

The logo consists of a stylized globe with two hands, one at the top and one at the bottom, holding it. The hands are red, and the globe is white with a red outline. The text 'GiMUN' is centered on the globe.

GiMUN

GiMUN 2018

Background Guide for UNHRC

Agenda 1

The Civil War in Yemen

(None of the information provided below has been typed by anyone associated with the conference; we do not take ownership of the content – it has simply been copy pasted from various sources and assimilated together to give a comprehensive timeline of the crisis for your understanding.)

What is the Civil War and how did it begin?

The conflict has its roots in the failure of a political transition supposed to bring stability to Yemen following an Arab Spring uprising that forced its long-time authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to his deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, in 2011.

President Hadi struggled to deal with a variety of problems, including attacks by al-Qaeda, a separatist movement in the south, the continuing loyalty of many military officers to Mr Saleh, as well as corruption, unemployment and food insecurity.

The Houthi movement, which champions Yemen's Zaidi Shia Muslim minority and fought a series of rebellions against Mr Saleh during the previous decade, took advantage of the new president's weakness by taking control of their northern heartland of Saada province and neighbouring areas.

Disillusioned with the transition, many ordinary Yemenis - including Sunnis - supported the Houthis and in late 2014 and early 2015, the rebels took over Sanaa.

The president escaped to the southern port city of Aden the following month.

The Houthis and security forces loyal to Mr Saleh - who is thought to have backed his erstwhile enemies in a bid to regain power - then attempted to take control of the entire country, forcing Mr Hadi to flee abroad in March 2015.

Alarmed by the rise of a group they believed to be backed militarily by regional Shia power Iran, Saudi Arabia and eight other mostly Sunni Arab states began an air campaign aimed at restoring Mr Hadi's government. The coalition received logistical and intelligence support from the US, UK and France.

The rise of Yemen's Houthi rebels

Ansar Allah (Partisans of God), which is also known as the Houthi movement, has experienced several major transformations in arriving at its current dominant position in Yemeni politics.

It began in the 1990s as a youth-orientated revivalist movement that wanted to defend the religious traditions of a branch of Shia Islam known as Zaidism.

By the 2000s, it was leading a stubborn military insurgency that enveloped tribal politics in the far northern governorate of Saada. Its objective was to defend itself and its allies against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's military.

When the Arab Spring began in 2011, Ansar Allah was a welcome supporter of the peaceful protests against Mr Saleh and actively participated in the National Dialogue that followed his fall. The group backed regional autonomy, respect for diversity, and the strengthening of a democratic state.

But as the interim government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi stalled in early 2014, Ansar Allah launched an aggressive military campaign in the north, defeating key military units allied to Gen Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar and the Islah political party.

This culminated in its descent upon the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014.

What is the current situation in Yemen?

Almost three years of fighting appears to have entrenched both sides, while three UN-organised efforts to negotiate a peace deal have failed.

Pro-government forces - made up of soldiers loyal to President Hadi and predominantly Sunni southern tribesmen and separatists - were successful in stopping the rebels taking Aden, but only after a fierce, four-month battle.

Coalition ground troops landed in Aden in August 2015 and helped drive the Houthis and their allies out of much of the south over the next few months. Mr Hadi's government has established a temporary home in Aden, although the president remains in exile.

The Houthis meanwhile have not been dislodged from Sanaa, and have been able to maintain a siege of the southern city of Taiz and to fire mortars and missiles across the border with Saudi Arabia.

