



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ASFARI INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY  
& CITIZENSHIP

معهد الأصفري للمجتمع المدني والمواطنة

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

# FROM BEIJING TO FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: REVISITING THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION AT CSW69

March 13, 2025

American University of Beirut – New York Office

This document is the official outcome of the high-level convening **Beijing+30 and Beyond: From the Beijing Platform for Action to Feminist Foreign Policies**, held on 13 March 2025 during the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) at the AUB Debs Center in New York City. Co-organized by the Permanent Missions of Finland, Mexico, and Chile to the United Nations, along with academic and civil society partners, the event brought together a multigenerational group of stakeholders—including diplomats, feminist scholars, international organizations, and grassroots activists—to reflect on thirty years since the landmark 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women and to assess the emergence and trajectory of Feminist Foreign Policies (FFPs).

This outcome document synthesizes the core themes, policy insights, and strategic directions that emerged from the event's three panels. It highlights intergenerational dialogue on the evolution of global gender equality frameworks, the role of feminist movements in shaping foreign policy, and the urgent need to embed principles of social justice, care, and intersectionality into global governance. The document aims to serve as a resource for policymakers, civil society, and advocates working to translate feminist principles into actionable and accountable policy at the international level, particularly in conflict-affected and post-crisis contexts.

We extend our sincere thanks to all co-organizers, panelists, and participants whose contributions made this event and its outcomes possible.

**Author:** Carla Akil | June 2025

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# INTRODUCTION

[The 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW69\)](#) marked a significant moment in the global feminist movement’s ongoing reflection on the legacy of the [1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#). As the world confronts intersecting crises, from protracted conflicts, multiple genocides, erasure of human life, and authoritarian resurgence to climate collapse and ecocides, economic inequality, and gender backlash, this year’s convening emphasized the urgency of feminist strategies that are intersectional, historically grounded, and politically courageous.

This paper outlines the contributions and insights of an event organized on March 13, 2025, at the [American University of Beirut Debs Center](#) in New York City to trace the journey from the making of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPoA) to the present-day articulation and operationalization of feminist foreign policy (FFP).

This event was hosted by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut (AUB), in collaboration with the Global Engagement Initiative at AUB, the Permanent Missions of Finland, Mexico, and Chile to the United Nations, [Colegio de Mexico](#), [the Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative](#), as well as [The Footage Foundation](#), and in partnership with [UN Women](#) and [NGO CSW](#). It brought together feminist scholars, diplomats, policymakers, and frontline activists from across regions and generations.

The discussion served as a space to bridge pivotal moments in the women’s rights movement. From [the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women](#) to the current feminist foreign policy movement, the panel discussions explored how feminist organizing has shaped global policy and practice. Importantly, it fostered a multigenerational dialogue between those who shaped the Beijing moment in 1995 and today’s feminist leaders grappling with renewed challenges.

The first panel discussion, “The Making of Beijing and the Platform for Action,” featured diplomats, United Nations representatives, as well as feminist leaders who were directly involved in shaping the 1995 agenda. Their reflections highlighted the significance of the multidecade feminist organizing that led to Beijing, the challenges of implementation, and the relevance of the Platform in today’s political climate. The discussion highlighted the role of cross-sectoral alliances across state and autonomous civil society organizations, feminist multilateralism, and movement-building across geopolitical divides.

The second panel discussion, “From the Beijing Platform for Action to Feminist Foreign Policies,” explored how FFP has emerged as both a conceptual framework and a set of institutional practices. Panelists examined FFP’s foundations in feminist research and praxis, its evolution through regional and national policy processes, and the tensions between top-down policy instruments and grassroots feminist realities. Central themes included the importance of compassion, co-creation, and movement accountability in shaping and sustaining feminist foreign policies.

The final panel discussion, “Beijing +30 During Times of Upheaval and Conflict,” addressed the acute threats facing feminist organizers, particularly in contexts of war, repression, and civic space closure. Speakers from the MENA region and Latin America offered accounts of feminist resistance and movement survival. In the discussion, they stressed the need for collective protection, intersectional funding, transnational solidarity, and the centering of care as a political and strategic imperative.

Together, the three panel discussions offered a comprehensive and nuanced picture of where the global feminist movement stands today—and where it must go next.

The conversations affirmed that while the feminist vision articulated in Beijing remains foundational, it must be reactivated through flexible, justice-driven, and context-sensitive strategies.

The emergence of FFP as a response to earlier global commitments demonstrates a continuity of feminist innovation in shaping international relations.

Feminist foreign policy, as discussed across all three panels, is not a fixed doctrine but a dynamic political project grounded in solidarity, resistance, and the transformative power of feminist movements.

## THE MAKING OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The opening panel discussion convened a dialogue that is both cross-generational and cross-regional, revisiting the legacy of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and charting pathways toward effective FFP.

