

**Submission by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
on Gender and Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) and Gender
to the Working Group on Mercenaries**

6 March 2019

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) welcomes the Working Group's endeavour to examine key gender-specific considerations for the private military and security company (PMSC) industry. We also welcome the Working Group's inclusion of a gender perspective in a recent thematic report on the recruitment of child soldiers,¹ as well as considerations of sexual and gender-based violence linked to mercenaries and the PMSC industry in mission reports.²

This submission speaks to WILPF's long history of challenging militarism in all its forms, and in raising awareness of the gendered dimensions of militarism. In the following, WILPF seeks to offer a theoretical framing of themes intimately linked to gender and PMSCs, such as the gendered impact of the privatisation of military and security services, the relationship between PMSCs and the (re)construction of militarised masculinities, the implications of hegemonic masculinities intersecting with culture, race, and class in the PMSC industry, and PMSC personnel's role in perpetrating sexual and gender-based violence. This submission is based upon a non-exhaustive literature review, and aims to lay out major insights from critical feminist scholars in the field.

Annexed to this submission, WILPF further lists five case studies that illustrate the devastating gendered impacts of PMSCs on women, men, and non-binary people.

A note on terminology

Although cognisant of the differences between private military and security companies in practical terms, conceptually there is not a significantly different impact in relation to applying a gender perspective to PMSCs. This is why we will use PMSCs, or either of these two terms as appropriate in the text, and will not make any further distinction between them.

¹ Such as in the Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, A/HRC/39/49, 13 July 2018, paragraph F.

² Such as Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, Mission to Côte d'Ivoire A/HRC/30/34/Add.1, 17 August 2015; Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, Mission to Central African Republic, A/HRC/36/47/Add.1, paragraphs 63-64.

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The gendered impacts of privatising military and security

While the phenomenon of mercenaries has always existed, the exponentially increasing military privatisation is part of neo-liberal restructuring of the state by which state functions are outsourced to the private sector, and the state monopoly on the use of force is being reconfigured.³ Military privatisation is to be contextualised within debates on neo-liberal restructuring of the state, and can be best conceived as part of a broader transformation in governance and the commercialisation of security.⁴ It redefines, shifts, and reconstructs divisions between the public and private, state and market, national and international. “[It] initiates changes in power relations, which benefit geopolitically powerful groups and states, and exacerbate inequalities within and between societies,” observes Peterson.⁵ Moreover, Leander and Van Muster note that, “Instead of being a sign of state erosion, the neoliberal order works through state actors and leads to mutual empowerment of political and economic elites.”⁶

This shift in privatising militaries and military functions implicates transformations in gender relations, and exacerbates gender inequalities. PMSCs are not simply suppliers of security

³ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 76.

⁴ M. Eichler, ‘Gender and the Privatisation of Military Security,’ in *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Maya Eichler (ed.), 2015, Oxford University Press, page 4.

⁵ Peterson 2005, page 506, as quoted in M. Eichler, ‘Gender and the Privatisation of Military Security,’ in *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Maya Eichler (ed.), 2015, Oxford University Press, page 4.

⁶ A. Leander and R. Van Muster, ‘Private Security Contractors in the Debate about Darfur: Reflecting and Reinforcing Neo-Liberal Governmentality’, *International Relations*, 21(2), 2007, page 13.

and security-related services but also political actors who contribute to the production of gendered social hierarchies and the global social order.⁷

There are manifold reasons as to why the privatisation of military services as both part and result of neo-liberal restructuring is a highly gendered element of the private sector. On the one hand, in the past decades, women, and in some cases trans and queer-identified people, have been “allowed” into many Western militaries as a result of equality policies and advances in the women’s and LGBT movements. These advances have undeniably transformed gender relations. On the other hand, this has also been experienced as a “crisis of masculinity that has invoked defensive reactions.”⁸ Privatisation therefore serves as an ideal process where masculinities are reconstituted, and where new dynamics are promoted between gendered state orders and gendered private markets.⁹ Thus one result of the neo-liberal discourse as a site of reconstituting masculinities is to masculinise the market and construct the state as feminine.¹⁰ This allows private armed forces to “represent themselves as the efficient, assertive, masculine counterpart to the inefficient, weak, democratic and gender-integrated state military.”¹¹

Privatisation creates a continuous push to expand the market. Driven by profits, PMSCs seek to extend narratives and claims of protection to the global scale so to expand their market access. In promising to “deliver the impossible ‘anytime, anywhere’”, or to offer the “best possible security on any scale, anywhere in the world, or in “any place on earth,” PMSCs seek to (re)define who is a legitimate and effective protector and who and what needs protecting.¹² As a result, there has been a steep increase over the past two decades or so of the number of PMSCs operating in the world. The market for privatised security has continuously grown, at times even outnumbering the workforce within states’ Departments of Defence, such as in the United States.¹³ Monetising security has become big business. Between 2005 and 2010, contracting PMSCs accounted for 18 per cent of total war spending.¹⁴ The British multinational G4S, the world’s largest private security firm, registers

⁷ Maya Eichler, “An Introduction,” *Gender and the Privatisation of Military Security*, in *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Maya Eichler (ed.), 2015, Oxford University Press, pages 2-3.

