Dealing with the Past, Memories for the Future – Reconstructing the Stories of Unsung Heroines

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About LAU
The Lebanese American University (LAU) is an American institution chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York and operating in Lebanon. LAU is a private, nonsectarian, co-educational institution of higher education encompassing seven academic schools—Arts and Sciences, Architecture & Design, Business, Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy. www.lau.edu.lb

About The AiW
The Arab Institute for Women (AiW) at the Lebanese American University (LAU) was founded in 1973 as one of the first women institutes in the Arab world. It operates at the intersection of academia and activism through research, education, development programs, and outreach and focuses on several thematic areas including advocating for legislative equality, engaging women in peace and security, preventing gender-based violence, promoting women's political participation, providing life-skills support, and reaching marginalized groups.
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Executive Summary

Plagued by various forms of violence, ranging from a 15-year long civil war to decades of political oligarchy, patriarchy, corruption, political void, foreign military occupation, mass uprisings, and economic crises, to name a few, Lebanon has still not transitioned from a state of conflict to a state of peace almost 30 years after the cessation of war. During Lebanon's civil war and latest uprising, women emerged as pioneer peacebuilders; yet their role was not documented and socially acclaimed. This report aims to shed light and document the important peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by women during these two monumental periods in Lebanon's history.

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Introduction

Before the first spark that ignited the civil war on April 13, 1975, Lebanon was dubbed the "Switzerland of the Middle East" given the unique democracy it enjoyed among the Arab states, its laissez-faire economy, as well as its developed educational sector and institutions. In addition, the capital, Beirut, earned the epithet "Paris of the Middle East" as it was a touristic hub, attracting internationals from across the globe. Nonetheless, in 1975, Lebanon was engulfed by a civil war that lasted for a decade and a half and claimed the lives of an estimated 120,000 people.[1] Over 17,000 people presumably disappeared between 1975 and 1990, a figure that has been the subject of contention.[2] Even though Lebanon signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances (ICPPED) in 2007, it has yet to ratify the convention. The war was an amalgamation of internal conflicts between the various sectarian parties in Lebanon with the interference of regional and international actors. In addition to the apparent repercussions of the war—destruction of infrastructure, immigration, and the subsequent brain drain, to name a few—sectarian roots and divides deepened, paving the path for warlords to preserve their families' grip over power and ensure hereditary politics.

The Ta'if Accord laid the foundation for the war's termination which officially ended in 1990. The lack of post-war formal governmental efforts to reach a consensus regarding national history and national memory of the civil war has generated countless accounts of the war, each favoring the political party recounting the events. In addition, ensuing governments have disregarded the importance of initiatives to establish peace and reconciliation between different sectarian factions, whereby each still has an antagonistic perspective of all others. As such, political hostility, deeply rooted in sectarianism, persists.

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1. "Dealing with the Memories of the Lebanese Civil War through Theatre." *UN Women: Arab States*, 16 Sept. 2021, https://arabstates.unwomen.org//news/stories/2021/09/dealing-with-the-memories-of-the-lebanese-civil-war-through-theatre.

2. "Missing in Lebanon: Report on the Needs of Their Families." *ICRC,* 20 June 2013, https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/report/06-20-lebanon-missing.htm.

Even though the war has ended, the post-war era has ushered in various forms of conflict, including foreign military occupation, a series of political assassinations and sporadic explosions, governmental deadlock, political turmoil and divides among the ruling elite, and most recently hyperinflation, mass protests, the October 2019 uprising and severe devaluation of the national currency against the U.S. dollar. Moreover, the unforeseen magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent repercussions added fuel to Lebanon's fires thus engendering a double calamity: an economic crisis as well as a public health catastrophe. Lebanon's fragility was further threatened by the drastically tragic explosion in Beirut's port on August 4, 2020, which claimed the lives of around 218 victims, injuring approximately 7,000 others, and leaving more than 300,000 homeless.[3] All these factors combined culminated in the World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor ranking Lebanon's financial and economic crisis in spring 2021 among the top ten—possibly third—most severe crises the world has witnessed since the mid-nineteenth century.[4] More than 30 years following the end of the civil war, the Lebanese are now again hostage to a failed state that cannot provide them with their basic needs including water, electricity, fuel, medication, as well as food items, and thus tramples upon what remains of their dignity and human rights. Long queues in front of gas stations, bakeries, and pharmacies—reminiscent of memories of the civil war—depict the grim reality that the Lebanese endure to secure their daily needs and those of their families. Lebanon has transitioned from a period of traditional military combat and conflict to an economic war, one that threatens its very existence.

The Lebanese civil war as well as the October 2019 uprising have had apparent repercussions on traditional gender roles, particularly shifting the role of women in various societal spheres. During both periods, women emerged as active participants, breaking gender stereotypes and patriarchal traditions, and

3. "'They Killed Us from the Inside': An Investigation into the August 4 Beirut Blast." *Human Rights Watch,* 8 Sept. 2021, https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/08/03/they-killed-us-inside/investigation-august-4-beirut-blast.

4. "Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2021: Lebanon Sinking (to the Top 3)." *World Bank*, 31 May 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/lebanon-economic-monitor-spring-2021-lebanon-sinking-to-the-top-3.

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participating in the peacebuilding process. Toward that end, the goal of this report is to uncover the role of women in peacebuilding initiatives during the civil war and the October 2019 uprising.

Methodology

This report aims to document the peacebuilding initiatives undertaken by women during two historically remarkable periods in Lebanon: the civil war of 1975 and the October 2019 uprising. This report uses qualitative research methodology, including online focus group discussions and key informant interviews, to discuss the role of women's peacebuilding initiatives during each of the abovementioned historical periods.

