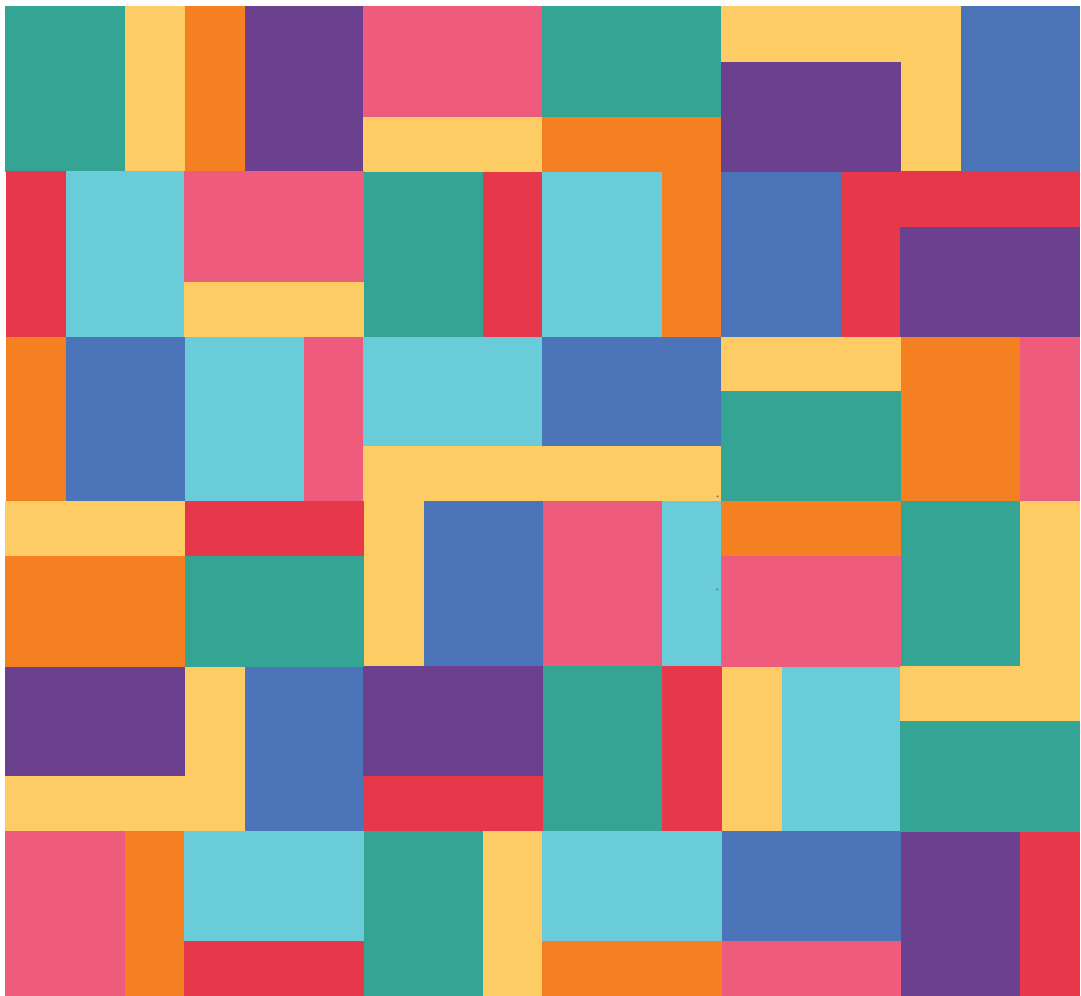




YWCA KOREA's 100th Anniversary

2022 YWCA Women Peace Forum

2022 July 6th
Paju, Korea / Webinar



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YWCA Women Peace Forum

YWCA KOREA's 100th Anniversary YWCA Women Peace Forum

- Date/Time: 6th July (Wed.) 14:00-17:00 (KST)
- Place: Zoom Webinar
- Purpose: To build a discourse for the peace solidarity of women in the world on issues that threaten the international community, including peace on the Korean peninsula, and to lay the foundation for solidarity and joint action.
- Program

Moderator : EunYoung Lee (Vice President, YWCA Korea)	
14:00-14:20	Opening Remarks : YoungHee Won (President, YWCA Korea)
Keynote Speech <Peace Made by Women, How is it Sustainable?>	
14:20-14:50	SungKyung Kim (Professor, University of North Korean Studies)
14:50-15:20	Q&A
Panel Presentation	
15:20-16:10	Restorative Movement of Ukrainian Women in War : Nataliya Ulianets (President, YWCA of Ukraine)
	YWCA Palestine's Peace activities under Israeli rule : Amal Tarazi (National General Secretary, YWCA Palestine)
	Work for Peace and Protection of Japanese Constitution : Sayaka Higuchi (Vice President, YWCA of Japan)
	Peace Activities of Women on the Korean Peninsula and Their Prospect : SookJin Lee (Former Y-Academy committee member, YWCA Korea)
16:10-16:50	Questions and Discussion
	Closing

Blessed are the Peacemakers

YoungHee Won (President, YWCA Korea)

I would like to welcome and give thanks to everybody who has joined us today to celebrate the start of the 2022 YWCA International Women's Peace Forum. This forum marks the beginning of the YWCA Pilgrimage and Forum for Woman's Peace; one of the YWCA Korea's many centennial anniversary projects.


The YWCA Women's Peace Pilgrimage first began in 2017 at Mount Halla during the 95th anniversary of the YWCA of Korea. From there, we travelled to Mount Jiri in 2018 and Mount Taebaek in 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we continued our pilgrimage by hosting "Socially Distanced Individual Peace Pilgrimage" travels. The pilgrimage initially began as a group of 95 participants, but gradually grew to a group of 585 participants over the past six years as we added participants annually, commensurate to the anniversary year of the YWCA. The pilgrimage group reaches around a thousand pilgrimage participants when counting unofficial, individual participants, which included various Korean diaspora worldwide. All participants gathered in prayer to share our hope and aspiration for peace, and confirm our resolve for combined action.

This year 2022 was shook with conflict and war across the globe delivering shock and distress to all that were expecting a return to normal and recovery from the impact of the two year long pandemic. War brings death and chaos and breeds hatred and conflict. Conflict pushes the vulnerable into further vulnerability and incites exploitation and agony for women and children. Over the past seven decades, the Korean Peninsula has been mired in repeated tragedies of conflict, hostility, hatred, and confrontation due to an ongoing, never ending war and division. In the midst of this war and tragedy, however, we have learned that international solidarity for peace that goes beyond the boundaries of the Korean Peninsula is our power and hope.

