



# APPENDICES



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

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### Appendix A:

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### Appendix B

## STATEMENT TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE NOBEL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE: "WOMEN REDEFINING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND"

We would like to thank each and every one of you for taking the time to come to Galway to participate in our first international conference. We have come together here out of our shared concern for the state of the world today - the spiraling violence, terrorism and anti-terrorism begetting more violence, always and increasingly borne by women and children.

We have been here together to share our experiences and the lessons learned in our various responses to violence against women. We know that our ability to confront this violence depends upon our ability to understand the causes and linkages, as well as learn from the hope and the positive responses of resilience and nonviolent creativity of women in the Middle East and beyond.

We have talked about the continuum of violence - at the local, national, regional and international levels - and that we respond to that continuum of violence on the local, national, regional and international levels as well. We know that all of our work is linked, whether we acknowledge the linkages or not, and that all of our work is contributing to building cultures of peace.

Listening to you all sharing together, we have heard many not liking the word "peace." We have discussed how "peace" has been hijacked as a meaningful word and has become synonymous with "weak." We know that working for peace is anything but "weak" - it is hard work every single day.

We have heard women from throughout the Middle East that conflict will not end without dialogue - dialogue built on inclusion, human rights, justice and equality - and we heard of the dialogue that you are engaged in daily - proving that it is not only possible but necessary. Indeed it is impossible for countries under occupation - Palestine, Iraq - to meaningfully participate in that kind of dialogue. As one participant said, "In order to coexist, we must first exist."

We have heard you ask that people of the United States work on real democracy at home. Even when the people of that country voted the party of invasion out of the control of Congress, the Democratic Party has stepped back from legislation to bring an end to the occupation of Iraq.

We would also like to thank all of the women here for sharing with us your ideas as to how the Nobel Women's Initiative can use our combined visibility and access to power to advance some of the issues addressed here. We will take these suggestions with us so that the NWI can assess how we can respond to the broad array of action we might take.

We would also like to ask all of us who have shared this experience together to think, perhaps, about “peace” in terms of human security. That all of the work that we do individually and collectively contributes to human security. Human security is a world where people recognize that sustainable peace, human rights and sustainable development are indivisible parts of global security - security based on meeting the needs of the peoples of the world and meeting their needs with justice and equality.

More weapons will only make us less secure; meeting the needs of the peoples inhabiting this tiny planet is what will make us more secure. Human security, not national security.

We also ask that when we talk about violence, we recognize that violence is not “just part of human nature.” Violence is a choice. Whether it is the violent choice of a man to beat the woman he supposedly loves; or the violent choice of a community to ghettoize people who are “different” racially or ethnically; or the violent choice of illegal invasion; or the violent choice of occupation. Building a culture of peace is learning and teaching that there are different choices. We as individuals do not have to choose violence. We as societies do not have to either support violent choices or participate in making them.

We as women can and must redefine peace - in the Middle East and beyond.

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[L to R] Nobel Laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Betty Williams, Wangari Maathai and Mairead Corrigan Maguire.



Betty Williams, Ireland - 1976  
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## Appendix C

# IN OPPOSITION TO THE IRAQ OIL LAW

In support of the people of Iraq, we, the undersigned Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, state our opposition to the Iraq Oil Law. We also oppose the decision of the United States government to require that the Iraq government pass the Oil Law as a condition of continued reconstruction aid, in legislation passed on May 24, 2007.

A law with the potential to so radically transform the basic economic security of the people of Iraq should not be forced on Iraq while it is under occupation and in such a weak negotiating position vis-à-vis both the U.S. government and foreign oil corporations.

The Iraq Oil Law could benefit foreign oil companies at the expense of the Iraqi people, deny the Iraqi people economic security, create greater instability and move the country further away from peace.

The U.S. government should leave the matter of how Iraq will address the future of its oil system to the Iraqi people to be dealt with at a time when they are free from occupation and more able to engage in truly democratic decision-making.

It is immoral and illegal to use war and invasion as mechanisms for robbing a people of their vital natural resources.

Sincerely,

*Betty Williams Máiread Maguire Rigoberta Menchú Tum*

Betty Williams

Máiread Corrigan Maguire

Rigoberta Menchú Tum

Jody Williams

Shirin Ebadi

Wangari Maathai

## Appendix D

# REFLECTIONS ON THE NOBEL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: "WOMEN REDEFINING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND BEYOND"

by Rebecca Barlow

## Introduction

*"Women speak with their hearts. Sometimes when people speak from their heads, intellectualism can get in the way of dealing with the reality on the ground."*

With this statement Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire began her reflections on the first day of the Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference: "Women Redefining Peace in the Middle East and Beyond," which took place in Galway, Ireland, on May 29-31, 2007. The Nobel Women's Initiative (NWI) was launched in January 2006. It was a response to a suggestion by Iranian Laureate Shirin Ebadi that the women recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize should collectively endeavor to use the power and influence concomitant with being Nobel Laureates to advance the cause of women internationally by bringing their voices and experiences to the direct attention of the international community and media sources.

The Nobel Women's Initiative represents an attempt to help fill a gap that, from the perspective of feminists at least, fundamentally mars the present system of international relations. Global standards have developed in earnest over the past half-century, and one of these global standards is women's equality with men. Despite the codification of this precept in international law, discrimination against women because of their gender remains a globally unresolved problem. Women continue to be seriously underrepresented at local, national, regional and international levels of governance, and their voices and experiences remain marginalized from negotiations toward conflict resolution and the formation of viable democratic institutions.

NWI's First International Conference was a gathering of over 80 of the world's leading activists and scholars on gender studies and women's human rights. It provided women from more than 40 different countries an opportunity to share their experiences of discrimination and oppression; exchange information and strategies that had improved women's conditions; and discuss how best to work together to demand a central place for women at the negotiating table of the peace process and political liberalization. The Middle East was chosen as the contextual focus of the conference precisely because the region is at present characterized by conflict and warfare (as in the cases of Afghanistan, Iraq and the occupied territories of Palestine), undemocratic political institutions and serious political repression (as in the cases of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran). Under such circumstances women's rights and human security are readily sacrificed on the altar of "national security" and unqualified allegiance to the nation state - inherently masculine concepts.

Importantly, the NWI conference was designed to challenge the stereotype that women - particularly those from the Muslim Middle East - are the exclusive "victims" of war and conflict, and passive subjects of systematized oppression. This view represents what Hilde Lindeman Nelson calls a master narrative - those "stories found lying about in our culture" that present as summaries of human experiences (2001: 6). Master narratives are often stereotypical in terms of both plot and character types (Nelson 2001: 6). The master narratives of wartime, conflict, and what does or does not constitute meaningful participation in the politics of the nation state are deeply gendered. Almost universally throughout history men have been presented as soldiers, heroes of war, and protectors and defenders of the state. Conversely, women have been construed as "victims" in need of protection, whose primary role is to keep the candles burning at home while they await the return of their menfolk from the battlefield.

This paper will navigate some of the discussions and findings of the Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference within the framework of what Nelson calls a "counter story." According to Nelson, a counter story is one that resists the oppressive stereotypes of particular master narratives and attempts to replace them with axes of identity that demand respect (2001: 6). Counter stories fill in minutiae that master narratives ignore or underplay, and reveal details that the master narrative has deliberately suppressed or concealed.

## Some discussions and findings of the NWI Conference

The organizing principle of NWI's First International Conference was the recognition that women are not passive victims of conflict and the discontents of the modern state. The conference was proposed on the basis that "[d]espite the spiralling violence in the Middle East, women have demonstrated positive responses of resilience and nonviolent creativity. These kinds of responses can serve as a lens that can offer ways women's rights, human security and peace issues can be addressed globally" (The Nobel Women's Initiative 2007).

