

## *The Contemporary Theological Project*

# Blessed are the Peacemakers? Why Peace and Reconciliation Processes can Perpetuate Violence Against Women

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### ABSTRACT

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This article emphasises a gender-relational lens to reconciliation, post conflict and peace-building spaces. It highlights that while faith leaders can make important contributions here, they can also reiterate problematic gender norms and reinforce risks that the peace secured may perpetuate violence against women. It reflects critically on this gendered reality of peace-building within a number of African contexts in the light of high levels of violence against women. This raises questions about the role of Christian theology in relation to peace and seeks to avoid reinforcing a gendered imperial peace underpinned by the threat of violence. Instead, it calls faith leaders to hold together peace and gender justice by applying important insights from the violence against women field to peace and reconciliation themes.

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### Introduction

The complex interplay between gender, conflict-resolution and post-conflict rebuilding is receiving increased attention globally. There is also more awareness of how long-term violence impacts economic livelihoods, socio-cultural norms and gender roles, increasing the effects of both conflict and peace on women in particular. Gendering peacebuilding is now being seen as essential for sustainable peace,<sup>1</sup> and a gender-relational lens is strongly recommended:

A gender-relational approach goes beyond understanding gender to mean simply women and girls, to examine the complex relationships between gender and other aspects of

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1 A Reinke, "Gendering Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda", *Journal of Global Initiative: Policy Pedagogy Perspective*, 10:2 (2016), 71-86.

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