

YEMENI WOMEN'S ROLE IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

This article looks at the topic of the role of Yemeni women in conflict resolution in Yemen, regarding the informal and formal peace processes. This study analyses scientific literature and documentation available in open sources, such as newspaper articles and interviews, along with non-governmental organizations' reports. It was also conducted some interviews with experts from different backgrounds connected to Yemen, which gives us a broader perspective of Yemeni women and their role in the conflict. It was found that women's participation in conflict resolution is an important piece that contributes to sustainable peace. Despite that, women have deep difficulties when we talk about assuming an active role in these stages and have been excluded from the negotiations in conflict resolution processes. Guided by the Security Council Resolution 1325, women's involvement in peace negotiations is one of the United Nations (UN) purposes. Even if the conflict parties in Yemen have been extremely resistant to accept them in negotiations, the UN has promoted their inclusion in formal processes, through some indirect adviser mechanisms, such as the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security, the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group, and more recently, the Bloc of Women Members of Political Parties. The patriarchal Yemeni society has limited the Yemeni women intervention in the conflict, still, they have taken part in it, by participating in many activities, like evacuating civilians and taking care of injured in areas affected by war, negotiating humanitarian access, and exchange of prisoners, which shows the dynamic and relevant position they have in conflict resolution informal processes.

Keywords

Conflict resolution, Yemen, Women, UN Security Council Resolution 1325

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Introduction

Our world is nowadays characterized by a complex interconnection of relations, where people, nations, economies, politics, media, culture, between other fields, are linked by invisible ties. The *global village* has shortened distances and the access to information has broadened in our world and the globalization process came to stay (Castells, 2003).

The *global village* has increased conflicts' consequences in size and extent: "conflicts of the 20th/21st centuries have shown a very special ability to threaten regional and global stability and peace" (Branco et al, 2017: 28). According to the Positive Peace Academy (2020), 84% of the main political crises take place in countries with a low level of peace. Conflicts happen more frequently between the so-called weak states, which do have not the capacity to guarantee the basic functions of a state.

Armed conflicts affect all the parts involved. They cause death, massive human rights violations, like torture, disappearances, and arbitrary or illegal detentions. Historical records have shown that conflicts affect disproportionately women and children. Even though, women have been ignored in formal or political mechanisms of armed conflict resolution (McGuinness, 2006).

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was considered the world's least peaceful region, and the growing conflict in the region has been the key driver to the global deterioration in peacefulness, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (2020). Yemen is an example of an internal conflict, that has become an international issue, also called proxy war by some observers considering the support given by the external actors or countries to the different internal parties in conflict, according to their own strategic agenda (Byman, 2018). The negotiations discussions for achieving peace in Yemen have been quite difficult and still insufficient to bring some stability and development to the country.

In 2000, the UN approved Resolution 1325, which has been one of the prime steps toward gender equality, concerning conflicts. Since then, many improvements have been achieved, but the reality is not the desirable one yet, because the participation of women in conflict resolution is still deeply low and insufficient, in many parts of the world.



Several observers and academics agreed that all population's involvement in conflict resolution, mainly concerning formal processes, is essential to reduce violence and to build a society based on positive peace and sustainability (Crespo-Sancho, 2018; McGuinness, 2006; Sandole-Staroste, 2009; Domingues, 2020). Empowering women and promoting gender equality is crucial to accelerate development and produce more equal societies, which are important elements in preventing violent conflict (Crespo-Sancho, 2018).

This study is based on a Master's dissertation conducted in the context of the International Studies Master Program, with a specialization in Middle East studies (Domingues, 2020). The main research question of this study was "Has Yemeni women's participation in formal and informal peace processes had a positive impact on conflict resolution in Yemen?". This study has the purpose of understanding how Yemeni women are involved in the peacekeeping process, namely in formal and informal processes.

Concerning the methodological aspects, it was analysed existing scientific literature and open sources, such as newspaper articles and interviews, along with nongovernmental organizations (NGO) reports and up-to-date information. It was also conducted some interviews with a range of individuals who had different experiences from Yemen conflict: a Portuguese police officer that was in a UN mission, in Hodeida; a Portuguese journalist, that had worked in Yemen; a Portuguese architect, who studied and lived in Yemen; a responsible of NGO Mwatana for Human Rights; a worker at the Embassy of Netherlands in Yemen; and a senior gender advisor in OSESGY Office.