⁸ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), page 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, page 77.

¹⁰ M. Marchand and A. Runyan, ‘Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistance, Routledge, 1999, page 13.

¹¹ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 86.

¹² Joachim and Schneiker, 2012, pages 497, and 501-502; as quoted in M. Eichler, ‘Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 17.

¹³ In December 2010, there were 150,000 contractors deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan versus 144,000 uniformed personnel, with the former making up 52 per cent of the US Department of Defense’s workforce. See: M. Schwartz and J. Swain, ‘Department of Defense Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background Analysis’, Congressional Research Service (ed.): Report R 40764, 29 March 2011, Summary.

¹⁴ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 75.

an annual turnover of around £500m (\$726m) in Africa alone,¹⁵ and the total worth of the global private military and security industry has been estimated to stand somewhere between £69 billion and £275 billion a year.¹⁶

The privatisation of security is, amongst many other factors, informed by class, as PMSCs provide protection to only those that can afford it, mainly constituting the transnational political and economic elite, such as state representatives and international business people, extending their protection to the global ruling class' assets, including military bases or oilfields. Laura Bruun et al. note in their investigative report about British PMSCs that "this is an industry run by men trained in concealment, secrecy and measured violence – and one that remains impenetrable to anyone who does not show funds to gain access."¹⁷ These services are therefore only accessible to a small, masculinised, mostly Western (or Westernised) elite.¹⁸

In turn, Eichler observes that *insecurity* is deflected onto those that cannot afford private protection. This reinforces masculinised protection and exacerbates class inequalities. Yet it can also exacerbate inequalities *among* women, namely among those that can afford to buy protection services and those who cannot. In this process, privatisation "partially erodes and partially intensifies the specifically gendered aspects of protection and challenges a simplistic male-female dichotomy of gendered protection characterised by male protectors and female protected."¹⁹

The interaction between different sets of discrimination in both public and private structures contribute to the exclusion of women and the LGBTQI community from PMSCs, observes Stachowitsch.²⁰ She notes that "these results emphasise the historical institutionalisation of male dominance in the state, question the alleged successes of women's formal integration into state institutions and show that masculinist gender arrangements adapt to new conditions as the state transforms and the boundaries between state and market shift in the course of neo-liberal state restructuring."²¹ PMSCs therefore constitute a hostile environment for groups marginalised in this sector, both within PMSCs as well as where PMSCs operate, a point on which WILPF will further elaborate below.

¹⁵ E. Buchanan, 'Dogs of war: Who are the British mercenaries roaming Africa accused of 'war crimes'?', *International Business Times*, 6 February 2016, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/hold-saturday-8am-dogs-war-who-are-british-mercenaries-roaming-africa-accused-war-crimes-1542030>.

¹⁶ L. Bruun et al., 'Britain's private military and security industry examined, Action on Armed Violence', 20 December 2018, <https://aoav.org.uk/2018/britains-private-military-and-security-industry-examined/>

¹⁷ L. Bruun et al., 'Britain's private military and security industry examined, Action on Armed Violence', 20 December 2018, <https://aoav.org.uk/2018/britains-private-military-and-security-industry-examined/>

¹⁸ M. Eichler, 'Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, page 19.

²⁰ S. Stachowitsch, "Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations," *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*

PMSCs as a site of ‘remasculinisation’

There are multiple dimensions in which gender shapes the military system and vice versa. “The link between masculinity and the military is constructed and maintained for the purposes of waging war,” notes Maya Eichler.²² She reminds us that the mutually reinforcing dynamic between militarism and masculinity operates not only within militaries, but in the wider society that hosts a military. Militarised masculinity refers hence to the assertion that traits stereotypically associated with masculinity can be acquired and proven through military service or action, and combat in particular.²³ The association with the notion of militarised masculinity—from which women are largely excluded—can bring advantages such as societal celebration. Thus, studying militarised masculinities requires attention not only to men and masculinities, but also to women, femininities, queer identities, and gendered relations of power.²⁴

Schulz and Yeung assert that “violent forms of masculinity are prevalent in militaries and (despite the absence of reliable data) it can be inferred that they are equally common in the private security sector.”²⁵ Indeed, the concept of masculinity is a main theoretical point of reference in gender research on PMSCs: Paul Higate grapples with identity practices of contractors and the role of masculinity and nationality within them,²⁶ Sandra Via examines the role of masculinity in the construction of the image of private security companies,²⁷ Amanda Chisholm explores the politics of masculinity and race/ethnicity in relation to PMCs,²⁸ and Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schneiker investigate the role of different concepts of masculinity in the self-representations of private military companies.²⁹

