

The Impacts on Women

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Cet article analyse en détail les protocoles, les rapports, les déclarations et autres documents sur les armes au

tries such as the United States and South Africa to prove that this is not the case (Hemenway, Shinoda-

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poing et autres armes légères, qui même en mentionnant les femmes et les filles, n'ont rien à voir avec elles.

In recent international protocols on small arms and light weapons (SALW), signatories typically assert that they are "[a]ppalled by the devastating effects of armed conflicts particularly on women and children" (Nairobi Declaration). Yet beyond statements such as these, no further recognition or assessment is offered of the specific effects on women and girls of the proliferation of SALW during periods of armed conflict; how women and girls are impacted by the continued presence of such weapons in the aftermath of war; or what women and girls are doing to resist persecution at the point of a gun.

In this paper, I shall offer a detailed analysis of why most of the existing Protocols, Declarations, Reports and other such documents on SALW, even when they mention women and girls, are not useful instruments for gender mainstreaming as they stand. I shall focus on women in conflict zones, but I do not mean to imply that women in areas not in a state of war are safe from gun violence, since there is ample evidence from coun-

Tagawa and Miller; Wintermute, Wright and Drake).

Shortcomings in Existing Tools for Policy-Making, Research and Activism

Recently, both SALW and gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention have found a prominent place on the international agenda, and a spate of agreements have been ratified in the decade. It is in assuring women's full-scale involvement in social and political movements, especially that of women living in conflict zones, that such agreements should wield their greatest power. Indeed, this was the most important priority agreed on at the United Nations (UN) Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. Among the Strategic Objectives in the Beijing Platform of Action devised at this meeting were the following:

- To increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation;
- To promote non-violent forms

of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations;

- To promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace;
- To provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.
- To encourage the production and distribution of research about how women and girls experience warfare.¹

Then in May 2000, after a seminar on "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations" which was organized by the Lessons Learned Unit of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and hosted by the Government of Namibia, the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action on "Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective In Multidimensional Peace Support Operations" came into being. This Declaration deals with gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping missions, taking up the challenge set in Beijing. It states that:

[T]he principles of gender equality must permeate the entire [peace] mission, at all levels, thus ensuring the participation of women and men as equal partners and beneficiaries in all aspects of the peace process—from peacekeeping, reconciliation and peace-building, towards a situation of political stability in which women and men play an equal

of Proliferic Small Arms and Light Weapons

part in the political, economic and social development of their country.²

The Windhoek Declaration sets out practical ways in which the United Nations and member states can begin the process of promoting women's central involvement with matters pertaining to national security and the planning and implementation of peacekeeping missions, negotiations, the monitoring and evaluation of programs, and raising public awareness about how gender mainstreaming affects the success of peacekeeping missions. What is not mentioned is the possible effects on women of the proliferation of illicit weapons after war, and no reference is made to how increasing gun violence might mitigate against women's increased participation in peace-building efforts.

In the build-up to the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons held in New York a year later, in July 2001, there was a flurry of meetings, at both government and civil society level, to develop appropriate protocols and plans of action to combat the further proliferation of SALW and the devastating effects of their misuse on post-conflict reconstruction. African nations played a particularly significant role in articulating the problems of proliferation and developing strategies to combat their effects. In March 2000, two months before the Windhoek Declaration, "The Nairobi Declaration on the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa" was ratified. In it, the signatories expressed their "concern that

the easy availability of illicit small arms and light weapons escalates conflicts and undermines political stability," and acknowledged that these weapons "have devastating impacts on human and State security."