The theme of today's forum is "Peace Made by Women: How is it Sustainable?" We are joined today with YWCA members from Ukraine, Palestine, Japan, and Korea; all of whom who have relevant experiences of, or are currently suffering from war and conflict. These members have overcome the role of victims in conflict and are advocating peace by voicing their determination for justice and change. We hope this gathering today will become a cornerstone for support and cooperation for all activities carried out through our combined action.

The Holy Bible says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." There are many that say they love and long for peace, but there are few that actually work to make peace a reality. Peacemaking leads to justice building and it is carrying out God's will of love and salvation. May God comfort and bless all people including our YWCA sisters, who are striving in the most vulnerable and painful places as peacemakers.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the 100 pilgrimage participants from the YWCA of Korea gathered here, as well as the members of the YWCA of Korea and other YWCAs across the world, and all other participants, joining in with us online. Although we cannot meet many of you face to face, I can still feel our communion of warm support and sisterly love. It is my earnest prayer that our actions of peace will contribute to reconciliation and justice around the world.

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to those who worked day and night to put this forum together and for their passion and cooperation. I hope that all of our prayers for peace translate into action and become a reality in our lives in God's Love. I would like to ask for your continued support as we work towards peace on Earth. Thank you. 

Peace Made by Women, How Is It Sustainable?

SungKyung Kim

Professor, University of North Korean Studies &
YWCA Peace and reunification Advisory group

Living as a woman on the Korean Peninsula

Let us begin with a question. What does it mean to live on the Korean Peninsula as a woman? Unable to overcome colonization by its own power, South and North Korea were divided and ruled by the two pillars of the Cold War, and soon the Korean War broke out. The Korean War, which began as a civil war, turned into an international war, and only after countless lives were lost did the warring parties agree to a temporary halt to the war. With the signing of the armistice agreement on July 27th, 1953, an ‘armistice system’ was established. When the armistice agreement was signed, there were also expectations that an end of the war and peace would soon be institutionalized. However, as the Cold War on the international level began operation on the Korean Peninsula, the armistice system between the South and the North continued for 70 years. Even after a Post-Cold War World emerged, the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula continued. Now the division and Cold War on the Korean Peninsula are solidifying with the recent arrival of a new international political order called the New Cold War. The South and the North have lived by defining each other as ‘enemies’ for such a long time, and the hostility and competition between the two Koreas grew enough to distort the people, not just at the national level, but their identity and life as a whole.

The women of the two Koreas are beings who have experienced a crooked history of overlapping colonization, war, division, and decolonization. Of course, the situation on the Korean Peninsula has been difficult for men, but in the case of women, they have been exposed to oppression by the male-centered social structure of patriarchy through the war and division. The biggest victims of the war were women and other civilians, and in the process of post-war restoration, women in neither of the two Koreas could be free from structural gender discrimination and sexual violence. It seems that the South and the North have established different political systems and economic structures, but from a woman's point of view, the structure of oppression is only different in regard to density and is not particularly distinguished in terms of its fundamental structure. For example, during post-war restoration and economic development, South Korean women were generally represented in the form of sex

workers known as the so-called, 'Yang Gong-ju (western princess),' for the purpose of serving U.S. soldiers, or as female factory workers who had to endure an enormous amount of intensive labor at low wages. Similarly, in North Korea, women were considered a labor force to be mobilized whenever the state needed them, and they were called to be in charge of the family's economy in the case of a national crisis.

The same is true of our recent situation. South Korea has achieved tremendous rapid economic development, including joining the OECD, but gender inequality has not seen much improvement. For example, according to the World Economic Forum's GGI (Gender Gap Index), Korea ranked 102nd out of 153 countries with a 0.687 rating. The index measures the gap between men and women in four areas: economic opportunity, education, health and political influence, so it should not be mistaken for a woman's overall life, but economic opportunities for women were only 58.60 percent of what men receive in comparison. Fortunately, women's education was found to be 97.30%, keeping pace with men, and health was also 97.60%, but political influence has remained at 21.40%, indicating a major difference between men and women. The reason why the gender issue has recently had such a significant operational impact on South Korean women is that they are experiencing the inequality between men and women whom they face in their daily lives. Even if women have equal or greater opportunities than men in terms of education, when there is a difference in economic opportunities like jobs, and when social reproduction is distributed to a lesser extent in political influence, then the frustration experienced by women is bound to be even greater.

The situation for women in North Korea is even worse. It is difficult to confirm the gender gap in North Korea with the same index, but the gender inequality index provided by the National Statistical Office can give us a picture of the situation of North Korean women. As of 2019, the proportion of female lawmakers in North Korea was 17.6%, thus the social reproduction of women in the political field was confirmed to be lower than in South Korea. Regarding economic opportunities, the North emphasizes that it is achieving complete equality, but jobs provided to women are concentrated in light industry and caring labor areas. The larger problem is that the safety and protection of women at the most basic level has not been achieved. For example, the maternal mortality rate reached 89 (per 100,000 births) in North Korea compared to 11 in South Korea. In terms of educational opportunities, North Korea is known to have a fairly low character difference, but in the most basic circumstances such as women's health it is incomparably inferior to South Korea. Why on earth are women in the South and the North living in these circumstances? As such, living as a woman on the Korean Peninsula means a different system of experience than that of living as a man here, and each of those sides are deeply entrenched in the historical nature of the overlapping colonization-war-division.

Women in the Midst of Perpetual War

War is harsh on everyone, but it especially destroys women's lives. The damage to women in the Korean War is immeasurable. Not only were women exposed to the pain of having to send their husbands and sons to the bat-

tlefield, but also sexual violence in wartime as well. According to Kim, Kwi-ok's study, about 300 Korean military 'comfort women' were operating between 1951 and 1954, and 'comfort stations' existed in military camps or operated as mobile 'comfort stations' following soldiers's movements.¹⁾ Starting with the public testimony of grandmother Kim Hak-soon in 1991, Japanese military 'comfort women' have been actively discussed in public; however, the existence of Korean military 'comfort women' has still not been fully discussed. Although Korean society up in anger about wartime sexual violence committed by the Japanese military, it would not have been easy to admit that we ran wartime 'comfort stations' of our own. No matter whose name in which war is fought, no matter who is the main agent, the most important point is what kind of violence the war has committed against women.