PMSCs represent a new market model of militarised masculinities. The privatisation of military services shifts the association of the ability of military capacity and protection from the state to PMSCs, and thereby both reinvigorates hegemonic masculinities, but also re-defines the construction of different layers of masculinities. For one, private military and security companies tend to intensify gender inequalities compared to public militaries, many of which are in the process of “integrating” men and women into combat roles. Women are a minority in private armies and, because they are private, there are far fewer

²² M. Eichler, ‘Militarised Masculinities in International Relations,’ *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 81.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ M. Eichler, ‘Militarized Masculinities in International Relations,’ *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 82.

²⁵ S. Schultz and C. Yeung, ‘Private Military Security Companies and Gender,’ *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, M. Bastick and K. Valasek (eds.), Geneva: DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW, 2008, page 4.

²⁶ P. Higate, ‘In the Business of (In)security. Mavericks, Mercenaries and Masculinities in the Private Security Company,’ in Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg (eds.) *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices*, Routledge, 2010.

²⁷ S. Via, ‘Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity,’ in Laura Sjöberg and Sandra Via (eds.) *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger, 2010.

²⁸ A. Chisholm, ‘Racialised Representations of Masculinities in Private Security: An Ethnographic Exploration of Gurkhas in Afghanistan,’ conference paper, International Studies Association Annual Convention, February 2010.

²⁹ J. Joachim and A. Schneiker, ‘Of “True Professionals” and “Ethical Hero Warriors”: A Gender-Discourse Analysis of Private Military and Security Companies,’ *Security Dialogue*, 43(6), 2012.

gender equity guidelines.³⁰ Linked to the masculinist culture in PMSCs, these companies position themselves as the prime protector and guarantor of security in relation to the alleged feminisation of the public military in the past few decades.³¹ The relative exclusion of women from PMSCs leads to an overall erosion of the status and rights of women and the LGBTQI community. An example of shocking levels of misogyny is evidenced for instance within DynCorp, a company which has provided support for US military operations for 50 years, and that failed to hold its employees accountable when they were engaged in illicit trafficking, sexual enslavement, and rape of women in post-conflict Bosnia.³²

Stachwitsch,³³ Via,³⁴ Higate,³⁵ Eichler,³⁶ and Chisholm,³⁷ amongst others, have argued that the rise of PMSCs reveals both disruptions and continuities in militarised masculinities. They advance the development of multiple masculinities that can be simultaneously at work and that are continuously reconstituted and diversified, as opposed to re-establishing one traditional notion of aggressive masculinity.³⁸ This process has been described as 'remasculinisation,' which includes the renegotiation of interests, values, and projects of the patriarchy.³⁹ This means that PMSCs have moved away from portraying themselves as hyper-masculine, as media coverage based on these images have caused public outrage in the past, adding to "a widely held aversion to the mercenary archetype."⁴⁰ These hyper-masculine notions of PMSCs have proven to harm business, and PMSCs have moved to adapting private military masculinity to varying degrees. In the case of American private military company Blackwater, which experienced several public scandals, the CEO Erik Prince renamed the company Xe and also shifted its representation towards a less hyper-masculine and aggressive image. "Whereas Blackwater's early public presentations emphasised aggressiveness, independence, stealth, struggle, glory, and vigilantism, the

³⁰ M. Eichler, "Militarised Masculinities in International Relations," *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, XXI (Issue I), Fall/Winter 2014. See also ³⁰ Ray Acheson, 'Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti', *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*, August 2017, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

³¹ P. Higate, 'Aversions to Masculine Excess in the Private Military and Security Company and Their Effects', M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

³² Ray Acheson, 'Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti', *Reaching Critical Will of WILPF*, August 2017, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

³³ S. Stachowitsch, "Military Privatisation and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations," *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013.

³⁴ S. Via, 'Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity', in Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (eds.) *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger, 2010.

³⁵ P. Higate, 'In the Business of (In)security. Mavericks, Mercenaries and Masculinities in the Private Security Company', in Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg (eds.) *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices*, Routledge, 2010.

³⁶ M. Eichler, 'Militarised Masculinities in International Relations,' *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 86.

³⁷ A. Chisholm, 'Racialised Representations of Masculinities in Private Security: An Ethnographic Exploration of Gurkhas in Afghanistan, conference paper, International Studies Association Annual Convention, February 2010.

³⁸ S. Stachowitsch, "Military Privatisation and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations," *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 84.

³⁹ S. Jeffords, 'The Remasculinisation of America. Gender and the Vietnam War', Indiana University Press, 1989.

