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## Launching Research Project, Ambassadors Highlight Women's Role in Peace

by Caroline Gardner — January 24, 2018

Women's civil society groups are crucial to promoting peace in Ukraine and Myanmar, said Melanne Verveer, the first U.S. ambassador-at-large for global women's issues under the administration of former President Barack Obama, at an event co-hosted by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the Embassy of Sweden on Jan. 17.

"In both Ukraine and Myanmar, we see how women's civil society groups are trying to build peace," Verveer said. "This is a work in progress; this is not looking back at what took place. It is what is happening in real time."

Verveer, who is also the executive director of GIWPS, was joined by Swedish Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter; William Taylor, the former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine; and former U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell, to present new peace-building strategies to deal with the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and Myanmar.

Olofsdotter echoed the importance of women's engagement in civil conflict, adding that for there to be actual peace, citizens must actively try to further peace missions in conflict areas and that "women and men also need to get involved to counter hate speech, prevent intercommunal violence and end the discrimination practices that fuel violence."

"Women's representation is essential in governance, in peace-building and as actors in economic spheres for the country to reach its full potential," Olofsdotter said.



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Karin Olofsdotter, Ambassador of Sweden, speaks at a Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security event last Wednesday.

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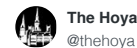
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In addition to remarks by the ambassadors, three GIWPS fellows presented their research on the impacts of bringing women into the peace-building process in Ukraine and Myanmar to the panel of about 50 students, professors and professionals from around Washington, D.C., in Riggs Library.

The three fellows, Anna Applebaum, Holly Furman and Briana Mawby, conducted their research through the Hillary Rodham Clinton Research Fellowship program, created by GIWPS in 2013.

The fellows based their research around U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, which stressed the importance of women in peace-building efforts. The fellows explored how nations with conflict are adopting this legislation.

Mawby, one of the research fellows, said that GIWPS supports research that explores the often-overlooked role that underrepresented groups play in civil conflict.

“So you hear about the big people at the table but not [about] all the people on the ground who are doing local peace-building and making a difference at the grassroots level,” Mawby said. “And so, for me, highlighting that work and showing that it is effective and that it can make change at the broader level is really important.”

Taylor said it was “very appropriate” that the study focused on conflict in Ukraine in particular.

“Let’s be clear: The Russians have invaded their neighbor,” Taylor said.

Mitchell emphasized the importance of considering the particular effects that conflicts have on women in academic study.

“Whether it disproportionately affects women or not, [conflict] affects women differently. So the different ways that conflict has affected women, whether it is through sexual violence or whether it is through displacement, those elements of the problem need to be discussed,” Mitchell said.

Noah Ahmed (SFS '21), who attended the conference, said he appreciated the discussion of the role of women in civil conflict.

“I don’t see a lot of opportunities on campus for lectures that pertain to women and woman leadership roles in solving conflicts around the world,” Ahmed said. “So I thought this was a unique opportunity for me to delve into this less-spoken-about topic.”

Mawby encouraged students to stay conscious of conflicts happening around the world and be aware that “what is in the headlines isn’t all of what’s happening.”

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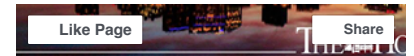
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