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## **CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING AND PREVENTION IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND WAR**

Report on the final conference of the project «The Contribution of Women to Peace and Reconciliation» in Brussels, 24/25 November 2011, in the Committee of the Regions

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In November 2011, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Brussels invited women peace activists, peace researchers and policy makers to the conference «Consciousness-Raising and prevention in the struggle against violence and war». The conference aimed to facilitate the exchange of experiences of women in resisting and struggling against violence and war. It also aimed to define new approaches and recommendations to strengthen women's resistance on the ground and to lay down strategies that strengthen feminist perspectives and women's positions in areas such as peace building and reconciliation processes.

The results of the RLS Brussels research project «The Contribution of Women to Peace and Reconciliation» served as a starting point. In this project, women peace activists from Rwanda, Somalia, Ex-Yugoslavia and the Middle East (from current and post-conflict areas) analyzed indicators in the development of violent conflict and reflected on their experiences in civil resistance and in processes of peace reconstruction from a feminist perspective. About 100 peace activists, researchers and policy makers from Africa, Europe and the Middle East participated in the conference, facilitated by English, German and French interpretation. In 23 presentations, discussions and a concluding panel, the participants shared their experiences, discussed new approaches, and brought forward proposals to strengthen feminist perspectives in the struggle

against violence and for justice. An open and warm discussion characterized the two days of the conference, in which differences were discussed and commonalities found.

The presentations and discussion centred on the following issues: Where have women succeeded and where have they gone wrong? Which approaches can strengthen feminist perspectives in the common political agenda? How can we strengthen women's voices, and critical civil society positions, in peace negotiations? How can women peace activists on the ground be supported? How can a feminist agenda be applied?

### **2 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS**

The opening questions of the conference were: How can the specific experience of women in conflict-prevention, civil resistance and reconciliation become recognized as the main tool for the development of general concepts and strategies? How can we find a way to solve ethnic, religious and economic conflict through compromise? Is it necessary to develop (in addition to the work of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) a Conflict Watch Network to inform the international community and the public about eruptions of violence? How can the EU build a civil policy structure for conflict prevention?

## **2.1 The opening panel: Women's soft power and missing voices in drafting peace accords**

On the first day of the conference, **Birgit Daiber**, head of office of RLS Brussels, welcomed the participants and introduced the conference. She invited discussion on strategies for non-violent conflict solution, and proposed to discuss conflict prevention, given the current failures of the international community to implement non-military strategies to end violent conflicts and wars. She highlighted the importance of women's networks, especially networks on the ground, as they can be subversive. She recognized progress made in terms of UN resolutions 1325 and 1820, which go beyond symbolism and recognize the dignity of women opposing sexual violence. She pointed to the new status of EU foreign and security policy since the Lisbon Treaty, and to the importance of critical civil society groups in raising feminist positions and women's issues.

**Galia Golan**, University Professor of Herzliya Interdisciplinary Centre's Lauder School of Government in Israel, emphasised the strength of «soft power» in order to end violent conflicts, to change minds, to fight for human security, and to oppose «hard power» (weapons). Soft power is connected to activism that focuses on persuasion, reconciliation, dialogue and communication, links to civil society, particularly women. In order to avoid war, peace agreements need to build on «soft power» rather than «hard power», to be able to replace peace-making (weapons) with peace building (dialogue). She puts women at the centre of resistance and peace building, attributing to women the skills of soft power, dialogue and persuasion, in opposition to the skill and power to tell others what to do. Although women can also be perpetrators, they are equipped for the job of peace building.

She then referred to the Israel-Palestine conflict, pointing out that in contexts of war and power hierarchies, women are not only victims but also actors in civil resistance. In sharing her experiences as a peace activist she acknowledges, «We find ourselves in a tragedy». The opportunity to resolve the conflict existed several times, but peace has been rejected repeatedly; the idea of holding onto as much territory as possible has made peace difficult. On the level of peace accords, the UN does not give women or critical civil society the right to speak and the power for peace building, she re-

marked. In her view, the solution remains in the hands of the international community.