1. Women's role in conflict resolution

The Council of Europe has revealed that there is a new idea emerging, which analyses conflict as a common event, in their own words conflict is "a simple and natural characteristic of human social systems" (Council of Europe, 2012: 54). Besides, it is not accurate to say that conflict and violence are identical concepts because violence is not present in all kinds of conflicts. Most of the time people find a way to harmonize their different ideas productively, and conflict does not turn into violence (Positive Peace Academy, 2020).

The conflict resolution field of studies arose after the Second World War. With it, concepts like negative and positive peace come to light. The concept of positive peace is wider than negative peace, which means just the absence of war. Positive peace is a concept introduced, by Johan Galtung, who defined it as a more lasting peace process, based on well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, free flow of information, good relations with neighbours' communities or nations, high levels of human capital, human rights acceptance, low levels of corruption, and a good business environment (Positive Peace Academy, 2020). According to the Council of Europe, "positive peace proposes that involving all parties in a negotiated solution will surely make it more sustainable" (Council of Europe, 2012: 66). Positive peace is a process of transformation where all parts of society are involved and are affected by it.

The UN has a huge background on gender issues. One of the biggest moments in history was the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, conducted in Beijing in 1995, with the



participation of 30 000 women around the world. The Beijing Declaration was quite significant in raising global awareness of gender inequalities (Porter, 2007). Another important historical moment was the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000, by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which highlighted the discussion about the role of women in conflict resolution. This has been the first UN formal document that expressed the discrepancy regarding consequences felt by women and the remainder of the population in war areas. Simultaneously, this document emphasised the smallness of the level of women's participation in decision-making regarding conflict prevention and resolution (Shepherd, 2015). The UN Security Council has also strengthened the idea that women's involvement is an important key for peace stability when stated that "peace was inextricably linked with equality between women and men" (Olsson & Tryggestad, 2001: 1).

Despite all the efforts and progress that have been made, in 2020, a report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), that stands for the reduction of poverty and inequality, still focuses on the differences existing among countries, affirming that "despite remarkable progress in some areas, no country in the world — rich or poor — has achieved gender equality" (UNDP, 2020: 1).

Gender inequality is not an isolated problem of a single country. Ingrid Sandole-Staroste argues that "sustainable peace, security, and development cannot be achieved if only one gender is included in decision making processes" (Sandole-Staroste, 2009: 226). When the conflict ends, society tends not to notice women's presence: "they fail to notice women's less privileged positions, the importance of the issues women want addressed, and the contributions they make, and, if they notice, they often dismiss women's demands" (Sandole-Staroste, 2009: 227).

Mary Caprioli's study, between 1960 and 2001, showed that there is a bigger likelihood of a state to experience warfare when there are higher levels of inequality (McGuinness, 2006). Similarly, Positive Peace Academy (2020) defends that countries where gender equality exists and where the rights of women are more considered have higher probabilities to build structural bases where positive peace can proliferate, and avoid conflict or war.

Men and women have different conflict management styles. Studies have shown that women tend to use more frequently collaborative, compromising, or avoiding styles of managing the conflict, while men are more susceptible to use competing or avoiding styles in managing the conflict. According to Cassandra Shepherd (2015), the collaborative style is more useful in international conflicts than the competitive one because it is more conciliatory and easier to reach consensus between parts. According to the theories of armed conflict resolution, formal processes are constituted by the negotiations between states or political groups, whilst informal processes are actions of negotiation performed by non-governmental organizations or informal initiatives of groups or even singular citizens (McGuinness, 2006).

Women have taken part mostly in the informal peace process. According to Elisabeth Porter, "while women are active peacebuilders, their contribution often is informal, behind-the-scenes, unpaid, collaborative and unrecognized as actual peacebuilding"



(Porter, 2007: 5). Women make their influence be noticed in war and peacebuilding through informal methods.

Although the importance of formal processes, the truth is that women are almost absent from them, in fact, women are “excluded from formal peace negotiation processes and public, political decision-making” (Porter, 2007: 5). History has shown that “controlling parties have ignored or excluded women from the negotiation table, and women often encounter overt discrimination when attempting to influence armed conflict resolution” (McGuinness, 2006: 65).

Women and men feel the war effects in different ways. According to Shepherd, women and children are often victims of violent situations, like rape, sexual slavery, and other sexual violence. Sexual offenses towards women and children are used as “weapons of war in international conflicts” (Shepherd, 2015: 54).

