-Inkigi), Umuhoza decided to return to Rwanda to run in the 2010 presidential elections.[11] Shortly after giving a speech calling for the recognition of post-genocide crimes against humanity committed against the Hutu and Twa population, she was placed under house arrest and eventually imprisoned and charged with divisionism, genocide ideology and complicity in terrorist acts. Despite having denied all charges and irregularities in the trial, she was sentenced to 8 years in prison in 2012,[12] which was subsequently increased to 15 years in prison in 2013.

The repression against Umuhoza created a solidarity movement in the diaspora, that induced many of the women who had coincided with her in associations and dialogues to organise to demand her release. The opposition activist was pardoned in 2018 after 8 years in prison, although her freedom of expression and movement is still restricted due to continuing government harassment.[13]

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

"Victoire Ingabire roused the conscience of many women who were not politically involved, especially with her decision to return to Rwanda in 2010. She helped us realise that women's empowerment is a reality", explained Marcelline Nyiranduwamungu, a human rights defender and spokesperson for Réseau International des Femmes pour la Démocratie et la Paix (RifDP),[14] one of the organisations behind the campaign in support of Umuhoza. RifDP is an association of women, most of them Rwandan exiles, based in Belgium, Canada, France and the Netherlands that promotes democracy and peace in the Great Lakes Region. Other actions the association has taken include the rallies organised at the Rwandan embassy in Brussels that have been held since 2010 to demand Umuhoza's release; it denounces repression against the opposition in Rwanda and in the diaspora; it lobbies Rwandan women parliamentarians and African and European women politicians and organises the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Prize for Democracy and Peace,[15] which is awarded every year to a person or organisation that has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of democracy, peace, women's leadership and defense of basic human rights in the African Great Lakes Region. The association brings Hutu and Tutsi women together for the same cause. According to Nyiranduwamungu, "there are two worlds in the diaspora: one that continues to suffer repression and oppression and generally supports the work of Victoire Ingabire, and the other that sympathises with the Rwandan regime. In each group there are people from all ethnic groups in Rwanda".

The campaign for the release of the opposition activist imprisoned in Rwanda is also promoted by the Fondation Victoire pour la Paix (Belgium), Friends of Victoire (UK) and other associations based in the Netherlands, Spain, the US and Scandinavian countries, which have organised numerous protests, conferences and appeals to organisations and structures like UN Women. Above all, they have served as a platform to denounce Ingabire's defencelessness in a legal process rife with serious procedural irregularities, including the arrest and removal of her lawyers, which was also pointed out in reports by Amnesty International[16] and resolutions by the European Parliament.[17]

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The campaign for the release of Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza has become rooted within the diaspora itself, in particular regarding successful advocacy relative to the position of organisations and institutions like the European Parliament, which in 2012 nominated her, together with two other imprisoned Rwandan opponents, for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.[18] All of this contributed to the situation not only of Umuhoza becoming widely known, but also that of civil liberties as a whole in the small "country of a thousand hills". One of the main obstacles to the campaign's work was the difficulty of eroding the image of the Kagame government in Western countries, for example, in relation to the issue of political parity in institutions, which Rwanda hails as a great achievement for gender equality in Africa. The presence of a women's majority in parliament since the 2008 legislative elections[19] has managed to window-dress the repression against opposition women politicians – the case of Victoire Ingabire is not an isolated incident – as well as abuses by the security forces against women during the COVID-19 confinement in April 2020.[20] "The biggest obstacle is convincing sympathisers of the Rwandan regime to see the other side of the story," says RifDP's Marcelline Nyiranduwamungu.

Furthermore, in addition to the traditional barriers that women face when participating politically and at the associative level in patriarchal societies whose cultural codes and language they do not always master, there are the psycho-social consequences of exile caused by the experience of indiscriminate violence[21] and the persecution of the Rwandan opposition in the diaspora itself. A report by Freedom House points out that the most critical sectors in exile have been subjected to online threats, spyware attacks, family intimidation and harassment, mobility controls, physical intimidation, assault, arrest and even execution, with the government physically targeting Rwandans in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, South Africa, United Arab Emirates and Germany since 2014.[22] This situation has increased the feeling of mistrust at the individual level and suspicion of official bodies within the Rwandan diaspora as a whole.

