



WOMEN, Peace and Security



Ireland's Approach to Women, Peace and Security Newsletter Summer 2022 Update

Welcome to our August newsletter. This month, we marked a year since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan on 15 August 2021. Since then, Afghan women's and girls' rights have been constantly under attack, with the introduction of severe restrictions on their freedom of movement, access to education and employment. In addition to granting refugee status in Ireland to a number of Afghan advocates for women's rights, Ireland has been vocal in highlighting the rights of women and girls at the UN Security Council and within the EU.

Also in this issue, we thank our Ambassador to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason, who will take up a posting in Washington as

Ambassador to the USA, and reflect on her term as one of a handful of women Permanent Representatives on the Security Council.

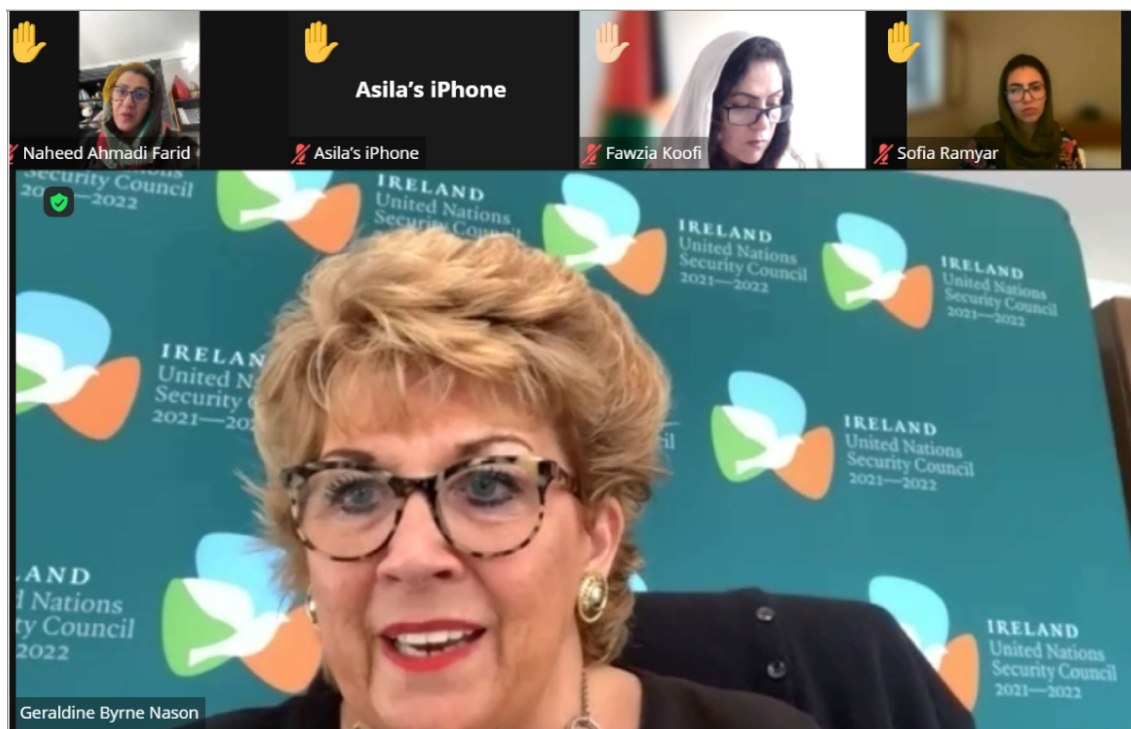
Afghanistan - a year since the Taliban takeover

This week we mark a sombre anniversary – one year since Kabul fell to the Taliban. It has been a year marked by increasingly repressive actions by the Taliban violating the rights of Afghan women and girls. The unconscionable decision to keep girls out of secondary school is a blow both to the rights of girls and to the prospects for the country's social and economic future. For over 300 days, this decision has stood and deprived Afghan girls of their fundamental right to education.

