

POLICY BRIEF

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# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE POLITICS OF ARMENIAN- AZERBAIJANI PEACE PROCESSES

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## **KVINNA TILL KVINNA**

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The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993. For every woman and girl's right to be safe and to be heard.

Today, we are one of the world's leading feminist women's rights organisations, working directly in areas affected by war and conflict to strengthen the influence and power of all women. We work closely together with more than 100 partner organisations in 20 countries to defend women's rights, achieve gender equality and justice, and reach lasting feminist peace.

## BACKGROUND

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has worked in the South Caucasus region supporting women's rights defenders and women peacebuilders for more than 20 years. In 2019, we published the report *Listen to Her – Gendered effects of the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh and women's priorities for peace*, which explored women's perspectives on conflict and peace-making. The aim was to understand women's needs and experiences of conflict and violence, as well as the extent to which women can meaningfully contribute to peace negotiations in relation to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict<sup>1</sup>.

Since that publication's launch, significant changes have occurred, notably the war in 2020 and the mass displacement of the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh in 2023, as well as the announcement in 2025 that the text of a peace deal had been agreed by Armenia and Azerbaijan. To reflect the new realities of the context, and to ensure that women's voices are heard as part of inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding processes, Kvinna till Kvinna has conducted a new study, building on the methodology and lessons of *Listen to Her*.

The research is based on fifteen key informant interviews (KIIs) and one focus group discussion in Armenia, and seven KIIs in Azerbaijan. The text of the peace deal was initialled by the Foreign Ministers on 8 August 2025 and publicly released mid-way through the data collection phase of the research, and thus later interviews and the focus group should have had more opportunity to respond to its contents. It is important to note that women's perceptions of risk and security may have influenced both the range of participants and the tone of perspectives expressed, particularly in Azerbaijan, where civic space has become increasingly constrained. While we were able to gather valuable insights from women based both in-country and abroad, participation and levels of openness may have been shaped by safety considerations. As such, the findings reflect the voices of those who could safely engage at the time of research and may be influenced by varying degrees of self-censorship.

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<sup>1</sup> A conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, primarily over the status of the Nagorno Karabakh region. The First Nagorno Karabakh war between 1988 and 1994 killed 17,000 and 25,000 people (although the governments have reported and continue to refer to higher numbers) and displaced around 353,000 Armenians and 750,000 Azerbaijanis. This included the wholesale departure of the Armenian population of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani population of Armenia, as well as the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno Karabakh itself. More than a thousand civilians were reported missing. (Statistics from de Waal, Thomas, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, 2003, New York Press, pp.284-285.) For thirty years, while recognised *de jure* under international law as belonging to Azerbaijan, the territory was *de facto* controlled by ethnic Armenian forces, with the support of Armenia. In 2020, Azerbaijan launched a 44-day war, which ended in a ceasefire agreement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, and which brought the majority of the territory under Azerbaijani control. In September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a short military offensive, reclaiming the remaining territory, and displacing at least 100,000 Karabakhi Armenians.

This paper represents the main findings and recommendations built on women's experiences and voices to European political actors, particularly European Union (EU) institutions and Member States.

## **IS THIS REALLY PEACE?**

In listening to women for this research, it became clear that there is a strong feeling in the societies affected by the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict that signing a peace deal would not bring peace. While many were hopeful that there was some progress, particularly after the signature of the Joint Declaration by the Armenian Prime Minister and Azerbaijani President in Washington on 8 August 2025, respondents highlighted that this is only a framework. It fails to outline what peace would mean for people living in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

*"[Peace] is not only signing the peace agreement, but [it is] when we start dealing with our own traumas and with our own hate; and this is really the very first step towards really constructing a peace[...] The second step would be when I see people start realising that the conflict is not one-sided, this is not just one enemy outside and we are just victims and they are the evil, but we are all responsible for the situation that we have; and also when people stop blaming each other but start questioning the system we are living in."* Armenian woman

Some noted that the text of the peace agreement lacked any specifics on the needs and rights of those living and returning to areas affected by conflict:

*"I don't think that there is a peace process. Two ministries sending documents to each other: it is a diplomatic correspondence."* Armenian woman

Broadly, respondents from Azerbaijan were more positive in relation to the peace process, seeing any progress as a good thing, and being reassured by the promise of no more war.