Following an extensive literature review and mapping of all secondary sources documenting and discussing the role that women played during the 1975 civil war and the October 2019 uprising, The AiW determined key experts who could provide valuable insights on the subject matter and invited them to participate in online focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Experts included researchers, war combatants, civil society representatives, prominent women leaders in the war, peace activists, and conflict control actors.

First, three online consultation meetings were held. The first two discussions took place on April 21, 2021. The first focus group discussion, which included six participants, covered the civil war period. The second focus group discussion, which included seven participants, focused on the October 2019 uprising. The third meeting was held on June 3, 2021, and brought together five participants who discussed both periods simultaneously. Due to COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures, these meetings took place online via Zoom.

After a thorough analysis of insights taken from these initial online consultations, The AiW conducted three key informant interviews (KIIs). The goal of these KIIs was to supplement the broader findings of the online consultations. KIIs were held between June 14 and 17, 2021. All KIIs were conducted online via Zoom, except for one interview that was done in person at The AiW's offices per the request of the expert.

Challenges

The major challenge to the project is the current COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns and restrictions being imposed by the government to curb its proliferation. As such, it was not feasible to conduct face-to-face focus group discussions; rather, the meetings took place online via Zoom. Moreover, the virtual discussions posed another limitation in terms of the number of invited experts. Had the discussions been face-to-face, more experts could have participated, and the conversation would have been more interactive.

Peacebuilding

Evolution of the Definition of Peacebuilding

There is no consensus regarding a unified definition of the term peacebuilding. The word was coined in 1976 by Johan Galtung, deemed the founder of Peace Studies, in the article "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding." Galtung advocated for the development of "peacebuilding structures to promote sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of violent conflict and supporting indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution."[5] Galtung's work influenced the work of the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who defined peacebuilding in his 1992 report "An Agenda for Peace", as "action to solidify peace and avoid relapse into conflict."[6] In 2000, The Brahimi Report-led by a panel of experts, the panel on United Nations Peace Operations, and convened by the Foreign Minister of Algeria, Lakhdar Brahimi-was commissioned by the UN to explore the UN's historical role in peacebuilding operations, and to develop a possible action plan for future work in the arena of peacebuilding. The Brahimi Report defined peacebuilding as "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."[7]

5. "UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation." *United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office*, Sept. 2010, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/

6. "UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation," 5.

7. "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305-S/2000/809)." *UN*, 21 Aug. 2000, https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/brahimi%20report%20peacekeeping.pdf.

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The evolution of the concept of peacebuilding continued (see Table 1). The UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee later issued a definition of peacebuilding that articulated the types of activities that UN Agencies and other international actors should take to encourage and support peacebuilding in conflict spaces.

> Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.[8]

At the same time, in the early 2000s, activists were expanding definitions of peacebuilding to include the concept of "human security." Such approaches to peacebuilding were meant to counter the historically "top-down" approaches to peacebuilding commonly utilized by foreign governments and the UN. Human security, according to a United Nations University report, is loosely defined as public policy that is "directed at enhancing the personal security welfare and dignity of individuals and communities."[9] Human security "strengthens" notions of peacebuilding, and consequently peacebuilding efforts, by attending to factors "beyond economic growth" to "address social relations, in particular restoring or building trust within a broader context of inclusive development and social integration."[10]

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8. "UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation." *United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office*, Sept. 2010, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/peacebuilding_orientation.pdf.

9. Futamura, Madoka, et al. "Towards a Human Security Approach to Peacebuilding." *United Nations University*, 2010.

10. Futamura et al., 6.

TABLE 1: KEY UN PEACEBUILDING DEFINITIONS & CONCEPTS[11]

1992	An Agenda for Peace	Introduced "peacebuilding" as a UN tool.
1995	Supplement to An Agenda for Peace	Emphasized the need for the institutionalization of peace.
1994	An Agenda for Development	Contributed to linking the security, development, democratization, and human rights agendas.
1994	UNDP Human Development Report	
1995	An Agenda for Democratization	
1996	Inventory of Peacebuilding Activities	Highlighted the building blocks of post-conflict peacebuilding.
2000	Brahimi Report	Defined peacebuilding as "activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."
2001	No Exit without Strategy	Underlined three key peacebuilding objectives.
2003	Review of Technical Co-operation in the United Nations	Sought greater coordination in peacebuilding across the UN system.
2004	A More Secure World	Called for creating the Peacebuilding Architecture.
2005	In Larger Freedom World Summit Outcome	Elaborated and formalized Peacebuilding Architecture concept consisting of the Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding Fund and Peacebuilding Support Office.
2006	UN Peacebuilding Capacity Inventory	Provided a snapshot of the wide range of peacebuilding activities undertaken by 31 UN agencies.
2006	Policy Committee Decision, September 2006	In determining strategies and operational plans, peacebuilding entails efforts to support … country's transition from conflict to sustainable peace, with a stable political order and basic institutions in place, the risk of relapse into conflict substantially reduced, and the country able to move to more normal development processes.
2007	Policy Committee Decision, May 2007	Provided a "conceptual basis" for peacebuilding.
2008	Capstone Doctrine	Situated peacebuilding within the UN's comprehensive approach to addressing violent conflict.
2009	Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict	Set out basic principles and features which have proven relevant across different contexts. Focused on peacebuilding in the first 12-24 months after conflict.

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11. "UN Peacebuilding: An Orientation." *United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office*, Sept. 2010, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/peacebuilding_orientation.pdf.

