



# THE DIALOGUE



FIRST INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE



## Women Redefining Peace

in The Middle East & Beyond  
GALWAY IRELAND MAY 29-31 2007

Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976  
Máiread Corrigan Maguire, Ireland - 1976  
Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemala - 1992  
Prof. Jody Williams, USA - 1997  
Dr. Shirin Ebadi, Iran - 2003  
Prof. Wangari Maathai, Kenya - 2004

*united for peace with justice and equality*

## AGENDA

### Tuesday, May 29, 2007

- 9:00**     **Opening and welcome:** Betty Williams will officially open the conference and welcome participants to Ireland.
- 9:10**     **Why are we here? The goals and process:** Jody Williams will introduce the purpose and process of the meeting, convey the expectations of NWI and situate the meeting within the current global context.
- 9:30**     **Participant introductions:** Each participant will briefly share what they bring to, and what they expect from, the meeting. Facilitator: Joanna Kerr.
- 10:00**    **How are women in the Middle East experiencing violence and conflict, and why? An overview:** This presentation by Val Moghadam will provide a summary of the multitude of forms of violence against women endemic to the Middle East and their causes.
- 10:20**    Break
- 10:40**    **Women's rights violations in the Middle East: A closer look:** In this panel, presenters will look at violence through different lenses, with an introduction by Shirin Ebadi:  
Religious fundamentalism undermining women's legal rights — Farida Shaheed;  
Women's rights violations and the reviving challenges of identity politics — Nayereh Tohidi; and  
Domestic violence as part of the continuum of violence — Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian.  
Shirin Ebadi will respond with a summary of lessons learned. Moderator: Joanna Kerr.
- 11:50**    **Plenary discussion**
- 12:30**    Lunch
- 13:30**    **Lessons from Darfur:** A short report from Jody Williams based on her High-Level Mission to Darfur, followed by discussion. Nang Lao Liang Won will speak on rape as a weapon of war in Burma and the Sudan.
- 14:15**    **Power mapping:** A facilitated participatory session with participants in five small groups looking at how visible, invisible and hidden power creates obstacles to breaking the continuum of violence affecting women globally. Facilitator: Lisa VeneKlasen (with Rashida Dohad, Joanna Kerr, Valerie Miller and Nani Zulminarni).
- 15:45**    Break

- 16:00 Power and its impact:** This interactive panel will explore the role that the United States, corporate interests, and powerful aid agencies and international organizations play in the region in reinforcing structural causes of conflict and undermining women's rights. Panelists include Antonia Juhasz, Yanar Mohammed and Zeina Zaatari. Facilitator: Mary Ellen McNish. This session will be summarized in remarks by Mairead Corrigan Maguire after the discussion.
- 17:30 Discussion**
- 18:00 Close of Day 1:** Brief remarks by Wangari Maathai
- 19:30 Dinner**  
After dinner, participants are invited to chat and enjoy the photo and art exhibits.

## Wednesday, May 30, 2007

- 9:00 Recap of Day 1 and naming priorities for Day 2:** Shahla Haeri will summarize results and introduce a new focus on strategies.
- 9:15 Lessons from Northern Ireland:** Participants will hear from Bronagh Hinds and Anne Carr, leaders working on peace and conflict resolution, who were active in the negotiation of the Good Friday accords. Through an open discussion, we will learn what lessons can and have been applied in other regions to address violence against women and conflict. Moderator: Terry Greenblatt.
- 10:30 Break**
- 10:45 Building transnational attention and solutions to domestic violence in all its forms:** Using a talk show format, hosted by award-winning journalist Rana Husseini, this session will get at three questions among its distinguished panelists Charlotte Bunch, Shahla Ezazi, Amira Khair and Hibaaq Osman: What creative solutions are women using to challenge domestic violence in all its forms? What should the international community be doing to expand these strategies? and What could NWI do to bring attention to these initiatives?
- 12:15 Concurrent workshops** (participants pick one of two workshops):  
"Challenging Fundamentalisms" or "Advancing Economic Security"  
In each of these facilitated workshops, participants will discuss strategies that have worked and why, and the ways in which the international community could bolster these innovative approaches. Facilitators: Shareen Gokal, "Challenging Fundamentalisms," and Nani Zulminarni, "Advancing Economic Security."
- 13:30 Group photo**, followed by lunch
- 14:30 Walk around local countryside and shopping at Spiddall Market**
- 16:30 Engendering peace processes:** This session will look at diverse peace-building experiences from the Balkans and Iran, as well as proposals for engendering the peace process in the Middle East. This will be followed by a discussion to pursue questions as to what more should the international community be doing and what could NWI do to leverage their voice and power for women. Speakers include Robi Damelin, Igballe Rogova, Nadwa Sarandah and Maha Abu Daya Shamas. Moderator: Brene Brown.
- 18:00 Closing remarks by Betty Williams and Shirin Ebadi**
- 20:00 Dinner**
- 21:00 Close-up on Iran followed by optional open film night:** A video clip will be shown on the Million Signatures Petition in Iran with a discussion moderated by Nayereh Tohidi (with Shirin Ebadi, Parvin Ardalan and their Iranian colleagues) on how to prevent conflict escalation and protect women's rights. This will be followed by optional sharing of film clips and videos for those interested.

## Thursday, May 31, 2007

- 9:30 **Honoring Aung San Suu Kyi:** A video conversation with Burmese sister Laureate still under house arrest.
- 9:45 **Recap of Day 2 and naming priorities for Day 3** – Joanna Kerr
- 10:00 **Cluster bombs, nuclear weapons and other disarmament strategies:** This session will highlight the various recent campaigns and strategies for demilitarization and disarmament, including the Cluster Munitions Coalition and International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. How is gender relevant to weapons and getting rid of them? How are women participating, surmounting stereotypes and challenges, on these technically and politically complex issues? How can more women get engaged? Merav Datan, Felicity Hill and Nancy Ingram moderated by Lisa VeneKlasen.
- 11:30 Break
- 11:45 **International strategies for peace-building and access to justice:** This session will explore how we have most effectively used international normative frameworks and institutions including Security Council Resolution 1325 and the International Criminal Court. The panel will also look at the potential of the new UN agency in terms of meeting the needs of women on the ground, including addressing the issue of violence against women in conflict situations. Panelists Charlotte Bunch, Shirin Ershadi, Brigid Inder and Jane Akwero Odwong will draw out what we have learned, what new opportunities exist, and what the international community needs to be doing differently. Wangari Maathai will address the possibilities and challenges of making local, national and global links that accelerate change processes on the ground. Moderator: Nancee Oku Bright.
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 **How do we shift public opinion so that conflict resolution is seen as urgent and real outcomes are possible? How do we stop the media from only portraying women as victims?:** Both journalists and women's rights activists will share their insights on how best to use and influence the media in order to build a culture of peace and to make visible women's human rights activism. Small buzz groups will add to these strategies and bring them back to the larger group for discussion. Speakers include journalist Rana Husseini, with Sorya Azizpanah and Sanja Sarnavka. Moderator: Isabel Hilton.
- 16:00 Break
- 16:15 **Going forward: Recommendations for NWI action:** Lisa VeneKlasen and Nani Zulminarni will help digest the rich experiences of the conference by facilitating discussion of the key action steps recommended for NWI and conference participants.
- 17:30 **Closing plenary:** Liz Bernstein and the Laureates will close the conference, highlighting what they heard and ways they will move forward.
- 19:00 **Party!** This three-day event will end with a celebration that will feature comedian Shazia Mirza, Irish singer Elizabeth Madden, and our own song and dance!