*"The best news of all these years we received on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August. I was so happy when I read about this, I had a great hope that all of this is ending."* Azerbaijani woman

*"I feel more secure because the risk of re-escalation becomes less to my mind currently than it was, for example, two or three years ago: it was really very actual [...] every [...] miscommunication or something, any kind of statement from both sides could provoke escalation of the conflict again [then]."* Azerbaijani woman

Armenian respondents, even those who saw recent developments as positive, were more likely to express dissatisfaction with the process and scepticism that it would lead to sustainable and lasting peace.

*"We even want to go to Syunik<sup>2</sup>, to have a tour there because we don't know what will happen with Syunik next. [...] We are very confused. We don't trust anyone yet."* Armenian woman

## **LACK OF INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY ABOUT THE PEACE PROCESS**

Armenian respondents, and particularly those living outside of the capital, said that they have not been informed about the peace process, they did not know what was happening, what was being discussed and where the sticking points were – this remained true both before and after the signature of the declaration in August 2025. This lack of information leads to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty – those women who felt uninformed also often reported feeling less secure than they had in previous years.

One Armenian woman put it this way, *"I'm not informed. I don't understand what is going on, the document that is signed won't give me confidence to be in peace. I am more afraid of this document."* She went on to describe her distrust of the Azerbaijani side, lack of faith that the Armenian authorities could ensure peace, and a fear of more losses for Armenians. This 'fear' of the peace agreement was heard often from women living along frontlines, but a general ignorance of its contents was commonplace among all Armenian women. One woman spoke of the "duty" to be informed, but that the problem was that *"we are not fully informed"*.

Azerbaijani respondents did not consider themselves informed of the process, with what they knew coming only from official sources, and with no platforms for discussion on what the agreement might entail.

All those we spoke to, both Armenian and Azerbaijani, noted a lack of women in the peace process, although this was not always seen as inherently bad. While they highlighted that women's perspectives can be key to making changes in the societies and in the peace process, some noted that it is not worth it to have the 'checkmark' of women being present at the negotiating table if they are not actively participating, or are failing to advocate for women's rights. They highlighted that those most impacted

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<sup>2</sup> Syunik Province in southern Armenia, which separates Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic from the rest of its territory, and through which the Trump International Route for Peace and Prosperity (TRIPP) will run.

by the conflict – displaced people, women who have lost husbands or sons to war, women living in border regions – are not able to influence the peace negotiations or the peace process more broadly.

*“One thing, I am sure. [...] Politicians cannot establish peace. Only the community.”* Displaced Azerbaijani woman from Karabakh

The lack of women’s participation was noted not only in the official peace process, but in all aspects of society, especially in Azerbaijan:

*“Yes, women have become very invisible. [...] the number of women [in public events] is less and less, and the voice of women becomes less and less, their priorities become less and less. I didn’t see any space for society, [...] I don’t see any mechanisms where society can say their opinions.”* Azerbaijani woman

The engagement of women in the peace process is vital, as they have deep contextual knowledge – our discussions with women showed that they are the ones who are working directly with communities, who have access to those who are most affected by conflict, who understand their needs, who respond to crises, and are able to incorporate this experience into analysis and strategic thinking. Their input can augment the work already being done by men, including those who have been involved in official processes for decades. Women noted the need to be recognised by officials as having expertise in their own right, and that they are ready to contribute:

*“Women peacebuilders are the ones with institutional memory of community, their needs and interests [...] If there is political will from even one side to engage these groups, I think there will be change; [...] at least advisory groups of women experts and grassroots activists.”* Armenian woman

Among the women we spoke to, and particularly those who have been engaged in peacebuilding for some time, there was a sense that peace is not reliant on Armenia and Azerbaijan themselves, or their political leaders, but rather on the actions of more influential actors – the United States, Iran, the EU and Turkey were all named with varying levels of positive and negative sentiment, but overwhelmingly with a sense of confusion and powerlessness. Women in Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot influence these outside actors, and do not understand their motives and actions, which lessens their belief that any peace brokered between the two countries can be sustainable and inclusive.