It brought together a distinguished group of state representatives and feminist leaders who have been instrumental in shaping and implementing gender equality policies both nationally and internationally.

The speakers included:

- **H.E. Alicia Buenrostro Massieu**, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations;
- **H.E. Tuula Haatainen**, Member of Parliament, Finland;
- **H.E. Gloria de la Fuente**, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations;
- **Lopa Banerjee**, Director of the Civil Society Division, UN Women;
- **Anita Nayar**, Director of Regions Refocus and feminist activist;
- **Patricia Licuanan**, former Chair of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and former Head of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education; and
- **Professor Charlotte Bunch**, Senior International Fellow at the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, American University of Beirut.

The discussion traced the trajectory of global women's rights advocacy—from the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, through the landmark 1995 Beijing Conference, to the present day, emphasizing the progress achieved and the challenges posed by backlash and the evolving landscape of FFP.

## LEGACY OF BEIJING & MULTILATERAL FEMINIST MOBILIZATION

Panelists emphasized that the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 was the result of a long feminist trajectory. It was built on two decades of UN world conferences that brought feminist activists into contact and struggle across national and regional lines, dating back to the first World Conference on Women in Mexico City (1975) and continuing through the Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) conferences.

Professor Bunch recalled the importance of Nairobi 1985, calling it the “birthplace of global feminism,” where feminist activists began seeing themselves as a unified global movement. These spaces fostered a shared feminist consciousness grounded in both common struggles and political diversity.

*“The path to Beijing started in Mexico City in 1975. It’s been a 50-year journey imagining what an egalitarian, functional, and just world must look like for women and girls.”*

– Alicia Buenrostro

In her view, the Beijing Conference was a turning point in framing women's rights as human rights as well as embedding feminist concerns within international legal and political frameworks.

The historic layering of feminist organizing helped activists push governments to commit to broad principles of gender justice. Rather than starting from scratch, the Beijing Platform succeeded because of prior coalitional work and the intellectual and political labor of feminists who identified patterns of structural exclusion.

*“Nairobi in 1985 was the birthplace of global feminism... when we really realized that we were a global movement... that we were and could be even more a global movement.”*

– Charlotte Bunch

Professor Licuanan noted that the platform was not only comprehensive but also groundbreaking in its ability to shift public discourse and legal frameworks.

The Beijing Platform for Action was framed by panelists as both a landmark and a living document. Its breakthroughs were numerous: it brought violence against women into the domain of public policy, legitimized reproductive rights as human rights, and highlighted women's unpaid labor in the home and informal economy.

Despite advances, panelists recognized implementation gaps. Patricia Licuanan emphasized the gap between the platform's aspirations and its operationalization over the past 30 years. She noted that while the Beijing Platform catalyzed important legal and policy changes, especially related to violence against women, political participation, and recognition of unpaid labor, its transformative potential remains constrained by limited political will, funding, and accountability mechanisms.

However, panelists argued that it remains the most comprehensive global blueprint for women's rights and equality. They reiterated that upholding the Platform and its implementation is important because of what it symbolizes: a broad-based feminist consensus built on hard-fought negotiations.

## FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AS STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

A recurring theme in the discussion was the strategic shift from feminist advocacy to feminist governance.

Multiple speakers highlighted FFP as one of the most tangible outcomes of decades of global feminist mobilization. It represents a deliberate effort to embed feminist values, such as equality, care, intersectionality, and accountability, into the frameworks that govern foreign relations, diplomacy, security, and global cooperation.

Importantly, speakers presented FFP not just as a rhetorical commitment but as a set of structural, legal, as well as procedural transformations that redefine how states engage internationally and domestically.

Representatives from Mexico and Chile shared how their governments have institutionalized FFP across multiple sectors. For instance, Gloria de la Fuente emphasized that Chile's policy is backed by an action plan that cuts across key areas such as human rights, digital innovation, trade, climate change, and consular protection.

She noted the practical outcomes of this agenda, such as support for women abroad who are survivors of violence, and the integration of gender perspectives into peace and security efforts.

This reflects a growing trend where FFP is no longer confined to symbolic gestures or standalone gender units but is integrated across the full scope of foreign policy.

*“Chile’s feminist foreign policy is not just a government initiative—it is a state commitment. We integrate gender across trade, climate, diplomacy, and peace.”*

– Gloria de la Fuente

Mexico's approach further reinforced this vision. Alicia Buenrostro argued that for FFP to be credible and effective, it must begin with internal institutional reforms—those that address the working conditions, caregiving needs, and equity within foreign ministries themselves. She illustrated this by referencing basic yet essential infrastructure, such as breastfeeding rooms and childcare services, which often go ignored in high-level diplomatic settings.