This is an important enterprise because the master narrative of war, conflict and citizenship translates to serious political maladies on the ground. In their exclusive position as those who fight and die for society and the state, men come to be construed as full citizens with full citizenship rights. In the logic of the master narrative, it follows that men should determine the direction of society and the state in the post-conflict climate. In contrast, women's non-participation in the physical defense of the state means that they do not occupy the same citizenship status as men. It correlates, therefore, that women do not have the same right – or indeed necessary capabilities – to participate in decision-making structures and post-conflict negotiations.

This not only represents an extreme injustice to women, but is also anathema to possibilities of human security at large (a term that indicates the rights-based needs of men, women and children inclusively). According to Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), "peace agreements, early recovery and post-conflict governance do better when women are involved" (UN News Service, 2006). Heyzer has highlighted the fact that "[w]omen know the cost of war; what it means to be subject to sexual violence designed to destroy their communities, what it means to be displaced, to flee their homes and property, to be excluded from public life and regarded as less than full citizens" (UN News Service, 2006).

As a result, women tend to adopt more inclusive approaches to peace and security than men, and to address key social and economic issues that might otherwise be ignored (UN News Service, 2006). This is precisely what has occurred in post-Saddam Iraq. On the first day of the NWI conference, Iraq's leading feminist, Yanar Mohammed, critiqued the US-led (re)construction of the Iraqi government. Mohammed pointed out that at the dawn of the US occupation of Iraq, there were over 400 women's NGOs (non-governmental organizations) registered with the government. Currently, there are only three or four remaining. Over 70 percent of television programs in post-Saddam Iraq have a conservative Islamic agenda. The Iraqi constitution has been formulated under the guidance of the Washington administration along what can certainly be described as a confessional system of politics, according to the country's Sunni and Shi'ite Islamic elements. According to Mohammed, "you cannot have women's rights without a secular constitution."

In light of these facts, Mohammed questioned the NWI conference participants: "What does this say about the United States' democracy promotion project?" The agenda of the Washington administration does not include women's rights beyond the parameters of rhetoric. Therefore, who will support the women of Iraq as they attempt to sustain their families and maintain some semblance of normal life in the context of what Mohammed referred to unambiguously as a civil war? Women's issues and women's human rights do not feature high on the agenda of left-wing elements of Western societies, which sometimes tend to sympathize with Islamist projects under the perception that they present a viable alternative to the dominant political constructs of capitalism and "Western" secularism. Mohammed's conclusion, therefore, was that "these gatherings" – meaning the NWI conference as a women-only congregation of human rights activists and scholars – "are the only way" (to support and protect women's rights in Iraq and other conflict and post-conflict societies).

In contrast to Mohammed's certainty, there is in fact some debate within the feminist community regarding how exactly to deal with the master narrative of war, conflict, citizenship and women's subsequent exclusion from meaningful decision-making processes. Feminist responses to the misrepresentation of women as the exclusive "victims" of war and passive subjects of political repression have not been homogeneous. Whereas some feminists support the equal participation of women in the military (including in armed battle), others emphasize the need to "work towards destabilizing the entire notion of armed conflict as an acceptable form of foreign policy" (Dowler 2002: 161). As a witness to every session of the NWI conference, it is my understanding that the women who participated in the event collectively support the latter agenda.

Feminist support for women's equal participation in the armed forces stems from the perception that as long as women are denied the right to defend and protect society and the state, they will never be considered equal in citizenship status to men. Thus, women should be allowed the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their bravery and heroism alongside men on the battlefield, rather than remain at home as victims of the economic, social and political ramifications of the events transpiring on the frontline. This argument rests on constricted notions of what might be considered the "frontline" of war and what constitutes protection and defense of society and the state, as well as constrained understandings of what it is to be "brave" and what it is to be a "victim." Dr Shirin Ebadi addressed this issue in depth at the NWI conference. In her paradigm, whereas war can mean the end of suffering for men, it almost always means the beginning of suffering for women. When a man dies in battle, the end of his life signifies the end of his fighting and the end of his plight. It is women who survive the war that have no choice but to face the struggle of post-conflict reconstruction head-on. Why then do we not consider women who survive wars the "heroes"? Why aren't the

women who attend to the economic burdens of society and the child-rearing responsibilities in the family in the absence of men, both during and after the conflict, praised for their bravery? Conversely, why aren't men who are sent to fight and die at on the "frontlines" at the behest of other men in power considered to be the primary "victims" of war? Indeed, feminists have offered expanded definitions of what constitutes the "frontline," conceptualizing it as "places of change and transformation" (Dowler 2002: 162). According to Lorraine Dowler, "feminists are reclaiming the frontline as a frontier rather than a border" (2002: 162).

This line of inquiry is not intended to negate the fact that countless men have demonstrated extreme bravery in war and conflict situations, nor the fact that these actions merit serious reflection and deep respect. What is being suggested here is just how easy it is or should be – conceptually, at least – to turn the master narrative of war, conflict and citizenship in the modern nation state on its head, simply by reconsidering and expanding the terms of reference above.

Dr. Ebadi suggested a way in which local communities might begin to pay the same respect to women who survive wars that they currently do to men who fight and die in wars. That is, the construction of a statue in all capital cities of the world to honor women as survivors of war and conflict. There are monuments to male soldiers in virtually every major city of the world, and members of almost all communities are at least annually called upon to pay formal, ritualized homage to these soldiers. Why don't we do the same for the women who have carried the social and economic weight of their societies through these wars?

The statue that Ebadi proposed would not necessarily take the same form in all communities. Rather, it could be constructed to reflect particular peoples and cultures, and may even appear as an abstract sculpture. According to Ebadi, what would unite the monuments to women from different countries around the world would be their function. That is, the statues might serve as constant physical reminders to those in the community of human security and human sustenance. This contrasts with the mental images that are arguably most often conjured up when we observe existing war memorials, which tend to include war and weapons of warfare, rivalry and hostility, and death.

The linking of women with notions of psychological endurance was a resounding theme of the NWI conference. Numerous participants recounted experiences in which the outbreak of conflict, sustained occupation or political repression revealed women's agency – their dynamism, assertiveness and innovative approaches to survival in the face of crisis and extreme hardships. For example, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's work with women-oriented healing circles in the Palestinian occupied territories has led her to conclude that in the face of serious political repression and violent encounters with Israeli Defense Forces, Palestinian women do not remain victimized, but rather redirect their energies towards feminist activism and resistance (2005).

Jane Akwero Odwong attended the NWI conference as a representative from Uganda. She explained to conference participants that before the outbreak of violence in Uganda in the late 1990s, she was a "shy housewife, unable to talk to more than five people at once, and even then I would whisper!" In response to the tragedy that enveloped her society in the context of the rebel movement, Jane decided to take charge. Since then, she has been a leading peace activist in Uganda. Jane is founder of the Concerned Women's Organization for Peace and Development. She has been a member of the Parliament of Uganda, and is currently a member of the national citizenship and immigration board. Her conclusion from her experiences is that women have all the right characteristics and capabilities to lead their communities and the world down the path to sustainable peace; it is just that their voices remain marginalized in patriarchal systems of governance. She demanded that governments "just give women the window of opportunity, and they will do the rest."

A case in point is the latest initiative of the Iranian women's movement, the One Million Signatures Demanding Changes to the Discriminatory Laws Campaign, discussed by conference participants on the second day of the NWI gathering. Following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iranian women faced intense political pressure to remain confined to the "private" realm of human affairs. Since the late 1990s, they have repeatedly attempted to hold peaceful protests within the confines of Iranian law, only to be met with state-sanctioned violence and mass arbitrary arrests. The One Million Signatures Campaign represents a change in tactics on behalf of the women's movement, whereby members have begun to conduct doorknock appeals along with seminars on the effect of the state's conservative gender ideology on women's everyday lives in the hope of collecting one million signatures protesting Iran's current legal framework regarding women's status to present to the Iranian government.

