



Kvinna till Kvinna



# FEMDEFENDERS

Young women who  
tear down barriers

3	Lena Ag Foreword
4	Femdefenders Study
8	Sadete Citaku Kosovo
10	Lejla Gacanica Bosnia and Herzegovina
12	Leyla Murshudova Azerbaijan
14	Amanda Eklund Sweden
16	Marija Stankovic Serbia
17	Zarine Harutyunyan Armenia
18	The Charter We want to ...

## #Femdefenders

### Young women who tear down barriers

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# An insight into young femdefenders lives

At the end of November we will be celebrating Femdefenders Day, the International Day for Women Human Rights Defenders. We at The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation work on a daily basis with women human rights defenders in countries torn apart by war and conflict. These femdefenders are our heroes! Every day, they fight for the rights of women and LGBTQ people, often risking their own lives in the process.

This year we would like to pay special tribute to young femdefenders. If older and more experienced women human rights defenders suffer more from violence, threats and state reprisals, the activism of young femdefenders is severely hamstrung by familial and societal notions of what young girls should be like. Why not be a housewife? Why not breed children for the nation and take care of your husband?

In last year's *#Femdefenders* publication, we focused on the threats and hatred that women human rights defenders in conflict affected regions are forced to endure. We were horrified to learn that 70 percent of the 66 femdefenders in our survey had been beaten or threatened in public, and that a further 14 percent of them had survived an attempt on their life.

This year's issue of *#Femdefenders* is about the rights of young feminists to stand up, speak out and influence their communities. Kvinna till Kvinna believes that equal, peaceful societies are reached through strengthening women and women's organisations. It is these young women who march at the forefront demanding change. Over the past year, we have worked with a unique project called the Young Women's Peace Academy, in which 140 young activists for peace and women human rights from six countries have learned leadership skills and strategies to influence their societies. The publication you're now holding is about the everyday realities that these femdefenders face.

It is an inspiration to meet young women who battle against the imposed, rigid norms of femininity and feminine conduct with guts and drive. I wish the world would listen more attentively to what they have to say!



Lena Ag  
Secretary General,  
The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation



# Young femdefenders claiming their rights

With violence comes silence. Threats causes fear which leads to self-censuring in daily life and on social media. Young women who want more out of life than just fulfilling the role as housewife and mother, may find that their own families turn against them. But despite these obstacles, young femdefenders keep on claiming their right to be heard in their societies.

In *#Femdefenders – Young women who tear down barriers* we meet participants from Kvinna till Kvinna's Young Women's Peace Academy for young feminists. Here, young women human rights defenders from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Sweden have spent a year exchanging opinions, ideas and experiences. They have strengthened their activism and pro-

duced a charter for the rights of young women and a peaceful world. *#Femdefenders – Young women who tear down barriers* presents this charter and opens a window into the lives of young femdefenders, showing how they struggle to assert themselves in society and the strategies they use to move forward.

Across the globe, young women are discriminated against, victimised, harassed and threatened – solely because of their gender. They are unable to move around freely in their society, are prevented from speaking their minds, and often lack power over their own bodies. Such injunctions can be imposed by their own families, by social norms of propriety, by religious rules, or by the fear of being sexually harassed.

**Women who stand up for gender equality and peace are particularly at risk. We call them femdefenders** – the most courageous young women in the world! They fight for their natural right to assert them-

selves, to be heard and to be seen. We will be introducing you to some of them in this publication!

128 young women have replied to a survey on their power to influence, the opposition and opponents they encounter, and where they find the energy and courage to struggle on. Some of them have also added personal stories.

## Silencing tactics

One third of all the women in the world has been beaten, raped or sexually harassed. Men's violence against women is one of the biggest threats to women's health and affects women of all ages and social classes.

