



# CONVERSATIONS ON CANADA'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

# 2020

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

On October 30, 2020, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) launched a dialogue process to feed into the development of a White Paper on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy. A working group of organizations<sup>1</sup> has come together to gather inputs from activists, practitioners, and scholars who are actively engaged in thinking about Canadian foreign policy from feminist perspectives. We are grateful for GAC's financial support to assist in the organization of many of these activities.

To encourage reflection and discussion the working group is:

- organizing three virtual, invitation-only roundtable discussions on economic justice and sustainability, peace and security, and human rights;
- hosting two public webinars on [November 18](#);
- organizing a virtual roundtable with feminist activists from outside Canada;
- curating a public [webpage](#) where organizations and individuals can share their submissions after officially submitting them to GAC; and
- preparing a 'what we heard' document to share with GAC, webinar participants, and other stakeholders.

The goal of these discussions is to build on recent efforts around feminist foreign policy globally and domestically and to contribute to the articulation of a Canadian feminist foreign policy. More specifically, conversations on Canada's feminist foreign policy will aim to:

---

<sup>1</sup> Members of the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group are: Karyn Keenan, Above Ground; Sarah Hedges-Chou, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights; Jackie Hansen, Amnesty International Canada; Beth Woroniuk, Equality Fund; Odette McCarthy, Equitas; Rita Morbia, Inter Pares; Nadia Abu-Zahra, Joint Chair in Women's Studies, Carleton University and University of Ottawa; Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada; Diana Sarosi and Siham Rayale, Oxfam Canada; Alison Pytlak, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; and Laura Macdonald, Department of Political Science, Carleton University.

- reflect on and bring forward Canada's progress on developing feminist policies, strategies, and programs;
- gather knowledge and experiences from activists, researchers, practitioners, and academics on what should be included in Canada's feminist foreign policy and why;
- discuss key feminist principles and priorities for consideration in the foreign policy framework; and
- define concrete steps that the government can take to implement a feminist foreign policy.

All of the virtual conversations will be guided by these questions:

1. What are the principles that a feminist approach to foreign policy should/must include?
2. How do you think the Government of Canada's recent efforts towards foreign policy are aligned with feminist foreign policy principles?
3. What are the most important accountability mechanisms that the white paper should include (reporting, indicators, budget allocations, public dialogues, transparency on guidance, etc.)?
4. What are three key actions the Government of Canada can take in the next two years to implement a feminist foreign policy?

GAC's *Scene Setter for Feminist Foreign Policy Dialogue* provides a framework for its engagement on this issue. The document highlights progress made thus far and outlines key areas to be considered including: enhanced diplomatic engagement; women, peace and security (WPS); responding to evolving vulnerabilities; and inclusive digital transformation. The *Scene Setter* also proposes key questions for moving the dialogue further towards more effective policy design and implementation.

Along with GAC's *Scene Setter*, and in order to prepare for your participation in these conversations around the White Paper on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy, the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group has prepared this short discussion note covering:

- Canada's stated progress towards feminist policy;
- the need for a feminist foreign policy
- the proposed principles of a feminist foreign policy; and
- the feminist foreign policy roundtable discussion themes.

**This document is provided for discussion. The positions and conclusions do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of all the members of the Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group.**

## Canada's progress towards feminist foreign policy

In the past four years, the Government of Canada has stated that several recent initiatives comprise its feminist foreign policy. The initiatives include the [Feminist International Assistance Policy \(FIAP\)](#), introduced in 2017 “to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world... [by] promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls.” The FIAP set ambitious targets for aid spending, with 80% of all bilateral aid integrating gender equality goals and 15% of all aid going towards programs that have gender equality as their principal focus. Along with the FIAP, Canada's second [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy](#) were also introduced in 2017. The government made gender equality [a centerpiece of its 2018 G7 presidency](#), included gender equality provisions in several [recently negotiated free trade agreements](#), and appointed Canada's [first-ever Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security](#).

The federal government made numerous feminist investments in its international assistance program, including C\$150 million over three years in dedicated support for women's organizations and networks in developing countries with the [Women's Voice and Leadership Program](#), and supporting the [Equality Fund](#) through an initial contribution of C\$300 million. At the 2019 Women Deliver conference in Vancouver, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to investing C\$700 million annually over ten years for global initiatives promoting [sexual and reproductive health and rights \(SRHR\)](#), as part of a larger C\$1.4 billion commitment globally to women and girls' health.