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Women in Peacebuilding, UNSCR 1325

The rise of human security as a conceptual framework used in tandem with peacebuilding helped shine a light on the disproportionate effects of conflict on women and girls, and the critical role that women and girls can, and should, play in peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict settings.[12] However, between 1992 and 2011, only 2% of chief mediators and only 9% of negotiators included in formal peacemaking processes were women.[13] Broadly, women's representation in formal peacebuilding processes amounts to less than 10% globally.[14] Gender bias is rife throughout peacebuilding processes, from selecting peace negotiators and mediators based on masculine understandings of "power" and "authority" to stereotypical claims that there "aren't enough qualified women" to fill these positions.[15] These gender biases have played out in the types of actors that are included in the various tracks of peacebuilding. For example, Track 1 peace processes focus on peacekeeping at the level of the state and the national level, and often included very few women, given their focus on "political" actors, which are historically understood as men. However, Track 2 and Track 3 peace processes, which take place at the local and grassroots level, respectively, include more women again based on hierarchical and gendered perceptions of the importance of achieving peace at these various levels of society.[16]

12. "'Our Rights Are Fundamental to Peace': Slow Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) Denies the Rights of Women and Girls in Armed Conflict." *Human Rights Watch,* 13 Aug. 2015, https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/13/our-rights-are-fundamental-peace.

13. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence." *UN Women*, 15 Oct. 2012, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/women%E2%80%99s-participation-peace-negotiations-connections-between-presence-and-influence.

14. Bigio, Jamille, et al. "Women's Participation in Peace Processes." *Council on Foreign Relations,* 2020, https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/.

15. Turner, Catherine. "Women's Leadership for Peace: Towards a Model of Multi-Track Leadership." *IPI Global Observatory*, 18 Oct. 2019, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/10/womens-leadership-for-peace-towards-multi-track-leadership/.

16. Coomaraswamy, Radhika. "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325." *UN Women*, 2015.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), which was adopted by the UN on October 31, 2000, is arguably one of the most important international frameworks for addressing the role of women in peace and security. The resolution includes four pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery. "This simple, yet revolutionary idea [UNSCR 1325] was the recognition that peace is only sustainable if women are fully included, and that peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men."[17] UNSCR 1325 is the foundation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), which continues to highlight the important role of women in conflict and peacebuilding through various international frameworks (see Table 2). As part of their commitments to UNSCR 1325, member states are urged to create national action plans (NAP) that provide concrete plans for implementing the resolution on the ground. As of September 2019, 82 countries have developed and adopted NAPs.

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17. Radhika, 28.

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TABLE 2: WPS RESOLUTIONS[18]

Resolution 1325 (2000)	Addresses the impact of conflict on women and recognizes the contribution of women in preventing and resolving conflict and their role in maintaining international peace and security.
Resolution 1820 (2008)	Recognizes conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war used by warring parties to achieve military or political ends and resulting in impunity, which require strengthened efforts to end sexual violence in conflict.
Resolution 1888 (2009)	Provides for more effective implementation of Resolution 1820, including by establishing a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide high-level leadership, and establishing women protection advisers within peacekeeping missions.
Resolution 1889 (2009)	Focuses on post-conflict peacebuilding, includes a strategy for increasing the number of women participating in peace talks, and calls for the development of global indicators to measure the implementation of Resolution 1325 by the UN and member states. A set of 26 indicators have now been developed to track and account for implementation, organized into 4 pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.
Resolution 1960 (2010)	Reaffirms the earlier commitments required to address sexual violence in conflict and mandates the creation of tools to combat impunity by listing perpetrators and establishing monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements.
Resolution 2106 (2013)	Requests all actors, including the Security Council, to do more to implement earlier resolutions and to combat impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in conflict. Acknowledges the importance of civil society in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict.
Resolution 2122 (2013)	Sets in place stronger measures to improve women's participation and representation in conflict resolution, especially through leadership positions. Reaffirms that gender equality is central to achieving international peace and security. Sets out the need for humanitarian aid to ensure access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services.
Resolution 2242 (2015)	Focuses on women's roles in countering violent extremism and terrorism and improves Security Council working methods on women, peace and security. Links the women, peace, and security agenda to The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), providing detailed guidance on implementation of the agenda.
Resolution 2272 (2016)	Provides measures to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations.
Resolution 2467 (2019)	Calls on parties around the world to put an end to sexual violence immediately, to prevent such acts in the future, and introduces accountability measures for perpetrators of sexual violence and calls for effective support measures for victims of sexual violence to be implemented.

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18. "Parliaments as Partners Supporting the Women Peace and Security Agenda." *UNDP*, 6 Nov. 2019, https://www.undp.org/publications/parliament-partners-supporting-women-peace-and-security-agenda.

Women and Peacebuilding in Lebanon

In 2017, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, Lebanon's national women's machinery, was tasked with drafting the NAP on UNSCR 1325 and, on September 12, 2019, Lebanon's NAP 1325 on Women, Peace and Security was endorsed by the Council of Ministers.[19] However, activists on the ground continue to decry the government's slow progress toward fully implementing the WPS Agenda.

In Lebanon, the "political glass ceiling" has kept women from meaningfully participating in politics.[20] For example, during the most recent 2018 parliamentary elections, women accounted for less than 5% of all parliamentary seats,[21] even though there was a record number of women candidates across all the electoral districts.[22] Those women who are able to enter the political arena remain underrepresented and largely defined by their relationship to their male kin (their fathers or husbands, specifically) in what has been identified as "political familism." [23]

Aside from limited political representation, women remain "second-class citizens" in the face of personal status laws that leave them constrained by conservative religious and patriarchal forces.[24] With regards to divorce and

19. "Lebanon National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2019-2022)." *National Commission for Lebanese Women*, 2019, https://arabstates.unwomen. org//digital-library/publications/2019/10/lebanon-nap.

20. ElMasry, Sarah, and Manar Zeaiter. "Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling: Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Lebanon." *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.28943/CSKC.003.00037.

21. ElMasry and Zeaiter, 5.

22. Dagher, Georgia. "Women's Participation and Representation in Lebanese Politics: Electoral Performance, Challenges, and the Road Ahead." *The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies,* 2021.