Miranda Alison (2006, apud Porter, 2007) has revealed that not all women are victims in conflict, moreover, they can be quite aggressive and methodical combatants. Despite that, “women universally are the prime nurturers in relationships, families, and communities, they play crucial roles in peacebuilding, often in very informal, unofficial ways” (Porter, 2007: 3).

According to Anna Snyder (2009), there are two main reasons for women to be involved in peacebuilding. First, women need to change the circumstances created by the conflict that affected them. And the second reason is that “they recognize that peace agreements offer an opportunity to transform society generally and gender relations specifically. Transformation of society during conflict may provide post-conflict opportunities for transformation of gender relations” (Snyder, 2009: 48).

2. Yemeni conflict

It is not new that the Yemeni conflict is causing a deep humanitarian crisis in Yemen society. In fact, over the last years, we have been heard not only different ONG and institutional organizations draw attention to that fact – UN¹ for instance – but also the media have been sharp in doing so.

Yemen, which was ironically called in the Classical Antiquity “Arabia Felix”², was established in 1990 with the joint of North and South Yemen. Yemen is divided into three geographical regions: north, south, and eastern. The north is constituted by the Shiite population, dominated by the Houthi movement³. The south, mainly made up of the Sunni population, was a British colony from 1839 to 1967, and after that period it became an Arab communist state, until 1990. The eastern side, also known as Hadramawt, is occupied by the Hadrami population, a nomad people (Orkaby, 2017). Despite all these differences, we can see that during history sectarianism has been slight. Just recently,

¹ As we can see on their webpage, that can be accessed on <https://yemen.un.org/en/about/about-the-un> (accessed on May 10, 2021)

² Latin words for “happy Arabia” or “fertile Arabia”.

³ The Houthi movement will be described further on.



people have started paying attention to religious differences, especially because of the rise of political Islam (Baron, 2019).

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait has had a strategic meaning, so it forms a vital strategic link on the maritime trade route between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Yemen is also linked to the major transition corridors of oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf to Europe and the United States of America (US) through the Suez Canal and the SUMED (Arab Petroleum Pipelines Company) oil pipeline in Egypt. This strategic importance can explain regional and western countries' strategic interests in the Yemen conflict, like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom (UK), and the US. Despite its huge potential, Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world, with high levels of poverty, malnutrition, and unemployment (International Crisis Group, March 27, 2020).

The Yemeni conflict is often presented by academics as a dual conflict between a pro-Hadi side, which represents the government forces, and a pro-Houthi side, which is considered by the international community as the rebel and/or revolutionary side (Clausen, 2018).

The Houthi movement is an Islamic political and armed movement that emerged from Saada in northern Yemen. According to Ibrahim Fraihat (2016), the Zaidi Shiite Houthi movement has appeared in the early 1980s and was founded by Hussein al-Houthi, a native man from the Houthi tribe. Since he died in 2004, the movement has been led by his brother Abdul-Malik al-Houthi (McKernan, 2018), who along with his predecessor defend the rejection of American hegemony, as one of the major aims of the movement (Fraihat, 2016). In the north of the country, where they fully control, Houthis have ruled almost all administration structures, like checkpoints, security, taxes, health, and justice (Clausen, 2018).

Between 2004 and 2010, President Ali Abdulla Saleh, who was in power since 1978, fought six wars against Houthis, and in all of them, he lost. In 2014, the Houthis took over the Yemeni capital of Sana'a. Consequently, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates immediately launched their intervention in Yemen in March 2015, on the Hadi side. According to Michael Horton (2020), the Saudi coalition's militaries who were in charge thrust on a quick victory over the Houthis, nevertheless after so many years of ongoing conflict, the Houthis have shown to be strategically astute and resilient.

The Saudi Arabia and Iran intervention on internal affairs of neighbor's countries is a quite recurrent situation. Some observers argue that is a proxy war going on between the two of them, where they are, indirectly, competing with each other, and trying to obtain some advantages, without declaring war to one another, but with some actions where prevailing forces finance different armed groups using money, weapons, intelligence, and military equipment to make war (Byman, 2018).

Conflict in Yemen is similar to other conflicts which recently took place in the MENA region: it "is not a single conflict, but is instead a mosaic of multifaceted regional, local, and international power struggles which are the legacy of recent and long-past events" (Drew, 2019: 3). This is considered to be one of the reasons why is so difficult to find out a solution to the Yemen conflict, once the interests they are fighting for are not just



internal, but regional and even international, with numerous players trying to change the political scene in their favors.