## **THE PEACE DEAL – A BUSINESS TRANSACTION OF FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL CITIZENS?**

While many women criticised the lack of transparency and information on what the official political peace process really includes, it is also perceived by many of the women we spoke to as not centring the needs of the citizens and creation of sustainable societies. Some respondents from Azerbaijan express that it seems that the peace negotiations are more about governments and leaders gaining assets: that the peace process is being conducted as a business transaction.

*"If for many years we were talking about a peace agreement, our understanding of the meaning of peace was completely different than now. Now it is sales, they negotiate who will win, how will the corridor be, who will manage this. Human life is not the point of the negotiation, only the interest of the state. [... They only think] about big economical wins."*  
Azerbaijani woman

In Armenia, this element of business as a priority was directly linked by one respondent with the lack of women in the peace process:

*"So far men are involved and did everything [in relation to the peace process], it's time that women are involved. [...Men] think about money, business. [...] Peace is not about business, it's about lifestyle."* Armenian woman

The idea that business is being put above a broader concept of a peaceful society is not only linked directly to the peace process, but to development more broadly, where women feel they have little influence or control over how their society is transforming:

*"All the economic developments are for the benefit of business, not people like me, everything is reshaping in Armenia."* Armenian woman

Several respondents in Azerbaijan mentioned that life improved in Azerbaijan as a result of the Contract of the Century in 1994, a deal between international oil companies and the Azerbaijani state to extract oil from the Caspian Sea<sup>3</sup>. One participant even referred to this period after the contract was signed as a *"splash of democracy"*, when international organisations and business showed interest in the country and civil society flourished. Nevertheless, this was not a guarantee for long-term, sustainable peace and development for the society, where now we see that the business sector has remained, but civic space is increasingly shrinking. Some respondents noted with

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<sup>3</sup> Azerbaijan's "Contract of the Century", signed on 20 September 1994, attracted major foreign investments and became crucial for Azerbaijan's economic development. The deal established the Azerbaijan International Operating Company and initiated a new era of development for the country.

disappointment that diplomatic actors prioritise the interests of their own national businesses, with little reflection on how these business relations could and should bolster human rights in the countries where they operate.

In this new phase of the peace process, where a peace agreement would be more akin to a business deal, it would be wise to consider how such deals have had an influence on the region in the past, to understand how they might be perceived by society in the present, and to learn from the successes and failures of such an approach when transforming conflict-affected societies into ones where peace is inclusive of all. In this moment, we must look at peace beyond the confines of only the agreement which would be signed by the states.

## **ADDRESSING THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT: BIGGER THAN JUST LAND**

Respondents were clear that the signature of a peace deal would not ensure lasting peace, and that the conflict was rooted more deeply than simply the jurisdiction of land.

Many noted that without understanding of the deep hatred that has been fostered between the two nations, without understand the roots of that conflict, that it will not be resolved. One Armenian woman from Nagorno Karabakh noted that through years of protracted negotiations and armed phases of conflict, the political roles of the states had become *"all mixed up"* and that the conflict over territorial integrity in opposition to the right of self-determination had been expanded to include both countries rather than the communities at hand. It is evident that incompatible interpretations of history, high levels of propaganda used for individual political gain for decades, even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, un-critiqued nationalism and militarised masculinity have divided Armenians and Azerbaijanis such that the heart of the conflict no longer lies with the *"Karabakh problem"*.

*"People say, 'We lived together once' but there wasn't so much hatred then. But now their children are raised to hate us with all their hearts."* Karabakhi-Armenian woman

*"If before the hate from their side was not as big as from our side, now it's opposite."* Azerbaijani woman

They noted that without addressing these roots, without creating systems that can transform conflict in a positive manner, there will be no resilience in the community to prevent other wars.

Women identified many different spheres where cooperation between communities could be an entry point towards conflict transformation and resolution. One Azerbaijani woman said *“there should be common projects, not directly about peacebuilding, but women’s rights, vulnerable groups, something cultural, not one common event, but something more sustainable, long term.”* She also mentioned the importance of having the buy-in of the target audience or community, which is often lacking when it comes to “traditional” civil society activities.

Without measures to foster coexistence and peaceful development, and in the face of a worsening climate crisis, armed conflict could arise over resources, rather than land. One Azerbaijani woman believed the next war would be about water. This unaddressed risk, while it could lead to armed conflict, could also provide opportunities for cooperation and understanding and for joint response to crisis.