23. Joseph, Suad. "Political Familism in Lebanon." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 636, no. 1, July 2011, pp. 150-163, doi:10.1177/0002716211398434.

24. Zeaiter, Manar. "Lebanon, UNSCR 1325, and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. 42, no. 1, May 2018, pp. 39-50, http://www.alraidajournal. com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1793/1812.

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custody over their children, women from all sects are treated inferior to men, and women are unable to pass citizenship to their foreign husbands or to their children.[25] Laws that are in place to protect women and girls, for example the 2014 Domestic Violence Law, are superficially implemented and lack comprehensive definitions of gender-based violence.

It is unsurprising, then, that definitions of peacebuilding and peace activism in such a patriarchal and sectarian environment differed among the report's interviewees. Interestingly, though, all interviewees stressed the importance of widening traditional definitions of peacebuilding and peace activism to include daily activities. According to one interviewee, a peace activist is anyone who is ready and willing to proactively undertake an initiative to foster inclusion in politics and decision-making. These activities lay the groundwork for long-term peacebuilding. Another interviewee defined a peace builder as a person who tries to provide a secure environment for all, regardless of gender and age, beginning with the person's immediate family and extending to all sectors of society. One interviewee noted that justice and accountability are key components of peacebuilding. To pursue justice and accountability, the interviewee noted, a peace activist must be brave enough to speak up on behalf of those seeking justice and accountability.

One focus group participant, pushed for a reconsideration of the term "peaceful" in relation to the work of peacebuilding and peace activists. "The term is misleading," she says: "there are [many] countries living in peace, but they have no justice [and] no security." She points out the hypocrisy of "peace" considering a government who has done nothing but wage violence against its population.

> All of our money was stolen, our city was [blown up]…we need to account for those who [are at] fault. We need a movement [that is] not only peaceful—of course it should be peaceful and not use guns—but [the movement] should

25. "Unequal and Unprotected: Women's Rights under Lebanese Personal Status Laws." *Human Rights Watch*, 19 Jan. 2015, https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws.

[also] be bold enough to speak up…Peaceful means [nonviolence], I think we [all] agree on that, but it needs more boldness.[26]

In support of this remark, another focus group participant asked us to similarly rethink the ways the term "violence" is used, especially in an environment like Lebanon where the political elite continue to avoid accountability for the current plight of the country.

If [protestors] go downtown and start breaking properties or if [they] light tires [on fire], is that violence? Is violence really when a person expresses themselves in relation to the [current] situation? The lack of money? The security? When the revolutionaries break stuff and light properties on fire, is that violence or not?[27]

Several interviewees also mentioned some of the potential pitfalls of aligning "women" and "peacebuilding," noting that simply having women in these positions does not necessarily guarantee that the outcomes will be just or intersectional. As one focus group participant remarked, the assumed "peaceful" role of women threatens to reinforce stereotypical gender roles that position women as "docile" and "non-violent" by nature. While women did prevent violence during both the civil war and the October 2019 uprising, this interviewee was worried that the "role" given to women—"telling [women] to stand on the front lines" between civilian protestors and armed military and police forces—might have been "because [other protestors] thought 'you are a woman and the armed forces will not hit you or injure you' whereas, it [was] never said that violence should be prohibited in its entirety," especially during the 2019 uprising.

Similarly, portraying women as "natural" peacemakers or peace activists precludes a discussion of women combatants, both during and after the civil war. Two focus group participants highlighted the outcomes of this exclusion.

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26. Focus Group Discussion, 21 Apr. 2021.
27. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

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In many instances, they noted, women became combatants because of their everyday struggle to protect their families and their villages. This interviewee summarized the "dual positioning" that women combatants of the civil war face today:

> When [women] say "I was a fighter," you can see in the faces of the [audience] that they were shocked and don't believe [this] at first…Women or female-combatants are often stigmatized in a double way or a dual way either because society is still not ready to accept that women could play this role or it does not correspond to the stereotypical role women should play: women should be gentle, should be peacemakers and raising families and the kids and so on but not share the battleground.[28]

Ex-combatants, like the women discussed above, do not "fit" the model of peacebuilding or peace activism that is common today, according to another focus group discussant. We need to "widen" our understanding of peace to account for the diverse array of activities that women undertake during times of conflict. As another focus group discussant noted, we need to reevaluate our "understanding of peacebuilding [and] the standards through which we analyze [peace activists] in relation to the specific context in which such work takes place. The next section goes further into detail about the roles of women as peacebuilders and peace activists in light of two specific contexts: the civil war and the October 2019 uprising.

Women's Peacebuilding in Lebanon during the Civil War

During the civil war (1975-1990), women's existence was completely "disregarded": "women had no say when the war started, neither in its decision-making processes nor in efforts to achieve reconciliation."[29] Women suffered disproportionately during the civil war. Many women lost their male family members, who either died as combatants or were disappeared. As a

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28. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

29. Stephan, Wafa. "Women and War in Lebanon." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. vii, no. 30, 1984, pp. 2-3, http://www.alraidajournal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1346/1338.

result, their families struggled to survive and they "remained absent from the political scene and anguished spectators to the fighting."[30] Forced to leave the private sphere, where they were remanded by traditional gender norms, women now had to secure their family's livelihood and, in many cases, lead the fight to demand accountability for their disappeared family members.