These contributions framed FFP as a model of governance that is inward-looking and outward-facing. On one hand, it demands that states align their internal structures with feminist values, ensuring that gender equity is practiced institutionally and not just promoted abroad.

*“We need institutions and legislation to tackle structural discrimination. It is often hidden—we can’t see it—but equality institutions can help make it visible and accountable.”*

–Tuula Haatainen

On the other hand, it calls for an overhaul of how states engage internationally, shifting foreign policy from being a tool of military dominance or economic extraction to one of care, equity, and cooperation. In this way, FFP becomes not only a matter of representation but of redistribution, recognition, and reparation, challenging the hierarchies that have long defined global power structures.

## RESISTING BACKLASH, SUSTAINING MOVEMENTS

Panelists reflected on the enduring strength of feminist organizing over the past five decades, while warning of intensifying backlash against gender rights, especially in the context of rising authoritarianism, nationalism, and anti-rights movements.

Professor Charlotte Bunch framed this as a predictable consequence of challenging patriarchal power:

*“Backlash always comes when you touch a nerve. And we did touch a nerve in Beijing—it’s a symbol of that challenge.”*

– Charlotte Bunch

The discussion also highlighted how backlash often targets the most marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ communities, migrants, and racialized women, to undermine broader gender equality gains. In this context, sustaining intergenerational and transnational solidarity and coalition-building across regions and movements is crucial.

Feminist civil society organizations have been and remain central to shaping, defending, and advancing women’s rights agendas. Their endurance, despite political volatility and funding constraints, was repeatedly acknowledged.

*“Governments come and go... What’s remained constant are feminist organizations still fighting the good fight, 30 years later.”*

– Patricia Licuanan

Multiple interventions stressed that FFP should prioritize sustainable funding and political support for grassroots feminist and women’s rights organizations. Without adequate resources and political space, FFP frameworks risk being symbolic. FFP should be evaluated not only by representation metrics but also by its material support to movements and its role in redistributing power and resources.

Lopa Banerjee emphasized that in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action marked a seismic shift in how the world recognizes, advocates for, institutionalizes, and legislates gender equality. It demonstrated that advancing feminist agendas depends on ensuring that women’s rights organizations have the space for free and active feminist advocacy and adequate resources to sustain their work.

She stressed that this principle remains fundamental to the FFP agenda and, without this foundational support to feminist movements, FFP efforts will not succeed.

Building on this, it was emphasized that feminist foreign policies must actively dismantle systemic bias and colonial hierarchies to ensure that women and girls in all their diversity can lead and thrive. FFP must place women in decision-making roles, including in multilateral institutions; provide direct support to women- and girl-led organizations working at the community level; and center the realities of women in conflict settings, recognizing that wars and conflicts often exact their gravest toll on women and girls.

As one participant stated, “Feminist foreign policy must recognize that transformative peacebuilding is not possible without women at the table.” The discussion highlighted the urgent need for accountability mechanisms and institutional strengthening to ensure FFP implementation over time. It also called for feminist foreign policy to be informed by gender data and systematically mainstreamed across all areas of foreign policy, including trade, diplomacy, and migration.

“Advancing feminist agendas depends on ensuring that women’s rights organizations have the space for free and active feminist advocacy and adequate resources to sustain their work.” – Lopa Banerjee

Panelists argued that treating these movements as co-creators, not just implementers or advisors, ensures that policies are grounded in the realities of those most affected by gender-based injustices. This approach demands structural inclusion, where feminist actors have meaningful decision-making power in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of international and national policy agendas.

# INTERDEPENDENCE, CARE, AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The panel discussion made clear that FFP must not only address representation and participation but also take aim at the foundational economic systems that produce and sustain inequality. Speakers, especially Anita Nayar, emphasized the urgency of returning to a feminist political economy perspective—one that prioritizes care, redistribution, ecological sustainability, and the recognition of interdependence across communities and ecosystems.

Nayar offered a critique of how feminist language is now being co-opted by international institutions such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank, often to legitimize neoliberal policies that deepen global inequality. She argued that the feminist gains of the 1990s, such as the inclusion of commitments to poverty eradication, reproductive rights, and macroeconomic reform in UN agreements, have largely been diluted or distorted in implementation.

Instead of transformative structural change, these commitments have often been reduced to individualized and market-driven solutions like microcredit or entrepreneurial training programs that fail to address the underlying drivers of economic injustice.

*“We’re not fighting to make gender visible anymore. We’re fighting over what these gendered policies actually mean—and whether they do more harm than good.”*

– Anita Nayar

She noted that the danger lies in the pinkwashing of neoliberal trade and development frameworks: the strategic use of feminist rhetoric to mask policies that prioritize privatization, deregulation, and austerity. In this model, women’s empowerment is reframed as their inclusion in unequal markets rather than as a call for restructuring those markets altogether. This creates the illusion of progress while reinforcing the same power dynamics feminists have long fought to dismantle.