LINKS AND ALLIANCES IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

Although the government's blinkered attitude hinders the political work of the opposition inside the country of origin, starting with the practical impossibility of parties and

organisations becoming legalised, the campaign for Umuhoza's release has successfully reached out to different sectors and established ties of support for the cause both inside and outside Rwanda. "Being awarded the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Prize for Democracy and Peace has helped us reach out to many people from different backgrounds. The real winners of this award are our ambassadors in their respective countries", Marcelline Nyiranduwamungu said. In addition to links with professionals and human rights activists from Western countries and the African continent, the campaign has also established partnerships with women's associations in countries bordering Rwanda.

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DIASPORA DEMANDS FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN SYRIA

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

It is ten years since the escalation of government repression sparked the outbreak of conflict in Syria, with over 400,000 people killed, 11 million displaced from their homes[1] and more than one million Syrians refugees in Europe, with or without legally recognised refugee status.[2] According to a report by CARE International, women are heads of households in one third of all Syrian households in countries of refuge.[3] This has particularly been the case since 2016 when there was a substantial increase in the number of Syrian women travelling alone or with children[4] on the dangerous route to Europe, fleeing war, arbitrary detention, unrest, sexual violence and food insecurity, in search of a future for themselves and their families. A situation that, as many humanitarian and refugee support organisations have denounced, was replicated during the journey, made even more difficult by restrictive European border policies that resulted in a much higher risk of physical and sexual attack.[5]

In this process of exile, however, Syrian women have clearly not only been victims in need of protection. In the public sphere, they have played a participatory and leadership role in the community and grassroots organisations since the Arab Spring of 2011 up to the present time, negotiating truces at the local level, facilitating humanitarian aid corridors, organising peaceful protests, documenting and denouncing war crimes, and self-organisation efforts to defend the rights of refugees.[6] This active role however has barely been reflected in the negotiating delegations and peace talks that have taken place since 2012 to bring an end to the hostilities. Despite resolutions by the UN, such as Resolution 2254, encouraging the meaningful participation of women in the Syrian peace process,[7] Syrian women have been repeatedly sidelined from high-level delegations, including those sponsored by the UN itself. Their exclusion has resulted in an important mobilisation within Syrian civil society, which has launched various initiatives to establish a minimum quota of 30% of women in all of the talks.[8] In this process, women from the Syrian diaspora and exile in Europe, along with others in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and the US, have played a fundamental role.

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

In the midst of the conflict, Syrian women have found the courage and opportunities to challenge gender expectations and hierarchies by demanding effective participation in the peace negotiations,[9] with numerous groups, networks and organisations serving to maximize their advocacy work. Various initiatives have demanded a minimum 30% representation of women in the peace negotiations since 2013, starting with the **Syrian Women's Network**, which was founded that same year by 200 women and 29 organisations and led among others by Joumana Seif, an activist and exiled lawyer living in Germany.[10] The network, which continues to be active, was established with the aim of ensuring the effective participation of women in all procedures and spheres of both public and private life in the transitional process in Syria, as well as safeguarding gender equality in the new constitution.[11] In the same year (2013), fifty Syrian civil society activists, including 8 members of the Syrian Women's Network, set up the **Syrian Women's Initiative for Peace** to promote the effective involvement of women in the negotiations, formally demanding the 30% representation quota within the framework of the second round of negotiations in Geneva.[12]

Although its establishment in February 2016 was initially seen as a step forward, the **Syrian Women's Advisory Board**, a UN movement to establish a certain level of gender inclusion, ended up being fiercely criticised by organisations in the Syrian women's movement. The initiative brought together 17 women, theoretically from diverse backgrounds and affiliations, who, while not directly involved in the peace talks, had the role of advising the mediators and delegations.[13] The Syrian Women's Network eventually withdrew its support for this mechanism amid criticisms of lack of transparency and equitable representation.[14]