During a lecture given to the Goethe Institute in 1984, Ilham Kallab identified five new "categories" of women that emerged during and because of the civil war. These included (a) women who maintained the normalcy of life; (b) women who participated in war-time activities (nurses, social workers, fighters); (c) women heads of households; (d) widows, or the "widowhood of war" phenomenon; and (e) displaced women.[31] Although the women in many of these positions, with the exception of women combatants, "played no major role either in the politics of the country or in its military destiny," they did "play an indisputable role in the preservation of the social structure."[32] As Juliette Haddad wrote:

> Women have tried to counter-balance this atmosphere of hatred [during the war] by manifesting a pro-life attitude. Their main worry, in the midst of continuous outbursts of violence, has been to care for life, to firmly refuse violence and its sterile logic.[33]

Put differently, women were actively participating in peacebuilding activities across various domains and sectors. And yet, as Rose Ghurayyib noted in an issue of Al-Raida dedicated entirely to the civil war:

> The women of this country have shown a heroic courage in facing the hardships imposed on them by war. Giving an accurate picture of their struggle requires

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30. Stephan, 2-3.

31. Kallab, Ilham. "Women and War in Lebanon." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. vii, no. 30, 1984, pp. 6-7, http://www.alraidajournal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1348/1340.

32. Haddad, Juliette. "Sociologist." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. vii, no. 30, 1984, pp. 8-9, http://www. alraidajournal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1349/1341.

33. Haddad, 8-9.

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a long and serious research which nobody has yet attempted. After ten years of suffering, they keep awaiting a rescuer.[34]

Toward that end, important research has been done on a handful of well-known women peace activists during the time of the civil war, including Laure Moghaziel and Wadad Halawani, and not so much is available on Amal Dibo and Iman Khalifeh.

Iman Khalifeh, who was a young kindergarten teacher during the civil war, played a crucial role in the call to mobilize for a peace march against the civil war. In 1984, a poem written by Khalifeh, which called for an end to the violence of the war, began circulating in Beirut newspapers and eventually led to the drafting of a petition for a peace march on May 6, 1984, under the slogan "No to the war, no to the 10th year, yes to life." Although the march was stopped by various militias, Khalifeh would continue her work as a peace activist in Lebanon until the end of the war.[35]

Amal Dibo, a UNICEF staff member and a founding member of the Nonviolence Movement, is another well-known peace activist from the civil war. During the war, Dibo was a key member of UNICEF's "SAWA" program, which worked to provide educational magazines to children around Lebanon. The magazine helped to "upgrade the image of 'the other' in the minds of children" and "promoted a more-or-less explicit message of peace" using "stories and parables illustrating children's rights, solidarity, unity and non-violence."[36]

Wadad Halawani was another key peace activist during and after the civil war. In her interview, Halawani recalls how her husband Adnan—an affiliate of a

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34. Ghurayyib, Rose. "A World Movement for Peace?" *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. vii, no. 30, 1984, p. 5, http://www.alraidajournal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1347/1339.

35. "Pioneer." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. vii, no. 30, 1984, pp. 4-5, http://www.alraidajournal. com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/1347/1339.

36. Hansen, Greg. "SAWA/Education for Peace: Uniting Lebanon's Children and Youth During War." *Local Capacities for Peace Project (Do No Harm)*, June 1995, https://www. cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SAWA-Education-for-Peace-Uniting-Lebanons-Children-and-Youth-During-War.pdf.

political party and a civil society activist—was kidnapped from their home and disappeared in 1982. She remembers how, immediately after his disappearance, she went searching for him by herself, pleading with various prominent figures for help; they dismissed her and offered her no help at all. The incident was, unsurprisingly, devastating for her and her two young children. She described feeling like "a chair with four legs, two of which were dislocated."

Halawani's desperation pushed her toward other methods, beginning with a plea issued over public radio that called all families of disappeared persons to an introductory meeting. This initial group, composed mainly of women, would later grow into the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and the Disappeared in Lebanon, an NGO that Halawani and several other women founded in 1982.[37] Unfortunately, the government's official policies of impunity and forgetting made Halawani's work exceptionally difficult. Halawani and her counterparts were constantly dismissed by various Lebanese government authorities, and it was not until 2000 that then-Prime Minister Salim El Hoss established the very first post-war commission to investigate the fate of the missing and disappeared.[38] However, the relatives of the kidnapped and disappeared, mostly women, continued to mobilize on behalf of their missing family members. As a 2015 joint report produced by the International Center for Transitional Justice and The AiW (previously known as the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World [IWSAW]) documented, women often spearheaded these searches because male family members commonly disappeared or were kidnapped when paying ransoms for other kidnapped family members. Further, women were forced to challenge normative gender norms to negotiate historically male dominated spaces in order to conduct their searches for their missing and disappeared relatives.[39]

37. "Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon." *Civil Society Knowledge Centre,* 11 Apr. 2018, https://civilsociety-centre.org/party/committee-families-kidnapped-and-disappeared-lebanon.

38. "Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon," 1.

39. Yakinthou, Christalla. "Living with the Shadows of the Past: The Impact of Disappearance on Wives of the Missing in Lebanon." *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 15 Mar. 2015.

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Most recently, in November 2018, the Parliament passed Law 105 on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared to create a national commission tasked with clarifying the whereabouts of those who were disappeared during the civil war.[40]

Laure Moghaizel is arguably one of the better-known women peace activists from the civil war.[41] Moghaizel is also a renown women's rights activist whose life mission was to eradicate all gender discriminatory laws against women in Lebanon. As a lawyer, Moghaizel played a fundamental role in advancing policy reforms for women's rights, including but not limited to the right to vote; the right to inheritance; the right for women to retain their nationality after marriage; the right to access contraception; and the right to travel without the permission of a woman's husband.[42] A co-founder of several important human rights and peace groups in Lebanon, including the Non-Violence Movement and the Human Rights Association, Moghaizel was outspoken about the war: "the war was unforgivable."[43] Moghaizel participated in several peace marches across Lebanon during the war, and organized a campaign to cover the walls of Parliament with anti-war posters.[44] Together with several other peace activists, including Iman Khalifeh, and in collaboration with the Lebanese Society for the Disabled, she participated in building a human chain of protesters that covered Lebanon from the south to the north and lasted nearly three days.[45]

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40. "The Missing in Lebanon: We're Halfway There." *ICRC*, 3 July 2019, https://www.icrc.org/en/document/missing-lebanon-were-halfway-there.