Four out of five of the survey respondents regard violence against women as by far the most important gender equality issue in their societies. To the question about whether they had been subjected to some form of gender based violence, such as slander, sexual harassment or

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

- ✓ Young Women's Peace Academy (YWPA) brought together young feminists and peace activists from five conflict-affected countries, and Sweden. The project aims to strengthen the participants' leadership skills and make exchanges of experiences possible.
- ✓ Armenia and Azerbaijan are battling over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region that formally belongs to the latter but that is effectively under the control of the former.
- ✓ Kosovo and Serbia have a troubled relationship following the conflict in the 1990s. The Serbian minority in Kosovo mostly live in sepa-

rate enclaves with parallel administration.

- ✓ Bosnia and Herzegovina remains deeply divided after the war, with the 1995 Dayton Agreement leaving the country split along ethnic lines into a highly complex political patchwork of 14 governments, 2 entities, one "district", 10 cantons and many municipalities.
- ✓ The participants' countries are all marked by powerful nationalist movements and conflicts that, even if they are not ongoing wars, are constantly present.
- ✓ The Young Women's Peace Academy is funded by the Swedish Postcode Lottery.

## METHOD

# 140

140 femdefenders participated in Kvinna till Kvinna's training programme Young Women's

Peace Academy. 128 of them took part in a survey consisting of 17 questions on their experiences of threats and violence, nationalism, their ability to influence society and the strategies they use to make their voices heard. The results are presented in accordance with the number of respondents that answered each question.

**HELLO ZANA SYLA! DO YOU EVER FEEL UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT TO WRITE OR SHARE IN SOCIAL MEDIA?**

– No, I am not being that careful. If a subject’s important to me I will write about it. I have learnt over the years not to bother about comments from people I don’t know. But I do care about what my family writes. When they post hearts and stuff I find it really embarrassing.



*Zana Sylja from Kosovo won't be silenced.*

**WHEN DO YOU GET STRONG REACTIONS ON YOUR POSTS?**

– I get the most reactions when I write about politics, since I oppose the government we have here in Kosovo. But I don’t let anyone deprive me of my right to express myself. If I did, they’d just stop me from saying other things too. That’s how people work. You give them an inch and they take a mile, and in the end you lose the sense of who you are.

abuse, over half of them answered that they had. Physical, sometimes sexual violence is a frequently used means of silencing women, but psychological violence is also common. Of the recipients who said they had been subjected to physical or psychological violence on the grounds of their gender:

- 51% of cases involved sexual harassment.
- 42% of cases involved slander.
- 42% of cases involved verbal threats and hate speech.

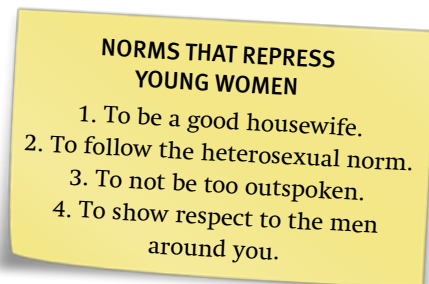
**Self-censorship**

Many young femdefenders describe how they constantly need to respond to external threats, and how this creates a sense of unease and fear that deters them from speaking their mind and influencing society. Consciously or unconsciously, they develop a form of self-censorship that dictates when, where and how they can express their opinions.

Internet and social media are key platforms for conveying thoughts and opinions, especially for young people. Over half the survey respondents said that they feel uncertain about what to say online, and many of them are scared of angering or disappointing others, or of encountering hate or threats from different-minded people. Of those who said that they felt unsafe when expressing their opinions, seven out of ten respondents said that they only express well-considered opinions, while two out of ten refrain from writing anything altogether.

**A real woman**

One common accusation against femdefenders of all ages is that they are not real women since they defy the traditional image of what a woman should be like. Old patriarchal norms seldom tally with how young women want to live. To the question about which norm is considered the most important to obey in their societies, almost 40 percent of the respondents said it was to be a good housewife.



Young women working for peace and gender equality challenge norms and patriarchal structures and in so doing put themselves in particular danger. Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, is a striking example. She fought for the right of girls to go to school and because of her activism she was shot in the head. Her story is one of the most important examples in recent years of how young women advocates of human rights are considered a threat by a patriarchal society. But it is also a story of impassioned commitment and opposition. Malala Yousafzai survived against all odds and her struggle continues.