**Angela Liberatore** from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG Research) pointed to the lack of women's voices in peace building and conflict transformation. Despite the European experience of the Nazis and the Holocaust, and the knowledge that diversity and gender play an important role in peace, these voices are missing. The EU envisages a permanent military and defence cooperation, as set out in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), and the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). People working for peace on the ground do not have access to the drafting processes of peace accords. The Sakharov prize (also known as Alternative Noble Peace Prize) highlights this lack of access.

DG Research is currently examining this lack with a research project that aims to show the extent of women's contribution to peace and security building, their involvement and potential influence over its short and long-term resilience. She further highlighted the importance of networking among women (and conferences as a tool to achieve this). Networking is an important means for resisting conflict and for peace building, as women, e.g. in former Yugoslavia, actively use their direct networks to communicate against dominant propaganda. In this sense, networks can serve as a means to avoid perpetration.

## **2.2 The second panel: results of the Rosa Luxemburg Brussels research project «The contribution of women to peace and reconciliation»**

In the second panel, the results of the research project «The contribution of women to peace and reconciliation» were presented. Birgit Daiber introduced the research project, explaining the approach with a focus on the analysis of the history and development of violent conflicts, on the achievements and challenges of civil resistance, and on women's experiences in peace building. A reconciliation process is underway in Rwanda, a kind of solution has been found in the former Yugoslavia, but strong contradictions and oppressed groups remain, as in Somalia. That country's state building process is often forgotten. This shows that military intervention deepens rather than solves conflict.

**Lama Hourani** from Palestine is a women rights activist and member of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace, currently working for the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Ramallah. She focused her speech on the underlying reasons for the Middle East conflict. She spoke about the double suffering of women in Palestine, and expressed her expectations for the Women's Commission in which she is active.

Lama Hourani explained that after lengthy internal debates in Palestine and after recognizing the Israeli state, Palestinians have no hope. They are convinced that the conflict can only be solved with neutral interference by the international community. She highlighted that the underlying reason for the conflict is land, and as long as Palestinian land continues to be taken away, the peace process will not succeed. She expects the international community to address asymmetries and to hold Israel to account for its actions through international law. She also pointed out the many roles of women in this conflict. As victims, suffering from occupation and the traditional society, and as peace activists, as pioneers, crossing borders and building bridges with Israeli women. She hopes for more engagement in joint actions with Israeli women in the struggle against occupation and for them to work to hold their government to account. However, international solidarity is vast now (she mentioned BDSM, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, the non-violent resistance movement within Palestine, the support for anti-blockade campaigns in Gaza). She demanded more human security and more human rights protection, which is in tension with state security.

**Ghada Al-Jadba**, medical doctor and director of 6 UNRWA health centres in Gaza city, showed how the blockade of the Gaza strip complicates lives and the work of her UN organization. She describes the situation as «years of occupation, limited land, high density living, and isolation». Nevertheless, she also shows how her organization, even in the fifth year of the blockade, carried on with their «Gaza Children's Summer Games». These games promote health and education, but also break the blockade by giving children the opportunity to have fun and to open their hearts, to experience normality in an abnormal situation. She further highlighted women's ability to bring the difficult issues to the table, even if they disagree. She criticized the international community for being bi-

ased and lacking the commitment to include civil society, particularly women's organizations.

**Molly Malekar** is Director of the Counselling Centre for Women in Jerusalem and a long-standing women's rights and peace activist in Bhat Shalom and in the Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Peace in Israel and Palestine. She raised several issues in her speech. The creation of a state of mind of victimhood in the Israeli case needs to be looked at carefully, as it is made into the ultimate victimhood by the current Israeli president. Civil society in the Middle East is not free and is deeply entrenched in this machinery.

A comprehensive view on the international community is needed, as it is plural and contradictory. However, in the case of Middle East, the international community is clear and follows its interests in the ongoing conflict. Human rights groups and peace activists have limited access to the international community. «They brought gloomy facts, but they were ignored. They provide the information. The international community has the information, but ignores it.» They attempted to meet with the international community but the answer was «patience, it will be solved». Those parts of the international community who have an interest in solving the conflict ignore the existing power asymmetries. The question remains: Who are those international agents that we want involved in solving the conflict?