Other panelists echoed the need to reclaim the feminist vision of economic justice rooted in public investment, universal social protections, and the revaluation of unpaid care work. They stressed that development must be centered on well-being and sustainability rather than GDP growth, and that security should be redefined as freedom from violence, precarity, and ecological destruction, not military might or state control.

At its core, this conversation reaffirmed that FFP must engage with the economic logics driving global inequality, and that meaningful transformation requires confronting not just gender imbalances but the systemic patterns of exploitation of people, labor, and the environment that underpin global capitalism.

Feminist policy, the panelists argued, must be about redistribution, reparations, and reimagining what global cooperation could look like when built on care, solidarity, and justice.

# FROM THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION TO FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICIES

The second panel discussion examined the development of FFP as a political, strategic, and operational framework to promote gender equality and justice. Drawing on the foundational principles of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the panel addressed how FFP can serve as a bridge between global commitments and the realities faced by women and marginalized communities.

Panelists included:

- **Dr. Kristen Ali Eglinton**, Founder and Executive Director of the Footage Foundation;
- **Lyric Thompson**, Founder and CEO of the Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative;
- **Nisreen Habib**, MENA feminist activist and Deputy Executive Director of Women Now for Development; and
- **Professor Ana María Tepichin**, Professor-Researcher and Director of the Center for Gender Studies at El Colegio de México.

The panelists affirmed that FFP is not a monolithic framework but a dynamic and evolving field rooted in lived experience, academic rigor, and political courage. Whether through direct service to displaced populations, institutional design, or feminist epistemology, they emphasized that FFP must center compassion, plurality, and structural change.

The discussion highlighted that FFP must move beyond tokenistic inclusion to embed feminist values into the foundations of global diplomacy, peacebuilding, and development.

Several shared challenges in implementing FFP emerged. These include the gap between rhetoric and action, with commitments often lacking political will and context-specific strategies; chronic funding shortfalls, especially in conflict and authoritarian settings; risks of backlash and co-optation without strong accountability; and the ongoing exclusion of feminist actors from key decision-making spaces.

The discussion offered key recommendations to improve FFP. First, FFP should be co-developed with local feminist movements and rooted in lived experiences, particularly in conflict settings. Second, foreign policy must integrate care, compassion, and trauma-informed approaches. Third, multilateral spaces should be reshaped to reflect intersectional and decolonial feminist perspectives.

Finally, research from the Global South should inform FFP agendas and challenge dominant Western frameworks.

## FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AS PRACTICE

This panel segment focused on how FFP can move beyond aspirational commitments and institutional frameworks to become a lived, grounded practice.

Drawing from her applied research and feminist activism, Dr. Eglinton emphasized that FFP must be operationalized through everyday engagements with communities, especially those experiencing crisis and displacement. Rather than centering states or formal institutions, she called for an approach rooted in local knowledge, emotional labor, and relational accountability.

Through her leadership at the Footage Foundation, Dr. Eglinton offered a concrete model of FFP in action—anchored in participatory research, people-centered diplomacy, and compassion as an instrument of healing and transformation.

Dr. Eglinton described how Footage’s participatory, trauma-informed, arts-based methodologies are co-developed with women and marginalized groups in conflict zones, such as Ukraine. These tools enable affected individuals to generate knowledge that reflects their lived experiences and directly informs humanitarian responses.

FFP, she argued, is most effective when it emerges from this kind of collaborative, on-the-ground engagement, where people are not research subjects, but co-creators.

*“Compassion... is often dismissed as idealistic. But compassion is in fact a strategic and necessary force in advancing feminist foreign policy.”*

– Dr. Kristen Eglinton

She also highlighted that diplomacy should not be limited to formal negotiations between states. Instead, she proposed “dialogue diplomacy”—a people-centered practice that fosters understanding across differences and prioritizes reciprocity and relationality.

Finally, Dr. Eglinton positioned compassion as a core element of feminist diplomacy, arguing that empathy and care must shape the way we communicate, design interventions, and imagine global solidarity.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

The discussion also focused on the strategic and policy-oriented dimensions of FFP, examining how it has been taken up, shaped, and contested within state institutions.

Lyric Thompson addressed the complexities of translating feminist principles into governmental frameworks. She emphasized that institutionalizing FFP is not simply about adopting a label—it requires redefining the policymaking process itself.

Central to this approach is ensuring that civil society actors, especially those most affected by global inequalities, are embedded in the design, implementation, and evaluation of foreign policy.

According to Thompson, what defines FFP is not just what policies say, but how they are made—through inclusive, participatory processes involving civil society actors, especially those affected by policy outcomes.