I once had the chance to travel abroad to take part in a programme on human rights. I was overjoyed but my family thought it inappropriate for me to speak in front of young men. They were afraid that I’d shame the family. Nowadays, they accept that I travel and give talks on human rights, but the other week my dad suddenly said that I ought to stop. I could hear from his unpleasant tone that he’d been having words with some relative. The outside pressure on young women to behave in certain ways is immense.

Nurana Mammadova  
Azerbaijan

The most important issue for me is how women are discriminated against. How women are meant to take care of the home and the kids and can’t choose how to live their own lives. I don’t think it’s selfish of me to want to live my life the way I choose.

Sona Hovakimyan  
Armenia

I want peace and gender equality to be the rule, not the exception.

Young femdefender  
from Serbia



Nationalism is one of the greatest obstacles to lasting peace and equal rights for all. It is created by men for men. It serves the interests of segregation and repression.  
Young femdefender  
from Sweden

Nationalism is about putting one nation above all others.  
Young femdefender  
from Bosnia-Herzegovina

Nationalism breeds war and fear and is a tool for controlling people.  
Young femdefender  
from Bosnia-Herzegovina

Nationalism is conservative and oppressive and designed to keep certain kind of men in power.  
Young femdefender  
from Sweden

In my society, people believe that women are less able than men, that they're not clever enough to make important decisions. I've spent my entire life trying to prove them wrong. Just because I'm a woman doesn't make me less intelligent than a man.  
Nurana Mammadova  
Azerbaijan

At first, the internet was a virtual meeting place where people from all over the world could talk to each other. For a long time, you could be completely anonymous, which opened the door to using the net in new, creative ways – it was a virtual reality that gave you the chance to be whomever you wanted, without being shackled by things like traditional masculinities and femininities.

## Nationalism

Most of the participants in the Young Women's Peace Academy come from countries where nationalist currents are strong and, in many cases, interact with religious conservatism. 60 percent of our survey respondents say that they believe nationalism to work against women's rights.

Nationalist ideologies are centered around the survival of the nation and its culture, and upon the cornerstone of the heterosexual nuclear family and its traditional gender roles that state that the primary role of women is to keep the nation thriving through childbirth, while that of the man is to protect her and the nation. Additionally, along with this idolisation of the nuclear family comes an opposition to LGBTQ rights.

It is thus in the interest of nationalism to restrict women's space in society, also in regard to women's rights to their own bodies. The purpose of women's bodies and sexuality is considered to be to breed new citizens and is thus an integral part of the nation-building project.

How nationalism is understood and experienced depends on the country and on the citizens within it, but what all nationalist currents have in common is that they ultimately lead to a distancing from "the other", which in turn fans the flames of conflict. This "other" can be a person from a different ethnic background or anyone who threatens the traditional notion of the family, such as the homosexual, the trans person or the feminist.

## Space for action

Around the world, severe constraints are placed on young women's room for manoeuvre and their ability to meet and organise – limiting their access to their own space. Depriving young women of a voice is not just frustrating for the women themselves, but also a loss to society as a whole, as it reduces the chances of building a democratic, just society and sustainable peace.

The survey respondents identified the following factors as imposing the biggest restrictions on young women's action space:

### OBSTACLES FOR FREEDOM

- Religious and traditional leaders and rules.
- Political parties and their leaders.
- The state (police, legal system, military, etc).
- Nationalist movements.
- Their own families.

In many countries, meeting places such as cafés and town squares are meant exclusively for men, and any woman who happens to enter such places risk being harassed or slandered. But even in societies where public meeting places are open to women, many young women feel intimidated by the possibility of sexual harassment or violence. This makes them acutely aware of where they go and when, how they dress and what they say. This lack of freedom of movement is a global problem that takes many different guises.



Nadine Moawad, internet activist  
Beirut, Lebanon [www.apc.org](http://www.apc.org)

Being anonymous gave young women the courage to talk about things that were otherwise taboo. It opened up new possibilities for those of us working with sexual rights, especially for trans persons struggling with strict gender norms.