Molly Malekar took up the term «soft power» mentioned earlier in the conference by Galia Golan. Molly Malekar's idea is to use soft power as strong power, and not apologize. Because after war, when the cameras have gone, it will be up to women to clean up and do the peace building (she cited the Polish author Ryslawa Brisboska: «Someone has to clean up when it is over»).

She emphasized the dialogue among women from both sides, Israel and Palestine, which consisted of an exchange of political and intellectual experiences, a process that has built on long-term relations between women activists, in which they did not always agree, but where women brought the questions to the table.

Conclusions on the Middle East were presented by all three women peace activists from the Middle East. They made a particular effort to find common conclusions, which were mainly concerning addressing root causes (the struggle for land), the failure of the international community, the ignorance of the international community towards civil

society, the attempts by women to cross borders, and the ongoing occupation and blockade.

**Yolande Mukagasana** is a writer, lecturer, and founder of Nyamirambo Point d'Appui. She emphasized the history of the Rwandan conflict and showed that «genocides are planned». She attributes to Rwandan women a strong role in the reconciliation process and in the rebuilding of the country. She spoke of the importance of including widows and orphans in such processes. Women's work on the ground, for Yolande Mukagasana, needs to be more strongly recognized with greater attention paid to conflict prevention mechanisms. She proposed the creation of a women's conflict prevention network.

**Shukria Dini** is a Somali-Canadian feminist and researcher who has been researching the gender issues in war-torn Somalia for over 10 years and is the director and founder of the Somalia women's Studies Centre (SWSC). She opposes the dominant analysis and picture of Somalia as a failed state. For reconciliation and peace processes, we need to draw another picture. She criticizes the top-down approach of the peace process promoted by the international community. The Security Council sponsors peace talks, but the meetings take place in the big cities of the neighbouring countries, Nairobi and Djibouti. Women are not at the table and Somali ownership of these peace processes is low. The military approach lead to the violence in Somalia. The situation in Somalia is disastrous, as «hospitals and schools are not working and young people are easily recruited». She attributes to women a particular role in the efforts to make peace work in Somalia. She mentioned two examples that show the ability to cut across patriarchal structures of war and «make the margins liveable». One is that women have crossed the boundaries between the two warlord zones and collected information, reported on the violence and the killing and thus dismantled forced separation by warlords. The second is alternative peace prizewinner Asha Hagi's promotion of a sixth clan open to women, in an environment where women are mostly considered «temporary guests» of their clan.

**Bosiljka Schedlich** is the CEO of the Association Südosteuropa Kultur e.V. (Southeast Europe Culture) in Berlin. She said that wars are premeditated and arranged before they become violent. They involve entire populations. «Their war became our war», Bosiljka Schedlich remarked. In addition, here, the war had its roots in economic issues, lead to destruction, individualism and national-

ism. In these times, they were able to use existing women's networks to keep the stream of communication and dialogue open. In addition, they experienced a lot of international solidarity from women from other countries. Her work in Berlin today is working with the war-traumatized and in advising on reconciliation processes. She said that a new focus should be placed on conflict prevention to eliminate war from history. For that, she stressed peace education for children and young people, and for strong networks and international solidarity. When conflicts are recognized early, for Bosiljka Schedlich, we can react early and work to prevent.

### **2.3 The third panel: civil resistance and protection during violent conflicts**

**Ruchama Marton** is founder of the organization Physicians for Human Rights Israel (Alternative Noble Peace Prize in 2010). Her organization strives to promote a fairer and more inclusive society in which the right to health is applied equally for all. The principles of her organisation's work are to share power and responsibility and to avoid patronizing, by being aware of imbalances and power asymmetries. In her speech, she shared her experience of the difficulties of organizing civil protection during violent conflict and focused on the importance of communication and women's networks in times of separation during conflict.

