

Editorial

Our intention in creating this volume was to bring to the fore the voices of women caught up in active conflict or in the aftermath of war. Through highlighting women's unique experiences in war zones around the globe, we wish to achieve two objectives: firstly, to participate in developing a body of literature that challenges essentialist views of women and war; and secondly, to point to the diversity of women's responses and the depth of their analysis of the gendered nature of conflict situations.

This issue benefited from the support, work, and inspiration of the members of the international Women in Conflict Zones Network (WICZNET). Members of this research network are represented on the Guest Editorial Board that produced this volume. We would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Institute (Budapest) and Oxfam (Sri Lanka), for their ongoing support of the WICZNET and for assistance in producing this volume of *CWS/cf*.

Part One of this volume offers alternatives to stereotyped views of women's roles in wartime. In Part Two, we have gathered together material that analyzes, from a gendered perspective, current conflicts. As the effects of war on women's lives do not end when conflicts are officially resolved, Part Three looks at reconstruction after war and the extent to which women's needs and experiences can be mobilized to shape post-war decisions. Because wars are complex and many-faceted, a number of the papers collected here touch on several aspects of their effects on women. The three sections in this volume highlight areas where feminist conversations about war overlap. Readers will doubtlessly discover different connections as they read the papers, and we hope that this experience will open up new areas for consideration in what is still an under-researched field.

Submissions were received from all over the world: from the war zones that have received global attention, such as Northern Ireland and the Former Yugoslavia, and

from places where armed conflict has been neglected by the international media, such as Nagaland in India. Many of the writers talk about how wars silence women, but even so, women's inability to write and to be published remains one of the less visible effects of war. Even in peacetime, women frequently do not have the resources—the time, space, and materials—to write about their suffering and resistance. How much harder, then, is the task of women writing from places which have suffered the attrition of long-term warfare? One of the problems we faced as editors was that in times of conflict, women have scant access to the normal channels through which to respond to calls for papers. It is also difficult for them to send their work by post or internet to those outside zones of warfare. This is why, to offer one example, we have managed to find only two papers on Africa, where at least 15 wars are raging as we write this.

Accessibility to sites that will publish their responses to conflict is only one of the problems confronted by women in war zones. How do women criticize a militant regime when censorship and persecution of dissenters are frequently deployed weapons of war? How do women in conflict zones voice their understanding and negotiation of what Cynthia Cockburn calls “the whole continuum of male violence” in order to effect change? This is where local and international feminist networks become an important site of resistance. These networks are spaces from which coalitions can be forged across difference and sites where women can be resisting agents, working across national borders and in opposition to the artificial boundaries set up by warring factions.

“I can be silent no longer,” writes a Cypriot poet in “Cyprus Roars.” In this collection, we honour her voice and remember those of countless other women who would speak out if only they could. We hope that the strong voices gathered here will reach those women, and will help to sustain all who seek alternative solutions to militarized aggression.

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