However, even though the Declaration promoting women's contribution to peace-building efforts was being drafted in Windhoek at almost the same time as this meeting was held, the Nairobi Declaration mentions women once, and then only alludes to them as passive victims of the effects of SALW. No attention is paid to how women's particular experiences and understanding of the effects of SALW might be mobilized in the struggle against their proliferation and abuse; and while the list of concrete actions that can be taken to combat the circulation of weapons recognizes that firearm violence is

concern that the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons continues to have devastating consequences for stability and development in Africa," the signatories recognize how SALW:

- sustain conflicts, exacerbate violence, contribute to the displacement of innocent populations and threaten international humanitarian law;
- promote a culture of violence and destabilize societies by creating a propitious environment for criminal and contraband activities;
- have adverse effects on security and development, especially on women, refugees and other vulnerable groups, as well as on infrastructure and property;

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worsened by poverty and political strife and thrives in areas where human and political rights are regularly violated, it is oblivious to the nuances of gender.

At the end of November 2000, member states of the Organization of African Unity met to devise the "Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons."³ Expressing their "grave con-

- have devastating consequences on children, a number of whom are victims of armed conflict, while others are forced to become child soldiers.

While this Declaration presents a much more holistic picture of how SALW affect the countries and regions of the continent, there is, once again, only a passing mention of women, who are again buried in a brief reference to "the most vulner-

able groups of society.” There is no careful reflection on how women’s lives, in particular, are impacted by illicit weapons, or any explicit commitment to involving women in the mechanisms that are being devised to combat the problem.

That the Bamako Declaration could be effectively gender-blind in both its analysis and its recommendations is all the more disturbing because, only a month before, in October 2000, the UN adopted Reso-

and promotion of peace and security, and deserve an increased role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution;

- international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts must be reaffirmed and fully implemented;

- mine clearance and mine awareness programs must take into

pants and not only as passive victims of conflict had no effect at all on the discussions and the Report of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York City in July 2001.⁵ Once again, this document fails to implement the mainstreaming of gender that is called for in Resolution 1325 and the Windhoek Declaration. Instead, it dispatches everyone who is not male, young and fit in one brief sentence in which its signatories state themselves to be

[g]ravelly concerned about [the] devastating consequences [of small arms proliferation] on children, many of whom are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become child soldiers, as well as the negative impact on women and the elderly.

What is obvious in a close analysis of the Windhoek and Bamako Declarations, Resolution 1325 and the Report on the small arms conference, is the fact that although weapons proliferation is often culturally sanctioned and upheld by the manipulation of gender ideologies, gender goes entirely unremarked in all documents which were not explicitly conceived to focus on gender mainstreaming. The development of gender-aware analysis and strategies to combat the unprecedented effects of armed conflicts on civilians in the past few decades would appear to be little more, then, than a public relations exercise. In the end, even the newest international protocols on the effects of SALW have failed to commit themselves in any meaningful way to countering the power of existing social divisions to exclude women from positions of authority or to protect children from the effects of weapons of mass destruction.

Gender Identities in Times of Conflict

The world’s women desperately

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lution 1325, which formally recognizes that achieving gender justice is as central to social transformation as any other form of reparations after war. Resolution 1325 came about as a result of years of campaigning by the international peace community, and draws from a body of feminist scholarship which proposes that, when demilitarization begins after violent conflict ends, understanding the effects of gender ideologies is essential to successful peace-building. The following groundbreaking assertions are made:

- civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and internally displaced persons, and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements which impacts significantly on the possibility for durable peace and reconciliation;

- women play an important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, must therefore participate equally and be fully involved in all efforts for the maintenance

account the special needs of women and girls,

- a gender perspective must be mainstreamed into peacekeeping operations, as set out in the Windhoek Declaration;

- the specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs, and human rights of women and children in conflict situations must be prioritized;

- further research must be undertaken to deepen our understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls;

- the development of effective institutional arrangements to guarantee the protection and full participation of women and girls in the peace process so that they can, in future, significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, must be instituted.

While Resolution 1325 was hailed by the international women’s movement as a break-through because it made sure that “Women Count At Last!”⁴ the attention it pays to the special efforts needed to highlight women’s presence as active partici-

need international agreements which are subtle in their analysis of how gender ideologies work to suppress women, have substance and power, and are committed to the real transformation of existing systems of gender inequity. After all, it is a universally observable truth that the oppression of women, both in wartime and after wars have officially ended, takes many forms.