One of the examples she spoke of was a mobile clinic in the West Bank that carried out humanitarian work (facilitating access to health) and facilitating communication. As a second example, she shared her experience in building women's networks for peace building. A previously established network of her organization continued to function during the Gaza attack in 2004. It allowed direct communication during and after this attack via email and phone calls. For Ruchama Marton, the continuity of relations among women contributes to bridging gaps in separated societies during violent conflict.

She also highlighted the difficulties of conducting this kind of work. Her organization's winning of the Alternative Noble Price was ignored by the Israeli press. In their commitment to Palestinian partners and society, they are considered national traitors. The work of her organization can therefore be considered subversive: it fights mechanisms of oppression, against occupation, and against the dominant idea of «there is no partner» on the Palestinian side.

**Sybille Fezer**, Manager of International Programmes of Medica Mondiale and former Programme Manager for Liberia, focused her speech on the organisation's work in post-conflict areas and against sexual war violence. Her organization has 20 years of experience in this field, in places such as Bosnia and the African Great Lakes region. She focused on the commonalities between women as victims and actors in contexts of violent conflict. Women often experience an increase of violence long before a war actually starts, e.g. having less freedom of movement. Violence against women carries on in post-conflict situations, mainly in close relationships. Peacekeepers and NGO-workers do not serve as role models; they equally exploit and rape women before, during and after war. Speaking from this experience, she is highly in favour of a monitoring system established by women. She also highlights the activities of women during war, by using networks in times of peace, and their fearlessness and empathy in times of war. In Liberia, women liberated children from rebels and took care of them during war, and in Congo, women took raped girls from the rebels and brought them to hospital.

What is needed to support women on the ground when violence increases is a strong solidarity structure, a strong women's movement, a strong civil society, autonomous spaces for women, which are isolated in times of war, for physical retreat and for exchanging ideas. In post-conflict areas, the presence of external women often enhances the dialogue to reflect discrimination patterns and power asymmetries. Establishing protection networks for women and supporting the work of women's courts in which perpetrators and victims come together in a form of arbitral trial has proven to be valid in Medica Mondiale's work in Afghanistan.

She concluded that the international community has to acknowledge a gender perspective on conflict and called on the EU to allocate more funds for trauma and solidarity, to change effectiveness criteria and increase time spans for funded projects. More resources are needed for the inclusion of women in peace processes and for the development of strong civil society.

## **2.4 The fourth panel: reflecting experiences of women's activism for peace and reconciliation**

**Diana Francis** from Great Britain is a consultant and writer working for many years with peace ac-

tivists around the world. She is former president of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and has worked with the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS). She is also co-chair of a Quaker group. She drew on her longstanding experience in accompanying peace-building processes (she is currently active in Asia) and mobilizing against war in Europe.

In her speech, she defined the conditions for reconciliation: to overcome asymmetries in dialogue and in a council of equals. Speaking of equals, she reminded us that «gender» as a social relation that is constructed and recon-structed, is often used as the antithesis of equality and a model of domination. She states: «We are left with service and victimhood if we accept what we are given.»

She questioned peace-building and community-building efforts that come with militarism, and considers power exercised by political and military forces as ways of constructing masculinity. For her, domestic violence is a hidden aspect of gender warfare that also takes place in areas where gender rights are strong. We ignore human rights when we overlook the many civilian deaths, of which we do not hear. The military industrial complex is not only a human rights disaster, but has also gross economic and ecological consequences. In her view, women have to take a lead to develop non-violent power, to counteract power over people. «But we need to become much better at it and be very intelligent to build the capacity to reach out».

**Naomi Chazan**, political scientist, is President of the New Israel Fund (NIF), a prominent Foundation supporting various progressive groups in Israel dealing with women's rights, religious rights, labour rights, and minority rights. She is also a longstanding peace and feminist activist, e.g. in the Bhat Shalom women's network. Naomi Chazan posed the question, why women's power still fails to solve conflict. She highlighted the following four axioms that related to the discussion at the conference, and proposed some key issues to help strengthen women peace activists.