## Session Summary

# OPENING AND WELCOME

**SPEAKER:** Betty Williams

### **This session's key points were:**

- » With “Céad míle fáilte” (“a hundred thousand welcomes” in Gaelic), Betty Williams welcomed participants to Ireland. She thanked us for enduring long journeys to join the Laureates in Galway. She recounted that it was her suggestion to hold the conference in Ireland because of Northern Ireland’s success in achieving peace after years of conflict (“It’s a miracle!”) and particularly because women were at the forefront of Northern Ireland’s peace movement. She said she wanted to share her beautiful country with us and hoped that we would be replenished by the remarkable scenery of Galway Bay. Betty recognized her sister Laureates: Jody Williams (one of her heroes), Shirin Ebadi (a magnificent beacon of hope for the people of Iran), Wangari Maathai (who showed that mother earth has to be protected) and Mairead Corrigan Maguire (who worked with Betty to bring peace to Northern Ireland).
- » Betty recognized sister Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been incarcerated for most of the last 17 years, although she is the democratically elected leader of the Burmese people. NWI has pledged to “fight tooth and nail for her freedom.” The Laureates together placed flowers and a photograph of Suu Kyi at the front of the room, where they would sit each day as a symbolic representation of her presence.
- » Betty described how NWI has a powerful force behind it, and by working together they can use the “Nobel” label to achieve great things for women.
- » Betty told us that every woman in the room was a Nobel Laureate. She named the more than 30 countries represented and asked participants to stand as their country was called. Women came from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas.
- » Betty reminded us that women have an amazing capacity for love. “When I travel the world, I see enormous hurt and pain and injustice, but also women who try to cope and fight this every day. We have a duty to all the women who can’t be here. I absolutely believe the power of women to change the world is something for everyone to witness (including good men).”
- » Betty read a message from the President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, who wished the conference success and congratulated us on our work to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people around the world.

Summary prepared from notes by Roja Bandari

*“It is by no means insignificant that Ireland was selected as the location of the first international conference of the Nobel Women’s Initiative. For three decades, women in Northern Ireland have played a consistent and progressive role in securing a lasting settlement. Our work can hopefully act as an inspiration to other women who are living in conflict situations.” –Mairead Corrigan Maguire*

## Session Summary

# WHY ARE WE HERE? THE GOALS AND PROCESS

**SPEAKER:** Jody Williams

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Jody Williams thanked us for our willingness to share our experiences and said her goal for the conference is that we come away with a vision of how we can link together in our work.
- » She described how NWI was born from a conversation in Nairobi in 2004 when Shirin Ebadi approached her with the idea that the women Nobel Peace Laureates work together to use the "prestige of the prize to benefit the women of the world." Jody and Shirin, in Nairobi at the time, discussed the idea with sister Laureate Wangari Maathai, who agreed to the project. By 2006, Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Rigoberta Menchu Tum had also agreed to take part in the Initiative. The only living woman Nobel Peace Laureate not involved in the Nobel Women's Initiative is Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains under house arrest in Burma.
- » Jody talked about NWI's vision of holding conferences every two years in a different region of the world to focus on issues of concern to women of that region. The next conference is expected to be in Guatemala in 2009.
- » Jody remarked that our work as women activists is often dismissed *because* we are women, as if the only things we can care about are "women's issues." "They think peace is for wimps who don't know how to stand up and fight for their rights." We need to send a strong message that women are empowered and we know what it means to build peace – it's hard work every single day.
- » In the entire 106-year history of the Nobel Peace Prize, only 12 women, seven alive today, have been recognized with the honor. "This means women were ignored in their fight for peace, while men who were making war won the prize!"
- » Jody introduced the purpose and process of the conference, saying that too often in our work we are afraid to mention the work of others, as if it will somehow detract from our own work. We need to share and learn from each other, and find the linkages that connect us so we can build our power as women. "We are all part of a continuum and we need to recognize our part in that continuum."
- » She asked participants to think about peace in terms of human security rather than national security. Human security is global security for the majority of the planet's people – enough food, water, resources and freedom to live and raise our families with dignity. That is security.
- » Jody closed by explaining that the Laureates are here to hear what they can do to help our work and that they expect we will share our ideas as well as listen to everyone else's suggestions. She said everyone deserves a chance to talk about their own struggles and share their work.

Summary prepared from notes by Roja Bandari

***"Through strategic dialogue we want to: understand how women in the Middle East are experiencing violence and conflict and why; examine creative approaches of women in the Middle East and elsewhere to challenge violence against women and armed conflict; explore what role the international community needs to play in order to amplify and strengthen integrated women's rights approaches to peace, security and access to justice."***

***—Nobel Women's Initiative***

## Session Summary

# HOW ARE WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT, AND WHY? AN OVERVIEW

**SPEAKER: Val Moghadam**

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Val Moghadam presented a summary of the multitude of forms of violence against women endemic to the Middle East and their causes.
- » There are macro structural issues pertaining to conflict and violence against women. We live in a capitalist world system that is intrinsically unequal and inherently conflictual. Social, ethnic and gender inequalities exist between and within countries. One of the most pervasive and universal of these is gender inequality.
- » We are in a period that some scholars identify as a *period of transition*. This is when a hegemonic power is in a state of decline, and competition and rivalries rise up to challenge it, thus creating chaos. Many conflicts are associated with this transition, but it also opens up a lot of opportunities for intervention.
- » We are seeing this *period of transition* now: the US decline is leading to the emergence of new conflicts as new forms of competition over power and resources emerge and create rivalries between different "hegemonic masculinities."
- » "Hegemonic masculinity," a concept central to gender analysis, is defined as "standards and ideals of real manhood in a particular culture and at a particular time" – essentially an "ideal form of manhood." This is at the root of many forms of violence and conflict, and it is systematically reproduced in families, religions, media, military, etc.
- » Gender identities are reproduced in constitutions, in family and religious institutions, by the media and in legal frameworks that reinforce these hierarchies of feminine and masculine.
- » Many states, as well as resistance movements, are masculinist and exclusivist. Because of this, women tend to be vulnerable at times of conflict *and* peace.
- » What causes conflict?
  - Legitimate grievances (perhaps because of a sense of oppression);
  - Greed (economics of war, competition over limited resources such as oil in the Middle East);
  - Creed (beliefs or competing nationalisms or grievances, such as the rise in Islamic fundamentalisms or the conflict between Israel and Palestine); and
  - Gender.
- » Importantly, all of these causes are dependent on the existence of a sizeable population of young men with access to weapons.
- » Social change must be done at all levels – macro, meso and micro.
  - Macro level – the level of the "world system" (women are not major decision-makers at this level);
  - Meso level – in organizations and institutions; and
  - Micro level – in small groups and at home.
- » Inequalities change through international solidarity and through strategies for *rights-based* development. For example, instead of an emphasis on nuclear technology, there would be an emphasis on people's equality and rights.
- » Women need to be represented in cultural decision-making *and* education. Participation in finance, engineering, etc., is okay, but in order to change, in order to raise good men, women have to be massively represented in the media and in cultural and education activities throughout society.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is being implemented in the West but not in the Middle East. We must work together with the international community to bring 1325's realities, in terms of women's protection and participation, to the Middle East.

## Related Documents:

- » Moghadam, Valentine M. 2007. Gender Dynamics of Violence and Conflicts: The Middle East in Global Context. Paper presented at the Nobel Women's Initiative First International Conference. See Appendix E.

Summary prepared from notes by Roja Bandari



Val Moghadam explains the various ways women are experiencing violence in the Middle East and the necessary steps to building "another world."

## Session Summary

# WOMEN'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A CLOSER LOOK

**SPEAKERS:** Shirin Ebadi, Farida Shaheed, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Nayereh Tohidi. **Moderator:** Joanna Kerr.