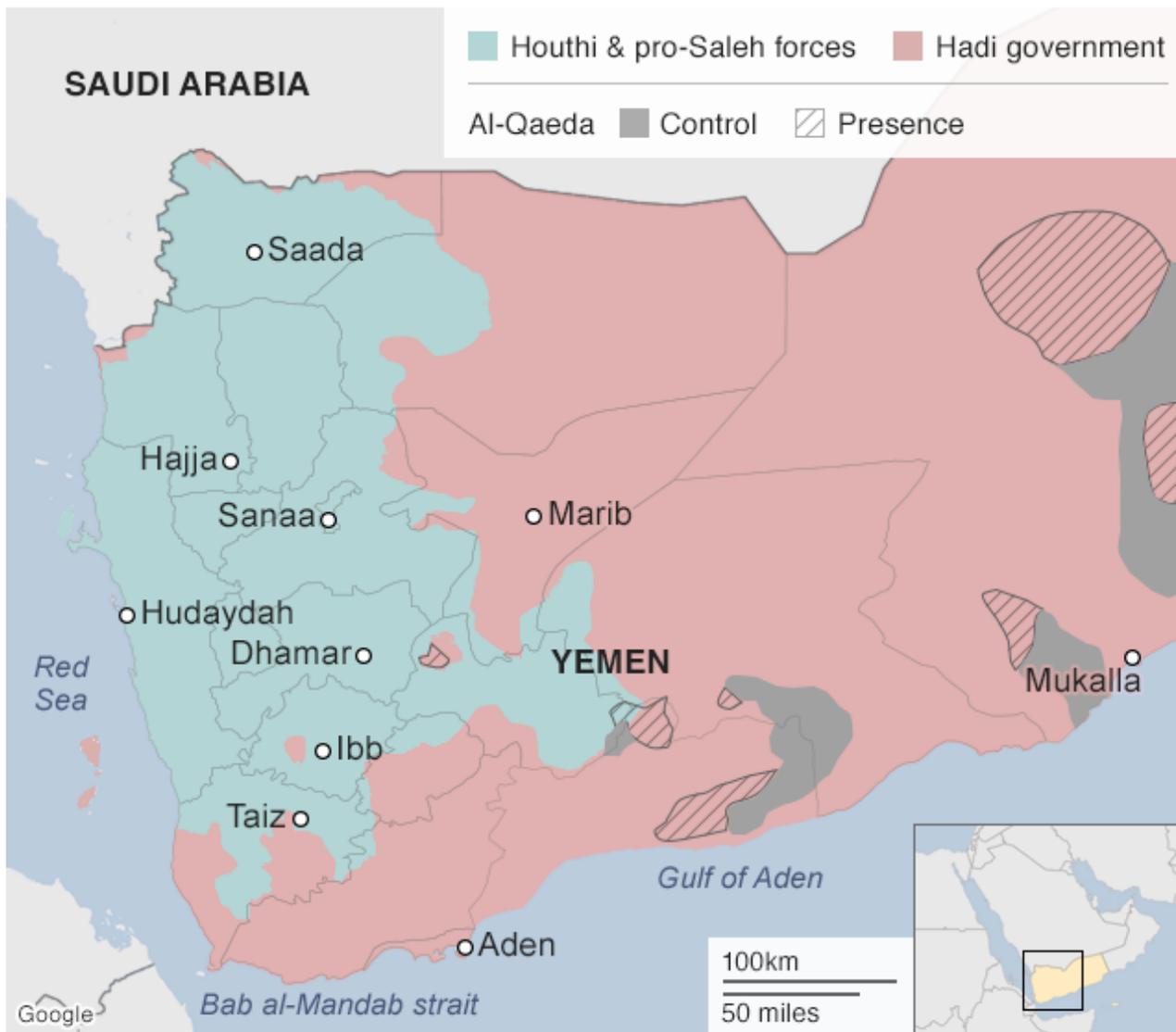
Jihadist militants from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and rival affiliates of the Islamic State group (IS) have taken advantage of the chaos by seizing territory in the south and carrying out deadly attacks, notably in Aden.

The launch of a ballistic missile towards Riyadh in November 2017 prompted the Saudi-led coalition to tighten its blockade of Yemen.

The coalition said it wanted to halt the smuggling of weapons to the rebels by Iran - an accusation Tehran denied - but the UN said the restrictions could trigger "the largest famine the world has seen for many decades".

