



October 2021

Overview of the Submission to the CEDAW Committee, 80th session Review of Sweden

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a feminist, anti-militarist organization working for peace, disarmament and gender equality. WILPF Sweden has been active in Sweden since 1919.

This two-page brief is an overview the submission made by WILPF Sweden to the CEDAW Committee in September 2020.¹

WILPF Sweden's submission focuses on the inconsistencies between the assessments that the Swedish government makes regarding human rights in general and women's human rights and gender-based violence against women in particular, and the continued arms transfers from Sweden to countries where women's enjoyment of their human rights is severely limited.

Inconsistencies between Sweden's own human rights assessment and its authorization of arms transfers

The first section of the submission (pages. 3-7) illustrates these inconsistencies through examples in which we compare the country assessments made in government reports as well as Sweden's statements in multilateral fora—like the Human Rights Council—or support to country-specific resolutions in those fora, with comprehensive information about the transfers of arms and military equipment from Sweden to those countries.

This section includes the example of Turkey, to which all export licenses were revoked by the Swedish government, which stated that Turkey's military operation in Syria violated international law and the UN Charter. This example shows that it is possible for the government to stop arms exports even when export licenses have previously been issued, and that it is a matter of political will whether that happens.

The next section (pages 7-10) presents the case of arms transfers from Sweden to countries involved in the war in Yemen. In addition to what's included in our 2020 submission of our report, we would like to inform the Committee that the Swedish arms company Saab has delivered a third Global Eye aircraft to the United Arab Emirates, two new deals have been signed between Sweden and Saudi Arabia, and numbers show that in 20,4 percent of the Swedish arms export went to the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen in 2020. Arming countries taking part in the war in Yemen is clearly detrimental to women's human rights, development and the risks that these arms will be used to perpetrate or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence cannot be ignored.

The Swedish arms exports regulations are comparatively strict, yet their implementations falter with regards to gender-specific risk assessments. On pages 10-12 there is an overview of the regulations, shortcomings and recommendations for improved compliance with domestic law as well as Sweden's obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty, the EU Common Position on arms exports and CEDAW.

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https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCEDAW%2fCSS%2fSWE%2f43279&Lang=en

Recommendations

- Fully and immediately stop all arms transfers to all countries involved in the war in Yemen, including follow-up deliveries.
- Cease to export and deny arms export authorisations to countries that violate IHL and human rights and facilitate GBV or violence against women.
- Ensure that the implementation of the new regulations on Swedish arms exports have a consistent gender perspective approach, by, for example, giving clear directives and training to the Inspectorate of Strategic Products (ISP), the governmental agency responsible for implementing control of Sweden's arms export.
- Ensure that authorities with expertise in gender analysis, human rights, development and conflict prevention, such as the Folke Bernadotte Academy and Sida,² are included in the licensing process.

Sweden's implementation of UNSCR 1325

Sweden's feminist foreign policy highlights the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as a central tool for its implementation. However, more remains to be done to ensure coherence and synergies between the two frameworks. This section of our submission highlights migration (page 13), disarmament and arms control under the National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 (pages 13-14), and climate change (page 14), as areas where more work is needed to ensure women's participation and the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls.

In its List of issues, the CEDAW Committee asked Sweden about measures taken to integrate a gender perspective into policies and programmes on climate change, to ensure the effective participation of women in decision-making processes on climate change in line with the Committee's GR 37.

The Swedish 2021 Action Plan on the Feminist Foreign Policy highlights the linkages between climate and conflict as well as the fact that gender discrimination is reinforced by discrimination and vulnerability linked to factors such as poverty, conflict, migration, and climate change. Climate change was not included in the previous NAP 1325. Given the linkages between climate change, violence, and conflict, it is clear that a gender perspective needs to be added to the discussion. The WPS agenda would, therefore, offer a good policy platform to start.

Recommendations

- Include migration, asylum, and climate change in the upcoming NAP1325.
- Include UNSCR 1325 and subsequent related resolutions in the assessments of Swedish arms export carried out by the Inspectorate of Strategic Products (ISP). Such assessments should include the recipient countries' reports on implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent related resolutions as well as NGO reports assessing such implementation.
- Require the agency ISP to report on the implementation of the NAP1325, in line with other agencies under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

² Sweden's government agency for development cooperation.