41. Kaedbey, Dima E. "Building Theory across Struggles: Queer Feminist Thought from Lebanon." *The Ohio State University*, 2014.

42. Antonios, Zeina. "International Women's Day: Three Lebanese Pioneers Who Paved the Way." *L'Orient Today*, 8 Mar. 2019, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1160742/international-womens-day-three-lebanese-pionners-who-paved-the-way.html.

43. Osseiran, Hania. "'The War Was Unforgivable': An Interview with Maitre Laure Moghaizel." *Al- Raida Journal*, vol. xii, no. 70 & 71, 1995, pp. 14-16, http://www.alraida-journal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/880/876.

44. "The Memory of War: Activities Handbook." *ForumZFD*, 2016, https://www.forumzfd.de/en/publikation/memory-war.

45. Aghacy, Samira. "Laure Moghaizel: A Spring of Bounty and Giving." *Al-Raida Journal*, vol. xv, no. 80- 81,1998, pp. 2-4, http://iwsawassets.lau.edu.lb/alraida/alraida-80-81.pdf.

Alongside peacebuilders, a handful of women are also remembered as combatants from the civil war. As mentioned earlier, focus group discussants highlighted the "dualism" of women's role as combatants: as fighters, women were able to move beyond traditional gender roles however, traditional gender roles still plagued them.

Especially for women combatants, war was a window of opportunity. That means, through their role as fighters, they could acquire agency and they could acquire a status that was more equal to men than [if] they had not been involved as combatants of the war.[46]

However, conservative gender norms made it difficult for women to escape their position as second-class citizens, even as fighters on par with men. As one ex-combatant and focus group discussant recalled, women entered the sphere of combat first through very traditional gender roles, for example, as cooks or as nurses.[47] However, even as women began to participate directly in fighting, gender discrimination was rampant. For example, one focus group discussant recalled that a fellow soldier had seen her and mocked her by remarking "What do we have here? A soldier with a skirt on!" The soldier, she remembered, would later apologize to her after witnessing her fighting skills. She also recalls on several occasions being "mistaken" for a fighter's wife, sister, or mother, instead of as a woman combatant. "So," she remembers, "yes, there was discrimination, the inclusion of women was not easy, [women] always had to prove themselves." Similarly, women combatants were subject to harsh criticism from various sectors of society.[48]

A handful of women combatants would later become well-known peace activists working for various nongovernmental organizations (NGO). As one interviewee noted:

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46. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

47. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

48. Al-Omari, Darine. "Four Women Relate Their Experience in Combat During the War: Purposes Vary but the Fixation on Gender Equality Remains!" *Al-Raida Journal*, 2003, pp. 42 -47, http://www.alraidajournal.com/index.php/ALRJ/article/view/400/398.

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> Many of [the] combatants we work with make this shift from fighters to peace
> builders…I think we can deduce that the first step for [some] women was
> to get involved in the wars to seek agency, to seek [an] independent role,
> away from their normal social surroundings, especially if they came from
> villages to the city. [Then] as a next step, once they [have] left their role [as a
> combatant], many of them become activists, not [only] in peacebuilding but
> also in women's rights. So, it was the step, through this role as combatants…
> [that] later on they acquired a different type of agency, through the activism for
> women's rights and for peacebuilding.[49]

While the role of a handful of women combatants-turned-peacebuilders and
women peace activists have been documented, our interviewees insisted that
these stories do not tell us the entire history of women's roles as peacebuilders
during the civil war. As the next section discusses, interviewees insist that if we
turn to an expanded notion of "peacebuilding" and if we use a wider definition
of "peace activism," we can begin to ameliorate our current "memory" of the
civil war to include women's everyday labor as peacebuilding.

Expanding our Memory and who "Counts" as a Peace Activist
The continued focus on a select handful of peace activists during the civil war
overshadows the critical peace activism that "everyday women" did. As one
of our interviewees pointed out, it is useful to divide women peacebuilders
and activists into two broad categories: those whom society knew of and
those who were unsung heroines and remained in the historical margins. The
first category includes, for example, women who operated non-governmental
organizations and those who played a publicly active role during and after the
civil war. The latter category encompasses "ordinary women," or members of
society working at the grassroots level whose work remained unacknowledged.
This category includes the educators who stepped up after the war ended, the
artists who portrayed peace in their work, and others.

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49. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

One participant refers to the importance of "ordinary women" whose stories defy the official discourse about the civil war. This participant mentions a story about day laborers who, to protest the violence of the war, chose to all wear white clothing on the same day. These seemingly insignificant moments of protest, although undocumented in the official political narrative of the war, are incredibly important for understanding how peacebuilding occurs in the realm of everyday life. These stories of everyday peacebuilding are also important, according to this interviewee, for countering official political histories of the civil war, which often paint the violence committed by political parties as "necessary" or for the "protection" of their constituents. To dismantle this narrative, our interviewees argued, we need the stories of everyday peacemakers.

Similarly, another interviewee refers to those forgotten women who played an important role in matters related to health, relief, assisting the wounded, distributing rations, and helping people stay resilient. This interviewee also highlighted the stories of women she had met who used to support soldiers from all parties during times of violence; they would bring soldiers water to wash their clothes, supplies to treat their wounds, and food. All of this, the interviewee notes, was done in the middle of the streets, amid the very places where the violence of the war was occurring. In a similar example, another focus group participant recounted how she stole her father's car to transport an injured person to the capital Beirut as the local clinic was not able to tend to his wounds.

It is worth noting that these stories seem to stand in contrast to normative narratives of women peacebuilders, which emphasize a "nontraditional" or "radical" woman breaking gender stereotypes as part of her peacebuilding work and activism. However, in the stories recounted during focus group discussions, women were participating in and contributing to peacebuilding in their traditional gender roles.