⁴⁰ P. Higate, 'Aversions to Masculine Excess in the Private Military and Security Company and Their Effects', M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

public face of Xe emphasises patriotism, efficiency, discipline, management, protection, and organisation,” observes Sandra Via.⁴¹

Some PMSCs have further adapted their self-portrayal from simplistic aggressive and violent actors to more rational and reasonable stakeholders by deploying euphemistic branding to fit in with the private sector’s managerial discourse. They describe their services as “risk management consultancy” and “security solutions” provided to “clients” operating in “high-risk and complex environments”.⁴² Havkin observes that the process of the Israeli government’s outsourcing of the management of checkpoints to private security firms is portrayed as “rational” and “modern,” yet is actually a “polishing-like process which seeks to conceal the oppressive power relations at work (...) and the new forms of domination and arbitrariness to which they give rise.”⁴³

In line with the re-invented professional image, PMSCs have also introduced or signed up to self-regulatory accountability measures, including protecting women from violence perpetrated by PMSC personnel.⁴⁴ They employ the rhetoric of humanitarianism, and cast themselves as “new humanitarians”.⁴⁵ The sector “[sells] itself as a ‘peace and stability industry’ vital for the protection of human rights worldwide.”⁴⁶ References to humanitarian concerns aligns with and exploits the rise of protection narratives over the past two decades that are rooted in a global responsibility toward other peoples on the basis of humanitarianism, which includes the proliferation of new forms of military intervention in the name of protection human rights.⁴⁷

PMSCs and the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class, and other factors

Western-based but globally operating PMSCs rely heavily on the labour of non-Western citizens, which includes locals in the country of operation as well as so-called “third-country nationals” (TCNs) composed of mostly men from the Global South. Eichler,⁴⁸ Barker,⁴⁹

⁴¹ S. Via, ‘Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity’, in Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (eds.) *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger, 2010, page 52.

⁴² ‘Mercenaries Unleashed – The brave new world of private military and security companies’, War on Want, 2016.

⁴³ S. Havkin, ‘Outsourcing the Checkpoints – When military occupation encounters neoliberalism’, Stéphanie Latter Abdallah and Cédric Parizot (eds.), *Israelis and Palestinians in the Shadows of the Wall: Spaces of Separation and Occupation*, 2015, page 3.

⁴⁴ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 84.

⁴⁵ J. Joachim and A. Schneiker, ‘(Re)Masculinising Security?’ Gender and Private Military and Security Companies, in Linda Ahall and Laura J. Shepherd (eds.) *Gender, Agency and Political Violence*, Palgrave 2012.

⁴⁶ Pattison, 2010, page 444, as cited in M. Eichler, ‘Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 18.

⁴⁷ M. Eichler, ‘Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 16.

⁴⁸ M. Eichler, ‘Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

⁴⁹ I. V. Barker, ‘(Re)producing American Soldiers in an Age of Empire, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

Chisholm,⁵⁰ and Joachim and Schneiker⁵¹ find that “the global labour market in protection services rests on a hierarchy that constitutes racialised men from the Global South as subordinate masculinities vis-à-vis the hegemonic masculinities of white, Western contractors.⁵² Barker for instance lays out how the majority of vital support service labour on US military bases in Iraq following “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was outsourced and performed by TNC men, including from India, Sri Lanka or Bangladesh. She argues that the “displacement of the reproductive labour, which remains coded as effeminate, onto poor migrant men of color serves to reinforce the aggressive masculine version of American soldiering.”⁵³

Eichler observes that the global hierarchy of masculinities is evident in the extreme differences of pay and working conditions, as well as the degree of danger.⁵⁴ Such clear hierarchy, along with blatant neo-colonialist attitudes, becomes evident in a quote by former director of Aegis Defence Services, a British private military company: “You probably would have a better force if you recruited entirely from the Midlands of England.... But it can’t be afforded. So you go from the Midlands of England to Nepalese etc etc, Asians, and then at some point you say I’m afraid all we can afford now is Africans.”⁵⁵ In response, Chi Onwurah, a UK Labour MP cited in the same article by *The Guardian*, notes that “there’s an inherent racism in paying security guards less depending on the country they are coming from when they are facing the same risks as a guard from the UK.”⁵⁶ Bianca Baggiarini concludes that in outsourcing potential casualties from “late modern, casualty-averse, liberal-democratic societies,” to men from the Global South, the body becomes a central site in the negotiation of who ought to sacrifice and who will be sacrificed.”⁵⁷

Against this backdrop, PMSCs both invigorate hegemonic masculinities, but also shape and reinforce subordinate masculinities.⁵⁸ The diversification of masculinities occurs along

⁵⁰ A. Chisholm, ‘From Warriors of Empire to Martial Contractors’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

⁵¹ J. Joachim and A. Schneiker, ‘The License to Exploit – PMSCs, Masculinities, and Third-Country Nationals’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

⁵² M. Eichler, ‘Gender, PMSCs, and the Global Rescaling of Protection’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 23.

