



Women Mobilizing
to End the War
KOREA PEACE NOW

Why Women Need to Be a Central Part of Creating Peace in Korea

Feminist peace is a fundamentally different approach to peace and security that defines true human security not by stockpiling weapons or issuing threats, but by dismantling structures of oppression and injustice through negotiation and cooperation. Recognizing that war is the ultimate form of human insecurity, feminist peace advocates promote long-term solutions to conflict — such as disarmament, demilitarization, and sustainable development — and support a peace and security agenda that protects all people. One aspect of feminist peace involves women's participation, but equally important are the tools, analysis, and perspectives of the feminist approach.

Thus, for the Korea peace process to be successful, women must have a seat at the table. After all, women have been at the forefront of social movements calling for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

During the Korean War, 21 women from 17 countries visited Korea to document the devastation and call for an immediate end to the war. In 1989, South Korean university student Lim Su-Kyung was the first civilian to cross Korea's Demilitarized Zone, which separates North and South Korea, to challenge Korea's ongoing division and work toward reunification. In the 1990s, women from North and South Korea and Japan met for the first time since the war. During the Sunshine Policy decade (1998-2008), when the two Koreas pursued political, social and economic engagement, hundreds of South Korean women crossed the DMZ to meet and dialogue with North Korean women. In 2015, on the 70th anniversary of Korea's division by Cold War powers, 30 women from around the world — including two Nobel peace laureates and feminist pioneer Gloria Steinem — crossed the DMZ, calling for an end to the Korean War with a peace agreement.

Despite this, there are very few women involved in the official Korea peace process: At the inter-Korean summit on June 15, 2000, there was only one woman out of 24 delegates, and at the inter-Korean summit on September 19, 2018, none of the 51 delegates were women.

From Liberia to Northern Ireland, women have been instrumental in making peace agreements. Research shows that the participation of civil society groups, including women's organizations, makes a peace agreement 36 percent more likely to succeed. And when women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreements are 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years.

Including women's equal participation and meaningful involvement in peace processes is also a commitment of both UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 and the U.S.'s Women, Peace and Security Act of 2017, which recognize the crucial role that women play in conflict prevention, management, and resolution. As of December 2018, 79 countries — including the U.S. and South Korea — have adopted National Action Plans for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

In addition, several countries, including Sweden and Canada, have adopted feminist foreign policies, which aim to protect and advance the rights of women and girls, and enhance their role in foreign policy toward peace, security, and sustainable development.