As well, as part of its “inclusive approach to trade policy,” the federal government adopted several measures to promote gender equality through trade policy. These include steps to prevent gender discrimination in employment through labour cooperation agreements and labour provisions in trade agreements, and, more recently, the inclusion of stand-alone gender chapters in free trade agreements (FTAs).

While these initiatives demonstrate Canada's commitment to developing a feminist foreign policy, further discussions are needed on what is missing, what policies require further input, and where more attention is needed to address the pressing challenges facing people in Canada and the world today.

## The need for feminist foreign policy

The world needs feminist leadership now more than ever. Social and economic inequality has reached extreme levels and is ripping apart societies, undermining human rights and democracy, destroying the planet, and is at the root of the highest levels of displacement since WW2. More than a billion people worldwide live in extreme poverty, while the world's 2,153 billionaires own more wealth than 60% of the global population combined.<sup>2</sup> The space for civil society to peacefully advocate for rights is ever-shrinking. Global military expenditures continue to skyrocket.<sup>3</sup> The world also faces a climate crisis, protracted conflicts, and humanitarian emergencies that threaten to displace millions of individuals and plunge them into poverty and insecurity which have not been adequately addressed through foreign policy efforts thus far.

The COVID-19 pandemic is compounding existing inequalities, disproportionately impacting women and gender diverse people. This experience is compounded for people with multiple and intersecting identities including gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, disability, age, family status, employment status, and immigration status, while also severely restricting our ability to collectively organize. Global gains in the areas of health, education, food security, and more, are all at risk of deterioration. The UN estimates countries in the Global South will need \$500 billion in aid to face the health, social and economic impacts of the coronavirus.<sup>4</sup> Significant new international assistance spending is needed from OECD countries like Canada. This aid must focus not only on saving lives but also on addressing the deep-seated inequalities and the roots of conflicts that make people—particularly women and gender-diverse people—in low-income countries vulnerable in the first place.

At the same time, countries in North America, Europe, and around the world are witnessing a rise in conservatism and misogyny manifested through populist attacks on the rights of women, [im] migrants, and LGBTQI2S+ individuals. In the United States, just two days after the historic Women's March on Washington in 2017, President Donald Trump reinstated an expanded version of the Obama-repealed Mexico City Policy (also known as the "[Global Gag Rule](#)"), banning funding for organizations that perform abortion services, make referrals, or take part in advocacy related to abortion rights. In Poland, state-sanctioned and media-fueled homophobia is pushing LGBTQI2S+ communities further into the margins of society.<sup>5</sup> In the Middle East and North Africa region, the global pandemic has exposed the devastating impact of discriminatory policies against migrant labour, where sponsorship programs restrict workers from leaving or changing employers without their employer's consent, placing them at risk of further exploitation.<sup>6</sup> These are just a few examples, and illustrate the backlash against feminist progress and movements.

As we deal with the impacts of extreme inequality, climate catastrophe, ongoing military conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the erosion of hard-won rights, "feminist foreign policy is one tool

---

2 Oxfam International, "[Time to care: Unpaid care work and the global inequality crisis](#)," 2020.

3 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "[Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade](#)", April, 2020.

4 Nobel Women's Initiative, Amnesty International, Inter Pares, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Equality Fund, and Oxfam Canada, "[A feminist action agenda: For Canada's global response to COVID-19](#)," May 2020.