That is not all. As the armistice system continues, since it has only temporarily suspended in the Korean War, the problem of the 'comfort women' for the U.S. military has also arisen. The so-called 'gijichon women' were exposed to beatings and murders by the U.S. military, but they failed to appear in this debate for a while as they were considered a national shame in Korean society. Due to the persistent efforts of women's groups and the achievements of the 'Comfort Women' movement, it was finally in 2014 that the U.S. 'Comfort Women' began fighting against the state and against state violence. What is even more terrible in the case of the U.S. military 'comfort women' is that the South Korean government took charge of managing and controlling STDs, encouraged sex trafficking for the U.S. military, and even educated the women to think of themselves as 'patriots earning dollars.' According to Catherine Moon, who has been studying the U.S. military 'comfort women' issue, there has been no widespread sexual violence elsewhere where the U.S. military was stationed like there has been in South Korea. Analysts say that the reason there is widespread sexual violence in Korea is because the state-sponsored prostitution carried down since the Japanese colonial period, such as Japanese military 'comfort women'-Korean military 'comfort women', etc. was not properly punished even after the war stopped.²⁾ In other words, violence against women continued on the Korean Peninsula, having failed to overcome colonization and division, and this spreads from rape or physical violence to continuous gender discrimination and sexual violence in daily life. Sexual violence against women continued during the democratization movement, and gender discrimination under the pretext of economic development and national security was maintained because of the ongoing abnormal state of the armistice system.

This situation is not limited to the Korean Peninsula. Efforts have been made to solve the violence experienced by women in situations such as war. For example, the international community has pointed out that women are

1) Kim, Kwi-ok, *In that Place there Were Korean Military 'Comfort Women': Colonization and war, the Cooperation of the Patriarchy*, Sun-in, 2020.

2) Moon, Katharine H.S., *Dangerous Women: Gender and Korean Nationalism*, Sam-in, 2001

exposed to numerous types of violence in war or non-peaceful societies. The United Nations Security Council issued ‘Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace, and Security’ in 2000, followed by subsequent resolutions: 1820 (2008), 1999 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019). Resolution 1325 points out that women's human rights are bound to be greatly violated in situations of armed conflict such as war, and violence against women tends to continue there even after the war ends. In order to improve this situation, it is emphasized that punishment for sexual violence should be strengthened, in the process of peacebuilding and reconstruction, gender must be mainstreamed, and that women should participate in all decision-making levels in the process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In addition, experts have recently emphasized the expansion of women's participation in the peace and security agenda, and have recommended that all social and economic rights of women be improved.

The international community emphasizes the introduction of a gender mainstreaming perspective on various situations of violence in daily life rather than narrowly defining violence as situations of war. While a response to violent extremism and the role, participation, and protection of women in environmental and climate change are emerging as major agendas for this community, they have also set one of their main goals to be solving the poverty experienced by women. This is because the peace and security agenda is not remaining confined to the existing traditional security domain, but is spreading to the realm of non-traditional security, including human security.

So what is the situation on the Korean Peninsula? As mentioned earlier, the daily lives of women in the two Koreas still remain in the wake of war in this ‘armistice system,’ where the war has only been temporarily suspended. In order to maintain the abnormal state of war, the state established a unique system that fused with the patriarchy, and women in the two Koreas are living a life that cannot break free from the patriarchal system that places the state at the forefront or from the violent and oppressive structure of men. Nevertheless, as the abnormalities of the armistice system continue for a long time, the critical view of the fundamental problems it creates is gradually weakening. This is because they have no sense of how twisted women's lives have been due to the war and division. One example is the gradual weakening of the problem of militarism, a fundamental condition that constrains the lives of South Korean women, as the lives of South Korean women improve to some extent with education and health care. Most of them take it for granted that women's economic opportunities and political participation are limited on the Korean Peninsula, where politics and the economy operate as a medium of division. In addition, sexual violence operating in everyday life has now expanded to the cyber world, making life difficult due to the fear and lack of safety experienced by women. It is also important to remember that women's lives are becoming more at risk in situations such as the pandemic, the climate crisis, and environmental disasters. From a feminist perspective, it is necessary to check what kind of lives women on the Korean Peninsula have lived in the past and are living in the present, and efforts should be based on this bring about gender equality in the future of the Korean Peninsula.

A Peace Made by Women

As is well known, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 consists of four key areas. Emphasizing prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery, it proposes the gender mainstreaming of foreign, defense, and development cooperation policies as a whole. In addition to the resolution presented as a follow-up to No. 1325, each country continues to make efforts to realize the Security Council resolution by establishing a national action plan. In the case of Korea, the first national action plan was established in 2014, and in 2017, the Framework Act on Gender Equality was revised to establish an institutional basis for the national action plan. The first national action plan continued from 2014 to 2017, then the second national action plan (2018-2020) was established and implemented, and the third National Action Plan was finalized by the Gender Equality Committee in February 2021. If so, it is necessary to briefly look at the change and development of Korea's national action plan here.

First of all, the first national action plan consists of a total of 10 goals and detailed tasks in four areas: prevention, protection, participation, relief and reconstruction. In the area of prevention, it supports, 1. Raising awareness of conflict prevention and peace activities as it relates to workers; 2. Integration of gender-sensitive perspectives into conflict prevention, peace activities and policies; 3. Establishing a prevention system through international cooperation; and in the area of participation; 4. Prevention of conflict, expansion of women's participation in peace activities; 5. Equal participation of men and women in the decision-making process in the field of peace and security and promotion of gender equality; 6. Support for the expansion of the social participation of women in regions of conflict and regions vulnerable to conflict; and in the area of protection, 7. Support for victims of sexual violence in the midst of conflict; 8. Establishing policies centered on women, children, and youth; 9. Support for the punishment of perpetrators of sexual violence and the protection of victims in regions of conflict and regions vulnerable to conflict; and in the area of relief and recovery, in includes, 10. Protecting female victims in conflict areas and supporting self-support through development assistance. As the first action plan for the realization of U.N. Resolution 1325, it can be evaluated as an action plan that reflects gender perspectives such as conflict prevention and peace activities, expands women's participation, and emphasizes the protection of women in conflict areas.

The 2nd National Action Plan expanded awareness of the areas of women, peace, and security and reflected a strengthening of the foundation for civilian participation and implementation. The 2nd national action plan consists of 12 objectives and detailed tasks in five areas, including the area of performance inspections, along with prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery. What's interesting is the fact that the 1st national action plan expanded key areas that had been limited to war prevention or peace activities to include the areas of national defense, security, peace, unification, disaster and crisis, and it emphasized cooperative governance between the public and private sectors. In the area of protection, the government is calling for an improvement in the treatment of victims of military-related sexual violence and North Korean defectors and refugees along with the victims of the Japanese military's sexual slavery system. It also emphasizes supporting women in regions of conflict or re-

gions vulnerable to conflict through development cooperation projects and strengthening their capacity.

