



# World

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## Chronicle

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- PROGRAMME:** No. 992 recorded 28 October 2005
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Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
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### **"Women and Peace-building"**

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, was the first resolution ever by the Security Council to specifically address the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

What difference has it made, in the last 5 years, in the real lives of women in war-torn countries around the world? What has the UN done to improve women's participation in the various stages of peace building? Does the resolution imply that women are "inherently" more peace-loving than men? Can the universal acceptance by Member States of the principle of a responsibility to protect civilians been seen as a victory for women?

These are some of the questions addressed in this round-table discussion featuring Rachel Mayanja, UN Special Adviser on Gender, Ohmar Khin of Women's League of Burma and Parvina Nadjibulla of NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

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**ANNOUNCER:** From the United Nations in New York, an interview programme on major global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

**JENKINS:** Hello, I'm Tony Jenkins. "Thirteen-Twenty-Five" may just be a bunch of numbers to you and me but in UN-speak it means this - that the United Nations Security Council recognizes how women can prevent and resolve conflicts and that it is committed to their full, equal participation in keeping and building sustainable peace. But how exactly is the United Nations promoting women's participation in peace-building? How successful has it been so far? And what can be learned from the experience of grassroots organizations in different peace-building efforts? Those are some of the questions we'll be talking about today with the UN Special Advisor on Gender, Rachel Mayanja. Rachel, let me put that question to you straight away. How much has the United Nations been following up 1325 in involving women. Is it just a lovely piece of paper that was filed somewhere in the Security Council and nothing more has been done or have we been seeing some sort of major differences since that resolution was passed?

**MAYANJA:** It is indeed a landmark resolution, so it is not like all Security Council resolutions that you find sitting somewhere. It is the only resolution that the women have on peace and security so for us it is a very special resolution. Yes, it is making a lot of differences.

**JENKINS:** So give us an example...

**MAYANJA:** I will give you an example indeed. Women, when they are thinking about, when they are involved in negotiations in their own countries talking about segments of conflicts in those countries, where you have had conflicts, have resorted to that 1325 to demand that a whole range of things be done, such as their involvement at the table.

**JENKINS:** Where?

**MAYANJA:** For example in Liberia, Sierra Leone the Mano River network of women brought all these women together and insisted that member states sit down and negotiate, and this was actually done in Burundi this has also been done.

**JENKINS:** They brought the women into the table and involved them in a negotiating process?

**MAYANJA:** Yes, and demanded that the fighting stop and that negotiations start taking place. Insisted on sitting down.

**JENKINS:** And you think that peace was brought about more rapidly or has been sustained better because they were involved?

**MAYANJA:** At least negotiating a peace was brought about because of the demand of these women.

**JENKINS:** So you are convinced that if they hadn't done that they might still be fighting going on?

**MAYANJA:** We would still perhaps have fighting going on.

**JENKINS:** Joining us today for this discussion on women and peace-building are Ohmar Khin from the Women's League of Burma and Parvina Nadjibulla of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Do you agree with that Parvina? I mean, you are part of a world... I think one of the areas that you are focused on is Afghanistan. Certainly the men were fighting for many, many years in Afghanistan and one of the things that I think if has been quite surprising is how women have been

drawn in to the process now, a certain proportion of the, I think it is called *Majlis*, in Afghanistan Parliament, is set aside for women. Is it like a token gesture or has the presence of women done something to change this atmosphere in Afghanistan so that these decades of fighting we've seen won't be repeated?

**NADJIBULLA:** Certainly Tony in Afghanistan we've seen probably one of the more successful cases of implementation and realization of the goals of this resolution that we are talking about today. The country has suffered for 30 years of violence and as you mentioned women were primary victims of that but also primary survivors. Those who remained in the communities were if not killed by the war, were certainly displaced or harmed in other ways. And when the peace making began, certainly after the fall of Taliban in 2001, just the year after the resolution had been adopted, the international community, the United Nations and also women in Afghanistan really looked at 1325. And the fact that now we have acknowledged through the Security Council that women should be very much involved in peace-making. And they demanded through a parallel process that actually was created in Bonn, where the actual negotiations were going on in 2001, if you remember. There was a parallel meeting where Afghan women got together and also begin to outline what kind of peace they would like to see in their country. And one of the things that came out of that was a requirement of at least 25 per cent of women in all processes, sort of the elections for the presidency, the writing of the Constitution, the elections for the Parliament and so on. And now three years down the road we see some of that actually pay off.