There are a number of characteristics of the campaign that make it a difficult target for the Iranian government. The campaign is nonviolent, non-ideological and non-hierarchical. This is feminist method par excellence. As a result, the government cannot target one or more specific members of the women's movement. If the regime attempts to do so, proclaimed Ebadi at the NWI conference, other women will fill their places immediately to continue the campaign unabated. In the context of President Ahmadinejad's current crackdown on even the most cautious voices of dissent in Iran, the One Million Signatures Campaign represents a brave and bold initiative.

## **Conclusion**

The Nobel Women's Initiative is not yet two years old, and yet it has made a promising start on bringing the voices and experiences of women into the spotlight of global political and media attention. The Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference

was a rare and vital opportunity for women from the Middle East and beyond to express those aspects of justice and human dignity that they view as being vital to any acceptable notion of human security. Importantly, this was done within a strategic framework of information sharing and the exchange of strategies that have enhanced the participation of women in conflict resolution, peace building and decision-making structures at local, national, regional and international levels.

In this respect, the discussions and findings of the NWI conference presented a strong challenge to the master narrative of war, conflict, citizenship and participation in the modern nation state. Women's "counter stories" at the NWI conference revealed that they are not exclusively "victims" of war, nor passive subjects of political repression. Rather, women have responded to crisis, conflict and oppression with highly innovative, assertive and dynamic strategies of resistance and survival.

The challenge for the international community lies in the extent to which it might begin to replace the stereotypes imposed upon women by the political master narratives with women's own self-perceptions and lived realities as indicated by their counter stories. This is a particularly urgent issue in the Middle East, which is characterized by conflicts that show little sign of abating. The development and maintenance of human security across the Middle East, and elsewhere, will be entirely impossible unless women's voices and experiences are emphasized and prioritized at the negotiating table. The Nobel Women's Initiative has set out to provide a space in which this enterprise might begin to take shape.

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Nobel Laureate Betty Williams and conference rapporteur Rebecca Barlow during a strategy session.

## Appendix E

# GENDER DYNAMICS OF VIOLENCE AND CONFLICTS: THE MIDDLE EAST IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

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Presentation prepared for the Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference: "Women Redefining Peace in the Middle East and Beyond," Galway, Ireland, May 29–31, 2007

*Johann Galtung: "The absence of war does not mean peace."*

*Cynthia Enloe: "Peace is women's achievement of control over their lives."*

The women's movement of the second wave drew attention to domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape (Brownmiller 1976). Since then, feminist scholarship has shown how constructions of masculinity and femininity have tended to "normalize" and "naturalize" violence against women. But it was not until the 1990s that violence against women and the problem of wartime rape acquired global prominence and action. Armed conflicts in Yugoslavia and Rwanda showed that women, like men, are victims of military onslaughts and terrorist actions; they lose life and limb, and join the ranks of refugees or internally displaced persons. Unlike men, however, they also are the special victims of sexual violence. For this reason, several international conventions and norms have emerged to address violence against women and women's roles in peace and security. And yet conflicts continue and violence against women persists. In this presentation, I provide an overview of the gender dynamics of violence and conflict, with an emphasis on gender inequality, the nature of the capitalist world-system and hegemonic masculinities. The alternative to this state of affairs lies in a more concerted effort on the part of the "international community" to increase women's roles in political and other decision-making processes, coupled with the continued awareness-raising and solidarity work of transnational feminist networks.

### **Gender Inequality, Violence and Conflict**

Violence against women is multifaceted and occurs in different contexts across the globe. From domestic violence to "date rape" to assaults on the streets to war crimes, violence is often sexualized and occurs at times of "peace" as well as during armed conflict. All too often, armed conflict exacerbates violence against women. Wars, and especially occupations by foreign powers, tend to be accompanied by crises of masculinity that lead to restrictions on women's mobility and increases in violence against women (Enloe 1990; Breines, Connell and Eide, 2000).

What has research told us about gender relations, conflict and post-conflict? In general, human security and human rights are seriously compromised, for both women and men. Men and boys, like women and girls, suffer from the displacements, deprivations and degradations associated with conflict, including the deterioration or destruction of needed infrastructure, unemployment, hunger or forced migration. That men and boys are carted off to die in senseless conflicts or to kill innocent people is a kind of trauma visited on men and boys while also being a reflection and reinforcement of the most egregious and damaging forms of hegemonic masculinity. And yet, the experience of women and girls is this and more.

We know that women's subordinate roles in peacetime render them vulnerable in wartime. This is the effect that gender inequality has on the course and consequences of violence and conflict. We know that this vulnerability is conditioned by class, ethnicity and ideology, but in general, women are vulnerable to sexual violence such as rape. In some conflict areas, women have been subjected to rape on a massive scale. Such women victims may also face inadequate or non-existent services and sometimes hostility from their family and community.<sup>1</sup> At times their only recourse is begging or prostitution. International outcries rarely succeed in bringing perpetrators to justice. The message is that women's lives matter less.

In areas where honor is all-important, concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity may be heightened, and the protection of women and girls may become an exaggerated feature of post-conflict society, with increases in "honor killings" or veiling or the reassertion or strengthening of traditional gender ideology and its legal frameworks. Men may institute controls over the women of their community, and women may suffer at the hands of husbands or male kin who feel humiliated or emasculated by occupying powers. Conditions are worsened when states lack the capacity or the will to protect the human rights of citizens, and especially the human rights of women. In many conflict situations, women are caught between weak states, occupying powers, armed opposition movements and patriarchal gender arrangements. Women's vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that formal political processes, whether during peacetime or in conflict-resolution, tend to be masculine and male-dominated, with women largely excluded from decision-making.

<sup>1</sup> One response was the formation of Medica Mondiale, founded after the Bosnian conflict to treat women victims of sexual violence, [www.medicamondiale.org](http://www.medicamondiale.org).

## What causes conflicts or war?

Conflicts can be anticipated – so can the fact that women will be violated. In what follows, I will focus on the nature of the capitalist world-system, competition among states and hegemonic masculinities.

The literature on “economics of war” emphasizes the role of natural resources or primary commodities for export (diamonds, minerals, oil) as well as economic crisis in instigating or perpetuating civil conflicts and sometimes international conflicts (Collier 2006; Humphreys 2003). Implicit in this literature is another, socio-demographic factor: the existence of a sizable population of restless and unemployed young men with access to arms. This analysis, therefore, points to the salience of gender as well as “greed.”

World-systems analysis and some versions of standard international relations theory posit that conflict is inherent due to the world’s inequalities and hierarchies, and that many conflicts result from legitimate but unaddressed grievances. At times, conflict can be managed by trade, aid, diplomacy or the power politics of the hegemonic power. These theories also note that the likelihood of chaos – including civil conflict or international conflict – grows as the hegemon (the superpower) weakens and competition among strong states increases (Go, 2006).

Feminist theorists emphasize gender and social inequalities, the patriarchal nature of state systems and the masculinist nature of much of observed international relations. A gender perspective puts the spotlight on the social relations that exist between women and men, and on the laws and actions of states. It places women at the center of analysis because of the fact that across history and cultures, women have been denied equality, autonomy and power. Women as a group have experienced diverse forms of violence from men as a group, because women have lacked power and because states or communities have failed to protect them or have in fact punished them. Gender analysis also demonstrates that conflict, peace-building and reconstruction processes may reflect and reinforce forms of masculinity and femininity (Enloe 1992, 2006).