*“There is no gold star definition... but the emphasis is on process, co-creation, and accountability.”*

– Lyric Thompson

She also highlighted the importance of iteration, reflection, and regional adaptation. Many countries have since adopted FFPs, such as Mexico, France, Canada, Germany, and Colombia, with varying priorities, from disarmament to racial justice to movement-building.

These developments show that FFP is expanding beyond a Northern or Western model and is being reshaped by diverse actors across global regions. However, Thompson noted that some countries have also reversed course, such as Sweden, showing that feminist gains remain politically vulnerable.

Still, she argued that the overall trend remains forward-looking, especially due to the activism of global feminist networks that are decolonizing the language and ownership of FFP.

## CENTERING CONFLICT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

The event brought attention to the limitations of FFP when applied in contexts of protracted conflict and displacement. Nisrin Habib, representing Women Now for Development, grounded the discussion in the experience of Syrian women who have endured over a decade of war, authoritarianism, and political exclusion. Her intervention served as a reality check for policymakers and advocates working on FFP from global or institutional perspectives.

She questioned the assumptions embedded in FFP frameworks that are crafted without substantive consultation with those on the ground. She stressed that in countries like Syria, the conversation about FFP cannot be detached from questions of militarization, repression, and survival.

She also argued that while FFP is increasingly adopted as a normative framework by some governments, it often fails to account for the complexity and violence of life in conflict zones. She noted that externally designed FFPs frequently replicate top-down, colonial, or technocratic approaches that ignore local political cultures and the agency of women navigating conflict. This disconnect, she warned, results in policies that may be feminist in name but are ineffective or even harmful in practice.

*“We are looking for feminist foreign policy that we participate in, not just receive.”*

– Nisrin Habib

Moreover, she pushed back against the idea of including women in foreign policy merely through consultations or thematic programming. Instead, she called for genuine political participation, where feminist actors are engaged as stakeholders in shaping peace negotiations, governance structures, and transitional processes.

She described the current situation in Syria as one of severe exclusion: military commanders, not civilians or civil society representatives, are determining the future of the country. Feminist actors—those who have remained embedded in communities, organized under siege, and built alternatives—are systematically left out of decision-making.

For FFP to be relevant in such contexts, she insisted, it must create space for women not only to be heard, but to hold political power and shape national futures.

# CONCEPTUAL AND EPISTEMIC SHIFTS

Professor Ana María Tepichin, a feminist scholar and director at ColMex in Mexico, framed her intervention as a reflection on the evolving epistemological foundations of feminist research and its intersection with policy over the past three decades. Speaking from an academic perspective rooted in Latin American gender studies, she analyzed how feminist theory and knowledge production have transformed significantly since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

These shifts, she argued, have not only influenced academic discourse but also shaped how states, multilateral institutions, and advocacy networks conceptualize and implement FFP.

Tepichin's remarks emphasized that the strength of feminist policy lies in its intellectual evolution, but that this same complexity can become a barrier when faced with rigid institutional cultures and conservative backlash.

*“Intersectionality and interculturality have enabled more complex understandings of inequality—moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to feminist policy.”*

– Dr. Ana María Tepichin

She identified four major conceptual transformations. The first is the shift away from portraying women solely as victims of structural violence toward recognizing them as active political agents capable of social transformation. This reframing supports policy approaches that focus on empowerment and leadership, rather than protection or charity.

Second, she highlighted the centrality of intersectionality and interculturality, noting how feminist research increasingly accounts for the interconnected systems of power that shape experiences of gender inequality, such as class, ethnicity, religion, and migration status.

Third, Tepichin discussed the inclusion of LGBTQI+ identities in gender policy discourse, emphasizing how this has expanded the scope of FFP and challenged the binary understanding of gender that had dominated earlier frameworks. Finally, she underscored the importance of deconstructing the rigid separation between sex and gender, which has implications for legal recognition, healthcare, and bodily autonomy.

These theoretical advancements, she argued, enrich FFP but also require careful navigation to avoid dilution or backlash within conservative policymaking environments.

Tepichin concluded by identifying three emerging research and advocacy priorities for FFP:

1. The recognition and redistribution of care work, especially in the context of economic justice;
2. addressing digital exclusion and advancing gendered understandings of technology and surveillance; and
3. The decolonization of global governance, which requires rethinking the role of the Global South in shaping international norms and institutions.

# BEIJING +30 DURING TIMES OF UPHEAVAL AND CONFLICT

The third panel discussion focused on strategies of resistance and feminist organizing in the context of escalating global crises.

Bringing together experienced feminist activists and leaders, the session explored how movements are confronting authoritarianism, defending human rights, and sustaining collective resilience amid war, displacement, economic collapse, and political repression.

Panelists included:

- **Lydia Alpízar**, a Costa Rican feminist and movement strategist;
- **Fahima Hashim**, a Sudanese peace advocate and human rights defender, and
- **Zeina Abdel Khalik**, a feminist activist and the Executive Director of the Doria Feminist Fund.