5 Lucy Ash, "[Inside Poland's LGBT-free zones](#)," BBC, 20 September 2020.

6 Omer Karaspan, "[Pandemic highlights the vulnerability of migrant workers in the middle east](#)," Brookings Institute, May 2020.

that shows promise for taking a much-needed, intersectional and often multilateral approach to women's rights, simultaneously addressing urgent issues such as climate change, peace and security, inclusive growth, global health and poverty alleviation."<sup>7</sup> Canada is well-positioned to play a leading role in advancing feminist foreign policy, alongside countries like Sweden, France, and Mexico, whose foreign policies are already explicitly feminist. Other countries are either debating or have committed to adopting versions of a feminist foreign policy, including Luxembourg, Spain, Iceland, Australia, and Malaysia.<sup>8</sup> Canada's feminist foreign policy development requires a discussion on key feminist principles and accountability mechanisms.<sup>9</sup>

## Proposed principles of a feminist foreign policy

The goals of a feminist foreign policy include transforming global norms, structures, and institutions that perpetuate the inequality of women, gender diverse people, Indigenous and People of Colour, immigrants, and people with disabilities, and to promote a more just, equitable, and peaceful world. Fundamental to this effort is combatting the destructive forces of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, heteronormativity, capitalism, and militarism that exist globally. A feminist foreign policy is not just about creating a more just, equitable world for women and gender diverse people—it is a way of re-envisioning foreign policy to benefit everyone.

An effective feminist foreign policy:

**Demands policy coherence:** To achieve meaningful and sustainable change, a feminist approach must be prioritized across all elements of a government's foreign policy, for example, development, trade and investment, political and economic diplomacy, defence, consular services, and immigration and refugee policy. Foreign policy also requires effective coherence between the policies that Canada promotes and implements domestically and internationally.

**Takes a rights-based approach:** The promotion of international human rights norms and standards must be at the centre of any foreign policy. Governments need to be accountable to how their policies and actions impact the realization of human rights in Canada and around the world. A rights-based feminist foreign policy highlights the centrality of the right to bodily autonomy as a human in achieving gender equality. The right to bodily autonomy includes the rights of individuals to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to sexuality, gender, and reproduction, free from coercion, violence, and discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

**Integrates intersectionality, diversity and inclusivity:** Adopting an intersectional approach within feminist foreign policy considers the ways in which power structures and systems of oppression can overlap, interact, and uniquely shape individual and collective experiences, in particular for

7 International Center for Research on Women, "Feminist Foreign Policy: A Framework," 2020.

8 International Center for Research on Women, "Defining Feminist Foreign Policy," 2019.

9 International Women's Development Agency, International Center for Research on Women, and Center for Global Affairs, "Feminist Foreign Policy: Key Principles and Accountability Mechanisms: A Discussion Summary," New York University, May 2019.

10 [Universal Declaration on Human Rights](#), the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), and the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

women, girls, LGBTQI2S+ individuals, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, (im)migrants, and people with disabilities. A feminist approach recognizes diverse knowledges and lived experiences, and values collaboration as an essential tool in promoting equality, justice, and human rights. This includes ensuring gender parity in the leadership and representation of government actors involved in foreign policy design and implementation, as well as a commitment to other meaningful forms of diversity, equity and inclusion based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability, among other identity characteristics.

**Dismantles colonial legacies and promotes anti-racism and anti-oppression:** The traditional North/South framing and dynamic of development assistance and foreign policy has mostly served to maintain colonial structures. Feminist policy aims to remove economic, social-cultural, and political systems that perpetuate colonial violence and imperial ideologies underpinning international relations such as current debt repayment models, aid, trade negotiations, and approaches to peace and security. Feminist policies must strive to break down institutionalized racism and act to heal the harm caused by racial violence embedded in foreign relations.

**Promotes demilitarization and peaceful resolution of conflicts:** The human and economic cost of war and preparation for war is clear. Investments on arms, weapons, and militaries dwarf investments in health care and social infrastructures. Narrow definitions of 'national interest' and outdated notions of 'security' are challenged by feminist approaches.

**Follows process principles and promotes accountability:** A feminist policy prioritizes not only results, but the process used to achieve them (ways of working, program design and implementation, and the values underpinning decisions). Fundamental aspects of feminist processes include integrity, contextualization, learning, collaboration, transparency, participation, inclusivity, and responsiveness. Consultation, dialogue and involvement of diverse civil society actors is a key component of a feminist approach. Regular, mandated, and independent monitoring and evaluation is critical to ensure openness, transparency, and accountability in foreign policy. Feminist monitoring and evaluation should be flexible, participatory, inclusive, and attentive to gender and other power relations.

## FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION THEMES

To be comprehensive, Canada's feminist foreign policy agenda must simultaneously address a range of issues that are central to advancing the rights of women, gender diverse people, Indigenous and People of Colour, (im)migrants, and people with disabilities. Below we discuss key issues and present guiding questions for our discussions in the areas of: human rights; economic justice and sustainability, peace and security. These issues are deeply interlinked, and often reinforce one another, underscoring the importance of policy coherence and a whole-of-government approach.

## Human rights

A feminist foreign policy puts human rights at its core and strives towards the advancement of justice and equality for all. An intersectional rights-based approach recognizes that some women and gender diverse people disproportionately experience human rights violations and focuses on ensuring the rights of the most marginalized are respected, protected, and upheld. “Nothing about us, without us” is a phrase coined by the disability movement, and it is central to a rights-based approach. Government must work in partnership with rights holders to understand and develop strategies to address rights violations. LGBTQI2S+ people, and women and gender diverse BIPOC, refugees, (im)migrants, and people with disabilities are more likely to have their rights violated, and Canada's feminist foreign policy must work in collaboration with a broad spectrum of groups to help devise specific policies, programs, and strategies to address patterns of discrimination and violence.

## Women's rights

While progress has been made in the areas of women's rights and gender equality, and despite the Government of Canada focus on women's rights and gender equality in the past several years, much work remains to be done. Gender-based violence and discrimination are rampant in Canada and around the world, and the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to unravel hard-won progress. An intersectional and inclusive approach to women's rights must be at the core of any feminist foreign policy and should concretely address gender-based violence and discrimination to help fulfill Canada's obligations under international human rights law including the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#).

*How can we move the dial on gender equality and women's rights in an inclusive and intersectional way?*

## Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Bodily autonomy is a critical right for all people, not just women and girls. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are a key component of bodily autonomy, and are recognized as a “full and free access to the public sphere.”<sup>11</sup> Feminist policy strives to achieve freedom from violence and discrimination for all those at the intersection of systems of oppression, ensuring that all individuals in Canada and internationally have full autonomy over their lives, bodies, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. It also means working to advance neglected areas of SRHR globally, such as adolescent SRHR, abortion, contraception, advocacy, comprehensive sexuality education, and SRHR in emergency settings.

*How can a feminist foreign policy advance SRHR and the right to bodily autonomy for all people?*

---

11 Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, “How Can Feminist Foreign Policy Support Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights?” 2020.

## LGBTQI2S+ rights

As Dignity Network Canada has reported, “over one-third of UN member states continue to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts, legislative provisions in support of transgender identities and rights remain elusive in the vast majority of countries, and the rights of intersex people are still only rarely acknowledged.”<sup>12</sup> Violence and discrimination against LGBTQI2S+ people is legal or accepted in far too many parts of the world, but progress is being made, particularly in countries where governments have explicitly supported social, legal, and policy reforms. A feminist, rights-based approach to foreign policy must recognize the marginalization of LGBTQI2S+ people and centre their rights in policies and programming.

*What concrete actions can Canada take to ensure that its feminist foreign policy is truly LGBTQI2S+ inclusive?*

## Women and LGBTQI2S+ human rights defenders

Amnesty International has warned that civil society space globally “is becoming increasingly small and exponentially more dangerous for women human rights defenders and LGBTI human rights defenders, who are persecuted both because of who they are as well as the changes for which they are advocating.”<sup>13</sup> Women and LGBTQI2S+ human rights defenders are threatened, harassed, criminalized, marginalized within social movements, and attacked for their peaceful advocacy in support of human rights.<sup>14</sup> Measures enacted by governments to curb the COVID-19 pandemic - such as lockdowns, curfews, roadblocks, street policing and surveillance - all put human rights defenders at increased risk of being located and targeted for repression.<sup>15</sup>

*How might feminist foreign policy recognize, support, and protect human rights defenders, organizations and social movements?*

## Economic justice and sustainability

### Poverty and inequality

Around the world, gender is the greatest predictor of poverty and powerlessness.<sup>16</sup> Women earn less income and own fewer assets than men, have less economic opportunities, and face greater barriers in obtaining decent, formal sector work. The situation is worse for individuals experiencing racism, homophobia, xenophobia and ableism, in addition to gender inequality. According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate of progress, it will take an estimated 257 years before women and men participate equally and are paid the same in the workplace.