Among all the forms of self-organisation, the **Syrian Women's Political Movement** (SWPM), a political organisation founded in 2017 in Paris and today numbering more than 150 members, is notable for its connections and openly feminist nature.[15] Many of its founding members are diaspora and post-diaspora Syrian and Kurdish women, such as Ayat Ahmad, who went into exile in 2013 and has lived in France since 2015; Hunada al-Rifaee, a humanitarian worker living in Austria; and the Aleppo-born trans activist Ziva Gorani, who currently resides in Canada, where the opposition politician Mariam Jalabi also lives.[16]

PURPOSE FOR ACTION IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

In addition to working for women's rights in Syria and for the dignified reception of refugee women, all these initiatives share, as a first step towards full parity, the goal of demanding the effective participation of women on all negotiating and decision-making spaces in a proportion of no less than 30% for the duration of the negotiation process and, in particular, in the summits promoted by the UN in Geneva since 2012, subsequently by Russia in Astana and in the current Constitutional Committee, a constituent assembly facilitated by the UN.

With its diversity of ethnic and religious perspectives, the Syrian Women's Political Movement (SWPM) also proposes work on a political solution that ensures the transition to a democratic, pluralistic state, regardless of (amongst other things) gender affiliation or categorisation.

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

Besides lobbying international institutions and delegations for the inclusion of women, the Syrian Women's Network supports campaigns for the release of female and male political detainees and initiatives carried out by relatives of missing persons. One of its most outstanding contributions is the international condemnation of the use of sexual violence as a weapon of repression, especially in Syrian government prisons and detention centres. In June 2020, together with the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) and the Syrian NGO Urnammu, the Network filed a criminal complaint with the German Federal Prosecutor in Karlsruhe against nine senior officers of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Service and the National Security Bureau for rape and other forms of sexual torture, including forced abortion, of four women and three male survivors of political repression.[17] Syrian diaspora women and their organisations have played a key role in the process of starting to demand justice and redress for crimes against humanity, human rights abuses in general and human rights abuses against women committed in the context of the Syrian conflict.

For its part, the Syrian Women's Political Movement is carrying out a process of consultation and participatory debate on the new social contract to emerge from the political transition after the war, as a preliminary step regarding the return of more than 6 million women

refugees. Within this context, the SWPM published a report in November 2020 that gathered the impressions of ninety Syrian women living in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan of the future possibility of return to their country of origin.[18]

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

The mobilisation of Syrian women within Iraq and from the diaspora for their effective and substantial inclusion in the negotiations and in the reconstruction process has clearly forced delegations to take the initiative and the international community to make clear its position. The impact of their campaigns is clearly visible considering the progress made in recent years in terms of women's presence in the Syrian peace talks. Following the first summit in Geneva to address the issue in 2012, the UN expressed its regret at the exclusion of women, noting that women "must be fully represented in all aspects of the transition".[19] Pressure from Syrian civil society, in partnership with historic feminist peace organisations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), was intensified in the run-up to the second round of talks (Geneva II), which began in January 2014.[20] No women were included in the UN delegation, the Syrian government's delegation or the opposition groups' delegation, however, and women continued to be formally excluded from the high level process until 2016,[21] when they accounted for 16% of the negotiating delegates in the round of talks hosted by Russia in Astana (Kazakhstan) in October 2017. November 2019 saw the start of a UN initiative to draft a new constitution for Syria by the Syrian Constitutional Committee, with women making up 28% of the negotiating delegates.[22] Progress has therefore clearly been made although it continues to be insufficient, according to Mouna Ghanem, a former Women's Advisory Board member.