**JENKINS:** It was really because of 1325? It wasn't, I mean, could women have not just, even if the Security Council hadn't stuck its foot into this. Could women have just said - look you guys have been fighting forever, we said enough. We, as women, are getting together and we are saying enough. Or was it the fact that was this resolution that gave them, that empowered them, if you like.

**NADJIBULLA:** Sure that is a fair question and, of course, you are absolutely right that women have been doing peace-making for years before this resolution. But what the resolution does, it provides us with a the tool that is part of international law, that is part of all governments obligations, because when the Security Council passes the resolution most members states are required to actually implement it. But even more importantly because the UN was so intimately involved in the peace building in Afghanistan, the UN was itself required to uphold the resolution and to actually follow its mandate. So absolutely the work is done by women. It is not the magic of the resolution. It is the absolute courage and the work of women. But the resolution is a tool that we can use and it is quite a powerful tool, because after 55 years of work the Security Council finally said - listen we can not make peace without women.

**JENKINS:** Ohmar is that your experience in Burma? I mean, correct me if I am wrong but I do not think there is a single woman on the junta in Burma, right? They are all men. But some of the fighters I believe certainly in the past have been women. Have women started to try to make their voices heard in Burma and say - look we need to be involved in peace processes?

**KHIN:** What we have been doing is that... when you look definitely in the military junta, you'll see all the men, and also in all the decision making level in the country are all also the men. But at the present moment women are calling on and saying that we would like to participate in the peace processes, in negotiation processes, for the post-conflict rebuilding, you know. We would like to participate in the decision-making, because all rules have been completely marginalized, whether inside the country or outside the country, in a democratic movement.

**JENKINS:** Of course the leader of the opposition in Burma is a woman, Ang San Suu Kyi. And we see how the junta has been treating her. Actually I sometimes thought that if she were a man then they might pay more attention to it. They might find it more

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difficult to marginalize her, but on the other hand, perhaps, if she were a man she might be dead by now.

**KHIN:** Yeah and also, but on the other hand, perhaps also because she is a woman being accused on a really powerful nonviolent means to bring about the peaceful change to the country, maybe that is why this really scares this military with 600, 000 men.

**JENKINS:** All right, so there goes a fairly basic question about the nature of women and nature of men. Is it something intrinsic in a woman that makes you better designers to bring about peace? Less inclined to make war? In recent years we have seen women became more and more involved in fighting, and that is true in developed countries as much as in the developing world. Something like 50 of the soldiers killed in Iraq amongst American forces have been women. All the militaries in Europe are now including women rather than saying – oh, women don't fight, let's follow their example – it seems to be the opposite. Let's change the nature of women and get them to be more like men. Is that something that concerns you?

**MAYANJA:** No, no at all. I think there are two, perhaps, distinct issues. We are talking here about giving women an opportunity to take part in whatever action they want to take part, they want to be part of the military they have trained they would like to go an exercise those skills in combat.

**JENKINS:** It is a paradox, you saying part of women liberation should be to say if you want to be a soldier, you can be a soldier.

**MAYANJA:** Yes absolutely!

**JENKINS:** You can go travel around the world and kill people then you should be allowed to do that.

**MAYANJA:** Absolutely if you want to be a soldier, you can be a soldier. Whether or not we should allow any soldier to kill innocent people is a different issue that we can debate another time. But, I mean, this is their job. Their job is there to go and defend their country in the best way they want, and I think women should be given an opportunity too to do that if they choose to. However what we are talking about is the involvement of women in the peace process and not necessarily as, you know, as soldiers only, but also as members of the community. As civilians, as member of political parties sitting down on the table to negotiate peace...

**JENKINS:** So what you are saying it is not necessarily that there is something intrinsic in women that makes them more peace loving, they are just part of humanity and you shouldn't marginalize them. They are part of the whole process. They are victims like anybody else. That they maybe participants of war just like anybody else but they have to be included. Is that what you are saying?