12 Dignity Network Canada, “[Advancing dignity: assessing Canada's global action on human rights for LGBTI people.](#)” 2017.

13 Amnesty International, “[Amnesty International Canada releases 2019 human rights report card and agenda for Canada.](#)” 8 April 2019.

14 House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights, “[Report on Women Human Rights Defenders.](#)” 20 June 2019.

15 Nobel Women's Initiative, Amnesty International, Inter Pares, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Equality Fund, and Oxfam Canada, “[A feminist action agenda: For Canada's global response to COVID-19.](#)” May 2020.

16 Oxfam Canada, “[Why women's rights.](#)” 2020.



## The care economy

Prior to COVID-19, the International Labour Organization estimated that 2.1 billion individuals have an unmet need for care<sup>17</sup> – including children, seniors, the ill, and people with disabilities – and warned of a looming “global care crisis” unless governments take action and invest in the care sector.<sup>18</sup> In Canada and around the world, COVID-19 has made the demand for care work greater and more challenging than ever. These impacts are most pronounced for low-income, rural women, and those providing care in humanitarian and conflict settings, with limited access to time-saving equipment and public infrastructure like electricity, transportation, and running water.

*What would a feminist foreign policy look like that integrates the “4 Rs” of care - recognizing, redistributing, and reducing women’s unpaid care work, and representing the rights of care workers?*

## Globalization, trade, and investment

The liberalization of trade and investment associated with globalization has led to economic growth. The benefits of that growth, however, have been unevenly distributed. One aspect of that inequality is related to the uneven ways in which women, men, and gender diverse people are incorporated into the global economy. Trade is not gender neutral and it is essential to recognize the gendered nature of the international economy to develop trade and investment policies and practices that benefit everyone.

In recent years, governments across the world have sought ways to ensure that women gain a greater share of the benefits of trade and growth, including through the inclusion of stand-alone gender chapters into free trade agreements (FTAs).<sup>19</sup> Many feminists, however, have pointed out the weaknesses of such efforts and their failure to come to terms with the structural causes of gender inequalities, as well as how those inequalities intersect with other forms of inequality such as race, ethnicity, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and others.

A further priority concerns addressing the potentially harmful impacts of investment on women. Canadian overseas investment in the extractive sector, including mining, oil and gas, is particularly damaging. Women are especially vulnerable to the risks posed by extractive activity, including in areas such as food security, health and personal security. Women involved in the production of goods imported into Canada, such as apparel, are also at risk, often working in precarious and dangerous conditions. Canada lacks effective accountability mechanisms to prevent harm caused by multinational companies overseas or to provide access to remedy for those who suffer harm associated with corporate activity. Canada also lacks transparency and accountability mechanisms regarding the many domestic state agencies that facilitate corporate activity abroad via financing, equity ownership, political backing and logistical support.

---

<sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization defines care as “Care is at the heart of humanity. All human beings are dependent on care, as both recipients and providers. Care is necessary for the existence and reproduction of societies and the workforce and for the overall well-being of every individual. The very essence of having independent and autonomous citizens as well as productive workers relies on the provision of care”, “Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work,” 6, 28 June 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> World Trade Organization, “Joint Declaration on Trade and Women’s Economic Empowerment on the Occasion of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires,” December 2017.

*Could Canada's feminist foreign policy provide accountability regarding Canadian corporations and the state agencies that facilitate corporate activity abroad?*

## Climate justice

We are facing existential threats and decisions given the climate catastrophe. Urgent action is required.

Women are shown to be the most affected by climate-related challenges. They are therefore well-positioned to play a key role in designing foreign policies that address these challenges. Agri-food systems, natural resources management, extractive industries, and issues around land rights and access require substantive input into foreign relations and policies that protect the rights of Indigenous territories and women's and gender diverse people's access to resources to secure their livelihoods and protect the natural environment for future generations.

There is a long history of women's movements advocating on climate change, with the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development discussed as a key historical moment in the intersecting gender/environment movements.<sup>20</sup> A strong feminist foreign policy articulates clear guidelines on responding to the global climate crisis through policies that align with sustainable food and extractive and renewable resources systems and that consider the crucial roles in these systems of women and gender diverse people, recognizing the disproportionate impacts experienced by people who are marginalized because of multiple and intersecting identities.

