



## UPR submission for Sweden - Operation 1325

Operation 1325 applauds Sweden's positive track record for including civil society organisations and consulting on matters of human rights, democracy, equality and peace. This has strengthened its efforts towards building a peaceful and inclusive society.

Furthermore, Sweden has a strong feminist foreign policy and is leading the international work for women, peace and security, integrating a gender-perspective in peace work, inspiring other regions to form networks of women peace mediators after the Swedish model and contributing with gender expertise in international organisations. **Indeed, human rights and peace are seen as interlinked in Swedish foreign policy.**

This has also transpired in domestic policy work - with a feminist government policy and a [national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women](#), which contains measures that strengthen protection for and support to women subjected to violence, measures to combat violence in same-sex relationships and measures that counteract destructive masculinity and perceptions of honor.

However, on the ground in Sweden, many of the citizens and especially women still do not fully enjoy the protection of their rights which undermines social cohesion and sustained peace.

### Sustaining peace in Sweden

In 2018 [a study about the sustaining peace agenda](#) was carried out globally consulting civil society organisations and particularly women on how they define sustaining peace and what building and sustaining peace looks like in their societies.

In Sweden 75% of respondents said that the greatest threat to peace in Sweden is internal rather than external – with many of the risks relating to violations of human rights. The following themes were identified as factors which cause instability and potential fragility to the Swedish society:

- discrimination of immigrants;
- violence against women;
- shrinking democratic space – specifically a backlash against women's human rights and an increase in nationalist, racist public discourse
- lack of social cohesion.

## Youth, Peace and Security

Sweden has ratified UNSCR 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, but has yet to develop and implement a national UNSCR 2250 action plan.

### Immigrant Youth Representation

Youth, and especially youth with immigrant background and particularly girls within that subgroup lack agency and representation in Sweden, incurring great risks to social cohesion.

It may create a pattern of marginalized youth growing up into marginalized adults causing instability in the societal agreement of democracy. Youth with background from a conflict-area may have an additional value bringing experience and agency that drives a peace agenda.

There is yet no national action plan for youth, peace and security.

### Discrimination of Minority Youth in Employment

Sweden's unemployment rate increased to 6.8 percent in May 2019 from 6.5 percent in the same month of the previous year and above market expectations of 6.5 percent. The unemployment rate among young people was 22.3 percent, an increase of 3.9 percentage points compared with May 2018.<sup>12</sup>

While within the average in the EU-28 zone, there is a marked difference in Sweden between the access to the labor market for those with parents born in Sweden and those whose parents immigrated. Young girls with immigrant background in particular testify that they have more difficulties to get a job and to pursue their career dreams due to discrimination against them.

Sweden has:

- an anti-discrimination act ([Discrimination Act \(2008:567\)](#));
- recognizes “the importance of creating policies for youth that [...] provide youth employment opportunities and vocational training, fostering their education, and promoting youth entrepreneurship and constructive political engagement” under article 11 of UNSCR 2250 on Youth Peace and Security
- commissioned the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) to work for a less gender-segregated labour market
- and clarified the gender equality commissions given to other agencies that can influence educational and vocational choices, such as the National Agency for Education (Statens skolverk).

Enforcement and monitoring are perceived as lagging behind or missing.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/sweden/unemployment-rate>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms\\_201428.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_201428.pdf)

## Recommendations - Youth, Peace and Security

Develop and implement a Youth, peace and security national action plan - in consultation with youth with immigrant background and especially girls with immigrant background – that strives to protect democracy and stability, prevents distrust in state institutions and parallel law enforcement and includes all parts of society as actors for peace giving early warning of fragility.

Population data collection should use various indicators of ethnic diversity and allow respondents to report anonymously to build adequate empirical basis that will guide the development of policies, including the YPS national action plan, that enhance equal enjoyment by ALL of ALL the rights and enhance social cohesion.

Take measures to prevent segregation in housing that has led to isolation and undermined social cohesion.

### Recommendations: Immigrant Youth Representation

Sweden should develop through inclusive consultations and adopt a national action plan on UNSCR 2250. This should be done in consultation with civil society organisations, using an intersectional perspective, striving to include more youth and especially girls with immigrant background in diaspora communities.

### Recommendations: Discrimination of Minority Youth in Employment

Commission a study on the relationship between discrimination and poverty and social exclusion to guide policies that address disparities in access to employment for people of minority groups, and especially youth of an immigrant background.

Develop special training for employers that ensure the mitigation of recruitment bias and support them in developing voluntary anti-discrimination plans.