It was during Ireland's presidency of the Security Council in September 2021 that the Council held its first open debate following the Taliban's forceful takeover of Kabul. Ireland provided a platform at that meeting for the participation of Afghan women's rights activist **Wazhma Frogh** and education rights advocate **Malala Yousafzai**. That debate set an expectation for the Security Council to consistently address the rights and futures of Afghan women and girls in its deliberations.

Following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, **Ambassador Byrne Nason** began meeting regularly with a group of influential Afghan women leaders, many of whom were forced out of positions of political and social influence and fled Afghanistan fearing persecution. The warnings these leaders had raised about the empty promises of the Taliban and

the dangers for women and girls had been ignored or overlooked by much of the international community.



Over the following months, **Ambassador Byrne Nason** continued to grow that relationship with Afghan women leaders, seeking their counsel on issues that included the UNAMA mandate, humanitarian need and sanctions. Their advice and their concerns informed Ireland's engagement at the Council, reinforcing efforts to push for stronger language on gender and human rights in the Council's statements and resolutions on Afghanistan and to galvanise support among other member states for these efforts. The counsel of Afghan women leaders is also central to Ireland's advocacy against the continuation of the travel ban exemption for the Taliban under the 1988 Sanctions regime.

By doing so, the Mission to the UN put into practice Ireland's commitment to listening to and heeding the lessons of women peacebuilders and leaders. As Ambassador Byrne Nason wraps up her duties as Ireland's Permanent Representative, she ensured one of her last engagements was to host a final meeting (captured in the photo above) with the Afghan women leaders, and in that call promised that Ireland will continue to advocate for

women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan, particularly for the remainder of our term on the Security Council and beyond.

On 12 August, a group of UN experts, including **Mary Lawlor**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; **Siobhán Mullally**, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and **Fionnuala Ní Aoláin**, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism issued a [statement](#) saying that the international community must dramatically step up efforts to urge the Taliban to adhere to basic human rights principles, warning that Afghanistan's future is bleak if more is not done to reverse the deteriorating human rights situation, particularly for women and girls.



United Nations Security Council
2021—2022

Ireland at the UN: Highlights from the Security Council

A look at Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason's term as Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN



Ambassador Byrne Nason at her last meeting of the Security Council. Credit UN Photo/Mark Garten

After five years leading the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, **Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason** will soon depart for Embassy Washington. During her tenure as Permanent Representative, Ambassador Byrne Nason worked intensively with teams in Dublin and NY to promote Ireland’s policy priorities on gender equality, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, and civil society engagement continued throughout the Mission’s work in New York – especially as part of Ireland’s ongoing Security Council term.

During Ireland’s Council Presidency in September 2021, Ireland prioritised the perspectives of women and of civil society, and set a new record for the number of women civil society briefers in a Presidency. Of 17 civil society briefers, 16 were women, showing Ambassador Byrne Nason and Ireland’s concrete commitment to the philosophy that women must be “in the room and at the table”. This was something she championed not just in the

Security Council chamber, but also in her regular interactions with women leaders and advocates.

The WPS Agenda is a ‘golden thread’ that runs through all of Ireland’s work on the Council. As co-chairs with Mexico of the Council’s Informal Expert Group on WPS, Ireland has consistently brought a WPS lens to Council agenda items, facilitating discussions in which Council members focus solely on the situation of women and girls. Under Ambassador Byrne Nason’s leadership in NY, Ireland also established the first WPS Presidency Trio with Mexico and Kenya. This involved committing to ensure WPS was a concrete and tangible priority during three consecutive Security Council Presidencies in September, October and November 2021. Other member states have since embraced a similar focus during their presidencies.

Ambassador Byrne Nason leaves the Irish Mission to the UN to become Ambassador to the United States this month, but the commitment and dedication to Women, Peace and Security will continue long after our Security Council term, and will influence Ireland’s work on the global stage for decades to come.

Open debate on implementation of WPS through regional organisations

During its Security Council Presidency in June, Albania called for a high-level **Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security** under the title ***Keeping the promises: The role of regional organizations in implementing women, peace and security in the face of political turmoil and seizures of power by force.***

At the debate on 15 June, **Ambassador Byrne Nason** highlighted the important role played by regional organisations in the implementation of the WPS Agenda, drew attention to Ireland’s collaboration with regional organisations such as the EU, OSCE, and the AU, and called for the marginalisation of women to be brought to an end.