Their interventions highlighted the importance of transnational solidarity, flexible funding, and feminist care ethics in sustaining grassroots mobilization during protracted crises.

## ESCALATING VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMINIST ACTIVISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During the panel, speakers underscored the severity and scale of violence targeting feminist activists and women human rights defenders (WHRDs), particularly in conflict zones and authoritarian contexts.

Lydia Alpízar described the systematic nature of these attacks, emphasizing that they are not isolated incidents but part of a broader strategy to suppress feminist organizing and dismantle grassroots power.

*“We’re seeing activists being criminalized, defamed, even killed. And still, we continue. But the cost is too high, and the world cannot keep looking away.”*

– Lydia Alpízar

In Latin America, her organization has documented over 35,000 cases of violence against WHRDs since 2012, including 200 killings and 228 attempted killings. These attacks span a wide spectrum—from online slander, stigmatization, and surveillance to criminalization, imprisonment, forced disappearances, and targeted assassinations.

Alpízar highlighted how the visibility and leadership of feminist actors in broader justice movements—including land rights, climate justice, and anti-extractivism—have made them high-risk targets for state and non-state actors. This intersectional positioning often places activists at the center of multiple fronts of violence, especially when they are confronting powerful actors such as corporations, military forces, or political elites.

Fahima Hashim shared the dire situation in Sudan, where civil war, state collapse, and authoritarian backlash have intensified the risks facing feminist activists. She detailed how women have nevertheless remained on the frontlines—organizing evacuations, sustaining community life, and continuing political work under extremely dangerous conditions.

Despite the closure of civil society spaces and the forced dismantling of her organization after 17 years of work, Hashim emphasized that Sudanese feminists have adapted their strategies, strengthened international alliances, and begun incorporating feminist protection frameworks to support their resilience.

Both speakers made clear that these forms of violence are intentional efforts to demobilize movements by instilling fear, isolating activists, and undermining organizational infrastructure. As such, FFP must not only recognize this reality but also actively respond to it.

Key policy recommendations include:

- Establishing and funding safe houses and healing centers for activists at risk
- Developing cross-border emergency relocation and protection protocols
- Ensuring access to legal defense and psychosocial support
- Advocating for asylum and migration frameworks that specifically address the needs of WHRDs

Such measures are not auxiliary but fundamental to safeguarding the political viability and sustainability of feminist movements worldwide.

## CARE AND PROTECTION AS POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC TOOLS

Panelists highlighted the critical need to reframe care as a foundational political strategy for feminist movements, not merely a personal or emotional practice.

Lydia Alpízar and Fahima Hashim argued that care must be understood as a collective, strategic response to the intensifying risks faced by activists and communities, particularly in contexts of protracted crisis, repression, and displacement.

Moving beyond the individualized notion of self-care, they called for a structural and movement-wide approach to care that centers healing, safety, and sustainability.

In this context, care includes a range of practices: trauma-informed healing, psychosocial support, rest and recovery, emergency protection protocols, and the creation of safe spaces where activists can regroup and continue organizing.

Alpízar insisted that without embedding care and protection into feminist practice, movements risk burnout, demobilization, and fragmentation—outcomes that serve the interests of oppressive systems. She emphasized that the ability to care for one another under pressure is not a sign of weakness but a demonstration of collective power and resistance.

Fahima Hashim further illustrated how transnational feminist solidarity has influenced care-based approaches in Sudan. After engaging with feminist movements from Mexico and Central America, her organization adopted a feminist protection framework that redefined their political work during and after the outbreak of war.

This framework views care as essential to preserving the dignity and agency of women in crisis, not through retreat, but through resilience, healing, and adaptation. As a result, Sudanese activists have begun translating these tools into Arabic to make them more accessible and locally embedded.

*“After learning from feminists in Latin America, we started shifting our strategies. Care became not what we do after the struggle—but how we struggle.”*

– Fahima Hashem

Both speakers insisted that FFP must treat care as central, not supplementary, to justice, human rights, and political organizing.

Policy responses should include:

- Long-term funding for infrastructures of care, such as healing centers and feminist clinics
- Protection measures that are trauma-informed and movement-embedded
- Resources for community-based mental health support, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts
- Policies that reduce the burden of care on individual activists and redistribute it across institutions and support systems

This shift requires donors, governments, and international actors to view care not as ancillary but as a core pillar of effective feminist policy.

## FEMINIST RESILIENCE IN CONTEXTS OF WAR AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Panelists offered grounded insights into how feminist movements persist and adapt under conditions of war, authoritarianism, and structural collapse. Fahima Hashim’s reflection on the Sudanese context provided a compelling case of how feminist resilience is not abstract—it is embodied daily through acts of survival, care, and resistance.