⁵³ I. V. Barker, ‘(Re)producing American Soldiers in an Age of Empire’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 1.

⁵⁴ M. Eichler, ‘Militarized Masculinities in International Relations’, *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 86.

⁵⁵ A. Ross, ‘UK Firm ‘employed former child soldiers’ as mercenaries in Iraq’, *The Guardian*, 17 April 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/apr/17/uk-firm-employed-former-child-soldiers-as-mercenaries-in-iraq>

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Bianca Baggiarini, ‘Military Privatisation and the Gendered Politics of Sacrifice’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 2.

⁵⁸ See for instance: I. V. Barker, ‘(Re)producing American Soldiers in an Age of Empire’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

A. Chisholm, ‘From Warriors of Empire to Martial Contractors’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

S. Via, ‘Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity’, in Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (eds.) *Gender, War, and Militarism*, Praeger, 2010.

intersections with culture, race, class, rank, disability, and nationality.⁵⁹ As a result, the global labour division of the PMSC industry is “ethicised” and gendered, as it allows only those who conform to hegemonic Western masculinity ideals into the best paying and most prestigious jobs.⁶⁰ It is thereby part and parcel of broader neo-liberal forces that reproduce and intensify global social inequalities.⁶¹

The gendered impacts of the industry’s lack of transparency and accountability

Many scholars, researchers, and activists have highlighted the lack of transparency in the business of PMSCs.⁶² For instance, in the United States, information on the executive’s use of private military is not centrally available, and therefore less accessible.⁶³ Elsa Buchanan also notes in her article that PMSCs “have created a corporate security nexus, which lies outside any kind of structure of accountability.”⁶⁴

The lack of transparency, and hence lack of accountability, has gendered implications. It means that the conduct of PMSCs largely bypasses public debate and the limits set by the legislature on state military. Democratic institutions have no instruments to implement measures to promote and enforce gender equality within PMSCs,⁶⁵ and face major challenges in monitoring any proclaimed policies. Moreover, as Valerie Sperling observes, “PMSCs are more likely to undercut than to strengthen the ties of political accountability between citizens and their governments, and often lack accountability to the population with whom they interact.”⁶⁶

⁵⁹ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatisation and the Remasculinisation of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 84.

⁶⁰ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatization and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 81. See also: N. Maclellan, ‘From Fiji to Fallujah: The War in Iraq and the Privatisation of Pacific Security’, *Pacific Journalism Review*, 12(2), 2006.

⁶¹ J. Joachim and A. Schneiker, ‘The License to Exploit – PMSCs, Masculinities, and Third-Country Nationals’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015, page 1.

⁶² This was stressed by researchers such as R. Acheson, ‘Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti’, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, August 2017, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

See also: L. Bruun et al., ‘Britain’s private military and security industry examined, Action on Armed Violence’, 20 December 2018, <https://aoav.org.uk/2018/britains-private-military-and-security-industry-examined/>
D. Avant and L. Sigelman, ‘What Does Private Security in Iraq Mean for US Democracy?’, conference paper, International Studies Association Annual Convention, 15-18 February 2009, page 2.

⁶³ S. Stachowitsch, “Military Privatization and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,” *International Relations*, 27(1), 2013, page 82.

⁶⁴ E. Buchanan, ‘Dogs of war: Who are the British mercenaries roaming Africa accused of ‘war crimes’?’, *International Business Times*, 6 February 2016, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/hold-saturday-8am-dogs-war-who-are-british-mercenaries-roaming-africa-accused-war-crimes-1542030>.

⁶⁵ M. Eichler, ‘Militarised Masculinities in International Relations,’ *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 86.

⁶⁶ V. Sperling, ‘Engendering Accountability in Private Security and Public Peacekeeping’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

While in recent years, women have been increasingly admitted to regular forces, the PMSC industry has evolved into a heavily male-dominated labour market because it is not subject to government regulations and oversight. The government is not accountable for women's working conditions, or the discrimination, harassment or sexual violence they might experience as employees within PMCs or as civilians outside PMCs.⁶⁷

PMSCs personnel as perpetrators of gender-based and sexual violence

It has been proven time and time again that military violence results in increased insecurities for women and others. One crucial aspect of the heightened insecurities for men, women, and non-binary people is the proliferation of weapons in society as a result of the presence of PMSCs. The Working Group also expressed concern at the lack of regulation in the use of firearms by PMSCs in more than 20 countries in most regions of the world.⁶⁸ In a similar vein, Elsa Buchanan informs that, "PMSCs have been accused of buying arms illegally in some of the strife-torn countries in which they operate [...] and then dumping the weapons overboard before reaching their destination. This influx of guns has a deep impact on political instability."⁶⁹