“Women, in all our diversity, continue to be sidelined, tokenised, and, frankly, too often completely forgotten at the negotiation table. Often, women are not even in the room – let alone heard. (...) But what I would prefer to focus our statement on today is how we can change the trajectory and harness the collaborative nature of regional organisations to advance the urgently long overdue delivery of our precious WPS agenda.”

Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason



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Arria-formula meeting on Transitional Justice in Colombia

On 14 July, Ireland hosted an Arria-formula meeting on transitional justice in Colombia, joined by co-sponsors Colombia and Norway. The meeting was briefed by **Padre de Roux**, President of the Truth Commission; EU Special Representative for the Colombian Peace Process, **Eamon Gilmore**; and civil society briefers - academic **Juana Acosta** and social leader and survivor of the conflict, **Yanet Mosquera**. By bringing the voices of women who survived the conflict in Colombia to the Security Council, Ireland lived up to its belief that victims and survivors must be at the centre of transitional justice processes.

The meeting provided a platform for a dedicated discussion on the transitional justice system in Colombia. Council members and UN Member states alike recognised the unique nature of the Colombian transitional justice system

and reaffirmed the support of the international community to the Peace Accord.



From left: Ireland's Ambassador to the UN, Geraldine Byrne Nason; EU Special Representative for the Colombian Peace Process, Eamon Gilmore; and Marta Lucía Ramírez, Vice President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia at the Arria-formula meeting on Transitional Justice in Colombia.

Informal Expert Group on WPS



On 24 June 2022, the **Informal Expert Group (IEG)** on Women, Peace and Security held a meeting on the

situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. It was the first time that the IEG had discussed the Palestinian question, and the Co-Chairs noted the recent escalation of violence and the killing of the Palestinian-American journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh, in May 2022. The Group heard a briefing by the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, **Tor Wennesland**, who was accompanied by representatives from the United Nations country team.

Issues discussed included women's lack of participation in the peace process and what the United Nations could do to engage more with women in civil society and universities and to promote the implementation of the WPS Agenda by the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government; the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), following accession thereto by the Palestinian authorities; the root causes of the gender inequality affecting Palestinian women and girls; the shrinking civic space for Palestinian non-governmental organisations and activists; and the visibility or impact of women-led initiatives to find common ground across conflict lines.

The IEG recommended Security Council members:

- Advocate the holding of free and fair elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territory with the full and equal participation of women.
- Support the implementation and resourcing of the Palestinian national action plan on Women, Peace and Security and urge the Israeli Government to develop and adopt a national action plan in close cooperation with Israeli civil society.
- Advocate the prompt investigation and prosecution of violations against women and girls committed by State and non-State actors in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and at checkpoints and advocate the provision of effective access to legal remedies and adequate compensation for victims.
- Provide flexible funding to women's rights organisations

and ensure that funding remains accessible in an increasingly restricted civic space.



Fiona Broderick (right), WPS adviser at Ireland's Permanent Mission to the UN, met with Comdt. Murtagh Brennan and 2/LT Natalia Juzalaska, gender advisers of the IRPOLBATT of UNIFIL

On 28-30 June, members of the Security Council Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS visited Lebanon. This was the first field visit by the group, since its establishment in 2016. The programme was facilitated and supported by the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), UN Women and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). It included meetings with the UNIFIL leadership and gender unit, UNSCOL leadership, UN Women, the Lebanese Armed Forces Gender Department, the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, municipal authorities in Tyre, civil society organisations, women peacebuilders and women Members of Parliament. The group visited Beirut, a UNHCR reception centre in the North, and UNIFIL headquarters in the South. They also visited a UNRWA Palestinian camp in Beirut.

Throughout the visit, UNSC experts met inspiring women activists and peacebuilders working in mediation, conflict resolution and gender equality, as well as UNIFIL gender advisors, who are working to make peacekeeping more inclusive. On their return, IEG co-chairs Ireland and Mexico together with the UK as WPS penholder issued a [letter](#) to the President of the UN Security Council detailing the findings of the visit.