As the state disintegrated and conflict intensified, it was women who assumed leadership in navigating the crisis: organizing evacuations, protecting families, managing displacement, and sustaining economic life through informal networks.

Hashim emphasized that this resilience is neither new nor accidental. It draws on a long-standing feminist history in Sudan, shaped by decades of organizing under oppressive regimes. She described how, even when civil society spaces were forcibly closed, women found alternative ways to mobilize—often quietly, persistently, and outside of formal structures.

After the 2019 revolution, thousands of women publicly identified as feminists, demonstrating a generational shift and a widening of feminist discourse and practice across the country. New alliances were built with sex workers, LGBTQ+ communities, and young activists, expanding the movement's reach and inclusivity.

However, panelists warned against romanticizing resilience. Feminist endurance in the face of violence and scarcity should not be taken for granted, especially when it substitutes for international inaction or inadequate support. Instead, resilience must be matched with political recognition and material investment.

*“We must not expect resilience without support. Feminist foreign policy must fund and recognize the invisible labor of women in war.”*

– Fahima Hashem

Feminist foreign policy should:

- Provide core, long-term support to grassroots feminist initiatives, especially those working outside traditional NGO frameworks
- Recognize and validate informal organizing and community-led responses as legitimate political labor
- Facilitate the translation and localization of feminist tools, protection protocols, and healing practices
- Center the needs of marginalized women, including refugees, displaced persons, and those in rural or underserved areas

In this way, FFP can move beyond rhetorical support and contribute meaningfully to the sustainability and safety of feminist actors working under extreme threat.

## CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN MENA

Zeina Abdel Khalik delivered a strong critique of the structural underfunding of feminist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), one of the most politically and economically volatile regions globally. Despite facing intersecting crises—armed conflict, mass displacement, economic collapse, authoritarian resurgence, and shrinking civic space—MENA receives just 1% of global Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocated to women's rights organizations. Abdel Khalik emphasized that this funding gap is not just a resource issue—it is a political failure that directly undermines the goals of FFP and global gender equality agendas.

She noted that feminist organizations in MENA continue to demonstrate agility and innovation, often filling critical service gaps left by the state during emergencies. These organizations provide humanitarian relief, advocate for legal and policy reform, offer protection and services to marginalized groups, and sustain long-term movement building. Yet their capacity to do so is constantly constrained by donor practices that prioritize short-term, project-based funding over long-term, core support.

*“Feminist foreign policy cannot exist without funding feminist movements. If governments are serious, they must invest—consistently and meaningfully.”*

– Zeina Abdel Khalik

She pointed to the contradiction between governments that adopt feminist foreign policies in principle, while simultaneously cutting or restricting funding to the very movements they claim to support. This hypocrisy, she argued, weakens feminist infrastructure and leaves movements more vulnerable to repression and burnout. She called for the creation of funding mechanisms that are:

- **Flexible:** allowing organizations to respond quickly to emergencies without bureaucratic delays
- **Sustained:** providing multi-year support to enable strategic planning and movement resilience
- **Accessible:** ensuring that grassroots and informal groups—not just large NGOs—can receive direct funding
- **Responsive to context:** tailored to the risks and realities of organizing in high-threat and fragile environments

She also stressed the importance of resourcing feminist work in countries like Lebanon and Tunisia, where hard-won rights gains are under threat, and movements continue to push for intersectional and inclusive agendas despite political backlash.

## THE POWER OF TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST SOLIDARITY

The panelists emphasized that transnational feminist solidarity is not merely aspirational—it is a vital strategy for survival, resilience, and transformative change, particularly in times of crisis. Lydia Alpízar underscored how today’s feminist movements operate across a broad spectrum of intersecting issues, including climate justice, anti-extractivism, LGBTQ+ rights, and Indigenous sovereignty.

This interconnectedness, she argued, strengthens movements by enabling shared analysis, coordinated strategies, and joint responses to systemic oppression. It also allows activists to confront common enemies—corporate power, militarism, and authoritarianism—through a unified and multi-sited resistance.

Fahima Hashim offered a concrete example of this solidarity in practice. Through her engagement with feminist networks in Latin America, particularly in Central America and Mexico, she encountered feminist protection frameworks grounded in care and healing. These exchanges significantly influenced her work in Sudan, leading her to adopt trauma-informed, collective approaches to activist safety and resilience.

By translating these tools into Arabic and contextualizing them for Sudan’s realities, she and her peers are building a locally relevant infrastructure of care—one that would not have emerged without transnational learning.

*“Feminist movements are no longer isolated. We are present in every struggle—climate, land, gender, race—and that interconnectedness is our strength.”*

– Lydia Alpízar

The panel made it clear that transnational solidarity fosters more than emotional or moral support; it creates strategic alliances that can respond to repression, close protection gaps, and reimagine feminist futures across borders. In this context, FFP has a key role to play.