The 3rd national action plan consists of 11 goals and 24 detailed tasks in the existing 5 fields. The main goal is to apply the gender perspective to conflict prevention, peace, unification, and international development cooperation, including the establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula, and to expand women's participation and international cooperation. According to Cho Young-joo, the 3rd national action plan emphasizes human security and emphasizes that peace and security are directly related to gender equality. Second, it emphasizes the expansion of women's participation in the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and actively reflects the reality of the divided Korean Peninsula. Third, it contains attempts to report war violence from that time and to historicize various peace efforts that women have attempted. It proposes expanding 'Comfort Women' commemorative projects and the establishment and management archives of records related to women, peace, and security. Fourth, it emphasizes the role of women in the area of security and peace, and argues that this should be achieved through strengthening women's capacity. Fifth, through the localization of agendas for women, peace, and security, different women's experiences for each region were shared and women's active participation was promoted.³⁾

As such, various goals and agendas have been proposed for the realization of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 from the period of the first national action plan until the third. However, the limitations of the national action plan seem clear, and the most representative issue is that they never made a separate budget for the implementation of the national action plan. In addition, although the national action plan is included in the Basic Act on Gender Equality, a detailed implementation system related to implementation is not specified. Although the national action plan emphasizes cooperative governance with the public and private sectors, the fact that practical private cooperation could not be achieved is a problem. The role played by the private sector in the state-led action plan remains at the level of advisory roles or service projects, which also leads toward a state-centered operation of the security and peace agenda.

Above all, it is clear that the National Action Plan for the 1325 resolution has been established, but it is also painful that the consent and participation of South Korean women have not been achieved. This is because the peace and security agenda has still not been fully discussed within women's perceptions and lives, and even though women are actively responding to gender equality in their respective positions, there is still indifference to the historical agenda of security and peace. Although institutionalization can play a part in settling peace, if

3) Cho, Young-ju, Ji-soo Yoon, Hee-young Moon, Hyo-kyung Kim, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the Third National Action Plan of the Republic of Korea, Women's Policy Institute (2020).

there is no discussion or practice of peace from below, the peace and security agenda is likely to be dealt with only within a male-centered frame again.

So what kind of effort should we make? What are measure women can take to make peace sustainable? First of all, it is necessary to clearly understand the relationship between women, security, and peace, and to recognize that gender equality and gender mainstreaming are directly related to security and peace through a human security approach. Also, through introspection we should address the fact that security and peace have been inadequately discussed in the women's community recently. Women are actively responding to sexual violence or gender equality issues at work, home, and in daily life, but inequality and general violence, which have been justified in the context of war and security, have not been fully addressed. In particular, it is clear that there is a considerable indifference to security and peace, especially among the younger generation. This is partly because communication between generations within the women's community has not been sufficiently conducted, and it is also problematic that war and security issues have been treated as problems on a different level to that of daily sexual violence. The goal of building peace through gender mainstreaming should not only involve peace in everyday life but also attempts to peacefully resolve political situations such as war and the instability of national security. In addition, it will be important to build a foundation for overcoming threats to human security by strengthening women's peace capacity.

Secondly, it is important to strengthen women's solidarity and cooperation system. Experiences among women are diverse to the extent that women cannot be considered as one same group, as even the socioeconomic location where they are located can be different. Various differences, not only in race and ethnicity, but also in class, education, generation, and region, produce differences in women's experiences and consciousness. This is why an approach that focuses on intersectionality is needed, as liberal feminism has emphasized. While considering the various contexts of location that each woman faces, it is also important to understand the identity and experience shared by women's being. It is necessary for women to share their various systems of experience through solidarity and establish a cooperative system to overcome each other's situations.


Finally, the feminist perspective should be further strengthened in the domain of security and peace. Despite the creation of Security Council Resolution 1325 and the implementation of national action plans in each country, gender mainstreaming in the domain of security and peace is progressing slowly. The situation in Korea is particularly serious, with female participation in policies of defense, national security and diplomacy increasingly falling, which foreshadows the difficulty of women's voices in the future peace process on the Korean Peninsula. Despite the deepening inequality experienced by women in the pandemic, which has become a crisis for humanity, there is no social discussion on gender inequality among women. To overcome this situation, feminist intervention in the security realm is necessary, and it should be recognized that peace is not merely a status at the state-level, but a status of life that involves safety and fairness for all humans, including women.

The Voices of the Nameless

The lives of women living on the Korean Peninsula are tough. Although women suffered from the position of the victim, they could not speak out as a party for a peace settlement. The violence caused by the war continues even amid the ceasefire system that paused the war. Looking back on the lives of women in the two Koreas from a feminist perspective, it becomes clear who received the bulk of the harshness of war and security. Sometimes under the name of national security, sometimes under the pretext of national development, and sometimes under the ideology of family well-being, women in the two Koreas have lived a difficult life. So, what should we do for peace on the Korean Peninsula? It is important to note that wars and divisions on the Korean Peninsula have never operated the same for everyone. The history of war and division on the Korean Peninsula should be approached again with a feminist perspective. The two Koreas may have a completely different political system and economic environment, yet from the perspective of women, both Koreas have something in common in that they have maintained a structure of gender discrimination and sexual violence by placing patriarchy at the forefront. By reading the war and division again as a feminist, a plan to overcome it can also be derived with a sensitivity to gender. To this end, it is also necessary for women to actively participate in peace discussions, and it is important to break down gender discrimination and sexual violence that affects everyday life for the safety and protection of women. In particular, it seems important to recognize that militarism and patriarchy are operating at the root of the threat to the safety of South Korean women. It is also necessary to share a consciousness of crisis in that those who will be most affected in the event of another security crisis on the Korean Peninsula are women.

Lastly, I would like to briefly introduce the War and Women's Human Rights Museum that I recently visited. The names and photos of the grandmothers were available there, where the data on the Japanese military 'Comfort Women' System, known as the most harrowing case of state violence during a war, was well organized. I checked for one grandmother's name among the well-known human rights activist grandmothers, and she was called, 'Baeknupdegi'. A woman has lived her whole life under the name of 'Nupdegi.' In an era when the idea of male-domination over women was deep-rooted, the idea that the name given to grandmothers could be so insignificant passed through my mind. It is said that Grandmother Baeknupdegi was born as the second daughter of six siblings in a tenant farmer's house in Jeolla-do. Her marriage, which began as a daughter-in-law in her husband's house, ends when her husband sells her to a alcohol bar for 120 won. Eventually she is sold to China, and there she lived as a 'comfort woman' near Shanghai. She was moved place to place following the Japanese troops and experienced the violence of losing a finger. When the war ended, she became dependent on a Chinese husband and remained in China. However, she did not receive a Chinese citizenship, so she lived as a stateless person for the rest of his life and entered Korea in 2003. How could someone possibly guess the violence she experienced. But how meaningful would it be to find her, who had forgotten her own existence in the deep mountains of China, and to bend an ear to hear about her sufferings? Finding beings forgotten in history and restoring their voices is the beginning

of efforts to no longer repeat violent history.

