



# Women, Peace and Security in Africa

June 21 - 23, 2021 Live-Stream

Press Release

*Rabat, June 23, 2021*

## **APSACO 2021: « Women, Peace, Security in Africa »**

The 5th edition of APSACO, one of the flagship conferences of the Policy Center for the New South, organized online on the think tank's [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages, continued June 22, 2021, with a workshop to present the Global Peace Index of the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP, Brussels) and two panels.

### **The Global Peace Index**

**Serge Stroobants**, Director of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East at IEP, presented the 15th edition of the Global Peace Index. This tool is built with 23 indicators to measure conflict, security, and militarization of societies. In 2020, the deterioration was small (0.07%), with 73 countries worsening their situation, compared to 87 that gained peace. Violent demonstrations increased sharply, linked to the pandemic, as did political instability, which rose in 46 countries. The Index identifies no fewer than 5,000 violent incidents worldwide in 2020 related to the Covid-19 crisis, while the long-term impact of the pandemic on violent crime and suicide remains unclear.

Ukraine and Iraq experienced the greatest improvements, while Burkina Faso and Belarus experienced the worst declines. The MENA region saw significant improvement but remains the least peaceful area in the world. North America, on the other hand, saw most decline in 2020, due to violent protests.

### **"Understanding for better action: the different roles of women in violent extremism"**

Women have become a target in the Lake Chad Basin, abducted by Boko Haram for forced marriage or ransom, recalled **Rida Lyammouri**, a Sahel specialist and Senior Fellow at the Policy Center for the New South. However, there is a lack of information on the role of women in conflict in general. Another challenge is that "violent extremist groups are

perceived as protectors, rather than threats, in many parts of the Sahel where the state is absent. This complicates prevention efforts.

"We know that women are involved in terrorism in Nigeria, especially in suicide bombings, which are more deadly when carried out by women than by men," said **Nayanka Paquete Perdigão**, Program Associate at the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). Existing research also shows that not all women involved in radical Islamist groups are radicalized themselves. They encounter Boko Haram for a variety of reasons - including poverty and financial dependence on men.

### **“Strengthening the presence and participation of women in peacekeeping operations”**

During the last panel of the APSACO conference, **Tigist Yeshiwas Engdaw**, UNDP Senior Advisor on Peace and Reconciliation to the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace, made the bitter observation that “the top of the decision-making chain in peace processes is still male-dominated”. However, “the example of Liberia shows that the presence of women can contribute to pacifying a country”.

With 8,000 female peacekeepers, they represent only 5 percent of the total, said **Younes Abouyoub**, Director of the UN Division on Governance and State-Building for the MENA region. A good point for Africa: the continent is ahead of the game, with 65% of civilian and military peacekeepers being women. For **Dominique Trinquand**, former head of the French military mission to the United Nations and NATO, the presence of women is beneficial in curbing the violent instincts of male soldiers, and the subject is “not up for debate: the number of women in the troops must increase”.

**Rama Yade**, Director of Africa Center, Atlantic Council, argued that women can play a key role in protecting civilians, women, and children, who are the primary targets of conflict. **Annette Leijenaar**, Head of Research on Peace Operations and Peacebuilding at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), advocated for the accurate counting of women in peacekeeping operations, and said that at the current rate, it would take 700 years to achieve parity at the managerial level in society.

The conference continues today, May 23, 2021, with the presentation of the Policy Center's Annual Report on Africa's Geopolitics and the “Isis Files”, a report from 15,000 administrative documents left behind by Isis in Iraq.

The webinar is broadcasted live in English and French on the Policy Center for the New South's [YouTube channel](#) and [Facebook page](#), with live tweets on [Twitter](#).

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### **About the Policy Center for the New South**

Launched in 2014 in Rabat with more than 40 experts of both south and north, the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) is a Moroccan think tank aiming to contribute to the improvement of economic and social public policies that challenge Morocco and the rest of Africa as integral parts of the global South.

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