SALW play a particularly egregious role in maintaining male dominance, and it is not an exaggeration to say that almost every form of violence perpetrated against women in conflict zones is facilitated by the widespread presence of firearms, both legal and illicit. This is one reason why we urgently need existing international agreements, with the support of effective international coalitions, to make real progress in curbing small arms and light weapons proliferation.

It is not, however, the only reason. Although, as we have seen, the relationship between the violation of women's rights and the abuse of weapons is alluded to in Declarations, Protocols, Plans of Action and other such attempts to manage SALW, the majority of these documents mention the impact of gun proliferation on women in such a way that they do little to challenge existing gender ideologies about "women as victims" and "men as perpetrators." Such an unreflective endorsement of gender stereotypes offers no space in which to analyze the real complexities of gender roles in wartime, including the fact that women are frequently very active in periods of struggle, as fighters and supporters, and that war sometimes allows women to take on roles that might not be open to them in times of peace. These roles may include women's participation in the proliferation and normalization of guns, either because they carry and use light weapons, or because they participate in liberation struggles by smuggling arms or hiding weapons and/or their bearers.

As feminist analysts maintain, one

of the most egregious effects of gender stereotyping is to make invisible women's complex participation in social events and political processes. While feminist activists in non-conflict situations have made some progress in correcting women's exclusion from influential public arenas by contending gender ideologies that identify women with the domestic arena alone, it has proven much more difficult to extend the same right to women who are caught up in violent conflicts.

In a world where poverty and dispossession are on the rise, armed violence is increasingly the result of contestations of identity. It is essential, then, to understand how gender identities are mobilized in support of the machinery of war. In assessing this issue, feminist theorists have proved that ideas about women and femininity form an essential part of the process of constructing a male identity that is deemed appropriate for a warring society. Cynthia Enloe (1998) notes that the manipulation of notions of gender-appropriate behavior is a central component of ethnic nationalism and holds that the "militarization of women has been crucial for the militarization of gov-

militarized and mobilized in support of the ideology of war (Cock 1991; Goldstein).

While recognizing a pattern in the ways in which societies manipulate gender ideologies, feminist scholars have also worked to nuance our understanding of how women find ways to be active in determining their roles and the identities they take on to fulfill these roles during the build-up to war, in wartime, and afterwards. They have pointed out that even in the duress of conflict, women's identities are strategic and shifting (Cockburn 2001). Arguing against the predominant stereotypes of women as innately peaceful and men as inevitably warlike (Goldstein) feminists have urged that we recognize the complexity of gender ideologies and the multiple roles they play in drawing different social actors into war.

In peacetime, as in wartime, women display a wide variety of responses to organized and/or state-sanctioned forms of violence. There is a long and much-celebrated history of feminist pacifism (Schreiner), and some women, as peace activists, play essential roles in maintaining social connections, build coalitions

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ernments and of international relations. The militarization of women has been necessary for the militarization of men" (Enloe 2000: 3). Yet while significant attention has been paid to the ways in which men and ideas about masculinity are mobilized as part of the war machine—and this attention has not always been critical—it is only in recent years that we have begun to understand that women, and deeply-held beliefs about femininity, are also both

across communities divided by violence, and therefore are ideally positioned to play important roles in rehabilitation, reconciliation, reintegration support and peace-building roles in the aftermath. It is important to remember, however, that their power is somewhat tempered by the fact that their influence will only be felt if adequate provision is made to include women in peace negotiations and reconstruction planning (Anderlini; Farr 2000).