These are the names that we should pay attention to again: Korean military ‘Comfort Women’, U.S. military ‘Comfort Women’, victims of sexual discrimination and sexual violence in modern South Korea, women exploited by the sexist structure of the North Korean regime, and North Korean defectors who came to South Korea through gender labor and migration. They should restore their lost voices to reveal the gender-based anti-peace structure of the Korean Peninsula. And even in the structure of discrimination and violence, they must create a foundation for a peaceful future by giving meaning to the gaps they have created. And even to the cracks they have created in the structure of discrimination and violence, they must give meaning so that they can create a foundation for a peaceful future. 

Restorative Movement of Ukrainian Women in War

Nataliya Ulianets

President, YWCA of Ukraine

War affects women no less than men. What is it like to be a modern woman living in a beautiful, prosperous Ukraine, and suddenly lose everything, home, loved ones, security, the familiar world? But politicians and the media hardly talk about this.

Political instability and armed conflict have had a serious negative impact on gender equality and the status of women in Ukraine. More than 6.5 million people - two thirds of them women and children - have been internally displaced since the start of the conflict, and suffer from difficult access to health care, housing and employment opportunities. A large number of women who stayed at home lost their jobs and lost their basic livelihoods. All this seriously affects the situation with the social cohesion of society, public safety and the resilience of vulnerable groups, especially negatively affecting the lives of women.

Due to limited public resources, lack of access to social services and pre-school institutions, local and internally displaced women bear the brunt of the burden of caring for children, persons with disabilities and elderly family members, which also makes it difficult for them to find work.

Women's participation in peacebuilding decision-making processes remains at a very low level. Women hold only 12% of the seats in Parliament, and make up 11% in the Cabinet of Ministers. Governments and civil society organizations have limited capacity to support families torn apart by war, children separated from their families, or women with children and elderly relatives who have been forced to leave their homes and communities as a result of armed conflict.

The seven main areas of concern for women and girls are:

immediate security threats;

lack of essentials;

loss of livelihood;
the psychological impact of war and constant fear;
sexual and gender-based violence in public and private places;
lack of communication, information and social services; moreover, women are virtually excluded from planning and decision-making processes at all levels.

Therefore, we, public organizations, need to defend the priorities of all women and girls, including those from the most vulnerable groups.

4 months of war in Ukraine. How it affected our women and me?

All women reacted differently. The worst thing was for those who has small children or who are pregnant. There is only one way out - is to evacuate and escape to a safe place. I know very well what is like to run from dangerous place with a baby on my hands. I remember well how it was during the Chernobyl disaster. Now many women have gone through a lot of different feelings: shock, fear, confusion, fear of the non future. Some of the women experienced hysterica and they still can't overcome this condition. Many women and girls have hatred in their hearts. It does not allow them to live and breathe. This is sad. Because you never can fight hate with a hate.

What I learned about myself during this war...

As every person in this world, I do not know myself fully. Since childhood, I was very scared of war. It seemed to me that if the war would happened I would die of fear. As I got older I was always sure that there could be no war in my life. But it happened and I discovered some special qualities in myself. Since the first explosions of the bombs I was quite calm. I believed and still believe that I am under the protection of Almighty. I was not fall into hysteria and hatred. I just accepted the situation as it is.

I also realized that during the war life continues and you still have to take care of yourself and others. Bring small joys to your life and try not to become discouraged. Believe in the Almighty and in your strength of mind.

What do I feel on the 120 days of the war?


I am glad that me, my family and also my friends are alive. I feel tired. I really want this nightmare to end as quickly as possible. And people who were left without housing, work and livelihood could rise fast enough mentally and financially. No one have to die any more and no more blood have to be shed. Also during this war I learned that I have wonderful friends all over the world. And they are friends not in a word but in deed. That there are wonderful caring people who cannot stand aside from other people's suffering and sorrow. These people ewokes my big respect and sincere admiration. They teach me to be more attentive and sensitive.

I never give an advice unless I have gone through a similar path or experience myself. I will never understand a person without “wearing their shoes”. In 2014 I did not fully understand what was happening to people in the Donbass. I had no idea what they had to go through. Now I understand it very well. And my heart hurts every day from the thought that everything there can turn into ashes. I am very worried about what can now happen in the south of our country.

I remember very well what a terrible things happened in the former Yugoslavia or Syria. But at that time it seemed to me that it was far away. Later I watched a lot of informational materials about those events, and the indifference of the world scared me. That we, the inhabitants of the Earth, are often silent, minding our own business. And we don't care about the fact that women and children are being killed somewhere. Now I often think about why the world is the way it is.... What is really going on? Why do wars happen? Maybe we're doing something wrong? Are we giving enough to make this world a much better place?I feel and understand that all events occur by the will of the Almighty. But after all, they happen in order to teach us something, so that we realize why we go through this or that experience.

We started to conduct joint coaching work with the YWCA of New York. Our trainers started to work online with our women helping to rehabilitate with the help of support groups. This is a very difficult and lengthy task.

Topics that concern our women

1. Depression and exit from it during the war. When you feel that you are at an impasse and do not see the future.
2. Nervous breakdowns. When anxiety, anxiety, fear and a sense of hopelessness accumulate, and at one moment it breaks through that tantrums or panic attacks can happen. What to do in such situations to get out of this.
3. Loss of loved ones, property, work during the war. How to cope when you feel weak and confused because you have lost everything that you have been going to for many years 

YWCA Palestine's Peace activities under Israeli rule

Amal Tarazi

National General Secretary, The YWCA of Palestine

About the YWCA Palestine

The National YWCA is a non-governmental association that started in Palestine in 1893 and was officially registered in Jerusalem in the year 1918. It is a union of four local associations in the cities of Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jericho and Bethlehem. It envisions free and democratic Palestinian civil society where women and youth are empowered to exercise and protect their human, social, economic and political rights. It is affiliated with the World YWCA, a global movement that works for -through its members: the national YWCAs in over 100 countries in the world, for the rights of women, young women, and girls. The World YWCA holds a special consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The history of the National YWCA of Palestine is linked with the recent history of Palestine itself. After the Nakbeh of 1948, it was the first national association to provide humanitarian services for the Palestinian refugees in the refugee camps. These efforts continue to this very day despite facing a series of difficulties and challenges including on-going restrictions and limitations imposed on freedom of movement especially during the first and second Intifadas and after the construction of the Apartheid Wall and the consequent geographical separation and fragmentation of Palestine. The YWCA of Palestine organizes international advocacy campaigns, based on human rights principles to promote the Right of Return and self-determination of the Palestinian refugees who were ethnically cleansed by the Israeli gangs during the 1948 Nakbeh, from their cities, towns and villages. These campaigns are done with the support of YWCAs around the world, donors, and Palestinian rights' supporters around the World