The term “hegemonic masculinity” has become a key concept in gender analysis since Bob Connell (1998) identified it as a particular culture’s standards and ideal of real manhood at a particular time in history. Hegemonic masculinity is reproduced in various social institutions, including the media, the sports arena, the family and the military. In countries such as America and Australia, hegemonic masculinity is defined by physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, suppression of “vulnerable” emotions such as remorse and uncertainty, economic independence, authority over women and other men, and interest in sexual “conquest.” What Connell has defined as “emphasized femininity” is constructed around adaptation to male power. Its central feature is attractiveness to men, which includes physical appearance, ego-massaging, suppression of “power” emotions such as anger, nurturance of children, sexual availability without sexual assertiveness, and sociability. Both standards and ideals may be observed in many cultures, albeit with variations on the sexual element.<sup>2</sup>

A similar analysis is put forth by Lauren Langman and Daniel Morris (2004), in their discussion of “heroic masculinities.” As they point out, civilizations and cultures based on conquest or expansion, societies where politics and militarism are fused, or countries where the military is a central and valorized institution, all exhibit discourses, images and practices of heroic masculinity. In considering American society and the role of its military in both economic growth and empire-building, and in considering the foundational narratives of heroic masculinity in Islam, one can easily imagine a “clash of heroic masculinities” between the American security state and a transnational Islamist network such as Al-Qaeda. From a feminist perspective, it should be clear that hegemonic or heroic masculinity is a causal factor in war, as well as in women’s oppression.

In a way, contemporary rivalries in hegemonic or heroic masculinity mirror the inter-capitalist rivalries of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – which led to World War I and World World II. They underlie many of the factors that have been attributed to the “new conflicts” of the post-Cold War era, such as the emergence of a global weapons market, the decreasing capacity of states to uphold the monopoly of violence (Kaldor 1999; Kaldor and Luckham 2001), inter-ethnic competition (Chua, 2004) and what Benjamin Barber famously termed “Jihad vs. McWorld” (Barber 2001). Indeed, rival masculinities constitute a key factor in the conflicts that emerge over natural resources, such as oil or diamonds; aggressive nationalism and ethnic rivalries; and in politicized religious projects. Hegemonic masculinity is a central ideological pillar of great powers and of many resistance movements. Women become the special victims of rival hegemonic masculinities.

And what of the response of the “international community”? In October 2000, the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted. It reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts. However, despite the adoption of this important resolution, we continue to see the sidelining of both women actors and gender issues in many contemporary conflicts, peace-keeping initiatives and reconstruction efforts. In many conflict situations, a culture of hegemonic masculinity prevails among the major political actors, be they the occupiers, the resistance or the state.

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For example, in Muslim cultures, female modesty is valued much more than sexual availability. And rather than intense interest in sexual conquest, hegemonic masculinity in a typical Middle Eastern context might consist in the capacity to protect family or personal honor by controlling the comportment of the women in the family (and sometimes in the community).

## Violence and conflict in the Middle East

In the Middle East, we see many of the same processes at work. The Middle East is situated in a world-system of hierarchical, unequal and competitive states. Its function is primarily to produce and export oil, especially to fuel the industrial power of the richest countries. Much of the region's modern history includes episodes of nationalist and imperialist struggles for control over oil and other sources of "rents": the 1953 coup d'état following Premier Mossadegh's oil nationalization in Iran; the 1956 Suez crisis following President Nasser's nationalization of the canal; the 1991 Gulf War following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait; the 2003 US/UK invasion of Iraq. Conflict in Afghanistan has been fueled partly by the narcotics trade and partly by struggle over a planned oil and gas pipeline from Central Asia (Rashid 2002).

The region itself is comprised of authoritarian and patriarchal states, which reproduce gender inequality through legal frameworks and social institutions. Hegemonic masculinity is similarly reproduced in social institutions, and boys are taught from a young age that to struggle and fight is a national and religious duty. Girls are taught to be dutiful and meek, to carry out cultural and religious duties, to marry and bear children. This message comes strongest from the fundamentalist movements that have been growing since the 1980s, and they augment it with calls for women to veil. Women who do not conform to the nationalist or fundamentalist or state conception of the Ideal Woman can be harassed or arrested or killed.

After Iran's 1979 revolution took on an Islamist nature, the 1980s saw punishments for women for "mal-veiling" or for wearing make-up; stoning for adultery was reintroduced. Events in Afghanistan under both the Mujahidin (from 1992 to 1996) and the Taliban (from 1996 to 2001) demonstrated that women could experience punitive action over appearance, dress and access to public space. During Algeria's civil conflict of the 1990s, Islamist militants not only bullied and harassed but raped and murdered women and girls – and this 10 years after the government had tried to placate the growing fundamentalist movement by instituting a patriarchal family law (Bennoune 1995). In Iraq today, targeted assassinations of prominent or unveiled women, as well as assaults by occupation forces, are regular occurrences.

All too often, women – their legal status, social positions and bodies – have been pawns during conflicts or in post-conflict agreements. States have been known to make accommodations with opposition groups at the expense of women's integrity, autonomy and rights. And women have been the victims of contending masculinities. For example, Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine all have weak state systems (although Iraq had a strong and centralized state prior to the 2003 invasion) and armed opposition groups, as well as serious problems with human security, human rights and women's participation. An advantage that Palestine has over the other two countries is a relatively stronger civil society. However, the conflict with Israel and non-resolution of the national question has hardened identities and strengthened patriarchal tendencies, leading to the imposition of social controls on Palestinian women in the refugee camps and villages, and the inability of the Palestine Authority to implement a women's rights agenda. Violence against women is common in all three countries. In Afghanistan's highly patriarchal society, women have been long subjected to violence by husbands and male kin. "Honor killings" occur with some frequency in certain Iraqi and Palestinian communities. In Iraq in 2005, women won a constitutional right to a 25 percent political quota, but they lost the right to a uniform family code premised on equal rights in the family.

### Can conflict benefit women and transform gender relations?

Conflict is traumatic, but it sometimes can lead to major social transformations that could favor women's social participation. Recent studies by political scientists and sociologists have found that armed conflict seems to have a positive impact on women's political participation in the post-conflict period. Some research shows us that armed conflict can change gender relations – that is, notions of masculinity and femininity – and open windows of opportunity for women. The classic historical examples of this have been the United States, Great Britain and France during World War II, and Algeria during its national liberation war, when women were mobilized into all manner of services. Much has been written about the opportunities for social participation and changing gender relations afforded to Palestinian women from the beginning of the national liberation movement right through the first Intifada. In at least three examples, South Africa, Namibia and Rwanda, the post-conflict democratic transitions have led to high rates of women's political participation and to the integration of women and gender issues into government planning. This is not, however, a universal pattern. It did not occur in Iran or Afghanistan or Lebanon or Yemen. And women's political participation in Palestine since the second Intifada has been very limited. Why?

Research has shown that how women fare in a post-conflict situation depends on a number of factors: (1) pre-existing gender relations and women's legal status and social positions before the conflict; (2) the extent of women's mobilizations before and during the conflict, including the number and type of women's organizations and other institutions; (3) the ideology, values and norms of the ruling group; and (4) the state's capacity and will to mobilize resource endowments for rights-based reconstruction and development.<sup>3</sup> Cross-national research indicates that the single most influential factor in determining women's political participation – the variable that has consistent explanatory power – is ideology. Every quantitative study on women and political participation or women in post-conflict situations finds that gender egalitarian ideology predicts higher involvement of women. This does not bode well for Iraq or Palestine or Afghanistan or Lebanon. What is needed is an official discourse or movement ideology that is supportive of women's participation and rights.