First, she criticised that many women work within victimhood. She considers fear, victimhood, and revenge as helpless guides of action for women and men. «Maybe we are victims, but we are way beyond that in our capacity». Second, she stated that her believe in soft power is related to issues such as human security, environment, education, social welfare, social justice and human rights organizations. The problem is that these will remain

meaning-less if they do not lead to decision-making. Third, she warned against waiting for the international community to mobilize, intervene and solve the conflict. according to Naomi Chazan conflicts are international and homegrown simultaneously. Fourth, she criticises the fact that peace activists feel comfortable when talking about identity and rights, but do not allow (themselves) to talk about their own interests. «When we talk about identity and rights, we feel comfortable, but what if we talk about our own interests? It is in our interest to acknowledge the other and our own (Israeli) identity. There is room for everybody.»

Naomi Chazan suggests that feminist power has to leave these four axioms behind, move forward and sincerely «discuss where we have gone wrong». She is eager to correct mistakes, such as gender mainstreaming, and suggested to make the following improvements to become stronger:

First, there is a need for a vision. Peace needs a vision; we need to know, what peace is composed of, and what the driving values for peace are. Peace is living in equality, human dignity, mutual respect, and substantial democratic values (democracy is crucial). When peace activists resist, they need to define where they want to go and offer an alternative. Second, the key vehicle for peace is civil society, a tremendous vehicle that women can control. Women are the majority of activists in civil society, and civil society includes many feminists who are not female. This vehicle of change and transformation needs improvement and politicisation. Third, women lack a power paradigm. Women are afraid of taking power, and this is why they are beaten repeatedly. It is time for the creation of a power paradigm. Fourth, more strategic thinking and more feminization of strategic thinking is necessary, to make a direct connection between action and outcome. Currently there is no direct connection. Fifth, there is a need to mobilize international forces and international support. Now, Israel experiences its worst democratic recession. The current defunding of civil society organizations (via new legislation) is alarming. Democratic civil society forces act directly and are a vehicle for women. Women know how to campaign. What is needed is a selective and precise co-option of international support that fortifies the capacity to make the difference.

**Betty Bigombe** is a long-time peace activist. State Minister for Water Resources in Uganda, she was awarded Uganda's Woman of the Year in 1993. She started her speech by pointing out that it is her

conviction that the international community does not invest enough in conflict prevention, that it is so much easier to fundraise for humanitarian assistance, for peace-keeping, for post-conflict reconstruction and settlement, but less so for conflict prevention. Early-warning mechanisms exist but are not used to detect the breakout of war. For her, conflict prevention needs to focus on challenging weapons manufacturers, suppliers and dealers. Attention needs to be turned to those who supply the weapons to state and non-state actors. In war, many people profit from weapons dealing and this blocks the ways for peace.

She considers justice a strong component of any peace process, and therefore spoke about the contribution of women to peace, reconciliation and justice with reference to the Ugandan war. She was involved in the peace-building process in Northern Uganda, following a conflict that had affected one third of the country. Her conviction is that military victory never brings sustainable peace, that people defeated are humiliated, that the root causes remain unaddressed. The marginalization of defeated populations may even increase post conflict, and it is only a matter of time before they fight again.

She went to Northern Uganda because, although she was privileged, she was sick of seeing dead bodies, amputated arms, chopped off noses and ears, and sick of seeing people, particularly children, dying in camps because of lack of food and medication. She convinced the authorities to address the issues of the people of Northern Uganda by peaceful means, even though they are considered among the most dangerous rebels in the world. She convinced the government to negotiate with the rebels and to make a settlement. She was initially considered unwise and she clashed with the military, but she made a difference as a woman, because a man in her role would have insisted on a military solution.

Her mandate in Northern Uganda was not to talk peace, but to persuade the people in the Northern communities and camps to convince their sons and daughters to lay down their arms. She stayed in camps, listened to the people's grievances. When she stayed in the camps, she first addressed men, because they were easier to approach; they promised everything but nothing happened. She then turned to women, and they were much more practical and more suitable for peace building. Some of these women's sons, daughters or husbands were in the bush, and she convinced them to persuade their sons and husbands to lay down their arms.

She guaranteed security for them if they left the bush.