Governments and international donors committed to feminist principles must:

- **Invest in transnational feminist organizing**, including convenings, shared trainings, and interregional exchanges
- **Support cross-border protection mechanisms**, such as emergency relocation protocols, safe networks, and legal defense funds for WHRDs
- **Facilitate political learning across contexts**, ensuring that movements in the Global South are leading and shaping global feminist strategies
- **Respect and resource movement-driven diplomacy**, recognizing that feminist actors already practice international relations from the ground up

These investments are essential to sustaining the global feminist ecosystem and ensuring that feminist struggles remain connected, informed, and equipped to face escalating threats.

## DOCUMENTATION, MEMORY, AND NARRATIVE AS RESISTANCE

The panel emphasized that storytelling, documentation, and memory are not passive acts—they are forms of feminist resistance, especially in contexts of conflict, authoritarianism, and displacement.

Fahima Hashim spoke to the urgency of recording feminist histories in Sudan, where war and state violence threaten to erase decades of activism, organizing, and community-building. In such environments, formal archives and historical recognition are often denied to women, and the dominant narrative is shaped by patriarchal, state-centric accounts that render feminist contributions invisible.

She highlighted the importance of diverse methods of documentation: oral histories, community radio, testimonies, personal narratives, and creative expressions such as poetry or performance. These approaches help preserve lived experiences, build intergenerational continuity, and assert political agency.

She recalled listening to a young Sudanese woman introduce herself as an LGBTQ activist on a radio show—an event that, just a few years ago, would have been unimaginable. Such moments, she argued, are critical to capturing and affirming shifts in public discourse, movement growth, and feminist visibility.

*“Narrative is not a luxury. In conflict zones, it is our way of holding onto truth, history, and the memory of what we’ve built.”*

– Fahima Hashem

The panel made clear that documentation is not only about preserving the past—it is about shaping the future. When movements record their struggles, strategies, and dreams, they create a foundation for others to learn, organize, and continue the work.

In conflict zones, where oral transmission may be disrupted by displacement or violence, written and recorded documentation becomes especially important to sustain memory and political knowledge.

FFP must recognize the political value of documentation and invest in feminist knowledge production as a pillar of movement sustainability. This includes:

- Funding feminist-led archiving projects, oral history initiatives, and digital storytelling platforms
- Supporting intergenerational knowledge exchanges and mentorship initiatives
- Ensuring that feminist voices—especially those from the Global South—are documented, translated, and accessible
- Protecting archives and documentation from digital censorship, state surveillance, or destruction during conflict

Governments and donors can help counter erasure and strengthen the historical foundations of feminist resistance by valuing and resourcing feminist narratives.

# LOOKING FORWARD: FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY AT A CROSSROADS

As the global feminist movement marks 30 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) highlighted the urgency of translating past commitments into present-day strategies for change. The discussions across all panels revealed that feminist foreign policy (FFP) is at a critical juncture: it holds immense potential to reshape global governance, but only if it continues to evolve in direct response to grassroots realities, especially in contexts of conflict, repression, and inequality.

Looking forward, the advancement of FFP will depend on institutionalizing practices that are rooted in feminist ethics—care, accountability, plurality, and justice. This ultimately means strengthening multilateral cooperation that centers historically marginalized voices; ensuring that funding is flexible, long-term, and accessible to grassroots feminist actors; and embedding feminist knowledge production into diplomatic, development, and peacebuilding agendas. It also means treating protection and care not as auxiliary concerns, but as central components of a sustainable and legitimate foreign policy approach.

The path ahead requires sustained political will, especially from governments that have adopted FFP in principle but have yet to fully operationalize its core values. Civil society must remain a central actor, not as a stakeholder to be consulted but as a co-architect of policy. FFP cannot succeed if it is disconnected from movements, depoliticized by technocratic frameworks, or diluted by institutional inertia.

Beijing+30 offers a moment not just for reflection, but for recommitment. As multiple crises reshape the international landscape—from armed conflict and climate emergencies to digital surveillance and democratic erosion—FFP must be reimagined as a living, adaptive practice. This includes responding to backlashes with political clarity, defending hard-won rights, and building infrastructures of care, solidarity, and resistance that extend across borders.

Moving forward, key priorities include:

- Deepening partnerships with feminist movements in the Global South.
- Embedding feminist principles in peace processes, climate negotiations, and humanitarian response.
- Developing robust accountability frameworks for states that adopt FFP.
- Investing in transnational feminist infrastructures for protection, knowledge-sharing, and collective action.

The discussion demonstrated that FFP is not a finished product. It is an ongoing project shaped by struggle, dialogue, and the persistent labor of activists and policymakers across generations. Its future depends on our willingness to confront complexity, embrace collaboration, and push the boundaries of what diplomacy and justice can look like.

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