In an era of globalization, however, we can expect external factors to play an important part. Here I would underscore the importance of support for the women's movement, and especially for the secular, feminist and progressive women's organizations in various Middle Eastern countries. A strong women's movement could tip the gendered balance of power and influence the direction of change, especially if an external factor were activated - links to world society and to global feminism. In particular, transnational feminist monitoring and advocacy can make a difference in terms of laws, policies and resources available for women's participation and rights (Moghadam 2005). Strong transnational links may ensure global solidarities and collective action toward the promotion of women's participation, rights and empowerment in the post-conflict situation. At the local level, links to global feminism, or an active role within it, could prevent the isolation or marginalization of "the woman question" and lead to vigorous and effective campaigns to protect or build women's empowerment and to improve their economic conditions. The state, economic resources and legal frameworks matter enormously to women, but transnational solidarity can influence national-level decisions and raise international awareness of women's conditions and needs in various national contexts. Transnational feminist networks can affect national-level processes through advocacy, lobbying of donors to increase allocations to women's units and institutions, and campaigns to compel the post-conflict governments to prioritize women's empowerment.

### **Peace-building, reconstruction, and gender justice**

For women, peace does not mean only the formal end of war and its concomitants, such as the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of armed combatants. It also means the enjoyment of human security and human rights, including the right not to be beaten at home or assaulted on the streets. Given this, it must be stated that many so-called peace processes have been at best flawed and at worse failures. The UN-sponsored peace in Afghanistan in the early 1990s did nothing to bring about stability and security, especially for women, who had to contend with marauding Mujahidin warlords initially and subsequently with the strangely medieval Taliban. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the early 1990s was regarded by its detractors as favoring the Israelis, but it also was accompanied by a growing Islamist movement which earlier had put pressure on the women in its communities to veil. These and many other examples show that women's human security and human rights, along with the attenuation of inequalities generally, are rarely considered in so-called peace processes.

Ending gender and other social inequalities and bringing about human security, including women's security, lies at the heart of feminist analyses of peace-building. Indeed, a significant feminist contribution to analyses of international relations, as Ann Tickner (1992: 193) has noted, "is to point out how unequal social relations can make all individuals more insecure." She adds, "The achievement of peace, economic justice, and ecological sustainability is inseparable from overcoming social relations of domination and subordination; genuine security requires not only the absence of war but also the elimination of unjust social relations" (Tickner 1992: 128).

The concept of human security has been defined in different ways, but some aspects are: personal security, water and food security, rights to healthcare and political participation, and economic security. There is thus a connection between human security and human rights, and links among security, rights and participation. That is, achieving peace and security for women cannot be guaranteed in the absence of a broader socio-political and economic project that rests on participation and redistribution of resources. Reconstruction should therefore be viewed not only in terms of the repair or building of physical and social infrastructure, but also in terms of the establishment of participatory and egalitarian social and gender relations. In this regard, women have a special role to play, because they have experienced inequality, because they have a stake in reconstruction that is woman-friendly, and because of their roles in bridge-building and peace-making.

Women's role in peace movements is well known, and "maternalist politics" has a long history. Women peace-builders often have deployed the discourse of motherhood and emphasized feminine values of nurturing and care in their efforts to build bridges, mediate or encourage reconciliation. Whether we are referring to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) at the beginning of the 20th century or Women Strike for Peace in mid-century or organizations such as Israel's Four Mothers Movement, the Saturday Mothers of Turkey, and the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina in the late 20th century, or Code Pink in the new century, we see that women activists often draw on motherhood, maternity and femininity as resources and discursive strategies.

Maternalist politics constitutes one model of women's activism, seen largely in peace, anti-militarist and human rights movements. But there is another model as well: that of women in armed struggles, liberation movements and revolutions. Many feminist studies have analyzed women's contributions to peace movements and conflict resolution, but we also are aware that women take part in armed conflicts such as revolutions (women guerrillas of Nicaragua and El Salvador), national liberation struggles (the valiant Vietnamese) and the defense of the homeland (Soviet women in the 1940s). Whether these two models of women vis-à-vis peace and conflict are completely contradictory or simply two dimensions of women's lives, experiences and collective action is a difficult question. Feminists rely on women to lead the way in peace, conflict resolution and human rights, while also accepting that women will be active participants in armed struggles and resistance movements.

The phenomenon of female suicide bombers has some people thinking that this represents a shift in gender roles and identities. Palestinian women suicide bombers – a kind of exaggerated version of Leila Khaled – have their counterpart in Sri Lanka, among the women of the Tamil Tigers. For feminist theorizing this poses a vexing question. Does the Palestinian female suicide bomber – whose stated purpose is freedom for Palestine from the Israeli occupation – replace traditional female gender norms in domestic life with masculine gender norms of aggression and violence? Or is she a harbinger of a transformation in gender relations in Palestine?

Peace-building requires justice, including gender justice. A situation of long-standing injustice and deep tensions – whether within a society or between countries – is not a situation of peace. In other words, the “peace process” between Israel-Palestine in the 1990s was not a just peace at all, but rather a war, or at the very least hegemonic politics, by other means. And a ceasefire or a brokered “peace” in which essential issues of security, justice and redress have not been addressed should not be called peace at all. A just peace is more than a ceasefire and demobilization. Its sustainability depends on the achievement of social/economic justice, human security, democratization, participation and equality. Furthermore, it entails gender justice. As one advocate stated: “Women survivors of armed conflicts and advocates for women’s rights during and after these conflicts recognize that meaningful justice must protect the fundamental human rights of all people and that there cannot be meaningful reconciliation without gender justice” (McKay 2000: 561).

Gender justice has at least three components parts. One is the participation of women in peace-building, reconstruction and decision-making. Another is the establishment of laws and institutions for the realization of women’s human rights. A third pertains to redress for sexualized or other forms of violence against women during conflict or war. A major international achievement was the designation of rape as a war crime when carried out in the context of armed conflict. All too often, however, the perpetrators of sexualized violence are not brought to justice – thus denying gender justice to women.<sup>4</sup> The struggle in Argentina of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo against “impunity” via the blanket amnesty is a prime example of the need to link peace and conflict resolution to justice. Positive developments, however, should be noted. Tribunals in The Hague on human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia and on the genocide in Rwanda, as well as the Special Court for Sierra Leone, constitute one model of justice. South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-2001) is another model of linking peace to justice. In Morocco’s Justice and Reconciliation Commission, people testified on television about the abuses and torture that they experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. There were limitations to this new exercise in truth telling, as the government refused to put people on trial for past sins, or even name names. But it was especially moving to witness the testimonies of the former women prisoners (Slyomovics (2005). Such tribunals may be needed in the cases of Afghanistan and Algeria (as well as in Iraq, when the time comes), certainly to redress the violence visited on women, but also to educate the public and raise its awareness of women’s rights and of what constitutes violations of human rights and women’s rights.