According to International Crisis Watch (2020, March 27), "this conflict has no military solution, only a diplomatic one". José Rosendo (2020)⁴ stated that these conflicts which took place for years have left profound scars in Yemeni society. In the same sense, Cate Buchanan (2020)⁵ noticed that it is extremely difficult for the UN to conduct face-to-face talks because parties have been seriously resistant in having regular conversations. Buchanan (2020) also highlights that there is not a major agreement, but many small agreements that additionally make the process unclear and unstructured. The involvement of foreign actors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other MENA countries, which have used Yemen as a stage for their proxy war, is a relevant contributor for this internal disputation last for so long. According to Buchanan (2020) the different dynamics, the number of external actors who are involved, and foreign states turn this conflict into a complex reality.

Elcineia Castro and Verônica D'Angelo (2019) state that Yemen has been living in a logical of survival, where the conflict does not look so terrifying when compared with hunger and disease. This does not lessen the importance of this topic, but, naturally, it increases the relevance of other problems that even intensify the inequality within Yemeni people.

3. Informal women-led initiatives

Informal processes in conflict resolution are defined as initiatives or negotiations taken by nongovernmental organizations, informal groups, or single citizens, to establish positive peace in a country suffering from conflict (McGuinness, 2006). These initiatives cannot be confused with formal processes, which represent the procedures conducted by formal institutions, which participate actively in peace negotiations and the decision-making regarding conflict resolution.

Women's contribution is quite often "informal, behind-the-scenes, unpaid, collaborative and unrecognized as actual peacebuilding, and thus they consistently are excluded from formal peace negotiation processes and public, political decision-making" (Porter, 2007: 5). Although the importance of formal processes, the truth is that women are almost absent from them, in contrast, they have a huge impact on informal processes.

In the Arab Springs, women have played a leading role, and "rather than simply supporting men, women were on the frontlines of the revolutions across the MENA" (Khalid, 2015: 8). Indeed, the symbol of the Yemen uprising was a female human rights activist in local media, Tawakkol Khalid Karman. The "Mother of the Revolution", as she was called by some Yemenis, became the international public face of the Yemeni uprising. However, history has shown that, during political transitions, women are regularly kept

⁴ José Manuel Rosendo is a Portuguese journalist, who has been working in Yemen. As a result, from their work on the field, José Rosendo published a report on July 31, 2019, named "Yemen: o lado Houthis da Guerra". This report is available in https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/grande-reportagem-antena-1- iemen-o-lado-houthi-da-guerra_a1163821 (accessed on May 10, 2020)

⁵ Cate Buchanan is the senior gender advisor in OESGY.



out and tend to lose the power they achieved at the peak of a revolutionary process. Historical evidence points that their demands tend to be ignored (Al-Ali, 2012: 27).

Besides all these adversities, even in the most conservative countries, women have pushed boundaries when joined protests and made their requests. The Arab Springs is considered to be a moment of development and achievement for women.

According to Buchanan (2020), Yemeni women are responsible for many activities – in 2017 there have been reported hundreds of women-led initiatives regarding the reducing of some effects of the conflict –, intending to promote peace, like humanitarian arrangements and understandings, but not only, they also are active in trying to make visible the role of civil society. These initiatives are quite important to draw a path towards peace construction and also to strengthen the importance of women's position in society. Women are trying to make their voices to be heard and there are quite good examples of initiatives that are making a huge difference to the daily life of ordinary people, because of their proactive attitude (Domingues, 2020).

There are many examples of women's contributions through these informal methods, like Sabreen, who is an educator, civil society leader, and mediator (UN Women, 2018). In 2015, she conducted a truce agreement between her community and rebel forces which resulted in the rebels leaving her community (UN Women, 2018).

Yasmin Al-Qadhi is another notable example, she got a degree in journalism, and she was one of the first women to write articles for local newspapers during the Arab Spring. In 2015, Yasmin and her sister Entisar founded the Marib Girls Foundation, which supports women and girls' and boys' participation in peacebuilding. Some of the goals of this foundation are to combat child recruitment, to support displaced women, by coordinating with the local and international community, and to encourage women's empowerment and meaningful participation in civil society and the UN-led peace process⁶. Peter Salisbury⁷ talked to her during his journey to Yemen⁸ when she described the work of her group in training people to mediate conflicts. Salisbury also met, in his fieldwork in Sabah Al-Swaidi⁹, the representative of the Association of Mothers of Abductees. This women's group influences the release of civilians that are arbitrarily detained across Yemen.

