

# In Their Hands: Women Taking Ownership of Peace

Through the lens of local women photographers, we seek to elevate, amplify and increase the visibility of women's participation in, and their essential contributions to, peace and security. From Mali to Colombia, Yemen and South Sudan, we want to invite you to discover the stories of women who have taken peace into their own hands, and how the UN supports them in building sustainable peace. With these inspiring stories we seek to mobilize support and raise awareness on the indispensable role women play in promoting peace and building a better world.

For a more in-depth look at the exhibition *In Their Hands*, be sure to visit the [United Nations website](#)

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## **About the artists:**

Maura Ajak is a South Sudanese investigative reporter, photographer and camerawoman. She is currently a freelance reporter and producer for the Catholic Radio Network in South Sudan. Through her photography, she highlights human rights

issues such as sexual violence and elevates the voices of youth and people with disabilities. Maura's work has been featured in Harper's magazine, Al Jazeera, and the Associated Press. Maura has received numerous prizes for her work including the AWIM Award on Peace and Governance Issues in 2020 and was recently appointed 2021 Earth Champion by the IGAD Climate Prediction Application Centre.

Twitter: [@Maura\\_Ajak89](https://twitter.com/Maura_Ajak89)

Leila Thiam, a native of Bangui, Central African Republic, has worked for several years for the Central African national television. In 2017, she directed her first documentary, "Chambre N 1", after completing Ateliers Varan in Bangui, a famed French documentary film workshop. Her documentary was subsequently screened at several festivals around the world including the *Visions du Réel* International Film Festival in Switzerland, at Morocco's Agadir International Film Festival, and was awarded the best short documentary prize and the audience's favorite at the Festival Lumières d'Afrique in Besançon, France. She also worked as a shooting assistant on "Camille", a French biopic on the last days of Camille Lepage, a young French photojournalist killed during the conflict in the Central African Republic.

[https://www.ateliersvaran.com/en/cinematheque/room-n-1\\_1719](https://www.ateliersvaran.com/en/cinematheque/room-n-1_1719)

Ley Uwera, an independent photojournalist, uses photography to document conflict and socio-cultural issues in Eastern Africa with a focus on her home country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A contributor to the Everyday Africa collective, Ley has also worked with a myriad of international outlets including the BBC, Le Monde, NPR, The Washington Post and has been featured in The New Humanitarian, The New York Times and Huck magazine, among others. Passionate about human rights and development, Ley regularly collaborates with international organizations such as the UNHCR, UN Women, the ICRC and Mercy Corps.

Instagram: [@leyuwerai](#)

Kani Sissoko, a Malian photographer, graduated from the National Arts Institute in Bamako. Besides fine arts photography, Kani masters the art of photojournalism, focusing on social issues around her and works for numerous non-governmental organizations in Mali. Her work has been regularly exhibited in Mali but also in Benin, France, Niger and at the Panafrican Festival of Art Photography in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Passionate about supporting the youth, she regularly hosts journalism and photography workshops. Kani is the recipient of numerous prizes, including the 1st prize at *Phot'Art Mali*, the country's prime photographic inter-biennial.

Instagram: [@kanisissoko88](#)

Heba Naji took up photography in 2013, doing wedding and product photography, as well as documenting events and functions for local and international organizations. In parallel to her photography work, Heba has also worked for various local organizations on enhanced security and protection for local communities, cash assistance, peacebuilding and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects.

Rawan Mazeh is a Beirut-based documentary photographer academically trained in photography, multimedia and visual design at Notre Dame University in Lebanon and Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Italy. Rawan uses the medium to artistically incorporate and express her social interests. Her work investigates the relationship between belonging, memory, and the bonds between citizens and their land. Most recently, her documenting of the war between Lebanon and Israel was shown at the Artlab Gallery in Beirut.

Instagram: [@rawanmazeh](#)

Hana Haza'a works as a professional photographer documenting

different events for local and international organizations as well as social and cultural occasions. She currently works with a local organization in Taiz, Jasad Wahad, which has recently launched a campaign calling for the reopening of the main road leading in and out of Taiz to lift the siege of the city. Hana has worked for a number of local and international organizations as a coordinator for various projects and awareness raising campaigns on women's role in peace and security, humanitarian relief and the role of Taiz youth in the peace process.

Maimana El Hassan is a Sudanese photographer who uses photography as a mechanism for community building. Starting her career in photography 10 years ago, at the age of 15, Maimana has focused on the social impact of photography and the ability of the craft to forge community bonds. Her virtual community space, called "Orem Creative Hub", empowers artists through supporting the creative and cultural scene in Sudan. Her work has been highlighted by CNN African Voices and BBC Arabic Radio.

Instagram: [@maimana\\_elhassan](https://www.instagram.com/maimana_elhassan)

Ola Mohsin is a fine arts and graphic design graduate from Sudan University of Science and Technology with a photography career spanning over a decade. Passionate about human rights and social issues, she has pursued numerous trainings and courses on wide topics ranging from child labour to HIV to enrich her photography. From color to black and white, portrait and product photography, Ola has a broad array of skills. With a passion for sharing her knowledge and being deaf herself, Ola is also a trainer for the rights of people with disabilities. She is the recipient of multiple awards for her work and owns her own photography studio in Sudan.

Instagram: [ola\\_mohsin9](https://www.instagram.com/ola_mohsin9)

Deisy Lelibeth Tellez Giraldo, always politically active in



youth associations, saw her activism overshadowed by the constant state violence in her area in Catatumbo, Norte de Santander, Colombia. In 2010 she joined the FARC-EP where she assumed key functions such as radio operator, accounting and communication and propaganda. After six years of guerrilla warfare, the peace dialogue with the Colombian Government began. This was one of the most significant moments for Deisy since she was able to meet her loved ones again, sleep soundly, experience motherhood and play a direct role in the transformation of Colombia.

Samy Vásquez Ramos is a signatory of the Final Peace Agreement in Colombia. In 2014, she was part of the Dialogue and Negotiation Commission in Havana, Cuba, where she performed communication duties, including reporting, photography, and filming. In 2016 she returned to Colombia and participated in the laying down of arms in the Territorial Area for Training and Reintegration (TATR) Jacobo Arango in Llano Grande in the municipality of Dabeiba, Antioquia. She is currently studying audiovisual production at the CESDE Higher Education Institute and Territorial Public Administration at the Higher School of Public Administration (ESAP).

## **About the Organization:**

The 'In Their Hands: Women Taking Ownership of Peace' photo exhibition is underpinned by the principles outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and subsequent nine resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The resolutions recognize the importance of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in conflict resolution and the need for increased women's participation at peacemaking and decision-making at all levels in peace processes. The United Nations works to ensure women's priorities are central to peace, political and security decisions at all levels. To achieve this goal, the United Nations addresses social, cultural, and political barriers and protection risks that limit women's full participation in achieving and sustaining

peace. It is well known that violent conflict disproportionately affects women and girls and intensifies pre-existing gender inequalities and discrimination. Women are also active agents of peace in armed conflict, yet their role as key players and change agents of peace has been largely unrecognized. Acknowledging and integrating the different understanding, experiences, and capabilities of women into all aspects of UN peace operations is essential for the success of UN efforts and sustaining peace.

Curated by: The [United Nations Department of Peace Operations](#), the [United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs](#) and [UN Women](#)