

Global Summit – Lorraine Mirham

Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict June 2014 London –

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Whatever you feel about William Hague or John Kerry or Angelina Jolie, one thing is for certain; that without the 'celebrity' I wouldn't have been afforded several conversations with family, work colleagues and friends about sexual violence in conflict (SVC) and been able to discuss this with a WILPF analysis with them. Sometimes what we do in the UN Fora is too distant for those around us who have many demands for their attention, particularly when it comes to the issues I spring on them daily.

First though, I want to thank every WILPF member who came to the event and hope it made you as proud as I am of our ability to frame the debate, bring expertise and women from conflict situations. Who else brought Syrian women to the Summit and really put Syria on the table? WILPF did. Who else brought globally respected analysts on women, peace and security and the arms trade? WILPF's projects were represented, *peacewomen*, *RCW*, *MENA*. Who moderated, participated and hosted fringe events that really tackled the root causes of SVC and proposed concrete solutions? Yes, of course WILPF did.

I also want to thank our wonderful volunteers who worked beautifully together to promote WILPF and support the staff and interns. These were Clare and Caroline from Leicester branch, Chiara from SOAS and Holly Ahom. Also to Keely and Stella who have been working before, during and after on communications. It would have been impossible without you.

A shout out to the Sheffield Branch who supported the event by highlighting the issues with a street stall on the Wednesday of the Summit their City. They invited the public to sign letters to William Hague welcoming the Summit and urging the Government to maintain momentum by putting the issue at the heart of its bilateral relations with other nations.

In addition to the tremendous WILPF delegation, highlights for me included Nobel Laureate [Leymah Gbowee's speech](#) which was fantastic. She spoke with a WILPF voice when she said "We must be proactive about these issues in peace time. Sexual violence and rape doesn't arise solely out of conditions of war; it is directly related to violence that exists in women's lives during peace time.

"Militarization and the presence of weapons legitimise new levels of brutality and impunity. This violence, unfortunately, continues in post conflict where chaos adds to the many frustrations exacerbated by the war."

Young people were represented and the words of youth delegates ring true, "In order for SV to end, we can't see young people as victims but equal partners in change." I found [Girl Be Heard](#) performances inspiring. One vocal piece included the words '...rape is effective, it clears villages'.

Powerful stuff!

We come away from the Summit with much follow up work and have a large amount of material for advocacy from the speeches made in the expert panels. We must make this meaningful and hold foreign ministers to account. In the post-Summit WILPF gathering, we identified a number of criticisms including:

- the focus on Africa, especially DRC and Bosnia while leaving others, for example, Syria, Libya, Palestine, Latin America, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Cambodia out of the picture

- some key governments did not come, like Colombia
- the total lack of focus of the closed panels on root causes, only on prosecutions
- the lack of any real discussion or interaction, only prepared statements to protect themselves from engagement with civil society
- atmosphere of hypocrisy in terms of SVC only being a problem in the 'Global South', not in the UK or the 'West' in general
- The differences between the experiences between male and female victims were erased, making it seem as if this is not a gendered problem
- the total marginalisation of civil society in general, being put in 'the fringe' having close to no access for real participation
- definition of impunity was not dealt with
- the overruling dialogue war is inevitable by the military

- lack of human rights language in general, and mentioning of CEDAW and GR30 specifically
- lack of disarmament discussions, the one session on the Arms Trade Treaty was very isolated

Plenty of work to get on with then and I look forward to hearing how branches and individuals can help. Don't forget to keep up to date by visiting our international website www.wilpfinternational.org and especially www.womenstopwar.org as we head toward April 2015.

Lorraine Mirham