Against this backdrop, it is crucial to note that the possession of weapons symbolises power that stems from a particular and dominant understanding and performance of masculinity, and which are reflective of a culture of aggression and impunity, as WILPF has repeatedly noted.⁷⁰

The Working Group has also noted that sexual and gender-based violence have commonly been used as a weapon of warfare by mercenaries, where women often far outnumber the men in experiencing sexual violence.⁷¹ Studies have linked the cultivation of aggressive masculinity in the institutional culture of PMSCs to human rights abuses such as forced prostitution and the trafficking of women and children.⁷²

In the case of PMSCs, forced prostitution of trafficked women seems to be a widespread phenomenon. WILPF has previously observed that "we have seen time and again

⁶⁷ V. Sperling, 'Altered States – The Globalisation of Accountability', Cambridge University Press, 2009. See also: A. F. Vrodoljak, 'Women and Private Military and Security Companies', War by Contract: Human Rights, F. Francioni and N. Ronzitti (eds.) International Humanitarian Law and the Regulation of Private Military and Security, Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁶⁸ 'Mercenarism and Private Military and Security Companies – An overview of the work carried out by the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, n.d, page 18.

⁶⁹ E. Buchanan, 'Dogs of war: Who are the British mercenaries roaming Africa accused of 'war crimes'?', *International Business Times*, 6 February 2016, <https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/hold-saturday-8am-dogs-war-who-are-british-mercenaries-roaming-africa-accused-war-crimes-1542030>.

⁷⁰ See for instance: Ray Acheson, Presentation on gender norms and gun violence, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, June 2018: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/12587-presentation-on-gender-norms-and-gun-violence>.

⁷¹ Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries to the General Assembly, A/73//303, 6 August 2018.

⁷² S. Schultz and C. Yeung, 'Private Military Security Companies and Gender', Gender and Security Reform Toolkit, Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek (eds.), DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN-INSTRAW, 2008, page 4.

throughout the world that wherever foreign militaries set up shop, sexual violence becomes part of the local landscape. Their presence facilitates a culture of impunity for sexual violence and for purchasing sex from those who are likely to have been trafficked and forced into prostitution.”⁷³ As WILPF demonstrates in an investigative report, foreign military bases in Djibouti depend on a large number of private contractors to run the bases and associated activities. They fuel a sex industry that often depends on trafficked young girls and women forcing them engage in “prostitution”. Similar cases of heightened numbers of trafficking and forced prostitution as in the presence of peacekeeping troops, which almost always rely to some extent on private military companies, have been documented in Cambodia, Liberia, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁷⁴

The institutionalisation of the sex “industry” around military bases is a situation “that’s been created by a series of human decision made over time (mostly by male military and government officials),” writes researcher David Vine. “Those decisions have created a predominantly male military environment, in which women’s visible presence is overwhelmingly reduced to one role: sex.”⁷⁵ This influences the identities and behaviour of male soldiers as men. These identities are deliberately constructed in order to help the military to function. “Institutionalised military prostitution draws on existing gender norms— cultural ideas about what it means to be a man and a woman—but it also intensifies these norms,” explains Vine. “It trains men to believe that using the sexual services of women is part of what it means to be a soldier and part of what it means to be a man. It helps shape ... ‘militarised masculinity,’ involving feelings of power and superiority over women and a willingness to inflict violence on anyone deemed inferior.”⁷⁶

Higate notes that it is not only compliance with expectations associated with militarised masculinities, but also factors including socioeconomic structure, impunity, and privilege that exacerbate sexual exploitation of local women. He tentatively suggests based on exploratory fieldwork in Sierra Leone and the DRC that “while the concept of military masculinities represents a useful sensitising category, the notion of a particularly oppressive ‘social masculinities’ is better able to capture the intersectionality of gender, power, and sexuality.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Ray Acheson, ‘Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti’, *Reaching Critical Will* of WILPF, August 2017, pages 5 and 9s, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

⁷⁴ See for example V. Sperling, ‘Engendering Accountability in Private Security and Public Peacekeeping’, M. Eichler (ed.) *Gender and Private Security in Global Politics*, Oxford Scholarship Online, March 2015.

⁷⁵ David Vine, *Base Nation*, op. cit., pp. 182–183, in Ray Acheson, ‘Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti’, *Reaching Critical Will* of WILPF, August 2017, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

⁷⁶ David Vine, *Base Nation*, op. cit., pp. 182–183, in Ray Acheson, ‘Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti’, *Reaching Critical Will* of WILPF, August 2017, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

⁷⁷ P. Higate, ‘Peacekeepers, Masculinities, and Sexual Exploitation’, *Men and Masculinities*, 10(1), 2007, page 100. His article is based upon observations of peacekeepers in Sierra Leone and the DRC. While not the same as PMSCs, peacekeeping missions typically include some portion of private military contractors. Furthermore, both actors are similar in terms of their work environment and associated expected performance of gender norms.