#### **Women must be involved in formal processes of peace-building and reconstruction for at least five reasons:**

1. The first and most basic reason is that women constitute half, and in some cases a majority, of any population. Without their participation, there can be no claim of equity and representation.
2. Second, because women are often the special victims of armed conflict, their experiences, perspectives and aspirations need to be incorporated into negotiations, mediation and peace-building processes. Since women have likely been the special victims of the conflict, their views and perspectives must be included in all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction – including any truth commissions or tribunals that may be established. For the same reason, women experts and leaders must be involved in processes of demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration of fighters. Women experience not only sexualized violence but also bereavement and the loss of family members, resources and livelihood. Sanctions may lead to the feminization of poverty, while widowhood increases the number of female-headed households living in dire conditions. The gender-specific experiences and outcomes of conflict need to be considered and addressed in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.
3. Third, women often play a key role in bridge building and peace-making at the local level, a role that should be acknowledged as well as translated into higher-level participation and representation. Indeed, the important role played by women at the community level can serve as a model of mediation and reconciliation at the national level.
4. Fourth, women are major stakeholders and actors in the reconstruction or building of infrastructure, the state and civil society. They have a direct stake in strategies for social development, the allocation of financial and human resources across economic sectors, the adoption of progressive legal frameworks, and the flourishing of associational life. Without their participation, half the population is automatically disenfranchised, post-conflict reconstruction remains an exclusively masculine endeavor, and rights-based development is compromised. Fifth, exclusion/marginalization of women is part of the logic of authoritarian, patriarchal state systems. This is why including women is so important – *it helps to change the nature of the state.*

<sup>4</sup> Feminists and other democrats in Algeria, as well as Afghan women’s groups such as RAWA, have insisted on trials for those who perpetrated sexualized violence. In Afghanistan, however, Mujahideen/ Northern Alliance commanders responsible for rape and sexual slavery were given government posts after the overthrow of the Taliban. Much to the dismay of feminist organizations, Algerian president Bouteflika’s call for a general amnesty exonerated some of the worst of the GIA terrorists of the 1990s who were in prison, and the commission he formed in 2005 included not one woman. See Ouazani (2005).

## Integrating women and gender in post-conflict

Women must be integrated into all levels – from the Cabinet to the local police force – if women’s perspectives, needs and rights are to be recognized and addressed. Special efforts should be taken at the community level to involve women as teachers, social workers, managers and decision-makers. Government and international donors alike should emphasize capacity-building of women’s organizations, women’s studies centers and women’s resource centers – these are, after all, key institutions of a democratic civil society. In all three countries, establishing conditions for security, well-being and justice will require costly, long-term investments on the part of donor countries. But the investments will be well worth the costs.

The importance of “gender mainstreaming” in the state sector is tied to the goals of capacity building and institution building for women, and of ensuring the integration of women’s perspectives across government agencies, including such key ministries as finance and justice. What this requires is the establishment of “women and development” or gender units that are involved in decision-making and are given adequate staffing and budgets. The success of gender mainstreaming depends on the (re)building of the “national machinery for women” through resources allocated to the ministry of women’s affairs and to other state agencies dedicated to women’s participation and empowerment. The women’s ministry can work with women’s civil society organizations to develop a strategy for women’s empowerment at micro (family), meso (community and organizational) and macro (national and state) levels.

Without idealizing women, one may plausibly postulate that an enhanced role for women in reconstruction could minimize corruption and cronyism – if only because women’s absence from economic and political domains of power has prevented their involvement in clientelism. In addition, such a role would likely increase attention and allocations toward social policies to alleviate poverty, provide welfare and promote social development. And since women have a stake in a welfare state that is also women-friendly, they are likely to assist in the (re)construction of strong social institutions such as social service organizations; health facilities; schools, universities and training institutes; and nurseries.

Another important area for women in reconstruction pertains to the cultural and educational domains. This includes support for media campaigns in favor of women’s participation and rights; promoting women’s media; gender-awareness and sensitivity in the mainstream and government-controlled media; women’s involvement in cultural institutions such as the ministries of culture, education, religious affairs, communications; and examining pedagogies and removing references to militarism in school curricula. Through such involvement, women would play a key role in the transition from a culture of violence to a culture of peace, human rights and women’s empowerment.

(Citation available through author)



Iraqi activist Yanar Mohammad is interviewed by openDemocracy.net

## Appendix F

# RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISMS & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**Farida Shaheed**

Presentation prepared for the Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference: "Women Redefining Peace in the Middle East & Beyond," Galway, Ireland, May 29–31, 2007

I do not presume to speak on behalf of the experiences of women from the Middle East, but I do speak from some 25 years of engagement of the phenomenon of what is called religious fundamentalisms. In fact I resist the term "fundamentalism" for several reasons. Not only has it been taken out of a US Christian historical context and imposed everywhere, it is used to refer to significantly diverse movements and situations, and it is used selectively. I have never understood why, for instance, Saudi Arabia should be labeled "traditionalist" and Iran "fundamentalist" when the reality for women and human rights is, if anything, worse in the former than the latter. Is this only a difference of relationship with the US? As activists we need to ask who does the defining and for what purpose. Most immediately, however, for those of us confronting such groups, in translation the term metamorphoses into something quite different: in Pakistan, it becomes and is embraced by its proponents as "those who champion the fundamentals," those who stand up for the basics. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the term gives legitimacy to precisely those forces we are trying to combat.

Fundamentalism is not about tradition or a return to traditions; it is a modern contemporary phenomenon. And it is not about religion, but about politics and power. Speaking of those called Muslim fundamentalists, be assured that the aim of these politico-religious groups is not to make the more than 1.2 billion Muslims better Muslims; after all as Muslims we have survived for more than 1,400 years without needing their certification of being Muslims. And we shouldn't blame Islam for what some Muslims do.

Let's be clear that fundamentalisms are modern political forces seeking to capture state (and/or world) power: movements bent on forcing people into accepting ever more narrow definitions of self in which their multiple, non-antagonistic identities based on gender, citizenship, class, religion, ethnicity, etc., are reduced to one single identity that is imposed by those who have usurped the right to speak for the willing or unwilling "members" of that group. As South Asians we also know that so-called fundamentalist projects feed off one another, having witnessed the politics of Hindutva, Islamist and Buddhist groups drawing ever more intransigent lines dividing peoples from one another and citizens within states.

We also understand that the rise of fundamentalist groups is linked to world politics. Pakistan of the 1970s and 1980s saw the rights of women, of minorities and of workers decimated by a dictator able to do so in part at least because the US found it useful to have Pakistan act as the cat's-paw in its proxy war with the USSR in Afghanistan. We see fundamentalists feed and draw upon a deep well of dissatisfaction, frustration and anger at existing injustices at the local and international levels. It is not poverty per se which leads to such anger but the growing imbalances between the haves and have-nots – and the apparent inability of other forces to address and rectify the situation. We see them strengthened by neo-imperialist agendas of regime-change, by growing racism and racial profiling. Fueled by the lessons people may draw from Turkey's experience of trying to join the EU, and also by perhaps well-intentioned politicians in democratic countries who nonetheless accept unelected religious leaders as "the authentic voice" of specific communities. In the UK, for example, funding is now available and earmarked for faith-based women's organizations. This is tantamount to forcing people into identifying by religion and invisibilizing secular voices.

The political use of religion is part of a wider global challenge: that of identity-based politics replacing ideological political agendas, of force replacing conversation and discourse in a new world order, which actually suggests that forcing regime change by war is a legitimate action. Whereas ideological agendas aim to challenge and change existing underlying structures and systems, identity politics mostly promise a better deal for a particular group – defined by religion, ethnicity or language. But this better deal comes with conditions. It is only available if you give up your agency and let them appropriate your voice, only if you divest yourself of all other markers of identity, and only if you buy into the proposition that your interests are threatened by other identity-based groups rather than by, for example, the capitalist system and patriarchy.

In essentialist identity politics, symbols and signifiers resonating with people's lived realities, or collective identities, are harnessed to promote political agendas frequently couched in religious idiom, but also in the idiom of ethnicity, culture and race. Partially people may hesitate to reject this agenda because to do so feels like rejecting essential parts of their own identity (e.g., faith or culture). The silencing is also accomplished by the unbridled violence meted out by such groups to those who dare to differ and by the ensuing fear instilled in society. Such political projects sometimes aim to maintain existing power and sometimes to challenge it, but it is power – not religion or ethnicity or culture – which is key, regardless of their claiming the moral high ground of "authenticity."

The aim is to deny people – both as individuals and as collectivities – the means, the ability and eventually the right to define for

ourselves who we are. It is not only women's rights activists who are silenced; any and all dissenting views are silenced, including both traditional and progressive religious voices.

