

Protection of Women in Armed Conflict in Bangladesh: The Making of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

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Abstract

The issue of women in armed conflict has been a political one in Bangladesh from its very birth. The legacies of the *Birangonas* (war heroes) and the women freedom fighters is a continuing discourse in the state and civil society forums that haven core in addressing their rights and justice. But the onward journey of the Bangladesh state has had to reconcile with other situations of armed conflict both from its own territories such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts and from territories outside such as the historically intermittent movement, and more recently the massive influx of Rohingyas from Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Bangladesh is therefore at a critical juncture where it needs to address the issue of protection at both the national, regional and international levels. The Government of Bangladesh supported by the UN Women is in the process of drafting and validating a National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security as per the mandate of UNSCR 1325 where Bangladesh played a pioneering role in adopting the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000.

As a consultant leading the initial process of drafting the NAP, I personally had to reckon with the different and often contesting perceptions inherent in bringing together notions of women, peace and security and trying to ground them simultaneously in a statist and women-centric agenda.

This paper is therefore a reflection of the processes and challenges I encountered as well as an attempt to offer some lessons learnt.