

The Impact of Recognition and Security on Women Peacebuilders and Their Work

By Morgan Mitchell

During our weekly community check-in calls, WASL partners have been discussing the dynamics of recognition and protection of peacebuilding work, as well as the effect that international policies have on the lived experiences of peacebuilders on the ground. Throughout these calls our partners have identified specific points from their analysis and work across conflict contexts. ICAN's Founder and CEO Sanam Anderlini began the conversation by stating, "We need to discuss the threats and security concerns that many of you are facing. The things that many of you have been fighting against are starting to come back through various laws. Additionally, many activists are being threatened and spoken out against. We want to hear your experiences regarding the issues and the challenges that you are all facing."

It's crucial to understand the reality of women peacebuilders and citizens on the ground within conflict and post conflict environments, particularly those that have been affected by international policies or sanctions. One woman peacebuilder from Iran stated, "International sanctions stemming from many different countries, most notably the US, have weakened the civil society space and have created negative impacts on Iran's middle class." Including the voices of local women in conversations surrounding security will enhance the opportunity for lasting peace and will ensure that decisions are thoughtfully made with local communities in mind.

Another challenge of increasing concern is protecting the safety of women peacebuilders and their work. One woman peacebuilder from Cameroon who has been the target of many recent threats noted, "We live and we work every day to protect peace, but no one is protecting us. We give it all, but we receive very little." WASL members recognize the connection between recognition and acknowledgement and enhanced security and protection. As one woman peacebuilder from Sri Lanka stated, "Recognition is important. With recognition comes protection. Recognition can come through our participation in mediation or special envoys."

By understanding the linkages between recognition and protection, WASL members are able to voice their needs to government entities that have the power to provide them with the necessary acknowledgement and support. The importance of their recognition and inclusion in decision-making and peacebuilding processes is at the fore of conversations as WASL members prepare for the call tomorrow with the UN Security Council. As Sanam Anderlini explained, "The very least that we, as women peacebuilders and international citizens should expect is



protection and security. [Governments and multilateral organizations] should be protecting them.”