## Honour-based violence and oppression

Studies suggest that women in Sweden with an immigrant, asylum-seeker or refugee background face a higher risk of violence than native<sup>3</sup> - their lack of integration due to their residency status, lack of familiarity with the Swedish language, institutions and law are only a few of the isolationist factors that make these women vulnerable to abuse and less likely to reach out for help - with women coming to Sweden on the basis of arranged marriages particularly affected by these problems.

There is an increasing concern about the development of “parallel societies”<sup>4</sup> within Sweden’s populations which may render these vulnerable individuals more invisible – with de-facto residential segregation a critical obstacle as well to integration.

Within the three biggest cities of Sweden, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, 6000 young people live under honor-based repression and run the risk of being exposed to honor-based violence (HBV) and nationally 70,000 young people lived in some form of honor-based oppression – most in such isolated communities.<sup>5</sup> The oppression and violence often consists of threats or limitations upon young people’s freedom of movement and freedom of choice – but can go as far as to include female genital mutilation, [acid attacks](#), forced marriage, forced travels to the family’s homeland, the pressure or coercion to engage in exercising violence against someone else, as well as many other forms of physical, psychological, sexual, economic and material abuse.

The Swedish National Police Board calculates that about 400 cases of honor-related violence come to the attention of the authorities every year<sup>6</sup>; and an estimated five persons are murdered every year due to HBV in Sweden. This is probably heavily under-reported while Swedish crime statistics are generally not broken down by the nationality or ethnicity of the perpetrators or victims making it hard to identify the actual needs and develop solutions.

Sweden has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and presented a national strategy to prevent and combat men’s violence against women<sup>7</sup> which contains measures that counteract destructive masculinity and perceptions of honour, as well as has an Action Plan on Female Genital Mutilation. However, a comprehensive long-term strategy is still lacking to address the specific needs of young women and girls who are at risk of honor-based violence, particularly those suddenly deprived of their family support network when seeking protection<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention, Violence against women in intimate relationships: An Overview (2002)

<sup>4</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-sweden/16808b5c58> p.21

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hedersfortryck.se/hedersfortryck/vad-ar-hedersrelaterat-vald-och-fortryck/statistik/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/106/53/PDF/G0710653.pdf?OpenElement> p. 12 para 34

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.regeringen.se/informationsmaterial/2016/11/nationell-strategi-for-att-forebygga-och-bekampa-mans-vald-mot-kvinnor/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G07/106/53/PDF/G0710653.pdf?OpenElement> p.64

## Recommendations on Honor-based violence and oppression

Ensure that local authorities are informed that foreign women are moving into their community so they cannot provide them with information on available language courses, legal literacy programmes or other integration support measures to prevent them from being isolated and vulnerable to entrapment in violent relationships.

Foster international cooperation in cases of violence against women with a transnational dimension, especially honour-related violence

Consider re-establishing a special unit on such violence in the National Criminal Investigation Department which can coordinate Sweden's work with that of other countries.

Local police and justice sector personnel should receive special training on the specific challenges related to particular manifestations of violence against women (including Honour-Based Violence and Gender-Based Violence) in different communities.

Develop a comprehensive long-term strategy – that include young women and girls from an HBV-contexts in the development process - to address the specific needs of young women and girls who are suddenly deprived of their family support network in cases of witness protection; including special security arrangements to ensure that young women and girls can safely maintain the contact with those family members that do not want to harm them.

Education and health sector personnel should receive special training on the specific challenges related to particular manifestations of violence against women (including Honour-Based Violence and Gender-Based Violence) in different communities.

Organize national consultations that include Civil Society working against violence against women (including Honour-Based Violence and Gender-Based Violence) in the elaboration of a Woman Peace and Security and Youth Peace and Security action plans.

Ensure that Swedish crime statistics include analysis on Honour-Based Violence and Gender-Based Violence and that those statistics are broken down by the nationality or ethnicity of the perpetrators and victims.

## Preventing Violent Extremism

Sweden makes clear efforts in implementing UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and it includes its following sister resolutions like UNSCR 2242<sup>9</sup> on women's inclusion in countering violent extremism in its national action plan on women, peace and security – under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, it lacks analysis and implementation in domestic policy and is today implemented mainly abroad.

This engagement needs to be broadened to include domestic policies and strategies - notably with the return of Swedish citizens from so called Islamic State areas that has made the discussion on prevention of violent extremism increasingly relevant in recent years – through the development of a clear and coherent strategy on UNSCR 1325. Women's agency and participation in all forms and stages of PVE must be promoted. Women returnees must be included in reintegration programs.