Our Vision

Women and youth, particularly young women, are leading society towards change and development to help attain a Palestinian civil society where equality, freedom and social justice prevail

Our Mission

The YWCA is a national women's association that seeks to enhance and promote the role of women and youth, particularly young women in the decision-making processes, leadership, and entrepreneurship positions in society by strengthening their leadership and initiative capacity, enhancing opportunities for their participation and gender equality in civil life, and creating a society that embodies equality, freedom, tolerance, justice, peace and human dignity

Theory of Change:

The YWCA's theory of change is based on the firm belief that our young Palestinian women - if given the opportunity and necessary support - can build a better future for all where freedom and justice prevail. We, therefore, aim to empower young women and girls by enhancing their participation in cultural, educational, and economic activities, and helping them become more aware of, and defend their individual and national rights, thus promote equal and active participation at different levels. This theory helps the YWCA to empower women and young women through intergenerational exchange of experience and knowledge. The theory of change is the basis for our matrix of goals, objectives and interventions, which is based on four main outcomes that represent the YWCA's core historic path, with the gradual development of interventions and tools.

Strategic Objectives:

Objective one: Economic empowerment women and young women helping them to access economic opportunities and suitable work.

This goal is manifested in programs empowering women and young women to claim their economic, social, and political rights and to create job opportunities through vocational training programs and developing entrepreneurship skills. This plan develops the strategic direction for future interventions and tools which will include interventions related to entrepreneurship services and the establishment of micro projects, in addition to providing specialized training on remote work and e-commerce.

Objective two: Social innovation contributes to building the capacity of Palestinian youth and developing local communities. Historically, the YWCA-Palestine has worked to provide a safe space for young women and men to develop, learn and become engaged in society.

The YWCA also seeks to increase the knowledge of Palestinian youth of the importance of participating in decision-making processes and representation in their communities, local councils, and institutions as well as on the national level in order to represent voices of youth for change. This strategic plan aims to develop these interventions by focusing on partnerships with 6 STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026 grassroots institutions in targeted geographical locations to implement communitybased initiatives led by youth, in addition to expanding areas of

community work for initiatives in all fields (sports, culture, arts, and tourism).

These initiatives also focus on the community entrepreneurship as additional supporting tool, as it offers an innovative new model for community work. These changes have expanded the objectives set forth in the previous strategy from a focus on social development to social innovation in interventions related to youth, women, and children.

Objective three: A society that exercises respect for human rights. In previous plans, this goal was referred to as the just peace component, which seeks to develop the capacity of women and youth, particularly young women, and strengthening their understanding of human rights principles and international covenants, including UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 2250 to enable them to contribute to achieving a just peace in Palestine. These programs are considered important as the YWCA is part of a global movement of women that aspires to expand its membership to include 100 million women by the year 2035. The current strategic plan will focus on the local dimension of lobbying and advocacy to help implement international agreements and amend laws and procedures in line with the binding agreements of the State of Palestine, in addition to the regional dimension that will focus on working with regional YWCAs on both the regional and international level.

Objective four: Preserving the YWCA's historic legacy and its administrative and financial sustainability. This goal focuses on enhancing financial and administrative sustainability and closer administration and programming by diversifying partnerships with donors and enhancing sources of income (operations, property, investments). This goal also focuses on interventions related to the development of active membership of young women in associations to ensure their representation and participation in decision-making processes. This goal culminates in the development of an administrative, financial and operational structure, which is represented by a series of interventions related to policies, procedures, governance, and financial and administrative planning. It is worth mentioning that there is a need to develop an external and internal communication plan and to activate public relations to be able to contribute to the implementation of the strategic plan.


National Development Agenda

Within the framework of the national development agenda on achieving sustainable development, social justice is at the heart of the national policy agenda. As such, we are committed to working on reducing poverty, providing appropriate, integrated and comprehensive social protection systems for the poor and the marginalized, enhancing access to justice for all while working on promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and securing a better future for Palestinian youth. We are also committed to providing quality and inclusive education as well as comprehensive quality health care services accessible for all. We seek to promote the resilience of all Palestinians through ensuring a secure and safe environment, strengthening the rule of law, providing basic needs, promoting

agriculture and rural communities, ensuring environmental sustainability through the sustainable management of natural resources, and protecting the Palestinian identity and cultural heritage.

Women peacebuilders and adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

As we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of UNSCR 1325, it is critical to recognize the central roles of women, particularly in the local communities, introducing how women under the lead of YWCA's Palestine participated in responding to their community needs under COVID, where this contributed to led a sustainable peace in Palestine.

Palestine is small Arab country located in the Middle East. Palestine is occupied since 1948 by the Israeli occupation. The West bank and Gaza have been living under Israeli military Occupation since 1967; which has been depriving the Palestinian people from having control over their everyday lives and their future. The occupation has well caused the Palestinian economy to suffer, high rates of unemployment, and high poverty. The economic situation has worsened further in 2020 with the break out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The poverty rate which is currently 29.9% continues to rise due to the increase in the unemployment rate as a result of the long lock downs. This also reflected in increasing the level of the domestic violence against women 

Work for Peace and Protection of Japanese Constitution

Sayaka Higuchi

Vice President, YWCA of Japan

Thank you very much for this valuable opportunity to speak at this Peace Forum, with YWCA sisters from around the world working on women's empowerment and peace.

My name is Sayaka Higuchi, Vice President of the YWCA of Japan, and chairperson of the Committee on Peace and Nuclear-Free World.

First of all, on behalf of all the members in the YWCA of Japan, I would like to express our heartfelt congratulations for the 100th anniversary of the YWCA of Korea, and deep respect for your tremendous achievements in changing the lives of women and youths, and advocating for peace in the Korean Peninsula. The passionate voice of the YWCA of Korea for justice and peace has always been an inspiration for us in Japan, and it has been an honor to work together in many joint programs and shared initiatives.

The YWCA of Japan was founded in 1905, and has 24 local associations in different sizes and diverse areas of work.

The work of the YWCA has a strong focus on peace throughout Japan, ever since the end of the Asia Pacific War. The YWCA's role as a peacemaker has always been a central part of our work, as is stated in our theme and vision.

