

Open Statement:
Urgent Call for a
Sustainable Peace &
Gender Security
Strategy in Iran and
The Middle East
Region

Date: 21st May 2026

In just over a month, over 3,400 people have been killed in Iran, including more than 376 children and 496 women. More than three million people have been displaced in Iran.¹ While the scale of damage is being hidden by deliberate internet blockages, regime censorship and the silencing of civil society, we are witnessing the systematic destruction of life-sustaining infrastructure since the US and Israel launched illegal attacks on hospitals, pharmaceutical plants, water desalination plants, and food storage.

In Iran, we see deepening instability where women and children bear the heaviest costs of war, yet their voices are being excluded, both in the rooms where conflict is decided and, in the communities, where it is waged. This escalating violence further undermines the historic “Women, Life, Freedom” resistance movement inside Iran. Militarised responses and the opening of borders to armed groups only serve to displace the very people whose resilience is the foundation for lasting peace.

We call on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Australian Government to be proactive and act now to:

1. **Call for a permanent ceasefire** across Iran and the broader region
2. **Prioritise civilian protection and accountability** by:
 - Demanding adherence to international humanitarian law by ALL parties;
 - Supporting independent monitoring of attacks on civilians, medical infrastructure and heritage sites;
 - Investigating war crimes through mechanisms such as the International Court of Justice.
3. **Engage with and support civil society** in Iran and across the Middle East region by:
 - Drawing on the expertise of feminist peace builders to challenge polarising narratives and lack of accountability;
 - Protecting civil society actors inside Iran whose voices are being silenced;
 - Recognising diaspora leaders as essential civil society partners in Australia’s engagement in the region.
4. **Translate the WPS Agenda (UNSCR 1325) from rhetoric into consistent practice** by:
 - Ensuring women are actively engaged in conflict resolution;
 - Ensuring the protection of civilians with particularly attention to women, and girls, in humanitarian crises across Australia’s WPS National Action Plan (NAP) and all government implementing agencies.

Bombs do not build democracies, and exclusion does not build stability. Sustainable security demands a critical understanding of complex geopolitics in Iran and the Middle East region, the role of diplomacy, the inclusion of all actors, including civil society; and the courage to listen to those for whom peace is not just the absence of war, but justice for all.

The WPS Coalition calls on the Australian Government TO ACT NOW for sustainable peace, justice, stability and prosperity in the region and globally.

¹ Data sourced from Al Jazeera’s Live Tracker & The UN Refugee Agency