



Statement on Women's Leadership in Peacebuilding

'When women lead, peace lasts longer'

Feb 11, 2026

The International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) Steering Group met in Amman, Jordan (February 2 to 5, 2026) to hear about the experiences of women in places of conflict and discuss the role of women in peacebuilding processes. This statement reaffirms IAWN's commitment to support women as agents of peace.

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Peacebuilding is a God-given call to uphold the dignity and respect of all people. In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, 'urging Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.' Yet women's participation in formal peace processes remains generally unequal in UN negotiation teams in worldwide areas of conflict.

Research by the UN Women and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security has confirmed that women's participation in peace processes is both a gender equality issue and a proven security advantage. Countries with higher gender equality in civil society seem to experience less internal and external conflict, and less reliance on military force, and when women participate meaningfully in leadership and negotiation of peace agreements, those agreements appear to be 20% more likely to endure at least 2 years, and 35% more likely to last 15 years. Investing in women's meaningful, decision-making roles has been found to be an effective, evidence-based strategy for building durable peace and national stability, and representation at all levels of peace negotiations needs to be improved and acknowledged. When women lead, peace lasts longer.

Hearing the authentic experiences of women in war

Building on a conference, 'Women Mentoring Women', at Virginia Theological Seminary, USA, in April 2025, the Steering Group of IAWN decided to highlight the reality of women in war and to meet in Jordan (part of the Diocese of Jerusalem & the Middle East) to hear some of their stories face-to-face. We are grateful for the



support of a grant from the trustees of the Community of St Andrew and our own Anglican and Episcopal Provinces.

To be in Jordan and to visit both the place of Jesus' baptism and Mount Nebo from where Moses saw the Promised Land, we were aware of those Biblical stories of women as agents of peace, justice, reconciliation and as community-builders – women like Abigail, Deborah, Esther, the women at the tomb, and the early church women leaders like Priscilla, Phoebe, Euodia and Syntyche. Scripture affirms women as entrusted with leadership in peace-making that protects communities, restores relationships and advances God's peace. And women's sacrificial love in that peace-making work remains clearly visible in our worldwide church today, heard in our sisters' stories.

Several of us bring experience of women in war from Ireland, Myanmar, Mozambique and as children of survivors of the World Wars – this provided for rich, daily reflection on our conversations with women in Jordan.

Inspiring accounts of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding

We had the privilege to meet with 17 women of the Anglican parish of St Paul's, Ashrafiyah (which provides a supportive community for women in Amman), a woman from St Andrew's parish in Ramallah on the West Bank, a woman priest (the first Palestinian woman to be ordained), Senator Haifa Najjar, a mental health and drama therapist from Amman and also a mother from Ramallah. They all showed us the profound work of women in leading their communities pastorally and strategically in devastating war, long-term conflict and genocide, raising their voices even in fear, and supporting displaced women and families.

Senator Haifa spoke of building cultural and interfaith trust on universal roots of love, forgiveness, human dignity and respect, unlearning old beliefs to raise questions if not answers, and seeking educational paths for the youth going forward. A mental health and drama therapist from Amman spoke of searching for healing pathways for trauma, and sustaining community solidarity and resilience in the experience of felt denial, abandonment and betrayal. Another participant, a mother from Ramallah, spoke candidly of her experience of wartime's normalised trauma. Each of these women, and many more, stepped forward to embody the Church in their peace-making desire and human resilience to lead in a time which, as they reminded us, is not yet a time for mourning, but the time for solidarity in seeking justice, equality, peace and hope.



Calling all to be agents of peace

Our Steering Group was profoundly moved by the challenge to name truth, see oppression and make choices that align with our God-given values during this meeting. We saw both heartbreak and sisterly joy, recognising both the frustration and disappointment in international inaction as well as acknowledging the healing words and prayers from parts of the international church. We heard appeals for equality, boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to resist injustice and to sanctify their stories with a memorial day on October 8 for those suffering the hell of Gaza and genocide.

As a network, we pray that ways be found to empower the voices of the churches of the Holy Land and may we join our sisters as peacebuilders too.

Revd Canon Dr Helen Van Koevering
Chair - For and on behalf of IAWN Steering Group.

Members of IAWN Steering Group (attended)

- Revd Dr Helen Van Koevering, The Episcopal Church (Chair).
- Hera Clarke-Dancer, Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia (Vice Chair).
- Revd Moumita Biswas, Church of North India.
- Susan Barhoum, Episcopal Church in Jerusalem & the Middle East.
- Elizabeth June Butler, Church of Ireland.
- Revd Dr Paula Nesbitt, The Episcopal Church (co-opted consultant).
- Revd Heidin Kunoo, Anglican Communion Youth Network Representative (Anglican Church of Australia).
- Revd Dr Akua Ofori-Boateng (Church of the Province of West Africa).
- Mandy Marshall, (Link Director of IAWN and Director of Gender Justice for the Anglican Alliance and Anglican Communion).

Members of IAWN Steering Group (Not in attendance)

- Mavis Russell, Church of North India.
- Maria Gabriela Merayo, Anglican Church of South America.