Although the coalition eased its restrictions on rebel-held ports after several weeks, the extended closures resulted in a sharp increase in prices of basic commodities, accelerating food insecurity and the collapse of already basic services.

Who controls Yemen?



Source: Risk Intelligence, November 2017

BBC

Why are there rifts among rebel and government forces?

The alliance between the Houthis and Mr Saleh was the first to fracture.

At the end of November 2017, a dispute over control of Sanaa's biggest mosque triggered armed clashes that left dozens of people dead. Mr Saleh subsequently offered to "turn a new page" with the Saudi-led coalition if it stopped attacking Yemen and ended its blockade. The Houthis responded by accusing him of a "coup" against "an alliance he never believed in".

Separatists seeking independence for south Yemen, which was a separate country before unification with the north in 1990, formed an uneasy alliance with troops loyal to Mr Hadi's government in 2015 to stop the Houthis capturing Aden.

But relations have always been strained, and tensions came to a head at the end of January 2018 when the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) accused the government of corruption and mismanagement, and demanded the removal of Prime Minister Ahmed bin Daghar. He rejected the call and denounced what he called a coup "against legitimacy and the country's unity" when **separatist units attempted to seize government facilities and military bases in Aden by force**.

The situation has been made more complex by divisions within the Saudi-led coalition. Saudi Arabia reportedly backs Mr Hadi, who is based in Riyadh, while the United Arab Emirates is closely aligned with the separatists.

What has this crisis costed humanity?

In short, the situation in Yemen is, the UN says, the world's worst man-made humanitarian disaster.

More than 9,245 people have been killed and 52,800 injured since March 2015, the UN says. **At least 5,558 of those killed, and 9,065 of those injured up to 14 December 2017 were civilians.** Saudi-led coalition air strikes were the leading cause of overall civilian casualties. According to the UN Human Rights Council, **civilians have repeatedly been the victims of "unrelenting violations of international humanitarian law"**.

About 75% of the population - 22.2 million people - are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 11.3 million people in acute need who urgently require immediate assistance to survive - an increase of 1 million since June 2017.

Some 17.8 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from and 8.4 million are considered at risk of starvation. Severe acute malnutrition is threatening the lives of almost 400,000 children under the age of five.

With only half of the country's 3,500 health facilities fully functioning, at least 16.4 million people are lacking basic healthcare.

Medics have struggled to cope with the world's largest cholera outbreak, which has resulted in more than 1 million suspected cases and 2,248 associated deaths since April 2017.

More than 3 million people have been forced to flee from their homes in the past three years, including 2 million who remain displaced.

What happens in Yemen can greatly exacerbate regional tensions. It also worries the West because of the threat of attacks emanating from the country as it becomes more unstable. Western intelligence agencies consider AQAP the most dangerous branch of al-Qaeda because of its technical expertise and global reach, and the emergence of IS affiliates in Yemen is a serious concern.