*How would policy coherence between international and domestic environmental policies address the global climate crisis?*

## Peace and security

At least two billion people around the world live in places impacted by fragility, conflict, and violence.<sup>21</sup> "It is widely acknowledged that women and girls suffer disproportionately during emergencies and that their voices and leadership are undervalued and underutilized."<sup>22</sup> International relations and traditional approaches to foreign policy-making typically frame security as synonymous with military strength and power. Foreign policy is often based on narrow definitions of 'state security' and 'national interest.' Discussions of feminist foreign policy call on us to re-envision this understanding of security, by asking 'what makes us safe?' Most definitions of feminism challenge the equation of investing in arms and weapons as ways to bring security. It calls for inclusive, holistic, and gender transformative understandings of what peace and security mean to the most vulnerable.

20 International Women's Development Agency, International Center for Research on Women, and Center for Global Affairs, "Feminist Foreign Policy: Key Principles and Accountability Mechanisms: A Discussion Summary," New York University, May 2019.

21 UN Women, "COVID-19 and conflict," 2020.

22 Oxfam International, "Feminist Aid: A call for G7 leaders to beat inequality," 2019.

Two of the currently identified components of Canada's feminist foreign policy fall into this discussion: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Canada's 2017 Defence Policy: Strong, Secure, Engaged. Yet it is important to push the discussion beyond these two areas (as acknowledged in the official 'scene setter' document). While there has been progress on some issues (namely improved attention to the WPS agenda and the increased focus on the gender dimensions of disarmament in some international settings), a number of challenges have been identified including Canada's continued arms sales to Saudi Arabia, defence expenditures that dwarf international assistance, and Canada's stance on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

## Security and demilitarization

A feminist foreign policy recognizes the gendered impacts of militarism and weapon proliferation, and focuses on diplomacy, disarmament, and inclusive human security. People and human security should be at the center of security and defense policies. The past nine months have shown what really keeps people safe is not weapons and militarization but public health, care work, and food security. Humanitarian disarmament presents a model of discussing peace and security issues through a people-centric lens, that is closer to a feminist approach.<sup>23</sup>

*What could be Canada's feminist foreign policy anti-militaristic response to conflict that puts human security at the center of its strategy?*

## Conflict prevention

A feminist foreign policy would privilege non-military solutions to conflict and invest in conflict prevention. This includes addressing the root causes of conflict (including economic disparities, environmental devastation, the loss of hope and historical grievances). Global assessments of 20 years of the WPS agenda have noted that the conflict prevention pillar is the least addressed.

## Gender, peace, and security

Despite the expanding normative framework on WPS issues and growing evidence that there are strong links among gender inequalities, women's meaningful participation and global insecurity/armed conflict<sup>24</sup> mainstream policy makers and scholars continually fail to address these issues. A feminist foreign policy could attempt to understand why these blind spots continue and what can be done to ensure these dimensions are more prominent in the analysis of conflict and the policy prescriptions developed by the government.

*How should Canada's foreign policy support peace and security, and promote the rights and freedoms of those in crisis?*

<sup>23</sup> See [www.humanitariandisarmament.org](http://www.humanitariandisarmament.org)

<sup>24</sup> For example, Valerie M. Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen & Perpetua Lynne Nielsen, "The First Political Order: How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide," New York: Columbia University Press, 17 March 2020..

## CONCLUSION

The forthcoming White Paper on Canada's feminist foreign policy provides an opportunity for the government to set out both how it defines this policy and provide guidance to diplomats and policy makers. Yet this is not without challenges. There are high expectations from activists and scholars of what a feminist approach should and could include. There are traditional understandings of foreign policy that have remained impervious to feminist scholarship and even hostile to attempts to re-imagine what Canada's foreign policy could include. We are faced with an increasingly complex world with ongoing threats to the multilateral system and the international rules-based order.

It is our hope that these conversations will strengthen our capacity to engage in these discussions and provide recommendations that both remain true to feminist ideals and goals and also outline concrete pathways that the government can take in the short and medium term.