**MAYANJA:** Absolutely, and they are more than half the society in any country. You know, they are half of the society, so why would you want to exclude them? Whatever the peace that would arrive from these negotiations will have an impact on their lives. So they better be involved right from the beginning. This is what we are saying. And all the way to the end.

**NADJIBULLA:** Absolutely. Let me agree and also provide slightly, perhaps, a different answer. I mean, yes, there are certainly a camp out there that believes that women are inherently more peaceful, because they are mothers, because they are more nurturing and so on.

**JENKINS:** Because you produce the babies that eventually get shot basically?

**NADJIBULLA:** Sure, but we also teach the same babies, perhaps, to kill. So I mean I really don't believe that women are by nature more peaceful, so the argument that we are making is not connected to that. We recognize that...

**JENKINS:** You are not making a sexist remark, are you?

**NADJIBULLA:** No, in that particular way, I mean the question you are raising is important and it is important to make a clear distinction that this is not that women somehow are more peaceful and men are more violent. What we are talking about is recognizing that in order to really build peace, to really transform a society that has been violent for whatever reason, you need to involve all the people. And they are women or not just victims of wars. They have solutions and those solutions often time work at the very basic local level and they don't get brought up to the national level - to the capital. So often times in villages, it is the women who are actually the ones who reconcile the community after fighting. But at the national level, at the capital, the international community, the United Nations and certainly the U.S or any other mediator often times is much more comfortable negotiating with world lords than negotiating with women peace-makers. We have spent years bringing in the fighters to the table without excluding those who have been at home actually trying to make things work even during the time of conflict. So in order to really transform and not actually be stuck where we have been, which is more violence and war, we need women. Not because they are more peaceful but because they have different solutions.

**JENKINS:** I am, but it is a nice distinction, it is actually... it is not so simple what we are saying it is a little more complex what you are saying. Most people when they look at 1325 and they would say that what you are saying here is precisely what you have been denying. It is not that women are more intrinsically peace-loving. I think a lot of people would say that that's the reason the Security Council is saying involve women

or there is another element in 1325, which says that women tend to be disproportionately the victims of war. Is that true? Is that your experience?

**KHIN:** It quite true and also in all case in Burma, in the armed conflict zones, areas you see that the ethnic minority women suffer the most. One is because of the gender, that they are women, and the second is because these people belong to ethnic minorities and so they are at the double risk and suffer from all forms of sexual violence against, sexual violence, gender-based violence, and also become internally displaced where they have to give birth under the tree with no shelter, no access to basic needs. They just keep hiding and running away from the army that's following and shooting them.

**JENKINS:** So you are saying that they are disproportionaly the victims because of their gender; because they are more vulnerable and they are less likely to have a gun to defend themselves? I mean one of the things that we are seeing in conflicts recently has been a deliberate tactic of using rape, for example, as a weapon of war. We saw that very much in the Balkan region and we are seeing it currently in Sudan. And you're saying that we are seeing it in Burma as well. But we actually don't hear very much about what is going on in Burma. It is still a very closed society, not many journalists are able to get in there or maybe they are not interested. But that is the case there?

**KHIN:** It is definitely true for Burma. And we have been engaged in the civil war for more than 50 years. The rape has been used as a weapon of war and also there are hundreds of rape cases where like more than hundreds and hundreds of women are involved. And particularly for the ethnic minority women even the young women and under aged children have been suffering from this gender-based violence. Rape in Burma has become even nation wide. It involves authorities from different levels and it's being committed with impunity. No cases have been ever taken to the justice.

**JENKINS:** Do you think some of that is also because of what we certainly saw in the Balkans was that the Bosnians felt there was an attempt by Serbs to impregnate Bosnian women as a way of diluting the ethnic purity. Rachel, I hear you just have come back from Sudan? So I imagine you have run up against this directly?

**MAYANJA:** Yes, I did. I talked to some women and the scenes that they described are really terrible. But there I think is more of an attempt to humiliate and to humiliate not just the women but the men. Because it shows that men are so helpless that they cannot defend their own women and I visited this...