This determination comes from the remorse for the time of Japanese militarist policies in the 20th Century, leading up to and during the Asia Pacific War.

During the time, the YWCA of Japan was not only unable to stop the Japanese military aggression, but was also obliged to participate in the nation-wide policy of militarism and colonialism; we stopped communicating with the World YWCA, abandoning its nature as a part of a global movement, admitted the YWCA of Korea

under colonial rule to transfer into the YWCA of Japan, and founded a new YWCA in Shanghai for Japanese women. Such deeds resulted from our involvement with the Japanese militarism that caused terrible suffering on the women in the colonized countries, which we deeply regret.

We strongly believe that we should never go the same path again, and therefore have strived as a movement working for the realization of peace. We adopted “The Apology for the Asia-Pacific War and the Resolution for Commitment to World Peace” in 2009, to confirm this conviction.

Today, I wish to share the situation in Japan around the Japanese Constitution, and the YWCA's work in Japan to protect its spirit of pacifism and non-militarism.

The Japanese constitution came into effect on 3 May 1947, after Japan lost the World War II in 1945. With the Constitution, the Empire of Japan ended and Japan restarted as a new country. It has a strong message, with 3 principles namely pacifism, popular sovereignty, and fundamental human rights.

The following are some excerpts from the Japanese Constitution.

“We [...]resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution.”

“We, the Japanese people, desire peace for all time and are deeply conscious of the high ideals controlling human relationship, and we have determined to preserve our security and existence, trusting in the justice and faith of the peace-loving peoples of the world.”

(Preamble)

Article 9 of the Constitution states as follows:

“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

The challenge faced now, however, is that the current Japanese administration is striving to change this Constitution. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party states constitutional change as a commitment of the Party since its establishment in 1955, and as the most powerful political party in Japan, it has pushed legislations through Diet that pave the way to constitutional change, despite widespread opposition.

In its “draft constitutional revision” in 2012, the Liberal Democratic Party suggests deleting the preamble pas-

sage on “peace for all time” that I have quoted, as well as significantly amending the Article 9 on the renouncement of war and military forces, among other major amendments.

This trend towards constitutional change has become sharply stronger in the past decade as the Japanese society has gone through a shift to the right wing.

The YWCA in Japan have for a long time engaged in advocacy since the 1950s, voicing opposition to Japan’s return to militarism. The actions include a nationwide 'Conference on Constitution', which was continued annually for 40 years from 1962, and a stage reading performance “Fortress of Peace”, which started in 1962 and was performed in multiple local YWCAs around Japan for many years. Local YWCAs have engaged in a variety of initiatives including study groups, “Constitution Cafe” to discuss and learn about the constitution and peace, advocacy campaigns, creation of information tools for children and students, even making cookies and handicrafts in the shape of 9 to uphold Article 9.

The Committee on Peace and Nuclear-Free World of the YWCA of Japan has also recently created an online infographic tool to encourage young people to vote, so as to promote awareness to their sovereign rights as stated in the constitution.

The recent news of Russian invasion in Ukraine has been received widely with serious concern in the Japanese society, as must be in other countries too. There is a latest worrying phenomenon in Japan in the context of constitutional amendment, where some people claim that the Japanese Constitution must be changed so that Japan will become able to engage in war with other countries, because in their words, “we would be unable to protect ourselves without the military in case we are invaded”. In spite of the fact that it is Japan that did the invasion in the past, and the Constitution article 9 exists so that it will not happen again. Furthermore, there is even a talk that Japan should possess nuclear weapons by what is called “nuclear sharing” with other countries.

The YWCA of Japan, as a movement of women in Japan dedicated to peace, is committed to continue our advocacy work opposing the move towards constitutional change. In doing so, working together with the global YWCA network, especially our sister YWCAs in Asian countries, is vital for us. We ask for continued solidarity in tackling this challenging situation, and once again express respect for all our sisters who are working everyday as peacemakers.

Thank you very much for listening. 

Peace Activities of Women on the Korean Peninsula and Their Prospect

SookJin Lee

Former Y-Academy committee member, YWCA Korea

Arrival of the New Cold War Regime and Women

As if the New Cold War era has arrived, tension and armed conflicts are steadily increasing in different corners of the world to gain hegemony in the international order. The Korean peninsula is also not immune to the New Cold War trend. In South Korea, which has recently joined the ‘NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence’ (NATO CCDCOE), news about the South Korean President’s participation in the NATO Summit are being reported day after day, and the voices of those who believe the R.O.K.-U.S.-Japan military alliance must be strengthened are becoming louder. Such developments are threatening peace on the Korean peninsula as well as in East Asia and will likely lead to a serious crisis.

Who are eager to see the establishment of a New Cold War system? Who are to benefit from it all? What is clear is that tension and armed conflicts cause much more pain to the vulnerable social groups and widen inequality. As we already experienced during the Cold War regime, in high tension situations, people rely more on military means, citizen participation becomes limited, and human security becomes a peripheral matter, which deepens patriarchal gender inequality and results in the regression of democracy.

That said, many experts talk about the ‘uncertainty’ of the future direction of global developments. In short, we are currently at a crossroads where we may enter into the New Cold War regime in earnest or open the door to new future society with the help of the warm breeze called peace. One thing is clear: women’s role has become critical in preventing the Korean peninsula from exacerbating the tension and conflicts between the world powers or, domestically, in putting human security first in our everyday lives.

Woman Who Testified to the Brutality of Division

In the 1960s to the 1980s, when the military authorities/new military authorities took power, anti-communism law became the law with the highest priority in the name of the National Security Act. It was a time when people whose family members were stigmatized as ‘Reds’ felt that they could not even breathe properly due to the

almighty guilt-by-association system. The ‘woman’ who exposed the brutality of the division ideology by confessing about how she could not moan the death of her older brother, who was called a ‘Red’ at a time people were expected to fight communism, was writer Wan-suh Park.

“Yes, my family are reds. One of my uncles was even executed because he was accused of being a red. I also don’t want to live in a country where the leaders escape on their own, abandoning the people under the rule of the North Korean People’s Army, and then returning only to execute those who gave food to the People’s Army. Just kill me, kill me...” (Wan-suh Park, *Was the Mountain Really There*)

Just like how Antigone violated national law by burying the dead body of her brother, Polyneices, who was suspected of treason, Wan-suh Park became the Antigone of the Korean peninsula because she lost her chance to flee with her mother, who wanted to wait for her ‘red’ son.