### This session's key points were:

- » Presenters looked at violence through different lenses, including religious fundamentalisms undermining women's legal rights, women's rights violations and the reviving challenges of identity politics, and domestic violence as part of the continuum of violence.
- » Shirin Ebadi provided background as to why the Middle East was chosen as the focus of the conference. Discrimination and violence against women occurs all over the world, but today the Middle East is experiencing another problem: war. Violence and discrimination against women worsens in times of war. Women are raped or widowed, they lose their children and their homes, and they come to bear the economic burdens of their families. Importantly, the war that Ebadi spoke of referred not only to interstate conflicts, but also to the "secret war" that non-democratic governments are waging against their own peoples (for example, in Saudi Arabia).
- » Farida Shaheed explained that "fundamentalism" is a modern phenomenon and is not tantamount to, or indicative of, "tradition." It pertains to power and politics, not to religion. Fundamentalists are modern *political forces* seeking to capture state power.
- » The issue of collective identity is at the heart of women's issues. Collective identities are negotiated, and therefore they reflect power relations. We need to work on changing entire societies, not just "women" in isolation.
- » Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian discussed domestic violence as part of the continuum of violence, and questioned how we can discuss, intervene in, challenge and research domestic violence without harming the victims and reinforcing colonial stereotypes. She posed this question in relation to the Palestinian context, using a feminist lens to analyze Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- » She discussed the development of women-oriented strategies that protect domestic space and use creative counter-spaces to rebuild the family home.
- » She noted that oppression gives rise to frustration, and culture and customs are glorified in order to retain some sense of power and to survive. Victimization results in an increased desire to have some agency (i.e., a role in resisting the occupation).
- » We need to recognize different modes of resistance, such as women's narratives and women's art forms, and to link stories of victimization with those of success, power and emerging voices.
- » Nayereh Tohidi addressed the dilemma Muslim women are facing in the post-9/11 context, and how many Muslim communities are experiencing mega insecurity as the "war on terror" and "Islamophobia" prevail.
- » Some assertions of communal identity that resulted from the tension and intolerance of the post-9/11 period are fundamentalist. For example, the nuclear issue in Iran has turned women's rights into a pawn trapped between two hegemonic masculinities.
- » This is what Nayereh calls the "double-blackmail against women" – a promise on behalf of the internal masculinist patriarchy to protect women's faith and honor (in return for allegiance/loyalty), and a promise from external masculinist forces to protect women's rights, liberty and freedom (also in return for allegiance/loyalty).
- » Sanja Sarnavka emphasized the importance of remembering other religious fundamentalisms, such as Catholicism, and how religious fundamentalists from otherwise opposing ideologies support each other in order to resist women's rights.
- » Yanar Mohammad revealed that at the dawn of the occupation of Iraq, there were over 400 women's NGOs in the country. Now, there are only three or four. Who is now left to support the women of Iraq? The left (in Western communities) is not an option because women's rights are not on their agenda. So these types of gatherings (the NWI conference) are the only way to support women in some cases.
- » Nayereh commented that the Bush administration currently claims to support the women's movement and women's rights, when it has more often than not acted against women's interests.
- » Shirin Ebadi pointed out that some problems have cultural solutions (e.g., challenging fundamentalisms), and some have legal solutions (e.g., eliminating polygamy).

- » She also reminded us that to address war we should not turn to governments solely, but look to civil society as well. It is the responsibility of civil society to pressure their governments to stop fighting.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » More must be done to raise awareness of how Muslims are, or can be, involved in their own futures. Dominant reactions right now are to pity Muslims or to remain (by choice) ignorant about them. We need to act as a voice testifying to Muslims' agency in non-Muslim countries.
- » Yanar Mohammad emphasized the need for a secular women's rights television program in Iraq, which could then expand worldwide through regional outlets. NWI can support women's rights through their access to media.
- » Shirin Ebadi recommended that a statue be erected in every capital city of the world to honor the primary victims of war: women and children. Most capital cities have a statue for the "unknown soldier" of war. We should also show respect for the "unknown victims" of war. When a man dies in a war, it is the end of his life, his fighting and his suffering. For women, war only signifies the beginning of her suffering.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Shaheed, Farida. 2007. Religious Fundamentalisms and Women's Rights. Paper presented at the Nobel Women's Initiative First International Conference. See Appendix F.
- » Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Nadera. 2005. Counter-Spaces as Resistance in Conflict Zones: Palestinian Women Recreating a Home. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 17 (3/4): 109-41. Available at <https://www.haworthpress.com/store/ArticleAbstract.asp?sid=ATLT214VXP858JLN98G9Q7HUEX6Q82W3&ID=81835>.
- » Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Nadera. 2004. Racism, Militarisation and Policing: Police Reactions to Violence against Palestinian Women in Israel. *Social Identities* 10 (2): 171-94.
- » Nayereh Tohidi. 2007. Women's Rights Violations and the Reviving Challenges of Identity Politics. Paper presented at the Nobel Women's Initiative First International Conference.

Summary prepared from notes by Rebecca Barlow

## Session Summary

# LESSONS FROM DARFUR

**SPEAKERS:** Jody Williams and Nang Lao Liang Won

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Jody Williams provided a short report based on her United Nations Human Rights Council High-Level Mission to Darfur, and Nang Lao Liang Won discussed how case studies of both Darfur and Burma show that rape is systematically being used as a weapon of war. Identifying linkages between the various rights violations affecting women around the world will mean a real movement of solidarity for the international women's rights movement.
- » Jody opened by highlighting the complexity of her decision to take part in the Mission to Darfur. She concluded that her visit and her report presented to the Council have made a difference, if only to reconfirm and add to the now colossal evidence that the government in Khartoum is carrying out crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.
- » She spoke of her frustration – not just with the government of Khartoum, but with the states that are members of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. It was clear that many do not wish to condemn Sudan for fear that their own human rights records would be examined.
- » This, Jody stated, reflects the unwillingness of states to exercise their responsibility to protect civilians. Governments, including those of the African Union, lack the political will to bring an end to the suffering of the women, men and children of Darfur. Silence is complicity.
- » Nang Lao Liang Won provided a brief overview of the situation in Burma, highlighting that Burma has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Its record can be linked directly to the country's expenditure on the military, which accounts for 40 percent of the national budget (making it the largest military in South Asia). Only 1 percent of the national budget is spent on education and health.
- » Burmese women suffer particularly and are at risk of sexual violence. Such violence is used to:
  - Control the Burmese people;
  - Exploit ethnic areas;
  - Terrorize local communities; and
  - Humiliate women and their families and “reward” the perpetrators.
- » A 2002 report, *License to Rape*, provides evidence of the high levels of rape in Burma: it documents 173 incidences (where a total of 625 women were raped), 83 percent of which were reported to have involved military officers.
- » Sexual violence continues because a system of complete impunity is in place for perpetrators, highlighted in the 2004 report *System of Impunity*.
- » Other notable reports for more information include *Catwalk to the Barracks* and *State of Terror*.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » Linkages must be made between what is happening in Sudan and Burma, and the investments in both countries by multinational corporations; corporations need to be held accountable by consumers. Disinvestment campaigns (as exemplified in the U.S. by campaigns against corporations such as PetroChina) should be further developed and used to raise awareness and accountability on the issues of Darfur and Burma.
- » NWI should write and encourage the Norwegian government to divest from Sudan.
- » We must urge our media contacts to highlight real news affecting women, not just celebrity news.
- » The 2008 Olympics in China are being termed the “Genocide Olympics”; however, this condemnation should include not just China's involvement in Darfur, but also its involvement in Burma and beyond.
- » We must end the impunity of state actors: name and shame.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Williams, Jody. 2007. Fleeing the Janjaweed: A People Brutalized and Betrayed. *The Independent*, March 24.
- » Williams, Jody, and Mia Farrow. 2007. Sudan's Enablers. *The Wall Street Journal*, May 24.
- » *The Report on the High-Level Mission on the Situation of Human Rights in Darfur* is available at [http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/issues.php?WEBYEP\\_DI=3](http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/issues.php?WEBYEP_DI=3).