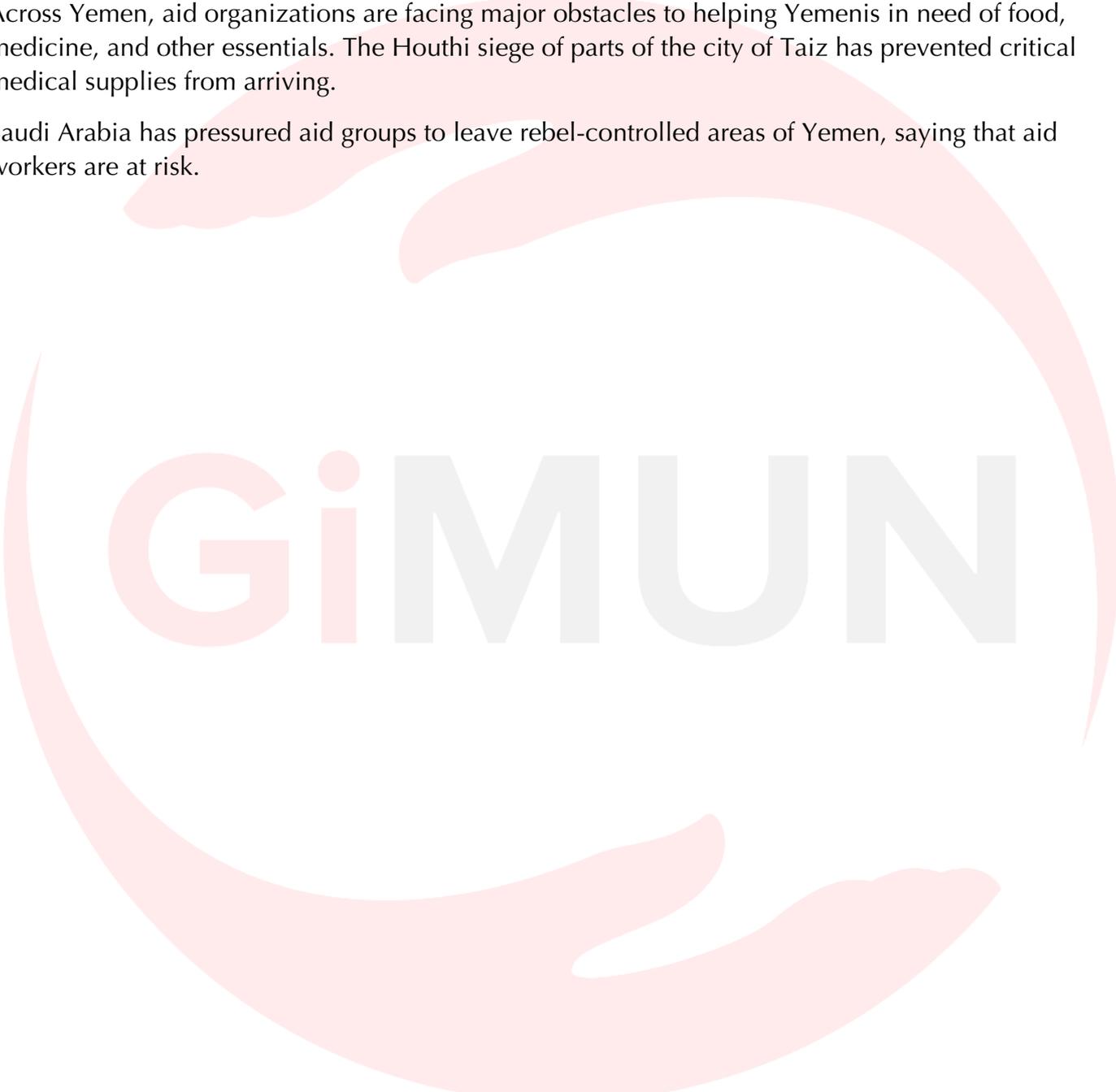
The conflict between the Houthis and the government is also seen as part of a regional power struggle between Shia-ruled Iran and Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia.

Gulf Arab states have accused Iran of backing the Houthis financially and militarily, though Iran has denied this, and they are themselves backers of President Hadi.

Yemen is strategically important because it sits on the Bab al-Mandab strait, a narrow waterway linking the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden, through which much of the world's oil shipments pass.

Across Yemen, aid organizations are facing major obstacles to helping Yemenis in need of food, medicine, and other essentials. The Houthi siege of parts of the city of Taiz has prevented critical medical supplies from arriving.

Saudi Arabia has pressured aid groups to leave rebel-controlled areas of Yemen, saying that aid workers are at risk.



GiMUN

Agenda 2

The impact of Arms Transfer on Human Rights

Historical Context

The Arms Trade Treaty is the first legally-binding instrument ever negotiated in the United Nations to establish common standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons. The development of common international standards for the trade of conventional arms has been a long time in the making, with origins in the League of Nations draft convention on the arms trade which was never adopted.¹ However, while international law during the Cold War developed prohibitions on the transfer of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, no such progress was to be found with respect to conventional arms.