Each month, the **NGO Working Group on WPS publishes Monthly Action Points (MAP)** with recommendations for the Security Council on how to progress WPS across different country files. August's [MAP](#) focuses on Syria and Ukraine.

NAP Domestic Agenda

From 21 to 24 June, desk officers **Caroline Lavelle** (Conflict Resolution Unit) and **Tom Noonan** (Eastern Neighbourhood Unit) travelled to Chişinău, Moldova as part of the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) Donor Mission**. **Eoin Egan**, Deputy Head of Mission at Embassy Bucharest, also attended the first day of the mission.

The purpose of this donor mission was to provide WPHF donors with direct access to the projects and civil society organisations they support, while accelerating resource mobilisation, deepening partnerships and driving enhanced visibility for WPHF and the local women's organisations that it finances on the front lines.

Donors had the opportunity to visit and engage with

recently supported civil society organisations in Moldova and see first-hand the impact of WPHF's Ukraine Emergency Response efforts. Additional Meetings were held with UN Women Country Office colleagues as the Management Entity of WPHF-supported projects in Moldova, as well as the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and other UN actors on the ground.



At Palanca border crossing, seeing first-hand the experiences of women & girls forced to flee their homes as local CSO partners work to respond to their urgent needs. Photo credit WPHF

Meeting of the Oversight Group on Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of the WPS Agenda

This year's second meeting of the Oversight Group (OG) took place virtually on 6 July and focused on the intersections between conflict, climate and gender.

Stacy Wrenn, from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications' Air Quality, EU and International Division and Ireland's focal point on climate

and gender, spoke about the differentiated impacts climate change has on women and marginalised groups, peoples, and communities, including LGBTQ+. Despite the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality more broadly, the gender-climate nexus has been receiving greater political and academic attention in recent years. Ireland has been pushing for an intersectional approach to crises, including the recognition of the gendered impacts of climate change.

Maeve McLynn, Deputy Director of the Climate Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs, started by drawing attention to DFA's Climate and Gender focused work that has been ongoing for some time, noting the establishment of the Climate Unit in 2020 as a standalone unit.

Maeve also spoke about the role of NGOs that have been instrumental in raising the profile of the agenda in the Global South and mentioned the partnership with WEDO (Women's Environment & Development Organization) on the gender-climate nexus. One of the priorities of the partnership is to generate knowledge and information, to advise governments of existing gaps and problems and foster greater collaboration with women's organisations. The thematic issues supported by Climate Unit include women's participation in climate action, access to clean energy, social protection mechanisms, land ownership and management. Through Irish Aid, Ireland supports projects in Sub-Saharan Africa that seek to improve women's access to land ownership in order to allow them to generate an income.

As part of the NAP Secretariat, **Shane Rice**, desk officer in the Conflict Resolution Unit, gave an update on the second annual report on Ireland's Third National Action Plan on WPS (due to be published in the next few weeks). Key findings of the report include an increase in funding to WPS relevant programmes, partly due to an increased recognition of Ireland's existing actions as contributing to implementation of the WPS Agenda. WPS was also mainstreamed in response to crises such as in the response to the Afghanistan crisis, particularly since 2021. The report also found an increased presence of WPS in international engagements such as at the UN Security Council and

African Union, and increased mainstreaming of WPS on the local level including through Department of Defence training sessions.

The next OG meeting is set for 7 September, 2022.

WPS Events

Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation event with Monica McWilliams



Monica McWilliams (right) in conversation with Áine Lawlor at Glencree event in Iveagh House.

On 14 July, the **Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation** organised a dialogue between Good Friday Agreement negotiator and signatory **Monica McWilliams** and **Áine Lawlor** of RTE, which took place in Iveagh House. The conversation revealed insights into the Northern Ireland Peace Process, the signing and

implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, the coming together of women across the sectarian divide to form the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and the ongoing barriers to women's participation in politics.