- » *License to Rape* is available at <http://www.shanland.org/resources/bookpub/humanrights/LtoR>.
- » *System of Impunity* is available at [http://www.womenofburma.org/Report/SYSTEM\\_OF\\_IMPUNITY.pdf](http://www.womenofburma.org/Report/SYSTEM_OF_IMPUNITY.pdf).
- » *Catwalk to the Barracks* is available at [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/bpsai/articles\\_publications/publications/hrfmcawalk\\_20050701](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/bpsai/articles_publications/publications/hrfmcawalk_20050701).
- » *State of Terror* is available at <http://www.karenwomen.org/Reports/state%20of%20terror%20report.pdf>.

Summary prepared from notes by Jameen Kaur



Jody Williams listens to conference participants' ideas about taking action against the human rights situation in Burma and the Darfur region of Sudan.

## Session Summary

# POWER MAPPING

**SPEAKERS:** Rashida Dohad, Joanna Kerr, Valerie Miller and Nani Zulminarni. **Moderator:** Lisa VeneKlasen.

### This session's key points were:

- » Lisa VeneKlasen began the session and presented an overview of three dimensions of power: visible, hidden and invisible power. Participants then broke into small groups for a facilitated discussion with the goals of (1) identifying the actors and forces operating in each of the three dimensions of power, and (2) identifying the implications of these power dynamics for our strategies and responses in support of women, i.e., how does power create obstacles to breaking the continuum of violence affecting women globally? Some groups also discussed formal vs. informal power and visible vs. invisible power, and the various permutations and combinations of these.
- » The root problem for women lies in visible power: the victimized begin to internalize the perpetrators' discourse, which in turn causes more violence.
- » The international community represents a visible form of power as the financers and legitimizers of violence and injustice around the world.
- » The non-use of power must be recognized as an abuse of power – for example, being in the position to do so but not speaking out against the Palestinian occupation.
- » Examining power in Iran, participants agreed that clearly the government represents a formal and visible form of power, but Iranian women have also influenced society through their husbands who have power, representing an invisible form of power.
- » Public opinion is another form of power. Few Iranian activists have any power in the government, but the public respects someone like Shirin Ebadi's opinion. However, the government has control over television and radio, and its message penetrates deep into every household, so it has direct access to public opinion where activists do not.
- » It is important to note that women in Iran and other parts of the world also act as agents of violence against their children, often due to a lack of education: their power in the home is thus being abdicated. Another example of this abdication is honor killings where mothers or mothers-in-law act as the persecutors. We see patriarchy using these women as an object for oppressing other women.
- » Some women are able to gain power in the patriarchal system, but having more women in power positions does not necessarily mean they will represent the concerns of the women's movement. We see examples of women intrigued by the possibility of garnering a share of the power, then when they get it, they reinforce the same hard line and rigid policies as men in order to maintain and protect their power (e.g., some women in the Iranian Parliament).
- » Iranian activists have tried to be dynamic in their methods of dealing with power. To avoid the high price of pressuring the government overtly, they try to impact public opinion with face-to-face campaign methods like the One Million Signatures Campaign.
- » Sometimes invisible and informal power can be more effective than visible and formal power.
- » In Iraq visible power is the government and those who control the local resources, including the media.
- » The dehumanizing power of the media must be kept in mind. Those who can define power have power.
- » In Uganda, specifically North Uganda, hidden powers do not want the peace talks to succeed, and rebels are increasingly pushing statements to contradict reports of progress.
- » In Burma, information is power, so by blocking information and communication, the power structure is maintained. Because those in control lack a coherent set of policies, this hidden power is used to terrorize as they pick and choose what, when and why to condemn things.
- » Wars do not end – they always persist inside of people, and this often manifests in domestic violence. Why doesn't the media go into post-conflict societies and investigate this psychological impact? Often the media stays away from such contexts because they do not have the understanding to discuss the issues at hand.
- » Betty Williams pointed out that to do her work effectively, she feels the need to stay under the media radar. "The first thing that disappears in war is the truth."
- » The media (specifically in Palestine) is either brainless entertainment or fundamentalist propaganda, posing a huge problem for peaceful progress.
- » To change the dynamics of power, we must acknowledge the resistance on the ground, wherever it is coming from, and

make the invisible visible. For example, schoolgirls daily have to cross checkpoints in Gaza; their voices must be heard and noted because their resistance reflects activism speaking truth to power.

- » The destruction of the home through house demolitions is a key form of violence against women and an example of the overt exercise of the powerful over the powerless – whether it be house demolitions in Palestine or village burnings in Burma or Darfur. When a house is demolished, a woman loses her sense of place, her power, her security, her value.
- » The International Criminal Court (ICC) has the power to decide what cases the court will hear. Attention should be paid to those states that support or criticize the ICC. For instance, the definition of a Crime of Aggression is to be adopted in 2009, but at this juncture it is up to the Security Council to determine whether or not a crime of aggression has occurred, meaning members of the Security Council are unlikely be tried for such crimes.
- » Women's Transformation Watch is trying to identify those moments and experiences where women are pushing the edges of the envelopes to create awareness, momentum, exemplary successes and inspiration – how can NWI join them?

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » We need to look at the issues/problems/strategies from another angle. Often classical feminist activism (for example, rallies) does not resonate with the masses. Other strategies that should be pursued include targeting the content of school textbooks (searching for covert sources of patriarchy) or promoting provocative forms of artwork.
- » We need to identify opportunities to redefine and manipulate the patriarchal structure. For example, in order to highlight fathers' sexual abuse of their children, the cases of boys were intentionally publicized because if abuse of a girl were highlighted, the issue would have been diluted by arguments of family honor, shame, etc. In contrast, the abuse of boys caused national shock that this was being allowed to happen. The victim's voice was given space.
- » We need to raise awareness of engendered crimes among judges and civilian police. This is a critical next step. Raising awareness is vital to making the invisible power visible. We also need to sensitize the aid coming in and question the use of development money to train the military and police.
- » In Iran women don't have any formal power. We should establish and empower a number of NGOs the way farmers sow seeds; maybe out of 100, only 10 of the NGOs will be successful. The NGOs would have specific goals like education, helping single woman households, widows, etc. Even those who are afraid to get involved in politics can get involved in NGOs like these as a means to gain power.
- » The majority of women depicted by the media in areas of war and conflict are those that have been raped. There is a need to put forward the experiences of strong, diverse women in these areas, so women around the world can more successfully identify with those in conflict situations and quit the "othering."
- » We need an international mentoring program, a collective voice to spread the stories of individuals far and wide.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Miller, Valerie, Lisa VeneKlasen, Molly Reilly and Cindy Clark, with ideas and inspiration from John Gaventa, Srilatha Batliwala, Malena de Montis, et al. 2006. *Power: Concepts for Revisioning Power for Justice, Equality and Peace*. Making Change Happen, nos. 3 and 4. Just Associates Reports. Available at <http://www.justassociates.org>.