Another activist is Radhya Al-Mutawakel, a human rights defender, and the co-founder of Mwatana Organisation For Human Rights, an independent organization working to defend and protect human rights in Yemen. This organization has been documenting human rights abuses by all parties in the conflict. She has briefed the UN Security Council on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, becoming the first person to do this.

⁶ Information available in <https://eca.state.gov/iwocprofiles/yasmin-al-qadhi-yemen> (accessed on May 10, 2021).

⁷ Peter Salisbury is a Senior Analyst for Yemen at the International Crisis Group.

⁸ Information available in <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabianpeninsula/yemen/behind-front-lines-yemens-marib> (accessed on May 10, 2021).

⁹ Information available in <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabianpeninsula/yemen/behind-front-lines-yemens-marib> (accessed on May 10, 2021).



Safe Streets Foundation for Development¹⁰ started its work supporting and empowering women in 2009, but it was just in 2013, the initiative was officially registered. The Foundation works in the field of Gender and Development and pretends to achieve peace for women through engaging them economically, politically, and socially; moreover, they intended to assure the presence of women in decision-making platforms.

4. Yemeni women presence in formal peace processes

Although the parties in conflict have been deeply opposing to accept women inside their structures, according to Buchanan's testimony, the UN has been original in developing initiatives to include women in formal peace processes (Buchanan, 2020).

Yemen's National Dialogue Conference (NDC), a transitional process held in Sana'a, which began in 2013 and lasted up to 2014, organized by the UN and the Gulf Cooperation Council, aimed to achieve an understanding agreement. NDC was decisive for achieving some important unison to build the new Constitution, with rules like including a 30% quota for women's political participation and law to set up the age of marriage to 18 years (Gressmann, 2016).

According to Afrah Nasser (2019), "the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths has ensured women's political participation in peacebuilding processes through creative ways, to apply UN Security Council resolution 1325". One of the creative ways found out by the UN was the creation in 2015 of the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security (also referred to as Pact) as a consultative mechanism for Yemen peace negotiations. The Pact was constituted by 60 Yemeni women. In 2016, the OSESGY invited a delegation of seven Yemeni women from the Pact to Kuwait meeting led by the UN¹¹, although women were not directly involved in the negotiations¹².

In mid-2018, the Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was created by the OSESGY with the support of UN Women and the Pact. The TAG was constituted by eight Yemeni women, with different backgrounds, like economics, human rights, governance, and politics. In September 2018, TAG members travelled to the Geneva Consultations on Yemen and were responsible for developing three papers regarding the economy, politics, and trust-building. In December 2018, eight TAG members were present in Stockholm for consultations with the parties. According to Nasser (2019), the "Stockholm peace talks has given these women groups better access to engaging with the two warring parties' delegations". In this meeting, only one female representative of the Yemeni government delegation was at the negotiation table: Rana Ghanem.

The OSESGY states the commitment to strengthening its efforts to promote gender inclusion in line with UN standards. Buchanan (2020) has noticed that all parties have

¹⁰ Information available in <http://www.thesafeststreets.org/p/blog-page.html> and <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/860-gender-issues-in-yemen> (accessed on May 10, 2021).

¹¹ Information available in <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/07/534602-yem-un-envoy-urges-definitive-decisions-peace-talks-continue-kuwait> (accessed on May 10, 2021).

¹² Women, Peace and Security, available in <https://osesgy.unmissions.org/women-opeace-and-security> (accessed on May 10, 2021).



been very resistant to having women in delegations and that is the reason why the office has created this indirect mechanism.

5. Results and discussion

The Pact and the TAG are indirect inclusion mechanisms, which have become quite common in recent years considering the huge difficulties in getting significant women participation in the process, mainly in the MENA region (Domingues, 2020). According to the European Commission¹³, “while civil society and women organizations are not formally negotiating parties at this stage of the political process, including women's interest groups is critical to build credibility and legitimacy of any transition”.

Roohia Klein underlines the “second-class status of women in most societies”, where their capabilities and contributions are many times undervalued (Klein, 2012: 278). This happens in many societies in MENA region countries, where Yemen has representative figures. Milena Raposo (2020)¹⁴ refers to the low status of women in Yemen society as related to its patriarchal cultural background (Domingues, 2020).