**JENKINS:** So is it an effort to humiliate the men as well as the women?

**MAYANJA:** As well as the women. So it is really an attack against the community, you know...

**JENKINS:** You can rape a man almost as easy as a woman, then why don't the rape the man?

**MAYANJA:** Well, I couldn't answer that question but I know that they are doing this to the women ...

**JENKINS:** Do you think this is a new element in war because I mean, you have read the history books, from the Siege of Troy onwards or whatever. I guess women were considered the spoil of war. We won therefore we can take the women. In my reading history, I didn't get the sense that it was been done as a deliberate tactic, as a weapon of war. Is this something new, do you think?

**NADJIBULLA:** Absolutely. I would very much agree with that. And actually to come back to your question why rape a woman and not man. We also saw this in the case of Afghanistan where there is a whole notion, sort of an honor of a man

depending on how he protects and supports his woman. So in order to dishonor manners, actually perhaps even more problematic to rape his woman if you will, it is supposed to harm him. So some of this comes from the patriarchal notions of what is honorable and where does one's honour rest, which often times has been with the women. I mean, of course, there are many problems within that structure itself so that's why when we analyze sexual violence in time of conflict we also have to go back to the whole patriarchy and the reasons why men do certain things.

**JENKINS:** We would get to that in a moment. Let me just say... this is **World Chronicle** and we're talking about women and peace-building. Here's a look at how women's involvement in the political process is making a difference in the central African nation of Burundi.

#### **VIDEO AND AUDIO IN**

**NARRATION:** In 1993 President Ndadaye was assassinated and war broke out across Burundi. As rebels and armed groups tore through towns and villages people fled in panic for their lives. When war broke out, rape was committed on a large scale as a war tactic to destroy enemy morale.

**SABINE SAIMBONA:** During the war women were the principle victims. They were raped, violated and intimidated and so they lost the ability to love. There was no representation for women, nobody could speak on their behalf.

**NARRATION:** When war broke out, there were just two women in power in the country and consequently they had very little political representation. One year into the war and women in Burundi from all political parties and ethnic groups had united, paving the way for their participation in decision-making. They marched for peace and to get their voices heard. 12 years later in July 2005 women gained more than 30 percent of seats in Burundi's nationwide elections. The seeds for this success were

planted when women fought for their inclusion in the Burundi peace negotiations being held in the late 1980's in Arusha.

**SABINE SABIMBONA:** Burundian women fought for inclusion in the peace process because they realized that men were fighting for their posts and not for peace.

**NARRATION:** The recommendations the women took to Arusha, among many others, included that sexual crimes against women be considered crimes against humanity and that the perpetrators be punished accordingly. They also demanded that refugees be protected on their return home, and that women be granted full rights to own land and property.

**SABINE SABIMBONA:** One of our main recommendations was land rights. In our society women did not inherit land from either her father or her husband so we wanted it that our children, be they boys or girls, would both be able to own land and property.

**NARRATION:** But for two years women were not admitted to the Negotiations and their role was limited to an observer status only.

**CATHERINE MABOBORI:** We couldn't believe the reaction we got from our Burundian brothers, we were so frustrated. I remember one time a man said to us 'your place is in the kitchen and in the bed so go back to your kitchen and to your bed'. We were very frustrated. I wish he was alive now to see what a position we are in today!

### **VIDEO AND AUDIO OUT**

**JENKINS:** You know what you are saying is somewhat complicated, it seems to me. Because, on the one hand, you are saying that women are been victimized because they are women and at the same time you are saying we need to involve women in politics, not because they are women but because they are members of the humanity. They don't have to bring anything special as women to the table. But what

we are seeing in that clip was that the woman was saying that they could bring something special to the table. I mean...

**NADJIBULLA:** Absolutely, we were not disputing that they have special solutions and ideas to bring to the table and that because of those solutions and ideas there are actually essential to making real peace, that's the point as well. And you are right women are being targeted particularly with sexual violence, because of who they are and because of the way society has perceived them and bestowed honour and so forth. But there are also impacts of war on women that are more general. For example women are a larger per cent of refugees and internally displaced people because, again, men often fight and women get displaced and so on. Women are also the ones who then have to go out and be employed in situations of war to actually support their families and that really transform a lot of the fabric of society as well. So there are many impacts of violence on war.

**JENKINS:** You are the lucky ones. The men are the ones who are going out there risking their lives in defense of the women. So what you are pointing out as them victimized, as them being in the refugee camps or what have you, as a consequence of war. In some ways, I'm obviously playing devil's advocate here, but there might be an argument that the women are the lucky ones in this conflict.