These days, though, the net is becoming increasingly privatised, and you often have to fill in your gender identity and state your name and age. Anonymity is seen as something strange and dangerous, and we treat anonymous testimonies and narratives with scepticism. As activists we have to strike back against privatisation and profit motives and fight for an internet that's free, open, unbounded and safe!

What does it mean for a young woman to live in constant fear and confinement? 60 percent of the respondents said that they are afraid to express their opinions, primarily amongst strangers and in public places.

## Getting full access

As a strategy for building up the courage to express their opinions, many young femdefenders mentioned the importance of sharing their experiences and becoming organised. In order to do this, they need access to places in which to meet.

In a society based on patriarchal norms, spaces are needed where young women can feel safe enough to talk and where they can get a chance to start formulating what they think and feel. The creation of safe forums for young women is therefore not only valuable to them as individuals but also to society at large. The Young Women's Peace Academy is one such place. Here, young women have been able to meet and cooperate in their own countries and across regional borders, and by training themselves in leadership and lobbying skills – and with help forming and financing their own projects – they have improved their possibilities to influence their societies.

However, personal development is also an important factor here. Young femdefenders have joined together to discuss and question the norms that restrain them, and have arrived at strategies for breaking or ignoring the rules. This strengthens their self-esteem and their belief that change is possible. The opportunity for young people from different

parts of the world to meet also challenges stereotypes; instead, relationships are built across borders.

It is time for the world's young femdefenders to be allowed full access to society and the rooms of power. Young women must be seen as critical actors in the building of a peaceful society – on the same terms as everyone else.

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We have to stop living in the past. We can talk about it and accept it and learn from our mistakes, but we must stop living in it. We have to turn to each other instead, and get to know each other and see the good that unites us.

Young femdefender  
from Serbia

The future for young women is great. We stand on the shoulders of all strong women in history who laid ground for women's rights. Young women are not asking for permission to do anything. Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams to the Young Women's Peace Academy

Kvinna till Kvinna gave me the opportunity to be an activist; without the Young Women's Peace Academy I'd never have become one.

Simona Rusimovic  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

The most important thing I'm taking with me from Young Women's Peace Academy is the strong sense of solidarity between women. We are sparing coming generations of girls the trouble of wrestling with the same problems as us!

Selviye Kurti  
Kosovo

**WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?**

When I see other women being brave. And when I see women encouraging other women, I want to do the same.

**SADETE CITAKU, 25, KOSOVO:**

# I feel afraid when waiting for the bus



When we have guests at home, there are things I'm not supposed to say or do.

It bugs me that I have to behave in a certain way simply because I'm a young woman. It bugs me that I'm always afraid when I'm waiting alone at a bus stop. My mum calls me a hundred times a night just to be sure that I get home in one piece. My brother can come and go as he pleases. There's a saying that goes: "Guys always have a door open for them to come and go through". They're much freer than us girls.

I'm studying law and psychology at university along with many other young women. That makes me happy. Just a few years ago, we didn't have the same opportunities to study as guys. If a family could only afford to send one child to university, it was always the son.

But at the same time, sexual harassment is common at the university. My friend was harassed by her teacher. When she went to report it to the vice-chancellor, he did the same thing as the teacher had done. She had no proof so she couldn't do anything or get any redress. We

have now started a group at the university to bring about change.

I dream of a world where there's no more violence against women. Never again do I want to turn on the telly and see news about yet another man abusing a woman. I want all women to support each other. When I graduate I'll start a human rights organisation in Sкендерaj, where I live. I want to get involved in young women's issues but also to start a project for our grandmothers. I want to tell them about their rights and that things have changed since they were young.





*"When I graduate  
I will start a human  
rights organisation,"  
Sadete Citaku says.*

*“Being unafraid and determined is what’s most important to me. It makes every time I encounter opposition just that little bit easier to deal with,” says Lejla Gacanica.*



**WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?**  
Every time I speak out about things that people don't want to hear. When I fight for the possibility to speak freely.

**LEJLA GACANICA, 32, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:**

# I'm expected to cook and raise the children

“During the war we lived in a basement. We were not allowed to play outside and there was not much to eat. One day, everything was okay, and the next we waited for dad for far too long. When he finally came home he was covered with blood from a woman who had been killed.