“I could see the whole neighborhood as I was standing on a hill. I could also immediately find the prison where the revolutionists had been freed and my uncle executed. I couldn’t sense the presence of anyone anywhere. I could feel the goose bumps on my back as if a cold, blue knife was lightly scraping my spine. It was the fear of being left alone in the world, and it was a new kind of feeling I had never felt before. There was no one, not on the main street where you could see as far as the Independence Gate, not on the alleys, not in the houses. How is it possible that there is not one house with smoke coming out from the chimney? We were the only ones left in the big city. How is it possible that I am the only one who is seeing this vast emptiness and that we are the only ones who are looking at the imminent unknown? That is when my thoughts suddenly changed just like a fugitive who is chased to a dead end suddenly turns around. Maybe the fact that I was the only one who saw this meant something, I thought. Think of all the nasty coincidences that happened and resulted in us being the only ones left here. Yes, if I am the only witness, then I must have a responsibility to testify to what I saw. That is the due revenge that must be sought against such nasty coincidences. I must testify not only to this vast emptiness, but to all the hours I was treated as a vermin. Only then can I escape from this life of a vermin. It was a hunch that I would someday write about this. That hunch drove away my fear...” (Wan-suh Park, *Who Ate All the Shinga*)

Wan-suh Park and other women of the Korean peninsula who experienced the war have testified to the “appalling world where more importance was placed on ideology than on people” for around 70 years since the ceasefire of the Korean War.

YWCA Korea, the Hub of the Peace Movement

It was in the 1980s when the military force of the New Military Authorities and the counterviolence of activists

were rampant that the history of the YWCA Korea's peace movement began. Starting with the national midday prayer meeting 'Use Us As Workers for Love and Peace' in 1982, the YWCA Korea has focused on education to foster future peacekeepers under the YWCA reconstruction plan in the North Korean areas before division (1986), whose activities include the Knowing North Korea Right Movement, education and vocational training of North Korean defectors, publication of teaching materials on peaceful unification for infants and children, peace education at daycare centers across the country, peace camps for teenagers, etc. What is more, the YWCA Korea's Helping North Korean Children Movement (which started in 1996) has donated powdered formula and cotton masks to North Korean children through the 'Donate One Tenth of Your Food Expense to North Korean Children' campaign, with the belief that even North Korean children are our children. Although the YWCA Korea has faced ups and downs in these activities due to the sanctions imposed on North Korea, it is still expanding its support and cooperation for the vulnerable social groups, children, and women of North Korea and maintaining its direction of striving to expand mutual understanding and emotional unification through continuous interaction.

According to John Lederach, "successful peacebuilding can be difficult when relying only on national-level diplomacy that tries to address the issues of a conflict if the groups in conflict are located close to each other, the members of the conflict share a common history, and the groups have serious stereotypes of the other due to their strikingly different perception of each other resulting from the prolonged conflict." In short, this means that reconciliation, which recovers and rebuilds the relationship between the members of the two groups, must be at the center of peacebuilding. The YWCA Korea is planning and implementing many programs to recover the relationship of such groups in conflict.¹⁾ In the 'YWCA Women Peace Pilgrimage: from Halla to Baekdu' program, peace pilgrims went up the Baekdudaegan mountain range to determine themselves to heal the pain of division and to pave the path to peace each year from 2017 to 2022. In addition, it has hosted the 'Peace Forum on the Street,' Women Peace Forum, etc., which are programs for deepening the mutual understanding between South Korean citizens and North Korean defectors and fostering peace activists. Through 'WCD (Women Cross DMZ) International Women's Walk for Peace' (2015), the YWCA Korea was able to confirm the potential energy of women's peace movement. Hundreds of members from 52 regions came together to create a patchwork of 1,000 pieces of cloth that symbolize harmony and peace and urged the world to build peace on the Korean peninsula by walking the DMZ while holding hands with other South Korean and foreign women. The 'Korea Peace Now' campaign (2019), which began in 2019 through the cooperation of domestic and foreign women's groups, is creating real results, such as visiting the U.S. Congress and engaging in civic public diplomacy with the U.N., and is upholding women's solidarity for peace on the Korean peninsula and in the world.

To carry out the mission of the 'Peace Campaign to End the Korean War (<https://endthekoreanwar.net>)' (2020)

1) John Paul Lederach, translated by Dong-jin Kim, Building Peace, Humanitas, 2012.

together with 380 domestic and foreign groups, the YWCA Korea has planned and implemented the Peace Challenge, the Peace Monday Street Campaign, and Member Y Education, among others. At the World Council of the World YWCA held in Johannesburg (2019), the YWCA Korea was able to confirm the support and solidarity of the YWCAs of 109 countries through the passing of the resolution that called for the termination of the Korean War, the signing of a peace treaty, and support for North Korean women with overwhelming support.

Also, the YWCA Korea's peace movement has demonstrated exceptional potential in the post-nuclear movement. On the third anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, it adopted post-nuclear as one of its main movements (2014) and has informed people walking on the streets of Myeongdong of the importance of getting rid of nuclear power plants every Tuesday at noon for around five years since 2018. It has also carried out the Post-Nuclear Day of Fire Campaign in front of the YWCA Korea building every fourth Tuesday of each month from 2019 to 2020.

The Future Path of Women's Peace Movement

The Greenham Common base's withdrawal of nuclear weapons in 1991 was the result of women's continuous peace movement carried out since 1981. It started out as a small movement of 38 women, but the second round of protests of 30 thousand women would not have happened and no solidarity would have been formed between European and American women if it wasn't for the first protesters. Of course, there are those who interpret the Greenham Common base's withdrawal of nuclear weapons and closing of its base as the byproducts of the rapid change in international affairs. People who maintain this perspective have deemed that peace in South Korea, i.e., the world's 10th largest economy and defense spender and the world's 6th strongest military power, depends on the world powers or have regarded women's peace movement as wasteful.

However, women's peace movement has the power to overturn militarism. As mentioned above, various circumstances today make us think that maybe we are entering the New Cold War regime in earnest, but the peace movement of South Korean women can turn this direction around. The beginning of the YWCA Korea's peace movement may have started out small with the midday prayer meeting, but the voices of the various women who have come together under the name of peace movement in the last several years can become a great force against totalitarianism.

To become peacekeepers, we must, on the one hand, urge military experts and public officials to adopt policies for building peace on the Korean peninsula. By requesting the disclosure of policy documents and studying those documents together, we must actively engage in policymaking by pressuring policymakers to repeal policies that threaten peace on the Korean peninsula and offering our perspectives on gender justice. On the other hand, we must perform our responsibility as the actors of peace by carrying out the 'YWCA Women Peace Pilgrimage: from Halla to Baekdu,' the 'Peace Forum on the Street,' the post-nuclear movement, etc., as we have done to this day until human security becomes a part of everyday life on the Korean peninsula. 