Summary prepared from notes by all rapporteurs

## Session Summary

# POWER AND ITS IMPACT

**SPEAKERS: Antonia Juhasz, Yanar Mohammed and Zeina Zaatari. Facilitator: Mary Ellen McNish. The session was summarized with remarks by Mairead Corrigan Maguire.**

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Rape, trafficking, domestic violence, forced veiling, colonialism, occupation, false imprisonment, corruption of legal systems and war all have at their heart the exercise of power, particularly corporations and powerful aid agencies that actually reinforce structural causes of conflict.
- » Antonia Juhasz described the role and economic agenda of the US government and corporations in the Middle East.
- » There has been a mass consolidation of oil companies in the past 10 years and these companies are closely linked to weapons manufacturers. The Cheney Energy Task Force devised a new energy policy for the US and in doing so mapped out a plan for Iraq, all in the hegemonic pursuit of the little oil that is left in the world.
- » The Bush Administration (<http://www.thebushagenda.net>) has pursued and drafted a new law - the Iraq Oil Law - to transform Iraq's nationalized oil system to a privatized system owned by foreign companies. This would prevent Iraq's involvement with OPEC, meaning no state control over its production levels.
- » Yanar Mohammad described various responses on the ground in Iraq to the outside imposition of a US occupation on an extremist Islamist regime.
- » Iraqi women are watching heartache, suffering and beatings on television. We need to ask who is funding these channels? Given that 60 percent of Iraq's population are women, targeting women's media is the key to changing society in Iraq. Iraq is the epicenter of change, of liberation.
- » A progressive, women-led television channel is needed, one that is informative, empowering and instrumental for women in the Middle East and around the world.
- » Zeina Zaatari described other interests at play, including the role of the UN and large international aid agencies and intergovernmental organizations in the economic, development and human rights work in the region.
- » US funding in Iraq is going to democracy training for women (constitutional, electoral and democratic practices), but there is no focus on addressing *violence*.
- » A depoliticalization of advocacy and of funding is taking place.
- » We need a different way of engagement that really contributes to movement building and challenges the role of foundations and donors and their policies.
- » The problem with international aid is that it is primarily driven by donors' agendas. The aid reflects perceived needs and desires rather than authentic ones.
- » What arenas are fundable in Iraq? Education is popular to fund, but we see the US going in and completely recreating the educational systems through the eyes of the Western world. Micro financing is popular, but this assumes that with only a little money women can save or rebuild entire communities. This fails to address the structural problems and doesn't effectively remove women from the conditions of their own exploitation and harassment.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » We can no longer afford to address only the symptoms with aid: we must address the causes or we are wasting time, money and hope.
- » NWI should coordinate a strong campaign to keep Iraqi oil in the hands of Iraqis, not oil companies. (An NWI statement opposing the Iraq Oil Law, issued after the conference, can be found in Appendix C.)
- » NWI should continue its efforts to oppose the US's going to war with Iran.

## Related Documents:

- » Juhasz, Antonia. 2006. It's Still All About Oil in Iraq. *Los Angeles Times*, December 8. Available at <http://www.bushagenda.net/article.php?id=301>.
- » Juhasz, Antonia. 2007. Whose Oil Is It, Anyway? *The New York Times*, March 13. Available at <http://www.bushagenda.net/article.php?id=369>.
- » Mahmoud, Houzan, and Rega Rauf, campaign coordinators. 2007. International Campaign against Killings and Stoning of Women in Kurdistan. Petition. Available at <http://www.petitiononline.com/kurdish/petition.html>.

Summary prepared from notes by Amelia Korangy



[L to R] Mary Ellen McNish, Zeina Zaatari and speaking, Antonia Juhasz.

## Session Summary

# LESSONS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

**SPEAKERS: Anne Carr and Bronagh Hinds. Moderator: Terry Greenblatt.**

### **This session's key points were:**

- » The discussion was based on exploring how we build peace and move forward after conflict.
- » Anne Carr and Bronagh Hinds, leaders working on peace and conflict resolution in Northern Ireland, discussed what lessons we can learn from their experiences, and how these lessons can be applied in other regions to address conflict and violence against women.
- » Anne Carr shared that peace came about in Ireland because people worked hard for it – particularly women. She reiterated previous speakers' emphasis that peace-building is not an easy undertaking and should be recognized as hard work.
- » How does peace come about? Dialogue starts and begins to dispel myths about what the "other side" is about. People eventually begin to move forward, not necessarily for themselves, but often for the sake of the next generation – for their children. They understand another reality must be achieved and begin to believe in this other reality. They begin to believe it is possible and this hope makes all the difference in a peace movement. Keeping hope and vision alive is the most important strategy in building peace.
- » Over the years in Northern Ireland, activists saw change in the way the media covered the conflict. The media reporting began to include some good, peaceful, hopeful news. This represented a big change from the sensationalized stories the country was used to. It was important to keep the personal story alive at all times because this is how you reach people.
- » Bronagh Hinds addressed how conflict impacts women and vice versa. Women have to be resilient and resist. They have to use their power for action.
- » Bronagh commented that we at the conference were focusing too much on what *kind* of woman gets to the table. She said it is critical that we have as many women involved in negotiations as possible. We need a "critical mass" and looking for the "perfect" women representatives is a recipe for failure.
- » The Northern Ireland conflict was centuries old and was not about religion, but more about territory, about power and control, much like conflicts we see around the world today.
- » Bronagh commented that during the ceasefire, women in Northern Ireland organized themselves across the community. They made links and built connections, and because Northern Ireland was high on the international agenda, they attended not just national debates but also European Union and United Nation debates.
- » It was important that the women utilized and channeled their anger. Recognizing that government representatives would not get the job done, women formed their own coalition: The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. The Coalition worked with three main principles from the UN Beijing Platform for Action: Inclusion, Human Rights and Equality.
- » Addressing a question about the issue of weapons and disarming, and "men separating themselves from masculinity," the panelists commented that all weapons had to be destroyed; otherwise it would have turned into humiliation for one of the sides. Sometimes peace is a balancing act.
- » Peace comes with conditions and compromises for both sides. We have to let go of all our wants and begin to ask what can we live with.
- » Peace must also be a relationship among equals. As one participant noted regarding the issue of Palestinians, "To coexist, one must first exist."

Summary prepared from notes by Jameen Kaur

## Session Summary

# BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL ATTENTION AND SOLUTIONS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ALL ITS FORMS

**SPEAKERS:** Charlotte Bunch, Amira Khair, Shahla Ezazi and Hibaaq Osman. **Host:** Rana Hussein.

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Two forms of violence against women exist – public and private violence – and both must be addressed if we are to effectively deal with this issue. We have to name and accurately describe the reality of violence against women. Domestic violence is one of the most universal of women's issues.
- » International strategies on domestic violence must be aimed at how we can change *the culture* of violence in the world. There is a direct link: accepting violence in the home comes from accepting violence on the streets and in communities, and the violence of war. All these things create a culture of violence that is perpetuated at every level.
- » A fundamental shift in community attitudes must be achieved in order to address the linkages between violence against women in the home, and war and militarism in the larger world.
- » There is more violence perpetrated by girls today than 30 years ago because girls got the message that empowerment equals violence. Movies, video games, toys and television contribute to developing this culture of violence. It is important that men and boys be sensitized to this issue as well.
- » From an international perspective, shame, addiction and humiliation seem to be at the core of people who perpetuate violence. Unemployment in particular has been shown to have a huge link to domestic violence.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » More effort should be made to support women in the Middle East with shelters and organizations. We need to increase public awareness of the realities of domestic violence, as well as correct misinterpretations of religious texts as they relate to domestic violence.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Karama Program: Middle East and North Africa. A network of activists working to end violence against women on their own terms. Contact Hibaaq Osman and Sarah Vaill. More information available at <http://www.vdaykarama.org>.

Summary prepared from notes by Amelia Korangy

## Session Summary

# CHALLENGING FUNDAMENTALISMS

**FACILITATOR: Shareen Gokal**

**During this session participants worked in small groups. The notes below are from one of those groups and the large group discussion that followed.**

In the small groups, participants were asked to address (1) innovative strategies for challenging religious fundamentalisms (Who are the allies in these strategies? What has been the result of the strategies and why?), and (2) what is needed for more effective collaboration among local, regional and international groups to challenge fundamentalisms.