The fear of violence and the fear of being ostracized from our own community (be this the family or larger entities) for speaking out, for daring to be different, is always present. But when people are besieged by other forces – in conflict, either through occupation or through imposed isolation, and obliged to live in authoritarian spaces, as in so much of the Middle East – it becomes all the more difficult to speak out for one's own rights since that speaking out implies a condemnation of one's own "community," however that community may be defined.

Such groups thrive on the inability of the state to fulfill its promises to its citizens, on the curtailment of spaces for discourse, debate and dissent, on people's exclusion from decision-making. (Conversely, as migrant communities, such groups use available democratic spaces to advance their project.) And by democracy I do not mean electoral politics, but the active involvement of all people in all decision-making about their lives, their communities and their states. As aptly defined by Saud M. El Sabah (2003): "It is not a democracy and an open society where a man can talk about politics without anyone threatening him. Democracy is when a woman can talk about her lover without being killed."

## **So why women?**

Why does the control and further subjugation of women appear a systematic first step to what fundamentalist groups define as establishing their version of what they call an Islamic State? Whether it is in Algeria, in Afghanistan, in Iraq or in Pakistan? In Palestine the Islamic Swords of Justice threaten women who dare not to wear the *hijab*, those who dare to play music as well. In Iraq self-styled (and self-serving, as all these groups are) Islamist "punishment committees" have emerged, threatening women without *hijab* and forbidding male doctors from treating female patients. In Pakistan they have added to the repertoire the declaration that girls' education and polio vaccination are also un-Islamic. The focus on such control is visible in all other fundamentalist movements as well.

First, I have to say that women are not actually the only targets: targets include minorities, those from other Islamic sects, as well as musicians and music itself, not to mention dancing. Sometimes it seems to me as if the intention is to eliminate any form of pleasure and joy. But I believe the real target is any form of self-expression that indicates a differing viewpoint: anyone who thinks and acts differently is targeted because essentialist politics are about false dichotomous choices being proposed to the world: Either you are a Muslim, a Christian or, let's say, a Kurd, and you do x, y and z. Or because you do a, b or c, you are not – or no longer – of the tribe, the clan, the community. You are therefore a threat that needs to be eliminated.

It is the false dichotomous choices being presented that need to be rejected – whether posited by right-wing forces within our countries and societies or from outside by the likes of George W. Bush and his defining statement, "either you're with us or against us."

While I completely agree with Yifat Susskind (2007) who states, "Strategies against gender-based violence in the Middle East need to also combat violence of US foreign policy," I also feel we must insist on the right to choose and define not only our individual identity but also our collective identity, for collective identity is the crux of the matter for two reasons:

(1) Despite the vast differences separating different societies (political, economic, cultural, etc.), all societies have to explain three incontrovertible facts of life: the fact of birth, the fact of death and the fact of the existence of at least two sexes. And this explanation of the sexes, the construction of gender, entails the construction of rules for each gender: the permissible and the forbidden, the approved and the disapproved, as well as ways of dealing with transgressions. Constructions of gender are therefore cornerstones of a community's identity.

(2) There is no plural of "I"; no duplicate of this "me" that exists, not even among twins. Therefore, whether in reference to a transient group such as a line at the bus stop, this gathering here or a more permanent group of a community, any – and every – time anyone uses the plural "we," they select one, two, possibly more, but *never all* markers of personal identity. Neither identity nor belonging to a group are givens. A collective identity is a fluid selective process – a positioning of self for engagement with others. Because collective identities are constructed, they are open to contestations and negotiations. And because the constructions of gender are central to the construction of any given collectivity, gender is always a key site of contestation as well as a source of potential power.

When as women we redefine our lives and ask for changes in gender relations, we are in fact asking nothing less than a complete transfiguration of the collectivity we inhabit. We know this as theory; we need to know this as a practical fact of engagement.

Gender has been a site of inter-group and inter-national contestations for a very long time, at least from colonial times – and probably long before then. More recently we have heard the hypocritical and instrumental use of women’s rights by the US-led coalition in attacking Afghanistan, and now in Iraq. While the rhetoric harps on the need to liberate women in other Middle East countries, under the occupation of Iraq, there was an early attempt to replace the more progressive family laws by a new code that would deprive women of rights,<sup>5</sup> while privileging religious interpretation. Of course the occupation has also seen a phenomenal increase in public violence against women.

### **A few other points**

“Culture” is a prickly and difficult term. It is commonly used by occupiers and others to dismiss gender-based violence as an inherent part of a particular culture, as something therefore that should not be interfered with. Unfortunately the perception that something is part of a people’s “culture” too often results in progressive elements, those who should be allies, hesitating to criticize “cultural” norms/rights for fear of being labeled or seen as culturally insensitive. This pattern needs to be broken. We need to remember that just because slavery or apartheid was a part of a society’s culture does not make either acceptable; all traditions are not to be upheld, and all manners of patriarchal control need to be opposed.

Secondly, those struggling for women’s rights in my part of the world, as also in the Middle East, are regularly accused of being alien and Westernized. I don’t think the accusers are in the least doubt that such accusations will stop activists – I certainly don’t care. The fear is that other women will, indeed, listen to us and, convinced of our arguments, start emulating us. The point of such accusations is to discredit us and to insert a wedge between us and the population in general, in order to silence and immobilize other women.

In this there is a deliberately promoted myth, from within and outside our contexts, that maintains that the struggle for women’s rights is a Western import of the last century or so. This is a myth – just as there is a myth that all men in our society are ogres with nothing better to do than violate women and deny their rights. We need to reclaim our history and rewrite our collective identity just as the opposition is doing. One project that attempts to do this is a training and information kit called *Great Ancestors: Women Asserting Rights in Muslim Contexts*, which traces women’s assertions of their own rights and for justice from the eighth century to the mid-1950s across the world.

The control over women and the imposition of a specific dress code through the *hijab* (as also forced beards for men and other symbols) is a way of marking and manifesting expanding control over an area. This is very innovative since the appropriation of space is no longer tied down to physical territory.

I have to end by raising the question of “authenticity,” stereotyping and who speaks for a community. Not infrequently, after hearing me speak, even feminists from the women’s movement have told me I do not *really* represent Muslims; and this from non-Muslims!! Clearly this is because I do not fit into the stereotype of what a Muslim woman should look and sound like is. But who makes this definition and whose purpose is served by such stereotyping? Please remember that politico-religious groups are strengthened and legitimized when other forces buy into the political use of Islam and the accompanying myths promoted to serve political agendas. These others are not only military regimes or more democratic political parties, but also people in the movement.

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5 In summer 2003, through Resolution 137 of the Iraqi Governing Council, under the leadership of L. Paul Bremer, the top administrator of the US occupation.

## Appendix G

# ENGENDERING PEACE PROCESSES

**Igballe Rogova, Executive Director, Kosova Women's Network**

Presentation prepared for the Nobel Women's Initiative's First International Conference: "Women Redefining Peace in the Middle East & Beyond," Galway, Ireland, May 29–31, 2007

The Kosova Women's Network (KWN), established in 2000, was originally an informal network of women's groups and organizations from various regions in Kosovo. Since its inception, KWN has developed into a network that advocates on behalf of Kosovar women, at the local, regional and international level. Representing the interests of 85 women's organizations of all ethnic groups from throughout Kosovo, KWN is a leading network in Kosovo and the region. Several of KWN's network members have over 10 years of experience in community development.

In relation to gender and conflict, KWN has undertaken numerous advocacy efforts both locally and internationally to advocate for gender equality, which usually means greater involvement of women in post-conflict decision-making processes.