> There are people who aren't known. One would know them through one's relation with them, perhaps they didn't show themselves through the press, but

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> I think that a woman who is raising her children and teaching them to be good
> citizens is participating in peacebuilding.[50]

Interviewees and experts also discussed women who were involved in mediation efforts. Another participant recounted how her mother orchestrated peacebuilding events to rally against war and violence. Events ranged from organizing sit-ins and protesting for the purpose of electing a new president, forming human chains, as well as organizing peace marches in coordination with the handicapped and the blind, and coordinating blood donation rallies. She explains that as women were less prone to kidnapping, they were able to lead such initiatives.

Beyond "Peace": Peacebuilding during the October 2019 Uprising and Human Security

Almost three decades following the cessation of the civil war, Lebanon still fosters an economic, social, and political environment that perceives and treats its women as mere subordinates to their male counterparts.[51] As such, women were among the first to join the uprising on October 17, 2019, a spontaneous response to talks by the then-Minister of Telecommunications who was calling for a new tax on WhatsApp calls.[52] That was the final straw for Lebanese, who had been inundated over the previous months with a deteriorating economic climate, including a decrease in job opportunities and a lack of cash liquidity, discussion about tax hikes, and other socioeconomic and political issues.

Women, and especially young women, were indisputably the leading figures of the movement. In the first few hours of the uprising, women solidified their presence through the iconic kick performed by Malak Alaywe Herz against a minister's bodyguard hiding behind the protection of his Kalashnikov. The

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50. Focus Group Discussion, 23 Apr. 2021.

51. Salameh, Riwa. "Gender Politics in Lebanon and the Limits of Legal Reformism (En-Ar)." *Civil Society Review*, Sept. 2014, https://doi.org/10.28943/CSR.001.007.

52. Azar, Georgi. "Whatsapp Tax the Final Straw as Massive Protests Erupt." *Annahar.com*, 17 Oct. 2019, https://www.annahar.com/english/article/1051479-whatsapp-tax-the-final-straw-as-protests-erupts.

kick symbolized women breaking down and fighting back against normative gender roles and restrictions. Malak's kick defied the corrupt patriarchal order. Women would continue this trend during the first few days of the uprising, taking to the streets and protesting all over Lebanon. These women called for long overdue feminist demands namely replacing archaic personal status codes with a civil law that governs all Lebanese, amending discriminatory laws especially those related to nationality and gender-based violence, imposing a gender quota, addressing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, and abolishing the kafala sponsorship system.

Throughout the uprising, Lebanese women attempted to enforce non-violence, maintaining the peaceful face of the protests. As they did during the civil war, Lebanese women took charge and served as the buffer between protesters and the State: they were the go-betweens who shielded men, the youth, and other protestors, protecting them from police brutality. Women prevented violent confrontations. Lebanese women and most notably mothers took charge of organizing two landmark demonstrations for peace. The first demonstration, from Ain el-Remmaneh to Chiyah, used the slogan "No war, no violence, no sectarianism," to emphasize the need to keep the October 2019 uprising peaceful. This demonstration was symbolically significant as it took place where the civil war first started. Another women-led demonstration, organized between Ring and Khandak el-Ghamik, made similar demands for the de-escalation of the October 2019 uprising to prevent a return to the violence of the civil war.[53]

Women also directed their efforts toward maintaining constructive dialogue between protesters and the government through organized sit-ins, blocked roads, organized marches, and public discussions. Women led recycling and cleaning initiatives, and even cooked alongside men to feed the thousands of protesters congregating every day. It is due to their presence that violence has been reduced. Once again, women assumed their roles as leaders and peacebuilders during conflict.

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53. Sfeir, Myriam. Forthcoming.

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During the October 2019 uprising, women took to the streets and fought against what one expert described as "all that the patriarchal society deems holy." Women spoke up in areas and cities that were considered too conservative and called for their rights, including the amendment of the personal status codes and the transition from sectarian courts to civil courts. They also advocated for toppling the regime and ending the era of corruption and nepotism. In addition, they wanted to achieve democratic societal change. One interviewee noted that the October 2019 uprising involved the "reinterpretation of politics" as prominent political leaders have for so long spread the notion that women are not capable of participating in political life. She also claimed that the uprising was an opportunity to practice the "politics of feminism."

> I can say that women in 2019 took to the streets just like men, but to be honest, the demands and causes the women were fighting for were feminist demands, which were very talked about in 2019. There had been times before when these issues were forgotten, but not in 2019…When I talk about feminist issues, I do not just mean the issues that concern the women alone, but rather all the marginalized societies: LGBTIQ+, the migrant workers, etc. … those were issues related to the public status and the common good. Those were issues that united the people, and those were the issues for which the Lebanese took to the streets and revolted. These issues, they united the people, more so than other fights and causes.[54]

As one focus group discussant noted, while women's participation during the civil war might be seen as reactionary—in other words, responding to the humanitarian needs of those affected by the war, and calling for an end to the violence—women's participation in the October 2019 uprising might be better understood through the lens of human security. Women were demanding their rights, and they were showing Lebanese society how critical these rights are, not only for women but for the wellbeing of the entire society. Further, many women joined the uprising to demand "accountability and justice for the sake of generations to come," as one interviewee noted. Another focus group

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54. Focus Group Discussion, 3 June 2021.

participant took this definition further and argued that the humanitarian aid and support during the October 2019 uprising, and later following the Beirut Blast, should not be the only things defined as peacebuilding. Rather, peacebuilding means creating a situation wherein such socioeconomic and political violence, racial and gender discrimination, and other forms of inequality do not exist:

> When the Beirut Port explosion on the 4th of August 2020 happened, our children went down the streets and cleaned the road. I do not know how this is a good thing even though I really love, and I appreciate what they did but this shouldn't be a definition of peacebuilding. This is [the] resilience we got tired of. Peacebuilding for me is to make sure the explosion will not happen again, to make sure that our money will not be stolen again… The peacebuilder has to [have] an effect [so that] we don't need to be resilient [anymore].[55]

Similarly, another interviewee noted that protesting in the streets "was not a luxury" but was, rather, "an obligation to a country that [is] in chaos." She highlights how the movement raised social consciousness and created public spaces for dialogue as well as solidarity among the Lebanese. As a "mother and as a woman," she had to take part in "saving the country."

