

Fact sheet:
WILPF and the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

About CSW

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established in 1946, the Commission meets every year to draft recommendations for strengthening gender equality, development and peace. Read more at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#sthash.MAzbVhWz.dpuf>
- During its first session in 1947, the Commission declared as one of its guiding principles: “to raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate all discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law.” Read more at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/CSW60YRS/CSWbriefhistory.pdf>
- Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from all regions of the world are invited to attend the session and inform the Commission. Simultaneously, the NGO CSW61 FORUM takes place in New York outside the UN Headquarters to allow women from all over the world to network and lobby delegations. Read more at: <https://www.ngocsw.org/ngo-csw-forum>

About WILPF

- The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections on every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York Office focused on the work of the United Nations (UN).
- WILPF envisions a world free from violence and armed conflict with justice and equality for all, and its mission is to achieve feminist peace for equality, justice, and demilitarised security.
- Founded by women from 12 nationalities in 1915 during the World War I, WILPF became one of the first NGOs – and the first women’s peace organisation – to be granted consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This status gives WILPF an opportunity to influence decision-making processes in many UN bodies that are open to NGOs, including the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women.
- WILPF has unique capacity and expertise in dealing with complex policy areas related to Women, Peace and Security. WILPF’s strength lies in its talent to analyse the root causes of conflict and war, and its ability to link the international and local levels.
- WILPF is known for its ability to mobilise women for nonviolent actions. Since its establishment in 1915, WILPF works constantly on building feminist movement through

bringing together women from around the world who are united in working for peace and political, economic and social justice for all.

- WILPF can boast of two Nobel Peace Prize winners within its history and is nominated to the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.

WILPF and CSW61

- As a matter of principle, and in solidarity with our partners from excluded countries, WILPF Secretary General and WILPF International Staff will not be formally participating in CSW61 as a consequence of the recent travel ban imposed by the US Administration on people from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen, for a period of 90 days, on all refugees for 120 days, and on Syrian asylum seekers indefinitely.
- As part of our efforts to advance feminist peace, WILPF had planned a number of events, including the launch of the most recent study on women, peace and security in Yemen with a delegation of women from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), during CSW61, as well as a variety of advocacy training sessions for women from conflict-affected regions. These activities are now cancelled.
- WILPF will move its planned activities to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland and to other spaces, where women peace advocates from all over the globe are welcome and can participate freely and meaningfully.
- WILPF is not boycotting CSW and fully supports the work of organisations planning to be there. However, since the US Administration has made it impossible for the United Nations to be as inclusive as possible, WILPF's presence at CSW61 would appear to normalise a process that is now illegitimate due to its exclusion. This is just the latest obstacle to women's meaningful participation in international forums and civil society shrinking space, which has disproportionately impacted women from the MENA region.
- WILPF takes this action in solidarity with broader feminist and peace movements, who are also raising this issue in a variety of ways in and outside of New York – through statements, protests, events, and other actions. We do so in order to highlight the exclusion of women from conflict affected context, and take action to prevent discrimination and reach outcomes that reflect the diversity of women.

What does meaningful participation mean for WILPF?

- For WILPF “meaningful” participation is about having women engage from their experience to address root causes of conflict and violence and promote mobilisation and policy change for peace and gender justice.
- Meaningful participation requires removing on-going obstacles to participation to enable women to speak for themselves, rather than be spoken for.
- Meaningful participation is not just about counting women—rather, it is about making women count. It requires promoting a women's human rights agenda for people and planet whether in parliament, peace processes, peace building, the development of new laws, or economic decision-making.