What the societies need is for education to address deep seated hatred, and for the societies to develop the skills and spaces for discussion to resolve problems within and between communities without the use of violence.

## **SOCIETIES ARE DIVIDED**

There was an undercurrent in many responses, particularly when it concerned displacement and return, that socio-economic class played a role in continued conflict within the societies. People want to be able to return to the standards of their previous life. This was evident among the displaced populations, both Armenian and Azerbaijani. This expectation of a return to a way of life before displacement comes with expectations of the government, but also of pressure on the displaced people themselves. Fulfilment and security in life comes from meeting certain socio-economic expectations.

*“I will return, because the place where I live now, this property, does not belong to me. I was given this house temporarily, I don’t even have any documentation for this house, but if I return, that property [in Karabakh] would belong to me.”* Displaced Azerbaijani woman from Karabakh

*“For us, a house is a safe place. We must have a house, so that we can say that we are successful people. And here in Armenia, we don’t have a house. We rent. It’s not our house. The government doesn’t give us houses. We are in an unstable situation. We don’t know what will be next.”* Karabakhi-Armenian woman

One Azerbaijani woman wondered about the housing being promised to returning displaced people, and if it was in keeping with their expectations and their culture:

*"The Government has built homes there. It is weird, because they build apartment blocks there, but people lived in [private] houses [before displacement]." Azerbaijani woman*

Armenian respondents, including those not displaced, acknowledge that there was a gap between the expectations and needs of displaced people, and what they received, and that this was a cause of trauma and conflict within Armenian society. *"In terms of the social assistance they got, the government with the resources and preparedness it had, has done its best. But it could have been less traumatising."* Armenian woman

Displaced women we spoke to did not feel integrated into their host communities, which in turn impacted their feelings of safety and security, one Karabakhi-Armenian woman said *"... here I feel like a person of a 'third sort'. There is no Artsakh<sup>4</sup> today, but there is no security either."*

Nevertheless, as it relates to Nagorno Karabakh itself, one displaced woman noted that this problem of expectations is perhaps an opportunity for a fresh start for both communities:

*"Our village is already not that village that was before, and we both [Azerbaijanis and Armenians from Karabakh] have to be ready for this new reality. We have to accept this, maybe it is a good moment. [...] Those who want to return to Karabakh have to understand, that we are returning to a completely different world, and we should establish this world and improve it together."* Displaced Azerbaijani woman from Karabakh

Divisions within society in Armenia were also clear from the women we spoke to. The priorities and worldview of rural and urban women were significantly different from, and often at odds with, each other. One woman who had moved from Syunik province to Yerevan in her 20s noted that one of the most shocking things to her was the amount of nationalism in the capital, where in her hometown, at least before the war in 2020, this was not something she came across. This is not to say that nationalism is not now present in borderline communities: women living in frontline areas were quick to highlight the need for a stronger army when asked what would make their day-to-day lives more secure. This was in stark contrast to those urban women in Yerevan and other cities, where the issue of the army was only raised in terms of conditions for male family members completing their national service. This immediate desire for a stronger army is indicative of how highly securitised and militarised the society is, and that women living in the frontlines have lived under such pressure for such a long time that

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<sup>4</sup> An Armenian name for Nagorno Karabakh.

they are not able to imagine peace that is not guaranteed by the potential of violence inherent in a state that prioritises military force. Far from being reassured that peace is close, women on the frontline await another armed escalation.

*"[...] we always have to be ready for war."* Armenian woman

Women in Azerbaijan for the most part did not see any particular conflicts within society, in fact one noted that the war had had a unifying effect. Nevertheless, there was a clear message that shrinking democratic and civic space and an inability to have a voice in the public sphere increases tension and violence in the private sphere, which pointed to an unspoken conflict between men and women. Those able to articulate that conflict existed within Azerbaijani society are largely based outside of Azerbaijan, as acknowledging conflict within the "winning" society now that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is "resolved" can be a risk to security.