### **Key points included:**

- » One strategy cited was Muslim women's efforts to bring together scholars and activists to fund and create women muftis who could offer gender-enlightened interpretations of religious texts so as to challenge those who claim to speak on their behalf in accordance with conservative readings of the faith.
- » However, this kind of strategy does not effectively address the problem of how to delegitimize fundamentalist readings of the faith, and break fundamentalist control over Islamic sources.
- » The point was raised that Western governments' propaganda against Iran serves to reinforce and expand fundamentalist forces.
- » Focusing on Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East also shifts the focus away from, or in fact shields, Christian fundamentalism in the United States, which is equally resistant to full gender equality and women's human rights.
- » The point was raised that "fundamentalism" needs to be understood as a political issue, not a religious issue per se. That is, fundamentalism attempts through repression to maintain centralized power at all costs. Therefore, an issue central to the question of how to challenge fundamentalisms is the separation of religion and state.
- » It was suggested that "extremism" is a better word than "fundamentalism" since the latter means to go back to one's basics, and conservative religious forces challenge their opponents who label them as "fundamentalists" by asking what is wrong with returning to the underlying premises of the faith?

Summary prepared from notes by Rebecca Barlow

## Session Summary

# ADVANCING ECONOMIC SECURITY

**FACILITATOR:** Nani Zulminarni

During this session participants worked in small groups. The notes below are from one of those groups and the large group discussion that followed.

### Key points included:

- » Gender justice equals social justice. A gender process is needed to tackle the inequality of accessing resources. This process must be enforced and implied at every level: local, regional, national and international.
- » Reconstruction programs are where the money is after a conflict. Women are often excluded from the negotiation table, and the result is little to no emphasis on generating income for women. Also, to tackle corruption, reconstruction funding should be given in phases.
- » To increase the political representation by women, the supply pool of women candidates has to be increased, so as to increase choice. We must move away from the “perfect candidate” thesis.
- » Economic rights are not stand-alone rights and cannot be addressed in isolation. All rights are connected: economic, social, cultural, civil and political. Too often the data examining poverty lacks a gender analysis. It is important to question who is producing this data.
- » International financial institutions (IFIs) dominate policy. Despite all the best initiatives, cooperatives, regional legislation, national legislation, etc., policies by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund sweep all equality legislation aside. (It was noted that more alternative banks, such as the Grameen Bank, will help to counteract IFI policies.)

### Recommendations from this workshop included:

- » Advancing economic security will involve (1) working to ensure business and corporate accountability by collaborating with organizations addressing business practices and human rights, and (2) efforts to help people take control of their own resources (e.g., oil in Iraq).

Summary prepared from notes by Jameen Kaur



Nani Zulminarni facilitates a small group discussion.

## Session Summary

# ENGENDERING THE PEACE PROCESS

**SPEAKERS:** Robi Damelin, Igballe Rogova, Nadwa Sarandah and Maha Abu Daya Shamas. **Moderator:** Brene Brown.

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Each panelist began by sharing her experiences to give participants a sense of the historical, political and personal context of her work. This was followed by a discussion about the specific strategies and approaches that have been effective in their work, including what tools have worked and what barriers participants might expect in similar work.
- » Engendering the peace process means focusing on the human level of conflict, and providing the networks, voices and support to those on the ground while connecting them to the decision-makers and stakeholders around the world.
- » Conversations about grief, hope and empathy are essential tools of activism. Recognizing this and teaching the power of shared conversations and empathy as tools for building peace is critical for our work.
- » Igballe Rogova described how women's leadership in Kosovo flourished before the war in 1999. Women shared leadership – politically, socially and economically. In 1999 the United Nations was given a mandate to govern Kosovo, after which women's role in society as key decision-makers had to be reestablished parallel with the developing civil society. The UN ignored the intense women's movement that had developed in the 1990s and imposed a patriarchal system, systematically excluding women from making decisions about the reconstruction of their country. Instead of devoting their energy to rebuilding their country, women had to dedicate their time to demanding to be heard by international decision-makers.
- » The Kosova Women's Network was founded in 2000 to advocate for gender equality at all levels, using UN Security Council Resolution 1325 directly and indirectly to engender the peace process.
- » The network reached out to Serbian women. They cooperated and supported each other, both during and after the war. In 2006 Serbian and Kosovar women established the Women's Peace Coalition.
- » Igballe shared with us stories of women singing and dancing together in refugee camps and highlighted the importance of individuals' being able to use their own methods of healing during times of conflict.
- » Maha Abu Daya Shamas explained that in understanding the connectivity of the public violence in Palestine, the war, the destruction of homes, etc., it became clear that they had to return to focusing on women in conflict in order to really help families and society at large.
- » Robi Damelin, from Israel, and Nadwa Sarandah, of Palestine, shared their personal experiences of losing loved ones to conflict. They are both members of the Parents' Circle Families Forum, an organization of over 500 bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families who have all lost close relatives to the violence in the Middle East.
- » Together Robi and Nadwa spoke about channeling their grief into the pursuit of reconciliation and understanding. They also shared part of a documentary film called *Encounter Point* that follows Israelis and Palestinians as they risk their lives and public standing to promote a nonviolent end to the conflict. (For more information and to watch the trailer of the film go to: <http://www.encounterpoint.com>.)
- » It was noted that access to justice (an apology for past violations) is vital to reconciliation. The reality is that conflict is about power – not religion – and to publicize this is difficult but essential.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » We were encouraged to focus on some of the *fruits* of conflict – for example, the art, film and music that emerges.
- » We need to educate people that violence is a choice at every level and teach nonviolent choices.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Rogova, Igballe. 2007. Engendering Peace Processes. Paper presented at the Nobel Women's Initiative First International Conference. See Appendix G.

Summary prepared from notes by Amelia Korangy

## Session Summary

# CLOSING REMARKS

**SPEAKERS:** Shirin Ebadi and Betty Williams

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Shirin Ebadi spoke more about the importance of an "unknown victim" statue to represent the true heroes that survive conflict - women and children. It is important that the statue represent pride and the resistance of women in times of conflict.
- » There was some debate about the statue - its clothing, the fact that it emphasizes the role of mother, etc.
- » Given that much discussion at the conference had centered on women's voices and their ability to be heard at the highest levels, NWI resolved to use its access to address this issue and be a vehicle for women's voices.
- » Women activists in the United States also need support and assistance in their resistance.

Summary prepared from notes by Jameen Kaur



A model for the "unknown victim" statue, created by artist Shoreh Ershadi

## Session Summary

# CLOSE-UP ON IRAN

**SPEAKERS:** Shirin Ebadi, Parvin Adalan and Nayereh Tohidi

### **This session's key points were:**

- » A video clip on the One Million Signatures Campaign was shown, followed by discussion on how to prevent the escalation of conflict between the US and Iran, and how to protect women's rights in Iran.
- » The One Million Signatures Campaign is a grassroots campaign to collect signatures from Iranians on a petition demanding a change in laws that discriminate against women. Some examples of these laws include: if a car hits a man and a woman in the street, the woman's life is worth half that of the man's; the compensation paid for a man is twice that of a woman's; in court, the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man; and a man can marry four wives and get a divorce easily, but for women divorce is incredibly difficult.
- » Iranian women oppose these laws, and feminist movements in Iran are strong, despite the risks. Many activists and signature campaigners have been detained and given jail sentences.
- » The campaign does not have a leader, a central office or branches – there is no hierarchy. The movement rests in the hands of every single Iranian. It's a democratic movement. The lack of a figurehead or single leader has made it stronger and more sustainable: if the campaign had leaders, imprisoning or killing them could destroy the whole movement. Instead, when one person is sent to jail, the rest keep working.
- » Importantly, the campaign is also an educational process. A lot of dialogue occurs when campaigners are face to face with people, informing them about the discriminatory laws and their human rights. This process of dialogue is a great achievement in itself.
- » The campaign is transparent, non-ideological, nonhierarchical and nonsectarian. It has brought together women from different backgrounds, ideologies and regions of Iran. Most campaigners are from the younger generation (the majority of Iranians are under 30) and rely on the experiences and advice of the previous generation of feminists. The campaign's pragmatic approach is the outcome of a lot of learning and much trial and error in activism inside Iran.
- » Some international support can be harmful to the campaign. Comments that the campaign is supported by Western countries or that the campaign is aimed at changing the government of Iran can put the lives of activists in danger. Iranians do not need military action from the West to "save" them. They can bring change to their country themselves.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » Jody Williams agreed to participate in an interview with conference rapporteur and emerging activist Roja Bandari to spread awareness about the campaign in the US.
- » International support can be shown by collecting signatures, either on paper or on the campaign's website <http://www.we-change.org>. (The government of Iran has censored the website several times, but each time campaigners reestablish the site immediately.) Importantly, however, international supporters should be sensitive and mindful that some forms of support can be harmful; they should seek guidance from campaigners about what type of support is wanted or needed.
- » Non-Iranian signatures are important, especially from other Muslim or Middle Eastern women. Signatures from women in countries such as Palestine and Syria, Iran's allies, can be very helpful.