At the same time, however, that women are celebrated as the peace-makers—whether or not they find opportunities to do any meaningful peace-building work—there are also many examples of women embracing “revolution with hope and war with enthusiasm” (Hill 21). Even if they do not enlist as soldiers, women can, and do, participate in conflict through supporting and maintaining guerrilla forces. They supply the essentials of war: information, food,

ers, sisters, wives or daughters. However varied their levels of involvement in the business of war, they remain at the margins of political, economic, and social power, and their voices and experiences tend to disappear when peace processes begin (Goldblatt and Meintjes).

In the end, women’s contributions are overlooked in the country emerging from war; and because of this, their presence is reduced to a single line in the documents which spring

fertility because their sexual reproductive functions are appropriated to fulfill pro-natalist policies. As part of their “war effort,” they are expected to produce more children who will either replace those lost in battle or be able to carry on the nation’s cultural traditions after the war (Mertus; Shikola; Turshen and Twagiramariya).

In an extension of the “mother of the nation” ideology, in times of crisis, women as mothers are elevated as “the bearers of the cultural heritage of a nation or community” (Byrne 16). Paradoxically, this means that their vulnerability as targets of sexualized violence increases, because they can become subject to mass rape and/or forced prostitution “as a calculated part of war strategy” designed to defile the nationhood of an enemy (Mertus 7). Examples of this tendency are almost too numerous to mention, but in recent years, rape as a form of “ethnic cleansing” has been practiced in conflicts as diverse as those in Cambodia, Haiti, Peru, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, and the former Yugoslavia.

The tragic effectiveness of rape as a war strategy is that the official end of the war may not signal the end of women’s suffering. For many women, the horror of their ordeal in wartime does not end with the announcement of peace. They need to live with the agony and indignity of the terrible injuries that are inflicted on their genitals, with unwanted children, and with the pain and disgrace of sexually transmitted diseases. After war, raped or sexually enslaved women continue to suffer because they are perceived as “damaged goods,” living symbols of a nation’s humiliation and bearers of “enemy” children. They may, as a result, find it impossible to experience psychological healing, reintegrate into their community and resume their lives (Farr 2002).

Gender ideologies which promote a sense of male “ownership” of women’s productive and reproductive capacities add another dimension to women’s suffering after war, and this

Women’s human rights rapidly deteriorate in societies which, when conflict ends, take a conservative turn to restore an imagined “Golden Age” in which women knew their place.

clothing, and shelter. They nurse soldiers back to health.

Women, then, are active in times of conflict in a variety of ways, whether in building peace or in supporting violence. Yet their contributions are all too frequently overlooked after conflict has come to an end. As Linda Grant De Pauw writes:

Women have always and everywhere been inextricably involved in war [but] hidden from history.... During wars, women are ubiquitous and highly visible; when wars are over and the songs are sung, women disappear. (1998 xiii)

While many feminists have remarked that women’s peace-building activities receive too little recognition in the period of reconstruction (Anderlini; Enloe 2000), it is also true that women who were active participants in the struggle are not always allowed to participate, as leaders, in the development of transition and reconstruction processes. Ultimately, their support is only recognized in relation to what is expected from their kinship to male soldiers: they are acknowledged, but as moth-

ers, sisters, wives or daughters. However varied their levels of involvement in the business of war, they remain at the margins of political, economic, and social power, and their voices and experiences tend to disappear when peace processes begin (Goldblatt and Meintjes).

Gender-based Violence in War

In reality, of course, it is male power over females that makes women and girls vulnerable in the first place: the most widely recognized problem faced by women in the world today is sexualized violence. Years of research by feminist peace activists has shown that in conflict zones and supposedly peaceful societies alike, this violence takes a variety of forms depending on the state of mobilization of a society and the ease of access to SALW (Cukier; Hemenway *et al.*).