Another focus group participant pointed out that peacebuilding during the October 2019 uprising "relate[d] to someone who provides peace [and] tries to provide a secure environment." These peacebuilders work at different scales—at home, in their communities, in their workplaces, and beyond—to strengthen human security. Giving an example, one focus group participant pointed to the work of youth, feminists, and others who "[were] doing the peaceful work":

> They are building, they are feeding people, they are distributing boxes. I mean they are involved everywhere. They are ensuring oxygen tanks for the [sic] COVID-19 and they are providing apartments. This is for me a peace process. They are working towards building a community, a peaceful community… this

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55. Focus Group Discussion, 21 Apr. 2021.

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new generation that's uprising… is very peaceful, and they want peace. They want to build a peaceful country.[56]

For several interviewees, their participation in the October 2019 uprising was directly related to the physical, economic, and social violence that women living in Lebanon face daily. Once again, calling for their full social rights, women took to the streets to address and admonish the impunity facing perpetrators of sexual and physical violence against women. One interviewee highlighted the harassment that was practiced by security forces personnel and those who were political party affiliates against women on the streets. Another interviewee shared that the security forces were spreading rumors that protestors were engaging in sexual relations in the tents that were set up on the streets.

Another participant emphasizes that economic violence was also widespread, as well as family-based violence. One interviewee recalls how her family was not supportive when she was subject to assault during the uprising and told her that this is the "price" she has to pay for her participation. Another interviewee recounted an incident where an old man came up to her during one of the protests and asked her to go back home and take care of her kids and husband. She also faced violence from her father, as he used to ask her to delete any Facebook posts that opposed his political views, or to change her last name to her husband's family name. Moreover, women who were active participants in the uprising were referred to as prostitutes, spinsters, and lesbians of the revolution, drawing on traditional gender norms to insult women based on their supposed sexual relations.

As another interviewee maintains, women also addressed demands connected with violence against women. These women went to the religious courts asking for custody rights and demanding the amendment of personal status laws. She admits that she was proud of the women who had the courage to go to Nabatieh, Tyre, and the Beqaa, where people were historically afraid to talk about women's issues. Another interviewee similarly expressed that women

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56. Focus Group Discussion, 21 Apr. 2021.

participated in peace campaigns in Tripoli. These women did not focus solely on feminist issues but also on corruption, the legal system, and the sectarian system. They succeeded in integrating feminist demands with the demands of uprising. Today, according to one interviewee, women are an intrinsic part of the groups that were demanding change.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite attaining piece-meal gains in various aspects of public life, the status of women in Lebanon is not equal to men. Deeply rooted sectarian divides, political corruption, traditional gender norms, and archaic and patriarchal laws, to name a few, are all deterrents to women's advancement in political and economic life. The civil war further entrenched Lebanon's multi-layered crises, and paved the path for warlords to preserve their grip over power. As such, women were sidelined from post-war negotiations and from economic and political life. In that regard, the initiatives undertaken by women peacebuilders during and after the war were overlooked and disregarded. Almost 30 years following the end of the war, women were the first to take to the streets in a massive uprising that was deemed a feminist revolution. The discourse in the uprising was a mix of feminist and nationalistic demands. For women's demands to see the light, our interviewees stressed the following policy recommendations:

1. **Abolishing the sectarian system** that governs every area of public life. Deep sectarian roots imply that religious beliefs are the anchor against which everything is weighed. As such, this reinforces traditional gender norms and limits the role of women to caregiving.
2. **Amending the personal status code** that favors men over women in family affairs including marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. It is pivotal to shift from a personal status code that is ruled by religious courts to a civil status code that equates men and women's rights.
3. **Enforcing the sexual harassment law** to ensure that survivors of sexual harassment feel safe and that they are able to access justice.
4. **Fostering a sense of national unity** that replaces the sense of belonging to one's sectarian confession. This will pave the way for democracy,

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abolishment of corruption, and peacebuilding, and will entail that citizens act in ways that are advantageous to their country as a whole and not to their sect.

5. **Training media outlets** that play a significant role in shaping public opinion. Media outlets in Lebanon either belong to political parties or are affiliated to them. Hence, they portray the underlying values and norms of those parties. Media outlets should be trained on issues of transparency, the right of citizens to know, as well as on gender equality. Important to note is the necessity to offer a space of discussion and dialogue not only for men, but also for women equally.

6. **Raising generations on the concept of gender equality** with a specific focus on male members of the family, as the family is the nucleus of society. The way children are raised to regard and treat women will be reflected in society at large. Inculcating the doctrine of gender equality is therefore a prerequisite for societal change.

7. **Supporting the Implementation of Law 105 on the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared** including the National Commission for the Missing and Forcibly Disappeared, whose members were recently appointed in the summer of 2020.

As one key informant interview noted, "We are peace activists and peace builders; we are not war makers." While the challenges remain many, implementing the recommendations stated earlier can successfully create incentives for a more influential role for women on the grassroot and decision-making levels likewise. Through a peaceful role, women transformed conflicts and brokered for solutions. During both historically critical junctures in Lebanese history, namely the civil war and the October 2019 uprising, women have indeed proven to be warriors of peace.