*"Statistically domestic violence increased, during the last 5 years after the war. Of course they don't say the reason was war, but the Committee of Family and Children's Issues, they say there is increase in statistics."* Azerbaijani woman

## **DISSATISFACTION WITH POLITICS**

From speaking to women, it was clear that there was deep dissatisfaction within society with politics, generally, and that it was not responding to their needs. High levels of polarisation, rather than encouraging political debate, democracy and participation, can push women further to the margins. As one woman put it, *"I've always tried not to be too deeply involved in politics, but still, I am a citizen of the Republic of Armenia. I have the right to think, discuss, and analyse what is happening in my country. I believe people here are given very little opportunity."* Armenian women are even willing to put aside their own interest for the sake of the avoidance of political conflict: *"during this complex process we should put our political views to one side and only think about the future of the country, that's the only thing."*

Women expressed that patriarchal structures are also preventing women from meaningfully engaging in politics: *"I see a patriarchal system [...] I'm talking about power. [...] I don't think that let's say the more females in the parliament in Azerbaijan will change something. [...] for me, this patriarchal system is genderless. It's about the power, about masculinity. But it's not about [men], it's about masculine, toxic masculinity."* Azerbaijani woman

The shrinking civic space in Azerbaijan, which foments violence, particularly against women, in the private sphere is also a hindrance to public discussions of peace and conflict resolution, and prevents the resolution of problems within the society as well as across conflict divides.

*"Peace is against aggression; peace is for solving problems with discussion with all the people involved."* Azerbaijani woman

This sentiment of a need for discussion with the aim of solving social problems beyond just the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was echoed by Armenian women:

*"Generally, men are afraid of engaging women, but I am confident women can change a lot of things, [...] women have a role and place everywhere, in the family, in domestic and foreign politics. They should be engaged in decision making."* Armenian woman

## **THE CRISIS OF PEACEBUILDING: WHAT IS PEACE? WHO GETS TO CALL THEMSELVES A PEACEBUILDER?**

One clear theme among respondents was that there is no one understanding of the word peace – this is not a new finding, but it did bring to light problems within the peacebuilding community itself, and on who gets to be called a peacebuilder. The women we spoke to had definitions of peace that touched both on the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict itself, where they prioritised "cooperation" and "open borders", but they also spoke about peace within their own communities.

*"[Peace is where] everyone has a voice, everyone feels protected and visible in their country."* Armenian woman

*"When you wake up in the morning and you don't feel that you have to protect yourself from someone or something."* Azerbaijani woman

For the most part, they did not speak about control of land or diplomatic processes when asked to define peace, and saw that for them in their day-to-day lives it means something more fundamental, more personal.

*"Peace is when in families, when women have peaceful lives, when they understand each other."* Armenian woman

*"It grows from your family to your community, from your community to your country, and then to the cross-country context."* Azerbaijani woman

Following the outbreak of war in 2020, peacebuilders on both sides went through a significant crisis of identity: the gains they had made in normalising relations were lost, they were disappointed in the actions (or lack thereof) of their peers on the other side, and they were criticised by their own communities. Respondents highlighted that during the 2020 war, talking about peace and rejecting military action was seen negatively within their communities, particularly in Azerbaijan.

*"There was [...] a kind of movement - 'No War'. And I think there were men as well as women. [...] and the attitude towards them was also almost the same [...] they all were called traitors."*  
Azerbaijani woman

Women noted that the criticism they receive for taking part in peacebuilding initiatives is often gendered and sexualised; one Armenian activist noted that *"attacks are different for men and women peacebuilders, women are criticised and attacked on their family and appearance, body and sexuality and so on."*

This societal criticism and the drastic changes in the status of the conflict, in particular Azerbaijan's use of force for its resolution, has had a significant impact on the peacebuilding community, especially in Azerbaijan, where they are unclear as to what their aims are in the new reality, and how they can work towards peace.

*"So many meanings can change, and it also influences our identity. If before the war we knew who we were, what we wanted to achieve, now we don't know who we are. [...] What will we call ourselves tomorrow? I don't know if I'm a peacebuilder or not."* Azerbaijani woman

Additionally, some respondents highlighted that, in addition to being criticised by broader society, peacebuilding has become a profession, rather than being an inclusive way of thinking. One respondent heard of her former professor saying *"[she] is not in our [peacebuilding] community anymore"*, to which she raised that peacebuilding is *"a mentality - you study peacebuilding and it shapes you for life. It's a value set, [...] you cannot be 'out of' it. It's an instance of the problem that the peacebuilding community is facing right now."* "Peacebuilder" has become a job title, rather than a way of thinking, of moving in the world. She was not alone in this sentiment - several respondents echoed that peacebuilding is not an action or a job, but a prism through which one looks at all aspects of life.