The **Representative Office of Ireland in the occupied Palestinian territory** (oPt) organised a consultation on 3 August which brought together **Mary Lawlor**, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), and a group of human rights defenders from across the oPt.

The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate an opportunity for HRDs to make contact with the Special Rapporteur and outline their work, and for the Rapporteur to outline how her mandate works and how it can be accessed if the HRDs are at risk. It was also an opportunity for the Representative Office to set out Irish efforts on the protection of human rights defenders in our bilateral, EU, and UN multilateral engagement.

The event involved nine HRDs from all across the oPt, including the Gaza Strip and Masafer Yatta, and was also attended by **James Heenan**, Head of OHCHR oPt.

The meeting was a very useful opportunity to inform the UN Special Rapporteur on the various issues affecting HRDs in the oPt and to facilitate her engagement with less prominent HRDs, including women who often work at great personal risk and with little support.



On 4 August, **Embassy Tel Aviv** hosted a workshop and training session on UNSCR 1325 with Israeli partner **Itach-Maaki** (Women Lawyers for Social Justice). Some 35 Arab and Jewish Israeli women from government ministries and civil society took part in the workshop. The aim of the training was to give women the skills and knowledge to be proficient negotiators and bring a gender perspective to the table.

Aoife Lyons, Deputy Representative at the **Representative Office of Ireland in Ramallah**, outlined the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and spoke about Ireland's work on the implementation of Resolution 1325 through its third National Action Plan on WPS and the importance Ireland places on having women at the negotiating table.

Founding member of the **Northern Ireland Women's Coalition**, **Avila Kilmurray**, shared a number of insights from the Coalition's experience of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. She noted that the Coalition had been structured to represent the various identities in a divided society having a shared leadership and representation. Avila emphasised the importance of having clear values and principles rather than detailed policy positions. In this case

the principles were **Equality, Human Rights** and **Inclusion**. This allowed potentially divisive issues to be discussed through the lens of this agreed format. Finally, Avila pointed out the importance of doing politics differently to allow broader participation than that offered by established parties. When traditional parties said they could not find women candidates to stand for election, the Coalition found 90 in 6 weeks! Where there is a will there is a way!

In 2021-2022, the **Embassy of Ireland in Kenya** is working in partnership with UN Women and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on a project entitled '*Amplifying Women's Voices in the Prevention of Violence against Women in Elections in Bungoma and Vihiga Counties*'. As part of this effort, on 13 July **the Irish Embassy, UN Women and OHCHR** hosted a dialogue session with women candidates to reflect on the recent party primaries and ongoing political campaigns. This gathering provided an opportunity for women aspirants to reflect on experiences, lessons, challenges and opportunities for their participation in the democratic process.

During the dialogue session, women leaders reiterated the barriers to political participation including inadequate political support from their political parties; inadequate financial resources; electoral gender-based violence; gender stereotyping; and, patriarchal structures across society that actively prevent women's equal participation. Young women and those with disabilities spoke of the additional burdens they face such as access to education, self-esteem, communication skills, and freedom of movement.



Fionnuala Quinlan (first from right), Ireland's Ambassador to Kenya, with organisers and participants in the dialogue session. Photo credit UN Women

The session demonstrated the ongoing financial, cultural, societal and even physical challenges that women aspirants face in the Kenyan democratic process and the need for strategic and targeted positioning of women in party leadership and nomination processes, direct efforts to tackle violence against women and gender stereotypes, investment in women aspirants early in the electoral cycle, and voter education on gender equality.

The Embassy of Ireland through the ***Amplifying Women's Voices*** project continues to work with UN Women and OHCHR to support the central work of women's human rights defenders and peace activists to strengthen rights holders' capacity to prevent violence against women in elections (VAWE).

In our next issue we will bring you updates from the UN General Assembly High-Level Week, WPS week at the Security Council in October and much more.

Until then, the WPS team in the Conflict Resolution Unit wish you an enjoyable end of

summer! Remember you can contact us any time at wpsconsultations@dfa.ie and follow us on [@DFAPeaceSupport](https://twitter.com/DFAPeaceSupport) for updates on all things WPS!



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