Multinational corporations which employ security companies to protect “their assets” is another crucial stakeholder implicated in the exacerbation of gender-based or sexual violence. Martignoni and Umlas underscore the specific risks at the intersection of business, conflict zones, gender, and security, including security forces that use sexual and gender-based violence as a tool of retaliation or control.⁷⁸ Schulz and Yeung confirm that multinationals “operating in conflict-prone areas have been implicated in serious incidences of sexual exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by their security providers (including their own security staff, contracted private security personnel and law enforcement personnel), often against members of host communities, but also against female security personnel.”⁷⁹

On the necessity to meaningfully include women and the LGBTQI community in restraining and restricting PMSCs

WILPF does not advocate for the inclusion of women or LGBTQIA people in the military or in PMSCs. Instead, we advocate for a change to the systems of war and conflict and a reinterpretation of security and the means of ensuring sustainable peace.

Of course, as already mentioned earlier, the PMSC sector is an industry marked by women’s extreme under-representation. PMSCs mainly recruit from the military and police, which still is predominantly composed of men. The admittance and participation of women is constrained in PMCS,⁸⁰ and women’s under-representation is further aggravated in the sector that recruit mostly ex-military from the combat-intensive, less-qualified occupations, from which women are largely excluded by law in countries such as the United States.⁸¹ As a result, women’s integration is uneven and limited to occupations “stereotypically associated with femininity such as support roles,” and “only a very small number of women employees [work] in the field”.⁸² As a result, Vrodljak finds for instance that female personnel experience elevated levels of physical and mental violence at the hands of their colleagues.⁸³

⁷⁸ J. B. Martignoni and E. Umlas, ‘Gender-responsive due diligence for business actors: Human Rights-Based Approaches, Academy Briefing N°12, *Geneva Academy*, December 2018, page 55.

⁷⁹ On the latter, see Schulz and Yeung, ‘Private Military and Security Companies and Gender’, supra fn 211, p 14; DCAF and ICRC, *Addressing Security and Human Rights Challenges*, supra fn 216, p 83.

See also: A. F. Vrodljak, ‘Women and Private Military and Security Companies’, in Francesco Francioni and Natalino Ronzitti (eds.) *War by Contract: Human Rights, Humanitarian Law and Private Contractors*, Oxford University Press, 2011, page 282.

⁸⁰ M. Eichler, ‘Militarized Masculinities in International Relations,’ *Brown J. World Aff.* 81, XXI(1), Fall/Winter 2014, page 86.

⁸¹ S. Stachowitsch, ‘Military Privatization and the Remasculinization of the State: Making the Link Between the Outsourcing of Military Security and Gendered State Transformations,’ *International Relations*, 27(I), 2013, page 76.

⁸² M. Eichler, *Gender and the Global Market for Force: A Feminist Analysis of the Privatisation of Military Security*, conference paper, International Studies Association Annual Convention, 1-4 April, 2012, p. 19

⁸³ A. F. Vrodljak, ‘Women and Private Military and Security Companies’, in Francesco Francioni and Natalino Ronzitti (eds.) *War by Contract: Human Rights, Humanitarian Law and Private Contractors*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

In this context, the lack of perspectives and experiences in this sector that do not align with Western, hegemonic masculinity cause a hostile environment for women, non-binary people, LGBTI community, and also men of colour, both within the industry and where PMSCs are operating.

WILPF cautions that the solution to pervasive militarisation fuelled by the exponential growth of PMSCs is not to increase women's or LGBTQIA participation in the sector. For over a century, WILPF has advocated for feminist disarmament and peace and has always cautioned against militaristic responses to complex social problems. Increasing the diversity of participants in the structures of war is insufficient for truly making change when addressing PMSC's devastating role in perpetuating conflict, militarism, and increased securitisation all over the world.

Addressing and transforming militarism and the privatisation of security as part and parcel of neo-liberal policies, in a way that paves the way towards real and sustainable peace, requires new understandings, perspectives, and approaches to weapons and war. It requires the effective and meaningful participation of survivors of PMSC personnel's violations. It requires the effective and meaningful participation of marginalised communities—the LGBTQI community, people of colour, those at a socioeconomic disadvantage, people with disabilities.⁸⁴

WILPF therefore supports the Working Group's previous recommendations to include civil society and community actors, with a special focus on groups experiencing significant marginalisation, in preventing gender-based violence and other human rights violations perpetrated by PMSCs.⁸⁵ WILPF further welcomes the Working Group's recommendations to increase women's political participation and leadership in sectors such as justice and security and economic recovery, and by providing services for survivors and tackling impunity in cases involving PMSCs.