According to Hanna Showafi¹⁵ (2020), it is very difficult for women to be at the table of peace negotiations, despite the women's determination for being part of it and participating in political issues, making their demands, sharing their needs, and find out new solutions to conflict resolution.

Catalina Crespo-Sancho (2018) argues that gender equality is needed to keep a country secure and stable, by saying that “excluding women from actively participating in society can increase the risk of instability”. Crespo-Sancho (2018) also refers that “research on women, peace, and security provides strong evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality are associated with more peaceful and stable outcomes”. The involvement of women in peacekeeping forces and the security sector increases accountability and has fewer abuses against civilians, as main consequence (Bigio & Vogelstein, 2017).

According to Carla Koppel (2017), “after decades of advocacy and few changes in practice, it is clear that the only way to achieve the crucial changes needed is to introduce incentives to promote inclusion (...) Women continue to be shut out of peace talks”. In the same sense, Buchanan (2020) argues that it is quite difficult for women to be included and, one of the reasons is because the process is still unclear and unstructured. Oxfam indicates that “negotiations to end a bloody conflict in Yemen have a far better chance of long success if women have a place at the table”.

¹³ Information retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/showcases/syrian-women-agents-change_en (accessed on May 10, 2021).

¹⁴ Milena Calvário Raposo is a Portuguese architect, who studied and lived in Yemen. She also gave an interview in 2015 to Antena 1, sharing quite similar ideas, that is available at https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/entrevistaa-milena-raposo_a799888 (accessed on May 10, 2021)

¹⁵ Hana Showafi is an employee at the Embassy of Netherlands in Yemen.



The UN, through OSESGY, is doing a huge effort to include women in negotiations to solve the conflict, even if the parties are against their participation. UN created the Pact for Peace and Security, as a consultative mechanism, the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group and, more recently, the Bloc of Women members of political parties. The efforts conducted by the UN are still growing up, and we can see that for instance looking at the fact that in December 2020 the Bloc of Women members of political parties was created to ensure women's significant participation in the political scene in Yemen and as a response to the absence of women from decision-making positions. This new group of women is constituted by representatives of six Yemeni parties: the Yemeni Socialist Party, Nasserite Party, General People's Congress, Islah, Rabita, and Justice and Construction Party.

These are indirect mechanisms created by the UN to overtake the parties' resistance in accepting women between their delegations, which allows women participation in formal processes. This shows that the UN is committed to promoting inclusion in peace negotiation talks. Sometimes the UN efforts are not clear to understand because these processes of conflict negotiation are surrounded by confidentiality and secrecy, which are needed to encourage the parties to achieve an agreement.

The involvement of Yemeni women in conflict resolution is a progressive process because, apart from gender prejudice, Yemeni culture has gender roles quite well defined, and the roots of these traditional norms are very deep (Domingues, 2020). So, the way to include women in political matters must be made step by step, and the UN must use a diplomatic effort to do so.

Conclusion

Although the Yemeni culture has its roots in a patriarchal society, where women do have not a decisive role in political matters, we can conclude with this study that Yemeni women are interested in participating and making their voices be heard in conflict resolution talks. This is visible when we look at their role during the Arab Spring, but also when listening to some testimonies of Yemeni women.

Once diverse studies point that women's participation causes a positive effect in conflict resolution, the UN has a decisive role in developing efforts to promote women's inclusion. The path has been made of small steps to integrate women in the negotiations. This is not a straightforward process, including women, in this context it is something that should be done step by step, showing respect about the Yemeni culture. Some examples of the efforts done by the UN were analyzed in this study, as the creation of the Pact for Peace and Security, as a consultative mechanism, the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group and, more recently, the Bloc of Women members of political parties.

However, the women's capacity to participate in conflict resolution is not only seen in formal processes of negotiation, but also in the informal processes. Women are involved in the Yemeni conflict resolution, through many initiatives to promote peace and give their contribution to establishing peace. Women integrated into associations, NGOs, or by themselves, have been struggling to assure human rights. Women's participation has



seen some forward movement, but it is still a slow progress. Positive peace in Yemen is a progressive path, which takes time, like all transformations in the world.

What Yemen is experiencing today requires the involvement and concerted action of the international community in solving this conflict, supporting the UN in its efforts. It is important, as well, that the states, which supported the Yemen conflict, engage themselves in contributing to the reconstruction of a sustainable society, by focusing on the development of positive peace and finding solutions to create transparent and effective state structures.

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