I grew up and the killing that was going on around us stopped. I was able to go back to school and there was hot water in the taps again. But the fact that the shooting stops doesn't necessarily mean there is peace, and the consequences of the war are still around, living amongst us. People were tortured, women were raped. Many people are still traumatised by the war but they're not getting any help.

The country is now strictly divided

between Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats. The government uses nationalism as a means of holding on to power, and incites the prejudices that exist amongst the groups. They make out there's no time for women's rights. "You can eat and sleep, what are you whinging about? We've got unemployment and poverty to deal with." But we've got heaps of problems! In some places girls can't even go to upper secondary school or travel in to town because it is perceived as immoral.

There are two things that hold me back in life. The first is that I am a young woman. I'm expected to cook, clean and look after children. I have a job, but if someone there doesn't like what I say, the fact that I'm a young woman is used against me. The other thing is that I want to build peace. That can come across as very provocative, as if I've forgotten all the wrongs that were committed.

Even though it's been 20 years since the war it's still a highly sensitive subject.

The other week I gave a talk on copyright to a large audience of media people. They didn't agree with me and tried to boo me off stage, mostly because they think I don't know anything on account of me being young and female. But when they saw that I wasn't afraid and had no intention of walking away, they calmed down. Being unafraid and determined is what's most important to me. It makes every time I encounter opposition just that little bit easier to deal with.

All young women who fight for equality and respect open doors for other young women. It's a slow process but the more young women's voices are being heard in society, the more the prejudiced notions of us not belonging there will dissipate.

**WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?**

I'm always brave. When people tell me that something's too difficult for me simply because I'm a young woman, I say "How am I to know something's difficult if I've never tried to do it?"

**LEYLA MURSHUDOVA, 27, AZERBAIJAN:**

# My brother said he would kill me



Imagine being surrounded by screaming, arguing and fighting every day.

That's what it was like to grow up in my family. I had no choice but to go my own way. It's enough for me to see the kind of life my brother and his wife have to know that I never want to get married. I told my mum that I haven't found anyone I want to share my life with yet. But she thinks that I can get married anyway, that love can grow with the years.

I come from a small, prejudiced community. When I finished my studies in town everyone expected me to move straight back home.

My family forbade me to work. If I didn't get married soon, my neighbours would think I wasn't a virgin. My brother threatened to kill me if I didn't do as they said. But I decided to ignore them. I ran away. I went back to town and got a job at a company selling work uniforms.

Not many young women get the chance to study in Azerbaijan, at least not in the rural areas. From my old street it's only me and one other person who's gone on to study. A childhood friend is working, but she has to give all her income to her father. As for the sons, everyone takes it for granted that they'll study and get a job. Very few people see young women as real people, we're more like slaves to

them. "What can women do?" I'm so tired of that. I can do anything!

My friend sent me a link to the Young Women's Peace Academy. Before that I didn't know much about women's rights. I applied and got in. It's perfect for me. I've met femdefenders and been inspired. Now I'll start getting involved in women's issues too. I want all women to be free to live however they choose.

Today, I think my family's proud of me. My mum thinks that one day I'll be something grand. My brother makes sure I get by and is happy for me that I'm doing what I want to do. This inspires me to fight for the rights of young women even more!



*“Very few people see young women as real people in Azerbaijan, we’re more like slaves to them,” Leyla Murshudova says.*



*"I planned my studies to give myself maximum opportunity to influence things, and I'm now studying law," Amanda Eklund says, holding the Swedish Code of Statutes. Photo: Private*

**WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?**

I feel the most brave when I'm most scared. The feeling that you've got a lot to lose can elicit the most unexpected courage in us all.

**AMANDA EKLUND, 23, SWEDEN:**

# I was surrounded and called a "whore"



I clearly remember once when I was seven years old, playing in the snow with my friends in the playground. My friends were all boys. I don't know why, but suddenly they surrounded me and started bombarding me with snowballs and calling me a "fucking whore" again and again. At first I got really mad, and then I started to cry. But what I remember most of all is the feeling of shame. That was the first time I realised that I was treated differently because I was a girl. I started to literally tremble with anger. I realised later that it wasn't just about me, but about all women all over the world.