*"You cannot stop being a peacebuilder, it goes very closely with the human rights work you do, you cannot do human rights work if you are not a peacebuilder. [...] It is how you are, you start from home and then to everywhere else... workplace, and outside and everywhere."*  
Armenian woman

Across the board, women were supportive of dialogue and believed that now was a time when it was necessary. Nevertheless there were critical questions of which participants should take part in dialogue, how it should be conducted, and what measures need to be taken for safety and security. In Armenia, women living on the frontline and displaced women, especially those living outside of Yerevan, expressed that they were not ready on a personal level to meet with Azerbaijani women, and yet they were interested in what they had to say: one woman living in an Armenian border community said *"I am curious what they answer, it's hard to imagine women of any nationality that wouldn't wish for peace."*

Those who had been involved in peacebuilding also had criticism of approaches taken by international organisations when it came to peacebuilding – that participants in dialogue are not sufficiently informed about what the purpose of activities is, what is expected of them and what they might expect of others. They asked that peacebuilding actors be clear and communicate their objectives, even when the activities are experimental. As one Armenian woman put it:

*"If you are a peacebuilder, [...] you have to explain to both sides what you are doing [...] so that the Azerbaijani person and the Armenian person have the agency in what they're doing. We are not lab subjects."*

She also highlighted the importance of providing support after dialogue, so that behavioural change is lasting and can stand up to the nationalistic ideas that surround the people returning from dialogue in their home communities.

One longtime Azerbaijani peacebuilder noted the pitfalls in dialogue *"Always trying to be polite, protect the feelings of others"* and that those relationships and networks that survived the second war did so because of *"openness, even after 2020, it was difficult to talk but we still talked."* Many respondents spoke about the necessity for "honest" dialogue, and that this at times might be painful and uncomfortable, but that this pain and discomfort leads to breakthroughs and stronger, more lasting relationships.

Peacebuilding practitioners from Armenia and Azerbaijan expressed that the primary concern for dialogue is the safety of participants: restrictions in Azerbaijan meant that Azerbaijani practitioners felt at increased risk of repercussions for taking part in peacebuilding initiatives; meanwhile Armenian peacebuilders expressed that they felt that their Azerbaijani counterparts were not able to be as open and honest as is required for deep connection and transformative relationships that could build a peace that is sustainable.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT PEACE PROCESSES

- Push for greater transparency in peace negotiations and agreements. Many respondents, especially in Armenia, expressed frustration over lack of information and fear of decisions being made without public input. This can be done through supporting structured dialogue and consultation mechanisms for ensuring that citizens, particularly women and displaced communities, as well as women human rights defenders and peacebuilders, understand and can influence peace processes and policies. This means clear communication, in accessible and inclusive formats, about upcoming decisions, priorities, and outcomes of discussions with the relevant authorities.

## 2. PUT PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF PEACEBUILDING

- Push for peace agreements that prioritise human security and rights, not only geopolitical or economic gains. Respondents criticised negotiations as “business transactions” benefiting elites rather than ordinary citizens.
- Encourage EU engagement that monitors and mitigates socio-economic inequalities, which respondents linked to tensions and violence. This should be based on more thorough, nuanced, and inclusive context-, conflict- and gender-sensitive analysis, informed by diverse voices, that goes beyond territorial issues and encompasses an analysis of identity, trauma, and socio-economic divides.
- Promote a human rights-based approach to business and development cooperation that is gender and conflict sensitive, enshrining women’s right to benefit from economic gains in their societies. EU member states should encourage international companies within their jurisdiction to adhere to conflict- and gender-sensitive business practices.

## 3. ADDRESS GENDER GAPS IN PEACEBUILDING

- Promote meaningful participation of women in the peace process and mediation, avoiding token representation. This can be achieved by engaging women with diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those representing the most marginalised groups, in structured, regular consultations, promoting their inclusion in formal mechanisms, and high-level political dialogue across all stages of peacebuilding. These mechanisms should also rely on local evidence, data, analyses, risk assessments, and early warnings.
- Support safer spaces, where women can engage in dialogue with each other within their societies and across conflict divides. Ensure that international stakeholders have the opportunity to hear diverse women’s voices, to inform their context analysis.

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