After the Cold War, the devastating impact of widespread armed violence, particularly in situations of poverty and extreme inequality, came to the fore of the international community's attention. In the early to mid-1990s, to help counter the proliferation of conventional arms, several sets of guidelines or principles on arms transfers emerged among groups of countries, which included some of the largest arms exporters. The Permanent Five (P5) members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany were the top six leading suppliers of major conventional weapons during 1993-1997.²

The risk of human rights violations in a recipient country was one of the reasons for many supplier countries to follow a restrictive arms transfer policy.³ Recognizing that arms proliferation was a global problem, the United States called on the P5 countries to meet at senior levels to discuss the establishment of guidelines for transfers of conventional arms. Despite the P5's commitment in 1991 to elaborate a set of "Guidelines for Conventional Arms Transfers" which included a set of arms transfer criteria, serious disagreements meant that the P5 process ended by 1992.

Meanwhile, in 1991, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was established as the key international mechanism to promote predictability and transparency in the conventional arms trade. An International Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers developed by a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, led by Dr. Oscar Arias, the former President of Costa Rica, was launched in 1997. With Western Europe as the second largest arms exporting region,⁴ by 1998, the European Union became the first group of States to accept a regional Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

Illicit trafficking was particularly an issue in Africa, Latin America, the Pacific and South-East Asia. In 1999, a study carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) demonstrated that the unregulated availability of weapons was a major contributing factor to civilian suffering during and after armed conflicts and increased civilian casualties.⁵ As long as weapons were too easily available, violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law would more likely occur and the provision of humanitarian and development assistance would be hampered. A 2003 report by the Small Arms Survey attributed death, injury, violations of human rights, international humanitarian law, forced displacement and economic collapse, in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, to the ready availability of conventional weapons.⁶

Progress in the United Nations was first realized in the area of small arms and light weapons, which were seen as the preferred weapon in modern-day internal armed conflicts and armed violence. A consensus decision to address small arms and light weapons was achieved at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place from 9 to 20 July 2001. The 2001 Conference resulted in the non-binding United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, in All Its Aspects.

By 2006, international attention shifted back to concerns over conventional weapons as a whole. The fact that the international trade in bananas was more tightly regulated under international law than conventional arms was beginning to resonate strongly with many States.

The road from 2006 to the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 2 April 2013 was not straightforward. States approached the negotiations from a wide range of perspectives. Exporting States saw the ATT as a framework to allow their defense industries to participate more transparently in the legitimate international arms trade and level the playing field with an agreed set of standards. Along with transit and trans-shipment States, they wanted to ensure that any new regulatory burdens were not excessive. Importing States wanted an ATT that brought greater clarity to their ability to choose a defense mix in pursuit of their legitimate right to self-defense.

How does the illicit transfer of arms violate human rights?

In its [resolution 32/12](#), the the Human Rights Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare a report on the impact of arms transfers on the enjoyment of human rights in order to provide States and other relevant stakeholders with elements to assess the relationship between arms transfers and human rights law that may guide them to strengthen efforts to effectively protect human rights.

The impact of the uncontrolled flow and widespread use of arms has a gender dimension, as acknowledged in article 7 of the ATT. Article 7(4) obligates exporting states parties, as part of the export assessment process, to take into account the risk of the conventional arms, ammunition, munitions, parts, or components under consideration being used to commit or facilitate acts of gender-based violence (GBV). This article was included in the Treaty due to the overwhelming recognition of the fact that irresponsible and unregulated transfers of weaponry, munitions, armaments, and related equipment across borders have resulted in acts of GBV perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. LGBTI are often also victims of GBV.

Conflicts do not happen in a vacuum. Due to gender hierarchies, women or other groups that are already marginalised and discriminated against such as LGBTI often find themselves increasingly targeted during armed conflicts. These targeted groups risk even higher exposure when their social infrastructure disappears due to loss of family, housing, and/or shelter. They then also become increasingly vulnerable to physical attacks and sexual exploitation.