I can't imagine not wanting to get involved in women human rights. I planned my studies to give myself maximum opportunity to influence things, and am now studying law at university.

Unfortunately, anyone fighting for women's rights has to expect opposition. You face opposition in everyday situations from the most unexpected people. It can be enough just to challenge norms at university. Sometimes I get so upset with all the crap I hear. It became easier for me to deal with criticism once I'd studied gender theory and could see everything from a structural perspective. Learning all this and knowing that other women also experience the same

things was like a protective cloak for me. I doesn't affect me so much any more because I know it's not about me personally.

As a child I didn't know how to deal with all my frustration and anger, but now I know that if we all pull together we can achieve so much. My hands and legs still shake with anger whenever I hear about women human rights not being respected. It's like I just can't stop trembling. Nothing fires me up as much as this. But when things get me down, there's nothing better than being together with other women, sharing experiences and encouraging each other. Sisters and sisterhood is the best!

MARIJA STANKOVIC, 27, SERBIA:

# It's always men who threaten me

## WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?

People often tell me that I'm a bit mad. I have a knee-jerk reaction to injustice. People think I'm brave but me, I see it as a necessity. I have this need to right wrongs.



*"There's still this idea in Serbia that society is entitled to decide how women are to behave," Marija Stankovic says.*

”

The women in my family are well-educated, but they still don't have the same status as the men.

Men are the ones that matter. My mum was almost invisible when she was young, because she had a brother. I grew up with the feeling that this was totally wrong, but I didn't know what women's rights were. It wasn't until my early teens that I learnt about women's rights. That's when I understood what was wrong and could articulate the problem.

That's why I became an activist. I've always been careful about the people I mix with. My closest circle of friends don't judge me. My dad knows about what I do, and even if he does not explicitly support me, he does not stop me either. Not even when I helped to organise the Pride parade in Belgrade did he say anything. My grandmother on my mother's side doesn't know what I get up to, but she's given me a piece of advice: don't have children until you're ready.

On the other hand, I get lots of threats from other people. I was recently threatened by an unknown man on social media because I was in the Pride parade. He'd somehow identified me from some photo that someone had posted. I find that quite strange since the photo was very blurred, yet he still managed to find me. It's always men who threaten me, never women.

There's still this idea in Serbia that society is entitled to decide how women are to behave, that it's somehow everyone's problem. Lots of young women remain at home with their parents, sometimes until into their 30s. They're controlled by their parents and get no chance to be independent. It feels as if things are expected of me. Especially having children.

I will continue to be involved in the feminist movement. The idea of an interstate women's network between Serbia and Kosovo was raised at the Young Women's Peace Academy. We'll start to make more detailed plans soon.




**WHEN DO YOU FEEL BRAVE?**

I work with helping displaced people from Syria. When I see that a family that's fled to Armenia has managed to find work and get their children in school, I feel brave. Because I know I've been able to help them.

*"If we go round with our hearts full of hate, how will we ever be able to resolve the conflict?,"*  
 Zarine Harutyunyan asks. Photo: Lusine Tonoyan

**ZARINE HARUTYUNYAN, 25, ARMENIA:**

# Hate grew within me

“ We lived just by the border of Nagorno-Karabakh, where the war was going on. It was hard to stay there, so my family fled to Russia. I went to school and got my qualifications. I liked it there but felt unsafe. We encountered a lot of prejudice because we were from the Caucasus. On Adolf Hitler's birthday it was too dangerous to go to school, so we stayed at home. Once I'd left school, I moved back to Armenia. It was so nice to be able to speak my language again without getting judgemental looks, like I did in Russia.

In Russia, children from Armenia and Azerbaijan were put in the same class. We were aware of the conflict at home between our two countries but we didn't give it much thought.

When I returned to Armenia, the war felt really close. The media reported on civilian and military deaths, and I felt a sense of hatred grow within me. The feeling depressed me, it was not me.