Summary prepared from notes by Roja Bandari

## Session Summary

# HONORING AUNG SAN SUU KYI

**SPEAKER:** Nang Lao Liang Won

### **This session's key points were:**

- » A recorded video conversation between Aung San Suu Kyi and her sister Laureates was shown, highlighting Suu Kyi's struggle for democracy in Burma.
- » Nang Lao Liang Won updated us on Suu Kyi's current situation, including that on May 25, 2007, Suu Kyi's house arrest was extended for another year by the Burmese military regime.
- » She informed us that Suu Kyi's 62<sup>nd</sup> birthday was approaching (June 19, 2007) and suggested that we send birthday cards to her home.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » The Women's League of Burma is organizing a postcard campaign calling for Suu Kyi's release; conference participants were encouraged to support this effort. For more information go to <http://www.womenofburma.org/>.
- » Jody Williams and Liz Bernstein visited Suu Kyi in February 2003 (13 Nobel Laureates were denied visas to see her in January 2007). During their visit, Suu Kyi made it clear that nonviolence was the path her party wanted to continue down. She said it was crucial for the international community to isolate Burma's military regime. She recommended that we stop tourism, stop investment and press the international community to highlight human rights violations in Burma.

Summary prepared from notes by Rebecca Barlow



Conference participants watch a recorded video conversation between Aung San Suu Kyi and other women Nobel Peace Laureates.

## Session Summary

# CLUSTER BOMBS, NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND DISARMAMENT STRATEGIES

**SPEAKERS:** Merav Datan, Felicity Hill and Nancy Ingram. **Moderator:** Lisa VeneKlasen

### This session's key points were:

- » Campaigns and strategies for demilitarization and disarmament were highlighted, and the relevance of gender to both issues was addressed.
- » Felicity Hill presented the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).
- » Polls show that the vast majority of governments and people don't want nuclear weapons. Governments in possession of weapons are making undemocratic decisions that affect our security – for us now and for future generations.
- » Talking about the issue of nuclear weapons is NOT retro – unfortunately it is very 2007. There is a war raging in Iraq that was started on the pretext of weapons of mass destruction. Speaking out about this is also not “feminine.” There is a powerful (mis)association of masculinity with war and weapons, and, conversely, femininity and weakness with disarmament.
- » Ideas about gender matter. Ideas shape, limit and distort discourse and political processes. These ideas are a preemptive deterrent to dealing with the effects and consequences of weapons.
- » Political power revolves around the issue of nuclear weapons. Israel says peace first, then disarmament. In Iran tension is building over nuclear weapons that don't even exist at this stage.
- » There is hope. The number of nuclear weapons has come down, and we've seen other weapons systems successfully banned. We need a nuclear weapons convention like the landmines convention.
- » Merav Datan emphasized the attitude of people in the policy or science areas of nuclear weapons that keeps women out of these discussions: “You don't understand the issues; leave it to us.”
- » Signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) include five nuclear weapon states and 188 non-nuclear weapon states. States not a party to the treaty include India, Israel and Pakistan.
- » The Middle East is the region with the greatest concentration of states that are not a party to one or more of the international treaties dealing with weapons of mass destruction. Although the goal of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in the Middle East has been continuously affirmed by the international community, the media and other analysis shows a trend toward the proliferation of weapons in the Middle East, serving to provoke fear and to threaten peace, stability and security in the region.
- » Nuclear energy is *not* clean energy. Waste is produced at every stage of the nuclear cycle. This type of energy is expensive and it's dangerous. To address energy security, we need to invest in sustainable energy resources. (Felicity Hill has provided participants a DVD documentary on the science of climate change and the nuclear fuel chain. It is included with this report.)
- » Nancy Ingram argued that you don't need to be an expert to discuss weapons policies. She described a new international treaty process under way to address cluster munitions. These bombs are extremely dangerous and indiscriminate: 98 percent of cluster bomb victims are civilians and 20 percent are children.
- » The 2006 conflict in Lebanon drew international attention to the effects of cluster munitions on civilians. Four million cluster submunitions were dropped by Israel, most of them in the last 72 hours of the war.
- » Cluster munitions have incredibly high failure rates, and when they fail to explode, they fall to the ground or hang in trees, etc., acting like anti-personnel mines. Post-conflict recovery of cluster munitions is therefore very difficult: they have to be treated like live landmines.
- » These weapons impact women and men differently. For example, male landmine victims are given priority to receive a prosthesis as they are the “main breadwinners.” Often women lack access to medical care, face more discrimination and carry the burden of unpaid work in case of a family member's injury.
- » We're experiencing a unique window of opportunity. A treaty outside “business as usual” is required to address cluster munitions, and the treaty process is under way right now.

## Recommendations from this session included:

- » Continue to challenge the lies that violence and war are inevitable or “human nature,” and the related lie that weapons bring strength and security.
- » Support ICAN’s call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. For information, go to <http://www.icanw.org/take-action>.
- » Support the Cluster Munition Coalition’s push for a new treaty addressing cluster bombs. Find out where your country stands and urge them to support the treaty. For information, go to <http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/dokumenti/dokument.asp?id=45>.
- » Call states with nuclear weapons “Nuclear Weapons States” – that’s what they are.
- » Support declaring the Middle East a Nuclear Free Zone.
- » Use every opportunity to pressure the UN Security Council that instead of arms races and weapons profiteering, they should be producing a plan to control arms and reduce the waste of human and economic resources on arms, per Article 26 of the UN Charter.
- » Don’t support nuclear energy.

## Related Documents:

- » Cohn, Carol, with Felicity Hill and Sara Ruddick. 2005. The Relevance of Gender for Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction. Reported created for the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC). Available at <http://www.wmdcommission.org>. See also Appendix J.
- » Greenpeace. 2007. Briefing: Conditions for a Nuclear Free Middle East. See Appendix K.
- » Greenpeace. 2007. *Climate of Hope: Climate change, nuclear power and the energy revolution*. DVD documentary included with this report. Also available at <http://www.anawa.org.au>.
- » Greenpeace. 2007. *Let the Sun Shine: Together for a Nuclear Free Middle East*.

Summary prepared from notes by Roja Bandari

*“We are told by some governments that a Nuclear Weapons Convention is premature and unlikely.  
Don’t believe it. We were told the same thing about a Mine Ban Treaty.”  
-Jody Williams*

## Session Summary

# INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR PEACE-BUILDING AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

**SPEAKERS:** Charlotte Bunch, Shirin Ershadi, Brigid Inder and Jane Akwero Odwong. **Moderator:** Nancee Oku Bright. Wangari Maathai closed the session with concluding comments.

