

Women Plan Walk Across the DMZ to Support Peace and Korean Unification

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On March 11, women who are planning to cross the DMZ separating the two Koreas held a press conference at the United Nations. They explained that 30 women from around the world would hold a walk for peace in Korea in May 2015.

The group hoped to meet with North Korean women in North Korea and then cross the DMZ into South Korea and meet with South Korean women. They proposed to hold peace symposiums with women in North and South Korea. They hoped to learn from women in both Koreas about their hopes and aspirations for peace and for unification.

This year, 2015, is the 70th anniversary of the division of Korea into two separate entities. Prior to the division of Korea, there was one Korea for over a thousand years. (1) The division of Korea set the stage for the Korean War in 1950-1953. While an armistice in 1953 ended the fighting, it did not end the war. The promised activities to resolve outstanding issues were to take place soon afterwards, but instead the discord has continued and in the absence of a peace treaty, there are continuing hostile encounters between the two Koreas.

In order to work toward unification, a peace framework is needed. Also a peace treaty ending the Korean War would help resolve outstanding problems so as to make peace on the Korean peninsula more of a possibility. The group of international women hope their trip will contribute toward such efforts.

In October 2000, the UN Security Council passed resolution, UNSCR 1325 which recognizes the contribution women can make toward creating peaceful resolutions of conflicts.(2) The significant aspect of this Security Council resolution is that it calls for an important role for women not only in preventing and resolving conflicts, but as part of the decision making processes.

The preamble to the resolution states: "Reaffirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution."

This language is reinforced in the text of the resolution, which urges in Paragraph 1 that member states increase the role of women in all decision making levels of conflict resolution and peace processes. The Resolution:

“1. Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict;”

To support this effort by member states, the UN is urged to act in a complementary way. The Resolution:

“2. Encourages the Secretary-General to implement his strategic plan of action (A/49/587) calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;”

Hence the activity of women is not narrowed down only to acting on issues related to the impact of conflict and war on women, but the role envisioned for women is one of active and empowered participants in all levels of the peace making and conflict resolution processes.

In a recent article Ann Wright, one of the women who will be part of the group of 30 women walking for peace in Korea, wrote that the group had received tentative support for their trip from North Korea and a response from the United Nations Command (UN Command) at the DMZ that if South Korea is agreeable with the proposal, the UN Command will approve it.

While the UN has continually supported UN Resolution 1325 through follow up resolutions or presidential statements from the UN Security Council each year since the passage of UNSCR 1325, there has not been any indication from the UN Secretary General yet of support for the trip.

A question was raised to his spokesperson on March 11 as to whether the announced “plans for a peace march through the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea is something that the Secretary General would support.” The Secretary General’s Spokesperson responded: “Let me take a look at what was announced, and I will get back to you a bit later.” But no response has yet been provided.

Similarly, the day after the group’s press conference at the UN announcing its plans, the question of whether or not South Korea would support the trip was raised to the South Korean Minister of Gender Equality and Family who was visiting the UN at the time. She promised to get back to the journalist raising the question by email, but there has not yet been any response from her.

Though the group had not yet gotten official approval from South Korea, according to Ann Wright, there are some signs that it will get a positive response.

In her article, Ann Wright writes(3):

“You might wonder, what will this peace walk do? For one, it has already conveyed several important messages: 1. The Korean War must end with a peace treaty; 2. Women can and must be involved at all levels of peacemaking; and 3. We must act now to reunite millions of families tragically divided by a man-made division. If the barbed wire fences lining the DMZ were erected by men over 60 years ago, men and women have the power to bring them down.”

Ms. [Ronda Hauben](#) is one of the frequent contributors for *The 4th Media*.

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2015/03/31/women-plan-walk-across-the-dmz-to-support-peace-and-korean-unification/>

Notes

(1)United Nations Command As Camouflage: On the Role of the UN in the Unending Korean War

<http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2013/08/31/united-nations-command-as-camouflage>

2)http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325%20%282000%29

3) Ann Wright, Women Walk for Peace in Korea, March 28, 2015, at PopularResistance.org

<https://www.popularresistance.org/women-walk-for-peace-in-korea>

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