Last year, I was at a peacebuilding workshop in Switzerland. It helped me to get rid of all my prejudice. I meditated and found the source of those negative feelings. Since then I can control my emotions and am critical about the conflict. My friends and family don't always agree with me, but if we go round with our hearts full of hate, how will we ever be able to resolve the conflict? Or enjoy our lives?

I work with people displaced from Syria in Armenia and can do so without being threatened by mem-

bers of the public. But my friends in women's rights organisations have a hard time and are constantly being visited by people who oppose what they're doing and who accuse them of destroying families and being traitors for accepting funding from western countries.

One important women human rights issue in Armenia is domestic violence. There's no law forbidding it. Another important issue is the way it's so common to abort unborn girls. Probably because boys stay and support the family while girls are married off. Many boys become soldiers, and having a son who's a soldier, and who might even die for his country is something that parents are expected to be proud of. There's a social pressure to raise soldiers and a perceived honour in dying for your country.



*Participants in the Young Women's Peace Academy during a workshop in Armenia 2015.*

# THE CHARTER

The Young Women's Peace Charter has been drawn up by 140 young women from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Sweden who took part in Kvinna till Kvinna's Young Women's Peace Academy training programme in 2015.

The Charter has been written to build an understanding of the obstacles and challenges young women face in conflict affected countries, as well as in other societies. It contains recommendations for national and international decision-makers as a means to influencing the debate on women's rights and peace work from the perspective of young women. It also contains recommendations on women's political involvement, men's violence against women, young women's health, sexual violence during war and conflict and young women's economic autonomy.

The participants in the Young Women's Peace Academy have been supported to

take an active role in their respective communities and drive issues of equality and peace. They have been guided by mentors when developing their own projects to be carried out at a local and national level to promote peace and equality work.

The programme has been running throughout the year and has, amongst other results, produced this Charter, which was drafted by the 140 participants. It was finalised on 24 September 2015 in Istanbul. The text on the right hand side is a summary of the Charter, which can be downloaded in its entirety from [www.kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/publications](http://www.kvinnatillkvinna.se/en/publications)

# WE WANT TO ...

## SPREAD FEMINISM WORLDWIDE!

- Spread the importance and value of feminism for societies as a way of eliminating patriarchal structures and to make people realize that promotion of feminism is the promotion of equality.
- Spread the importance of women's contribution to society.
- Include the concept of gender equality in formal education curriculums for young women and men, as a way of breaking down stereotypes and transforming ideas of femininity and masculinity.
- Include young women in the feminist movement.
- Value women more! Women are still valued less than men all around the world. Sadly, in some societies sex selective abortions are common because baby girls are not wanted and valued as much as baby boys.

## ELIMINATE PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURES!

- Many women suffer from double or multiple discrimination. Women face different forms of discrimination based on age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or other beliefs, social and economic status and many other factors in addition to those listed here. We must understand that women are not a homogenous group, they are affected in different ways by discrimination.
- The patriarchal structures and escalation of conflicts around the world affect women refugees extremely hard. Women refugees are left isolated in conflict zones and refugee camps where they are particularly vulnerable. The particular needs of women refugees must be understood and taken in to consideration.
- Eliminate the male-dominated peace and security norm! We call for a culture of peace where human security is prioritized. We want a shift from militarization to humanization.
- Countries not affected by war and conflict have to shift focus from military action to peacekeeping operations. It is every country's responsibility to not provide and export arms and weapons to support war.

## SECURE THE SAFETY FOR FEMINISTS & ACTIVISTS!

- Women who work for sustainable peace and tackle unpopular issues (e.g. abortion rights, women's rights, gender equality) live under constant threat. It is important to ensure the security and safety of feminists, human rights defenders and women peace builders.
- Lack of security and safety leaves the field open for a nationalistic and hostile atmosphere to grow, which in turn leads to shrinking space for feminists, human rights defenders and women peace builders. The international community as well as national governments need to provide better support to activists so they can continue their important work!



# #FEMDEFENDERS

THE KVINNA TILL KVINNA FOUNDATION  
STRENGTHENS WOMEN IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS

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