When insecurity is widespread, and in particular when the danger of sexual violence is rampant, weapons represent a constant threat to women on the streets and within their households. On the streets, the impact on the mobility of women prevents them from fully participating in public life, hinders their economic empowerment, and affects their political participation.

Within the household, the presence of weapons, virtually always in the hands of men, represents an additional threat gender equality within the family. Weapons in the home represent a constant threat to women and children, limiting their freedom and security. Often during conflict and militarization of societies there is also an increase in sexism and violence towards women, which consequently increases the risk of these weapons being used to violate women's rights.

Finally, when peace talks take place to end a conflict, those who are in possession of arms tend to have a main role in the negotiation. This often prevents equal participation of women in peace processes. Even when women have been armed combatants in the conflict, they are frequently overlooked in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Women's experiences and roles in war tend to be different than men's but men are often better positioned to take advantage of reconstruction initiatives. Furthermore, challenges to women's participation in peace processes are exacerbated by gender-based violence against women. Such violence "is both a cause and consequence of low levels of women's participation in all decision-making and, in fact, participation in day-to-day life." [i]

For these reasons, WILPF firmly supports the Human Rights Council in passing a strong resolution on the Negative impact of Arms Transfer in the Human Rights of all civilians which should include all above mentioned elements:

The impact of the uncontrolled flow and widespread use of arms has a gender dimension, as acknowledged in article 7 of the ATT. Article 7(4) obligates exporting states parties, as part of the export assessment process, to take into account the risk of the conventional arms, ammunition, munitions, parts, or components under consideration being used to commit or facilitate acts of gender-based violence (GBV). This article was included in the Treaty due to the overwhelming recognition of the fact that irresponsible and unregulated transfers of weaponry, munitions, armaments, and related equipment across borders have resulted in acts of GBV perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. LGBTI are often also victims of GBV.

Conflicts do not happen in a vacuum. Due to gender hierarchies, women or other groups that are already marginalised and discriminated against such as LGBTI often find themselves increasingly targeted during armed conflicts. These targeted groups risk even higher exposure when their social infrastructure disappears due to loss of family, housing, and/or shelter. They then also become increasingly vulnerable to physical attacks and sexual exploitation.

When insecurity is widespread, and in particular when the danger of sexual violence is rampant, weapons represent a constant threat to women on the streets and within their households. On the streets, the impact on the mobility of women prevents them from fully participating in public life, hinders their economic empowerment, and affects their political participation.

Within the household, the presence of weapons, virtually always in the hands of men, represents an additional threat gender equality within the family. Weapons in the home represent a constant threat to women and children, limiting their freedom and security. Often during conflict and militarization of societies there is also an increase in sexism and violence towards women, which consequently increases the risk of these weapons being used to violate women's rights.

Finally, when peace talks take place to end a conflict, those who are in possession of arms tend to have a main role in the negotiation. This often prevents equal participation of women in peace processes. Even when women have been armed combatants in the conflict, they are frequently overlooked in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Women's

experiences and roles in war tend to be different than men's but men are often better positioned to take advantage of reconstruction initiatives. Furthermore, challenges to women's participation in peace processes are exacerbated by gender-based violence against women. Such violence "is both a cause and consequence of low levels of women's participation in all decision-making and, in fact, participation in day-to-day life."^[i]

For these reasons, WILPF firmly supports the Human Rights Council in passing a strong resolution on the Negative impact of Arms Transfer in the Human Rights of all civilians which should include all above mentioned elements:

- Acknowledgement of and support for the role of the ATT in preventing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, including acts of gender-based violence;
- Acknowledgement of the varied gender impact of the trade of arms in all its aspects (in the house and outside, on the prevalence of sexual violence, on the participation of women and on their economical dependency);
- Acknowledgment of the consequences of groups at risk including LGBTI;
- Acknowledgement of the important role of civil society in disarmament processes; and
- Acknowledgement of the negative impact of the import of arms on future peace processes and on the participation of women in those processes.

GiMUN