As Ray Acheson of WILPF observes, "diversity is not about political correctness. It is the only way we are ever going to see change in the way that we confront issues of peace and security. Where we have achieved the most disarmament progress in recent years ... we have engaged with diverse communities and put humanitarian perspectives over the profits of arms industries or the interests of powerful governments. This is not just about including women, especially women who come from the same or similar backgrounds as the men who already rule the table. It's about completely resetting the table; or even throwing out the table and setting up an entirely new way of working..... Confronting norms, especially gendered norms, around weapons and war is imperative to making progress on disarmament."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ray Acheson, 'The gender and weapon nexus recognised; feminism need apply in 2019 and beyond', *Forum on the Arms Trade*, 19 December 2018, <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/looking-ahead-blog/the-gender-and-weapons-nexus-recognized-feminism-need-apply-in-2019-and-beyond>.

⁸⁵ Report of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, 'Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination', A/73/303, 6 August 2018.

⁸⁶ Ray Acheson, 'The gender and weapon nexus recognised; feminism need apply in 2019 and beyond', *Forum on the Arms Trade*, 19 December 2018, <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/looking-ahead-blog/the-gender-and-weapons-nexus-recognized-feminism-need-apply-in-2019-and-beyond>.

ANNEX – Case studies

1. The gendered aspect of the Israeli checkpoint industry in the West Bank (2016)

The position paper, drafted by the Coalition of Women for Peace and Who Profits from the Occupation, provides testimonies of Palestinian women passing through privatised checkpoint systems. It highlights how women experience a constant risk of harassment, perpetrated both by soldiers and private guards, and suffer from hindered access to health care services, including medical care for pregnant women. Please find more information in the report, particularly on pages 11-16: <http://www.coalitionofwomen.org/english-the-gendered-aspect-of-israeli-checkpoints-in-the-opt-position-paper/?lang=en>.

2. Remote warfare and sexual violence in Djibouti (2017)

This report, published by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), uncovers the role of foreign military bases and contractors in exacerbating sexual violence in Djibouti. The country has record numbers of trafficking and forced prostitution. The report notes that “the combination of high numbers of foreign military personnel, flows of migrants, high numbers of refugees, and low unemployment and opportunities for work creates a powder keg for sexual violence and exploitation. The foreign military presence in Djibouti exacerbates the risks of trafficking and “prostitution”. The military bases provide a steady market for women, girls, and boys who are forced into sex work due to poverty or trafficking.”⁸⁷ Please find more information in the report, particularly on pages 10, 19-24, 30-34, 37-38: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/publications-and-research/publications/11880-remote-warfare-and-sexual-violence-in-djibouti>.

3. Women in artisanal mines in DRC (2016)

This report, published by WILPF, analyses the case of artisanal mines in a province in the DRC and uncovers human rights violations suffered by Congolese women in artisanal mining. WILPF documents the increased militarisation of society as a result of the presence of private police in artisanal mines in the DRC. This in turn exacerbates the risk posed to women working in the mines. Please find more information in the report, particularly on page 13: https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/WomenInArtisanalMinesInDRC_web.pdf.

4. Impact of Canadian Mining Companies (2017)

This joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Canada by WILPF and Plataforma Internacional Contra la Impunidad focuses on the violations of women’s rights and of indigenous peoples’ rights resulting from Canadian mining companies’ operations and the failure of the Canadian Government to effectively regulate the extraterritorial activity of Canadian companies and ensure effective access to justice for such abuses. The report includes case studies where mining companies’ private security guards have committed recurrent and grave acts of violence against communities in Guatemala. Civil lawsuits, initiated by members of the Q’eqchi communities, are currently pending before the Canadian courts. Allegations include the gang-rape of 11 women by mining company

⁸⁷ Ray Acheson, ‘Remote Warfare and Sexual Violence in Djibouti’, Reaching Critical Will of WILPF, August 2017, page 4, https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_RemoteWarfareAndSexualViolenceInDjibouti.pdf.

security personnel, police and military during the forced eviction of their village and families from their ancestral lands. The report also notes that victims of human rights abuses by Canadian companies that operate abroad face enormous challenges in accessing justice and receiving effective remedies. Women face additional barriers, indigenous women even more so. Please find more information in the report, and particularly on pages 5, 6, and 9: https://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UPR_Canada_WEB.pdf.

5. Continued grave human rights violations, including gang rapes, by security guards of mining company Barrick

Sadly, the case of the Barrick mines has become notoriously famous over the years. Rapes, beatings and environmental contamination continue both at the Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea, and the North Mara mine in Tanzania. Barrick created a remedy mechanism in 2012 for victims of sexual violence, yet the mechanism is extremely flawed. So far, 119 rape survivors have taken their complaints to the UN, of which some have received insufficient remedies, and some haven't received any. For more information on this case and up-to-date information, see MiningWatch Canada: <https://miningwatch.ca/categories/company-country-issue/country/asiapacific/papua-new-guinea?page=1>.