In the build-up to war, women often suffer the loss of their physical well-being and bodily autonomy. They may lose access to adequate healthcare, including safe contraceptive methods, because a greater and greater portion of available money is directed to the machinery of war. But women also lose control of their own

suffering is worsened when firearms are readily available. Especially when they have been defeated, it is often a matter of pride for male survivors to assert their masculinity through demonstrating their control over women. To do this, they appeal to cultural and religious customs that restrict women's mobility and visible participation in social and political structures. Women's human rights rapidly deteriorate in societies which, when conflict ends, take an extremely conservative turn in an effort to restore an imagined "Golden Age" before the war in which men were men and women knew their place. In many such communities, it is considered quite proper for men to kill women who are seen to be disobedient. Vivid recent evidence of this tendency can be seen in women's extreme oppression in Afghanistan under the reign of the Taliban.

The Appropriation of Women's Labour in Periods of Conflict

I want to be careful about focusing exclusively on the tragedy of sexualized violence, however, as it is not the only form of tyranny that is perpetrated against women in conflict zones. As I mention above, I am concerned that discussions about women's particular vulnerability to gender-based violence have made it all too easy to do two things: one, to so powerfully reinforce stereotypes about women as the "weaker sex" that no other identity is possible for women in wartime; and two, to make it all too easy to overlook other ways in which women are made to suffer.

In my view, analysts need to focus on how women are afflicted by war in ways that are invisible because they are easily overlooked as "normal" parts of women's experience. For example, an analysis of issues such as the gendered division of labour will allow us to challenge the ways in which nations and societies construct the militarized identities that make them warlike in the first place.

Feminists have long mobilized to

resist the phenomenon of occupational segregation, by which women's labour is systematically undervalued in the public workplace and entirely overlooked in the domestic sphere. Only a few studies, however, have asked what this devaluation of women's labour means in times of war. Cynthia Enloe, in her book *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (2000), observes that women are essential to the maintenance of the war machine, both in the military sphere where they work as fighters, nurses, cooks, and sex-workers, and in the civilian sphere, where they work as caregivers, providers of nutrition, organizers, managers, and protectors of men and children. Yet almost all this work is unpaid and trivialized as "non-essential," a habit which not only preserves the usual gendered division of labour, but the militarized ideology that only combat and the leading and management of fighters can be considered essential work (Enloe 2000; Goldstein).

This undervaluing of women's labour has particularly serious consequences in the post-war period. After conflict ends, as we saw in Europe after World War Two and more re-

Mehreteab). Unlike men, women in the aftermath, both civilians and ex-combatants, are expected not to anticipate any rewards—such as pensions, promotions, or other financial recognition—for the work they have undertaken (Shikola, 1998). They are expected to return meekly to doing "women's chores," and reconstruction projects are often explicitly designed to achieve this objective (Mehreteab).

It is in their most invisible role of all, that of caregiving, that women bear the heaviest responsibility in wartime and in the aftermath. Because they are traditionally associated with nurturing and care, it is women who have to look after the victims of violence and take care of the disabled. This work is made even more difficult when the social, economic, and cultural infrastructures of care have been destroyed so that there is little or no formal medical or psychological support for home-based caregivers.

Women's Unpaid Labour and Firearm-Related Violence

A final blow to women's sharing in peaceful development after war arises

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cently in Afghanistan, a society may go to great lengths to restore ideologies of appropriate male and female roles. This means that women are supposed to give up their temporary occupation of jobs which returning (male) combatants expect to reoccupy. When economic recovery is slow and few jobs are generated, the loss of their source of income is a particularly pressing concern for women, especially those who head households (Rehn and Sirleaf;

from the proliferation and abuse of small arms and light weapons in the post-conflict era. Again, women are affected in two ways: firstly, by a rise in levels of domestic violence involving small arms, which comes about because the vast majority of gun owners are men and much of the violence that is encouraged in times of war is transferred to the domestic sphere when conflicts formally end (Cukier; De Abreu). Secondly, when small arms and light weapons continue to

circulate freely, causing on-going casualties, it falls to women not only to care for the injured but also to protect the vulnerable. Women bear the heaviest burden of nursing the casualties of gun-related violence back to health or taking care of those who have become permanently disabled. Whether at home or as volunteers or underpaid supporters in civil society structures that focus on the rehabilitation of victims, their labour subsidizes over-stretched or non-existent governmental healthcare and legal systems. Their work is often dangerous if it takes them into courtrooms to give testimony, and in the absence of witness protection programs or an efficient judicial system, women may also have to shield survivors from their attempted killers.