### **Kosovar Women's Leadership before 1999**

Before the war in 1999, women and men in Kosovo shared leadership responsibilities politically, socially and economically. Kosovo had a woman president from 1989 until its autonomy was revoked. During the decade of oppression of Kosovar Albanians by the Serbian regime, women participated in all sectors of the parallel system.

They were doctors and nurses, journalists and politicians, deliverers of humanitarian aid to places under siege, and vocal protestors against violence and war, both in the region and internationally. Under the parallel political system, a woman acted as Kosovo's Minister of Foreign Affairs, meeting regularly with officials abroad and participating in peace talks. Throughout this period, women worked alongside men toward a free and peaceful Kosovo.

### **The United Nations enters Kosovo**

On June 10, 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Security Council resolution 1244, which provided the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with the mandate to govern Kosovo until its final political status could be decided.

At first, most Kosovar women activists were excited to have UNMIK in Kosovo. We expected that such remarkable international institutions like the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) would bring with them higher standards for gender equality and women's participation in political decision-making.

We were eager to work with the international agencies in developing effective strategies for responding to the pressing needs of Kosovar women and men.

We assumed that the UNMIK would consult with local women regarding their political preferences and in making decisions regarding the reconstruction of Kosovo. We were wrong.

Instead of bringing an inclusive model for democratic decision-making, UNMIK imposed a patriarchal system in Kosovo.

Let me give one of many examples. In September 1999, the OSCE organized a meeting between civil society and OSCE staff under the pretext of increasing communication between the international governing administration (OSCE and UNMIK) and local people.

However, not one woman from civil society was invited to the meeting. When asked why, the top OSCE official replied, "Kosovo is a patriarchal society." Although women had been inclusive in decision-making in Kosovo before the war, it was OSCE representatives that decided not to bring them into discussions.

All but one of the UNMIK Special Representatives to the Secretary General (SRSG) have completely marginalized women, failing to involve or consult with them on key decisions. Rather than supporting development, the leadership of these international institutions imposed a patriarchal system, setting a poor example for new Kosovar leaders.

Instead of dedicating our energy to the reconstruction in Kosovo, women activists expended much time and effort fighting to be

heard by international decision-makers. It meant undertaking numerous efforts to prove to UNMIK that we were experienced experts and knew what was best for our communities.

We had to prove to them time and time again that women in Kosovo were not just victims waiting to be helped – we could help ourselves, as we did in the past, and we could be effective actors in building our own future.

## **Kosovar women’s efforts towards implementing UNSCR 1325**

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on Women, War and Security. The resolution “urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict.”

Resolution 1325 provided a legal mechanism that Kosovar women could use in advocating for their voices to be heard in political decision-making. Since Kosovo is governed by the United Nations, the government is that much more responsible for implementing the UN Security Council resolution.

Kosovar women activists immediately began to increase awareness about the resolution and how it could be used in Kosovo. We utilized resolution 1325 both directly and indirectly to make our voices heard.

Let me provide you with some examples as to how we have used the resolution:

In 2001, a United Nations Security Council delegation came to Kosovo. UNMIK representatives preparing the delegation’s schedule said that the delegation did not have time to meet with Kosovar women. We noted that resolution 1325 gave us the right to meet with the delegation.

Ambassador Chowdhury (Bangladesh) who was leading the delegation agreed to meet with women at 9:30 p.m., after the delegation’s other scheduled meetings.

In December 2002, a second United Nations Security Council delegation visited Kosovo. Once again, UNMIK failed to inform or invite local women to meet with the delegation.

When Kosovar women became aware of the visit, we advocated for a meeting. We succeeded in securing a meeting with the delegation, once again, after hours. During the meeting, we began by discussing issues related to Kosovo’s final political status.

The UN Ambassador interrupted, saying, “Status is an issue for political parties. Let’s talk about women’s issues. For example, let’s talk about resolution 1325.” We were insulted and also surprised at the Ambassador’s obvious lack of knowledge that according to resolution 1325, we should be involved in negotiating Kosovo’s final political status.

We asked him, “Don’t you think that status is an issue that affects women? This is directly stated in resolution 1325.”

During our first meeting with UN Special Envoy Ambassador Kai Eide in 2005, Kosovar women activists started the meeting by discussing the issue of including women in talks concerning Kosovo’s final political status. Ambassador Kai Eide replied jokingly, “Do not talk to me like men.” Again, we were shocked and responded by saying that resolution 1325 gives us the right to speak about Kosovo’s final political status.

As these examples show, rather than international institutions supporting the inclusion of Kosovar women in decision-making, we had to fight to be included in the process. Even then, we were accused by UN representatives of “speaking like men” when we brought up key political issues, such as Kosovo’s final political status.

Despite the barriers that we faced from international institutions such as the UN, we have continued to advocate for women to be included in decision-making.

## **Women’s Peace Coalition**

In the last decade, the women’s movement in southeast Europe has become oriented toward promoting peace and stability in the region, improving women’s positions in all spheres by achieving respect for their rights, as well as the rights of other marginalized groups, and has waged a strong fight against militarism.

These women have undertaken a difficult path – from the wars waged throughout the land, to the end of the last war in Kosovo, now with international mechanisms installed in order to ensure peace in the region, as fragile as that peace may be.

For these activists, it is clear that the only way to ensure the welfare of their people is through supporting a sustainable peace as well as economic prosperity for their countries. This peace cannot be achieved solely through political speeches and decisions. Countries within the region must try to make reconciliations between their nations.

After the wars, the suffering and the brutality exerted on innocent civilians, as well as the huge economic losses, the process of inter-ethnic reconciliation in order to achieve a sustainable peace is difficult to come to terms with. This fact was best recognized by activists for peace.

This was the very reason why women from Serbia and Kosovo cooperated and supported each other, both during and now after the war. These women consider mutual cooperation and regional networking as their topmost priority.

Based on these reasons, in May of 2006 the Kosova Women's Network and the Women in Black Network from Serbia have established the Women's Peace Coalition as an independent citizen initiative, based on solidarity between women, which surpasses ethnic, national and religious barriers.

The Women's Peace Coalition, works to achieve a just and sustainable peace by including women in the peace-building process as equal partners and by emphasizing that women are not victims, but survivors of war who are dynamic and prominent actors in movements for peace.

The Women's Peace Coalition (WPC) strongly advocates implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, on the advancement of women in politics, economy and society, and opposes those processes which are damaging to society at large. Since its inception, the Women's Peace Coalition has initiated large-scale activities primarily related to monitoring the status of the Kosovo talks and presenting alternate views regarding this status from a humanistic, rather than political, view.

These perspectives were expressed by the WPC in two press releases. The first statement addressed the failure of the decision-making factors, both Kosovo and Serbia, to include women in negotiating Kosovo's final political status. The second statement was aimed at informing the Kosovo and Serbian public about the Coalition's perspective on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, an issue which was being discussed in Vienna (<http://www.womensnetwork.org>).

Along with monitoring these talks, the WPC has undertaken and developed other activities aimed at fulfilling the objectives set by coalition members. These activities included organizing the Coalition's first conference on the subject "United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security," which was held in Struga, Macedonia, on September 1-2, 2006.

The conference was organized by the Kosova Women's Network (KWN) in cooperation with the Women in Black Network (WiBN) from Serbia, and was supported by UNIFEM.

We believe that the inclusion of women in post-conflict decision-making is not only a requirement of resolution 1325. It is also essential for the future functioning of inclusive, democratic processes in Kosovo as well as other countries.

Failing to include women in such important processes jeopardizes future stability as well as misses opportunities to incorporate women's knowledge, experience and expertise into important decisions.

Post-conflict decision-making processes are not only about resolving the conflicts of the past - they also lay the foundation for the future, a future to which women can, should and must contribute.



Igballe ("Igo") Rogova kept our spirits high throughout the conference. Here she laughs with colleagues during a break.