**NADJIBULLA:** I mean it's really hard to define that as luck to be in refugee camps...

**MAYANJA:** You see because they are left at home, they are left at home and they manage the community, they manage the homes. They have acquired a different role. They become the leaders of that community in the absence of the men. Now, when war is over, these leaders somehow are no longer recognized as having acquired these leadership qualities which would contribute to a sustainable peace. This is what we are saying and you asked us at the beginning, very provocative too,

whether they had an innate difference and that's where we're differing with you. But they do bring very different qualities to the discussions.

**JENKINS:** Well is a woman less likely, I mean, I was born a Brit and I lived in England when Maggie Thatcher took the country to war in the Falklands. The Iron Lady - she was certainly tougher than an awful lot of all the men around her at the time and more prepared to go to war than a lot of the men around her at the time. So certainly in her case, there didn't seem to be anything innately peace loving about her.

**NADJIBULLA:** Sure that proves the point we have been trying to argue. Absolutely, yes!

**MAYANJA:** But in fact also the decision in itself is not war mongering or peace loving. It could just simply be a question of the interest of the country, and if she felt as the leader of the country that she could not resolve the differences peacefully then perhaps she found that the only option left to her was war. That does not mean that she is innately or, you know, prone to going to war as opposed to a peaceful resolution of problems.

**NADJIBULLA:** There is also another issue that you raising, sort of highlighting one of the few Prime Ministers who were women in the history of Great Britain. So many countries have not experienced such leadership from women at all. But also when we call for women presence in peace negotiation tables or in the governments, we are not just talking about one woman or two women or three women even. For example, even in the case of Burundi, it is a big victory that there are three women ministers, but it is still three.

**JENKINS:** You want 50 per cent?

**NADJIBULLA:** Well no, it is not even that sort of magic number - 50 per cent. It is a critical mass. It is enough women and not just any women but women with an understanding of social justice; with an understanding of issues of equality and human rights and so on. It's not just having one token woman satisfy some sort of quota or request. It is a matter of engaging different people and certainly enough women really enough, not just again, even 25 per cent in the case of Afghanistan is, in my view too few, but it is certainly a start.

**JENKINS:** Ohmar, can you give us an example of what you are doing, in concrete, to try and bring women into this discussion?

**KHIN:** Well, we are displaced outside Burma, so what we can do in terms of, you know like, try and implement more women participation or bring women into the decision-making or peace processes under very difficult circumstances and situations. But what we are trying to do now is making sure that in the future Burma Constitution women's rights are enshrined.

**JENKINS:** Is that something that the opposition groups outside Burma have agreed on?

**KHIN:** We have been able to get to the point, yes. It was just recently that we have come to agree on the eight basic principles for the future Democratic Federal Union of Burma's Constitution and gender equality is already included in there.

**JENKINS:** You know, while on that subject, during the recent World Summit there was a decision to create a responsibility to protect civilians. Do you think of that as a victory particularly for women?

**MAYANJA:** I think it is.

**JENKINS:** Why?

**MAYANJA:** Because for the first time we are making every member state responsible for the suffering communities that have been ignored by their own countries; by their own government. So you and I can sit around and say – well, this is internal affairs of that country so let them solve it. So this is a victory for humanity.

**JENKINS:** I just going to say that it goes back to what you were saying before about leaving aside the gender thing, it is a victory for humanity. Women are part of human kind.

**NADJIBULLA:** In terms of the responsibility to protect population. It doesn't leave aside sovereignty of such in my view but it really redefines what sovereignty of a nation is. The sovereignty is not just a right to not have interferences in your domestic issues, but it is also responsibility to protect your own people. So that when you as a government are not doing that protection, either you are unwilling or unable, in fact those two words didn't make it into the final document, but the spirit did, then the international community has to step in.

**JENKINS:** On that hopeful note, we have to wrap it up because that is all the time we have. Thank you for being with us on this edition of **World Chronicle**. Our guest as been the UN's Special Adviser on Gender, Rachel Mayanja. She was joined in the studio by Ohmar Khin from Women's League of Burma and Parvina Nadjibulla of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I'm Tony Jenkins, inviting you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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