### This session's key points were:

- » A common thread through all humanitarian crises is the incidence of sexual violence. Alarming, in conflict situations some women make themselves available for, or vulnerable to, rape in order to protect their husbands and children from harm.
- » Women were successful in linking security to peace in the 1980s, and this conception of what security is has been on the international agenda since.
- » The UN is not an abstract entity. It is part of our political struggle toward women's human rights and matters with regards to policy, institutional decisions and resources. This is particularly the case for women in developing countries where the UN plays an important role with regard to resources.
- » The question is how can women utilize the principles that the UN stands for? CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 spell out the principles of what should be happening, but getting governments to sign or ratify the documents is not tantamount to making the standards in those documents an immediate living reality. This will require money, political will, a commitment to civil society and NGOs, and lobbying for a UN with a gender-equal hierarchy.
- » Unfortunately, according to Charlotte Bunch, the UN's Special Rapporteurs on gender violence have demonstrated "many words, less resources and even less political will." Currently, there are no women representing the issue of women's equality at the highest levels of the UN.
- » A new UN agency dedicated to women is essential. It needs to be a stronger, independent agency that combines the existing women's entities: INSTRAW, UNIFEM and DAW. The new entity should be led by an Under-Secretary General and funded at a much higher level. Bunch proposed a \$500 million to \$2 billion USD annual budget, compared to the current \$2 million budget. Civil society and women's groups are playing a strong role in this pursuit and should continue to be consulted on the agency's formation.
- » Shirin Ebadi raised the issue that existing human rights organizations tend to talk generally about the situation of women globally, with no systematic, continuous, statistical information-sharing. Shirin suggested that the new UN women's agency consider this issue as part of its mandate. She stressed that the situation of women in the world is not going to change unless people are provided with knowledge and concrete information about what is going on.
- » The Rome Statute was drafted in 1998 and was born out of the experiences of Yugoslavia and Rwanda. It called for a permanent criminal court – the International Criminal Court. Important to note: The US voted against the inclusion of the Crime of Aggression.
- » There are 124 states parties at the moment. Only two of these are from the Middle East – Jordan and Afghanistan.
- » Person(s) can be brought to the court via (1) referral from a state party; (2) referral from the UNSC (e.g., Darfur); and (3) initiation of an investigation by the prosecutor.
- » The notion of complementarity ensures that paramount responsibility to bring people to the ICC lies with the states parties. Many states parties have bilateral agreements with the US to refuse to hand over to the ICC any US nationals that are on their soil. The US has garnered these agreements by offering economic incentives and threatening economic punishments.
- » The ICC has a number of unique attributes: (1) victims can participate in the prosecution process; (2) there is a trust fund for victims; and (3) the ICC has a gender mandate.
- » The gender mandate ensures that gender provisions are integrated into the statute; rape, sexual slavery, trafficking, etc., are considered war crimes, giving the court a legal obligation to prosecute gender-based crimes.
- » Despite the gender mandate, so far the court has won only 36 convictions for gender-based crimes.
- » Jane Akwero Odwong described the rebel movement in Uganda that has displaced 2 million people and led to countless child abductions.
- » Women have looked to UNSCR 1325 and the African Charter on Human Rights for a role in peace-building. Their peace-

- building capacities have been demonstrated informally to be huge, despite little previous experience.
- » Despite their grassroots leadership, women from Uganda still have not been brought into the formal decision-making and peace-building processes. There has been resistance to the 1325 agenda of including and protecting women. The government of Uganda also deliberately refrains from raising awareness about the ICC. Hence, peace delegations to Uganda have not included women, and the ICC was initially reluctant to investigate crimes in the country.
  - » Shirin Ershadi's discussed the Rome Statute's definition of gender-based persecutions as crimes against humanity in relation to the issue of so-called honor killings.
  - » A total of 260 honor killings was documented in the Middle East region during the last 11 months of 2005. The legality of honor killings in some contexts is reinforced by social and cultural factors derived from erroneous interpretations of religion. Although equality is enshrined in Quranic verses, they not interpreted that way nor is equality emphasized by those in power.
  - » The laws of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia with regard to honor killings contradict and violate CEDAW and Article 7 of the Rome Statute.
  - » During an earlier plenary, a participant suggested that perhaps there is no such thing as a "voiceless" woman – instead it is a problem of people in power not having ears (that is, political will) to listen. However, during this session another participant insisted that there is such a thing as the 'voiceless" – some women cannot talk because they lack the confidence or consciousness to do so, or are not in the political or social position to do so because of severe repression.
  - » Wangari Maathai's closing statement focused on looking at the causes of women's human rights abuses, rather than the symptoms. She argued that those who violate women's rights are those who want to be in power, and we need to understand why they want to be in power. They want control of resources. People are fighting over the planet and women are at the mercy of this competition. Resources need to be distributed more evenly, which will help generate peace.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » Wangari urged conference participants to support the UN, to give it strength and voice, and to not give up hope that it can be reformed.

### **Related Documents:**

- » Center for Women's Global Leadership. 2007. Action Needed to Gain Stronger Gender Equality Architecture. Provided by Charlotte Bunch. See Appendix H.
- » Ebadi, Shirin. 2007. What the International Community Needs to be Doing Differently. Paper presented at the Nobel Women's Initiative First International Conference. See Appendix L.
- » Uganda Women's Peace Coalition and UWONET. May 2-3, 2007. Resolution of the Women in Peace Building Meeting, Kampala, Uganda. Provided by Jane Akwero Odwong.
- » United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Service. 2007. United Nations Reform: How to Strengthen Gender Architecture? Provided by Charlotte Bunch. See Appendix I.

Summary prepared from notes by Rebecca Barlow

## Session Summary

# HOW DO WE SHIFT PUBLIC OPINION SO THAT CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS SEEN AS URGENT AND REAL OUTCOMES ARE POSSIBLE?

**SPEAKERS:** Rana Hussein, Sorya Azizpanah and Sanja Sarnavka. **Moderator:** Isabel Hilton.

### **This session's key points were:**

- » Panelists shared their insights on how best to use and influence the media in order to build a culture of peace and make women's human rights activism more visible.
- » Limited access to media means the progress of women activists is ignored, making it difficult to sustain or grow our movements.
- » Rana Hussein, who reports on social issues with a special emphasis on violence against women and honor crimes against Jordanian women, said she never saw the writing she was doing as human rights work. She simply thought she was properly documenting what was happening. Her coverage of honor crimes against Jordanian women helped raise national awareness on a topic traditionally considered taboo and forced the government of Jordan to make some changes.
- » It can be dangerous for women in the media. For example, in Iran women speaking openly about the country's problems are accused of being anti-society, anti-religious or anti-government, and this holds serious consequences.
- » We have to be creative and learn to use the media effectively. Sonja Sarnovska spoke of how she chose for her organization the name *BaBe*, which means an irritating woman whom nobody likes, and how now the brand of the name has taken a once vilified word and effectively altered its connotation.
- » Media must be creative and eye-catching, and supply people with hard facts up front, so that they will pay attention. Only after the door is opened can media become a tool to supply deeper analysis and ideas for action. We need to more effectively identify eye-catching stories that will draw attention to issues of women's rights and peace.
- » The power of television and radio media has to be harnessed because illiteracy is a problem in many parts of the world, particularly for women with no access to education.

### **Recommendations from this session included:**

- » Women and children deserve to have their stories reported and recorded somewhere in history. Keep this as a reminder and as an impetus for writing and sharing stories. Know that policy-makers read as well, and we have to find any opportunity to reach them.
- » Encourage, support and focus on journalists who support your causes, and praise editors who have the wisdom and foresight to take up social justice issues.
- » Be prepared with all the information you need – all the numbers, all the resources, etc. – when going to the media to make it easy for reporters to cover your story.
- » Be creative: imagination is much more powerful than money, especially when trying to get access and attention.
- » Explore the Oxygen TV channel and strategies for an international channel that broadcasts two hours a day on women's issues.

Summary prepared from notes by Amelia Korangy