The main obstacles to this process have been closely linked to the barriers to women's participation in peace processes and explain why deployment of the participation component of Resolution 1325 has been highly unsatisfactory. There are other obstacles inherent to asylum policies and entry restrictions for Syrian women refugees however, which, in addition to placing them in a more vulnerable situation, have an impact on their involvement. In this regard, physical insecurity, the lack of basic necessities and restricted mobility all make it difficult for women to become involved in social and political initiatives.[23]

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BUILDING BRIDGES FOR DIALOGUE: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VENEZUELAN DIASPORA

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT AND FEATURES OF EXILE

Beginning in 2015, migration from Venezuela increased exponentially due to a political and economic crisis that led to a highly polarised and fragmented political situation, an absence of democratic safeguards and the growing role of the military in the country's civilian institutions,[1] with the resulting increase of military power, a situation that was acknowledged not only by the opposition, but also by the more critical sectors of Chavismo. In economic terms, hyperinflation, rising crime and shortages of food, medicines and energy supply – which the government attributed to international sanctions and the "economic war" of the Venezuelan elites[2]– have led to a deterioration in their living standards that has led to hundreds of thousands of people leaving the country.

At the present time, it is estimated that there are between 5.5 and 6 million migrants and refugees from Venezuela, the overwhelming majority living in Latin American and Caribbean countries ,[3] with a significant number in Spain, where it is estimated that around half a million Venezuelans live, mostly in Madrid, where around 20,000 people arrive every year from Venezuela,[4] although there are also active Venezuelan communities in cities like Paris and London. The diaspora is diverse in terms of socio-economic status, with the majority of exiles, i.e. those who left by crossing the border with Colombia, being working class and the ones who were hardest hit by the economic crisis, with no kind of documentation or residence authorisation in the receiving countries and who therefore lack formal access to basic rights and services. A minority of a more affluent class live in countries in Europe. "The profile of migrants coming to Spain up until recently was of middle-class with a higher education, who in economic terms made for a very active diaspora. For some time, however, groups from a more working class background have been arriving. Likewise in political terms, it's a very fragmented diaspora", according to María Teresa Urreiztieta, a university lecturer from Caracas and promoter of the "Puentes ciudadanos Colombia-Venezuela" (Colombia-Venezuela Bridging Peoples) platform, who lives in Spain.[5]

WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT AS A MAIN ACTOR IN EXILE

The ideological and political diversity of the Venezuelan diaspora in Europe is a reflection of the government opposition in Venezuela, with ideological divisions that range from "critical Chavismo", or groups that openly support a coup or insurrection against Maduro, to others that believe in the path of political negotiation. This fragmentation means that those who represent the diaspora in the media are not involved in large all-inclusive organisations but political groups that, in many cases, replicate those that exist in Venezuela and mainly consist of men who are prominent figures in their country of origin. A clear example of this can be seen in Madrid, which is where the core of the more rigid and conservative opposition, as to the project of a participatory and popular democracy, is based, with the presence of economically powerful groups and public officials from opposition parties, the main figures being Leopoldo López, the former leader of the opposition party Voluntad Popular, which some compare with the extreme right VOX party in Spain,[6] and the former mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma.[7] The fact that 15 parliamentary representatives (deputies) from the Venezuelan National Assembly reside in countries in Europe[8] has also been an important element in determining the most influential discourse for the diaspora in its relations with EU institutions and the host countries.

Nevertheless, aside from appeals made by institutions and formal talks between the government and the opposition, there are social initiatives that involve the diaspora in the process of creating initiatives and platforms for citizen diplomacy, understanding, democratisation and the reconstruction of community systems. One of these is the abovementioned **"Puentes Ciudadanos Colombia-Venezuela" (PCCV)**,[9] which appeared in 2019 and is where various different political views overlap and have the joint goal of establishing peace and participatory democracy, in which various people living in Spain are involved, including María Teresa Urreiztieta. Another group that is just as important is Dialogue for Venezuela ("**Diálogo por Venezuela**"), a group based in France with almost twenty years of experience, which was conceived as a platform for consultation and discussion and an exercise in democratic culture.[10]