Often, women affected by ongoing gun violence take on the responsibility to organize opposition rallies, marches, petitions and other such forms of public protest against the proliferation of SALW.⁶ In South Africa, for example, where more than 35 people a day die from gunshot wounds. Gun Free South Africa organized a huge rally on Women's Day, 8 March 2000, to say "Women Say No to Gun Violence." They were urging the government to put into practice a new Firearms Control Act, which was passed in October 2000 but is still in the process of implementation.

All of this work is highly stressful, takes time from other productive labour, and yet, like much of women's work, goes unrecognized and unrewarded. It can also make women feel even more vulnerable, since those who work in organizations that oppose gun proliferation and misuse often become the specific targets of anger from men who support gun ownership.

Conclusion

If women are indeed to become a resource in the struggle for the control of weapons after war, their political advancement must be prioritized.

While women may succeed in offering some input into decisions made at the local level over how small arms are managed, there is a danger that their ideas, experiences, and wishes will not move beyond this informal sphere. In cases where women's political goals are perceived as secondary to other development issues and become sidelined, as they have after national liberation struggles in countries like Zimbabwe and, to a lesser extent, Eritrea; and when women are left out of peace negotiations, as they were in Burundi, they have had few opportunities to encourage and support long-term disarmament programs or to help reduce the de-stabilizing effects of small arms in the time of social reconstruction (Anderlini; Turshen and Twagiramariya).

Feminist analysis has shown that gender roles are not fixed in stone but are adapted to meet changing social circumstances and that it is therefore possible to develop a social and political environment that facilitate positive changes in women's status. This insight is enormously important for the success of peace-building processes, since there is growing evidence that there is a higher rate of success in peace processes in which women play a significant part (Anderlini; Cock 2001; Hill).

Both the Windhoek Declaration and Resolution 1325 commit international organizations such as the United Nations, governments and civil society, to finding ways to help women, old and young, participate meaningfully in peacekeeping efforts and post-war reconstruction. Although neither agreement has had the effect of revolutionizing other international protocols on the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and the management of their aftermath, they are a step in the right direction, sending a powerful signal to the world community that women's essential social contributions have been recognized and will be upheld. From this recognition, if we remain active in its promotion, will come an ever greater commitment to ensur-

ing women's full participation in social transformation projects which aim to facilitate the coming into being of a peaceful world.

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¹For the complete and original text of the Beijing Declaration, see <http://www.undp.org/fwcw/plat.htm>.

²See www.reliefweb.int/library/GHARKit/FilesFeb2001/windhoek_declaration.htm

³Available at <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/othr/rd/2000/6691.htm>

⁴This was the title of an information brochure on Resolution 1325 published by the Hague Appeal for Peace, c/o IALANA, Anna Paulownastraat 103, 2518 BC The Hague.

⁵See <http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/CAB/smallarms/>

⁶I am grateful to Adele Kirsten and Margie Keagan of Gun Free South Africa (GFSA) for discussions of these points (Interview, Cape Town, South Africa, 13 May 2001).

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IRENE MARQUES

Leite de mel

To you my dearest love
 YOU *meu grande amor*
 To you-the one I never had
 To you I want to write the most beautiful letter
 And tell you about my deep loneliness
 To you-I want to write words that will carry my body
 In waves that you cannot miss
 Words that will speak the murmurs of my breasts
 How its shape surpasses all the mountains of your dreams
 How its mouth is never hungry because it feeds your children
 How its softness is the only blanket you need to sleep into the
 afterworld
 To you my faraway lover- I call with my *leite de mel*
 Never again will you be hungry or cold or lost
 For you my dearest lover
 This letter
 These words
 This call

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