The Swedish Defense Research Agency has been tasked, until 2018, with monitoring and analysing extremist propaganda on the Internet and via social media – but what the prevention of violent extremism shall include is unclear. Risk for securitizing the agenda is high and must be mitigated by protecting human rights and democracy. The rights to participate and raise public opinion as women human rights activists and as public leaders may not be compromised in the name of national security.

### Recommendations on Preventing Violent Extremism

Plan a transparent and inclusive consultative process - with youth, women and immigrant organisations and other civil society organizations – towards a national action plan for SDG16 which should include the identification of human rights that need better protection in order to secure an inclusive and sustained peace; the localization of the plan at all levels.

National coordination of countering violent extremism must consider prevention of violent extremism by building sustaining peace within Sweden guaranteeing human rights, gender equality and democracy.

Ensure that a strategy is put in place to ensure the protection of ALL human rights of survivors – and perpetrators - of violent extremism under the so-called Islamic-State through a comprehensive reintegration plan, to prevent the recurrence of violent extremism ideology.

A consultation process with several cities and towns must take place within a year so that returnee social cohesion plan be implemented rapidly.

Ensure accountability for crimes committed by Swedish nationals in so-called Islamic-State territories.

CSOs and diaspora groups, including women and girls, should be included. Sexual and reproductive health and rights must be guaranteed all returnees. The peace sustaining focus must lie in the forefront of such local and national consultations so that participants become used and valued as actors for peace.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12076.doc.htm>

Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities should engage with all religious leaders from all faith communities to ensure, through special trainings or workshops, that they take responsibility for preventing violent extremism and promoting dialogue, integration and social cohesion.

Diaspora groups including women's civil society organisations in Sweden must be financially supported to work for prevention on national policy level.

## Yemen: Women's inclusion in the Yemeni peace process and Sweden's arms export

Sweden's feminist foreign policy promotes women's inclusion in negotiations and in mediation. In December Sweden hosted the UN-led peace talks about Yemen in which only one woman participated from one of the two sides. Sweden has established a women's network of peace mediators and sent several women to mediate in Women's Advisory Board for Syria, train Afghan women leaders, engage in Somalia-talks and in other countries and regions. The network has inspired other countries and regions to establish more networks. Yemen needs this support of women mediators and negotiators. Sweden's involvement in the peace negotiations needs to model equity and include women voices.

Sweden has agreed to have a democracy clause for arms trade and not export arms to non-democratic countries or those in breach of human rights. Sweden has in February 2019 agreed to stop any arms export to warring parties in Yemen. Yet there is still Swedish arms trade with e.g. Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Swedish International Development Agency was 2015 instructed by the government to work with conflict-sensitivity. Development cooperation works also through trade agreement which must also be conflict-sensitive. There is an urgent need for proper conflict-sensitivity analysis when arms are exported to parties warring in Yemen and Swedish arms are transferred to third parties. Arms transfers and exports to third countries harming the rights of Yemeni – the exports need to stop to Saudi Arabia

Sweden has declared that consultations with women's organisations and with civil society will be encouraged in order to implement the women, peace and security agenda. In 2018 a global gender equality strategy was adopted. Yemeni women's organisations, women leaders, civil society and diaspora must be consulted in decisions about peace and security and the conflict-resolution in Yemen. Yemeni diaspora groups in Sweden as well as peace and women organisations in Sweden have the right to be heard about their recommendations on Yemeni peace-talks, arms trade and all issues resolving conflict and building sustainable peace. Recommendations on Women's inclusion in the Yemeni peace process

### Recommendations on Women's inclusion in the Yemeni peace process

Sweden should appoint a women mediator to assist the UN-led peace talks on Yemen.

Sweden should facilitate consultations with Swedish, international and Yemeni women's organisations for conflict sensitivity analysis of arms trade, peace negotiations and building sustainable peace in Yemen.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights in conflict related sexual violence must be included in peace talks on Yemen. Information and statistics gathering is a key activity to promote.

Sweden should open doors for women leaders and host women-inclusive peace-talks.

## Recommendations on Yemen and Sweden's arms export

Sweden should, in accordance to its ATT art. 6:3, 7:4, 11:7 obligations, to prevent the violation of human rights and specifically of the Yemeni population, halt all exports to all warring parties in Yemen.

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Submitted July 2019 by Operation 1325

Operation 1325 is a Swedish civil society organization working for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, in Sweden and in partnership with women's and peace organizations around the world.

Founded by several [Swedish women's and peace organisations](#) in 2003, it today serves as an umbrella organization advocating for the implementation of UN security council [resolution 1325](#) in Swedish international peacebuilding and conflict management efforts.

Since its founding, Operation 1325 has carried out capacity-building projects with partner organizations in the Balkans, Central Africa, Middle East and North Africa.