With regard to the meaningful involvement and leadership by women, the undermining of the social fabric in both the country of origin and in exile has led to the masculinisation of the participatory spaces, especially those considered to be the most influential. One example is of those who are publicly considered to be the "main leaders of the Venezuelan exile in Spain", as shown by this letter to the Spanish President, Pedro Sanchez.[11] "In the diaspora in Spain, women continue to foster organisation at the grass-roots level, many of them with

links to groups involved with humanitarian aid for Venezuela, but activism in this regard has now ground to a halt[12]", according to Urreiztieta. In the case of France, however, as activist Karla Nieves with "Diálogo por Venezuela" has pointed out, "the majority of those who lead and make up the associations of the Venezuelan diaspora in France are women, and they are also responsible for 80% of the work running the associations".[13]

PURPOSE FOR ACTION IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND HOST COUNTRY

One of the common objectives of the Venezuelan political diaspora is to condemn the "dismantling of democratic institutions and the violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms[14]". Within this widely shared demand, there are groups that are committed to lobbying international and regional bodies (International Criminal Court, European Parliament) as well as local and national bodies, for example, to prevent the recognition and acceptance of election results in Venezuela; other groups are committed to and even preparing for an internal armed uprising against the government, while others work from abroad to build bridges and raise awareness of the need for political and economic change.

CAMPAIGNS AND INITIATIVES

With the focus in this section on initiatives aimed at promoting negotiation and understanding, "Diálogo por Venezuela" gave an account of the imprisonment and disqualification of the main opposition leaders and the human rights abuses in Venezuela before the French National Assembly, the European Parliament and Paris City Hall, and has organised meetings of Venezuelan activist associations in Europe, with diversity as its leitmotiv. The platform's founder, Rafael Pulido "Chipilo", maintains that "contrary to what our adversaries predicted, the diversity of professional and ideological backgrounds and beliefs has been a unifying factor. I believe that the driving force of the group has been and is the acceptance of an honest debate in which a difference of opinion is normal[15]". For its part, *Puentes Ciudadanos Colombia-Venezuela* has hosted twenty dialogues in both countries in an attempt to stimulate citizen diplomacy "for a negotiated and democratically based solution to the crises in Venezuela by the citizens themselves, establishing peace in Colombia, defending the rights of migrants and returnees in the midst of the complex humanitarian crisis, and the reconstruction of the consular system and the bi-national relationship".[16]

ADVOCACY CAPACITY AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

Despite its minority status, the Madrid diaspora is powerful and influential in determining the policies and position of national and European supranational institutions, in addition to having a considerable media presence. Its influence has been evident, for example, in the European Parliament's request to the European Union to recognize Juan Guaidó as interim president, following his failed self-proclamation in January 2019.[17] This higher incidence of more strident and radicalised views among the groups in the diaspora could, according to a Crisis Group study, be part of an "exile effect", due to either the feeling of a greater freedom to express oneself or one of built-up pain and suffering. This "exile effect" may be regarded as a potential drawback to peace talks and political negotiation. Activists in exile also point to political fragmentation, polarisation and trauma as deterrents to participation and activism. According to Pulido, "avoiding the negative effects of the growing polarisation in [Venezuela] has been a challenge for the group and it hasn't always been easy[18]". Another source of discouragement is the absence of a clear, inclusive and plural project to support. "People don't identify with the discourse of the politicians, there's a disconnect between them and the poor and working class. People have suffered so much, the deprivation and pain run so deep that many here (in Barcelona) don't want to talk or discuss politics. And until that wound and the hatred and resentment heal, it's going to be very difficult," bemoans Urreiztieta.[19]

In addition, the Venezuelan exile and diaspora face different obstacles to political involvement, which in particular affect women. First is the slowness of asylum application processes and the low rate of positive applications, then there are immigration laws and residency restrictions that hinder access to housing and employment, the vast amount of bureaucracy involved in the official recognition of qualifications, the xenophobia, the machismo and stereotypes about Latin women. And these are just the more frequent obstacles that they have to face.

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