She considered it important to reach out to the women in the camps, because they were doing something to save their communities. Thus, the peace process was homegrown and attuned to the needs of the population. The strategies designed by international organizations that concentrate on the reconstruction, resettlement, demobilization and rehabilitation of ex-combatants, of child soldiers, mostly ignore what has kept people going during the conflict, and ignore what people have contributed to peace and their communities. The rural women have coping mechanisms and perseverance. Rather than creating something new, these rural women should be supported.

Betty Bigombe further highlighted the importance of not taking reconciliation for granted, and said that justice is a crucial component of reconciliation. The case of Uganda is of course special. Here, children were abducted by rebels, their innocence was violated, as victims they became perpetrators. Women who lost their children cannot just be asked to forgive immediately. They need justice and closure. In one case, she succeeded to help a child rebel to reach closure with his case. He and his brother were abducted by a rebel leader; his brother was killed by him later because he was tired at one point. As the rebel leader was already out of the bush, she could organize a meeting between the boy and the rebel leader; the latter said sorry, and the boy could have closure on what had happened.

She finished her speech by pointing out that women are good at peace building and at reconciliation. Women are considered trustworthy and less corruptible in peace processes. They prioritize their community and communicate their decisions to their communities. Women love peace, want a happy family, a happy environment, a happy community. Although they get raped and widowed and lose their children, they supply meals in camps, take care of the sick, and bury people. Women take up the role of peace building very naturally. They are good at reconciliation because they bring families and communities together. Reconciliation is nevertheless a very complex process; people must be given opportunities to heal slowly in counselled processes.

## **2.5 The fifth panel: characteristics of contemporary international wars and militarization of policy**

On the second day of the conference, the presentations addressed the questions of what kind of challenges feminist movements and peace activists are facing in the context of the new characteristics of wars and given the uprisings in Northern Africa.

**Erhard Crome** from the Institute for Policy Analysis of RLS in Berlin focused his speech on the new characteristics of war, considering them closely related to the power shift towards Asia, and to the world crisis. He pointed out four issues that characterize the «new wars». One, the impact of internationally coordinated demonstrations should not be underestimated, even though military interventions are not prevented. Demonstrations show that the majority of the population is against military intervention. Two, national foreign and security policies rather than the common foreign and security policy of the EU are decisive and powerful, as the recent case of the Libyan war showed; EU member states had different positions. With a diverse international community - the EU, NATO, and the United Nations - more options are possible. The disapproval of the German government for the Libyan war posed a problem for the German Left, as they agreed in general terms with the disaffirmation, but they had to show that they do not completely share the analysis behind this decision. Three, the term «new wars» needs defining. Erhard Crome referred to Mary Kaldor who differentiates new and old wars (warlord organizations and governments) from new powers, interests, and commonalities. He also referred to Herfried Münkler, who denies the colonial history and the responsibility of the West, and claims that the West is not responsible for corruption and patriarchy in Third World countries. The critical position of Rosa Luxemburg Foundation highlights the fact that warlords are part of the capitalist world economy, by trading raw materials, lithium, diamonds, rare earths, raw oil, and that our concerns need to focus on the world economy and our continuing responsibility for these wars. Four, the changing global political situation, the decline of the United States and Western Europe is the new background for many future conflicts. Erhard Crome refers to Parag Khanna, an Indian intellectual in the US, who considers China, the US and the EU as modern imperial powers that are struggling to maintain and build on their political, military and trading power.

**Bernard Schmid** is a journalist and essayist, a legal advisor with the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples (MRAP) in Paris. He has written for a variety of German print media on the Arab Uprising. In his contribution, Schmid focused, from a juridical-legal perspective, on gender relations and the challenges facing feminist movements in North Africa in the context of election campaigns.

The laws in Libya and Egypt are inspired by Sharia; in Tunisia, Sharia has been reformed. In all three countries, gender relations are restrictive; the man is the head of the family and inheritance is unequal. The legal reference to Sharia is not complete and does not apply to punishment for stealing, for example. For the sake of comparison, Schmid mentioned, that in Algeria and Morocco, a softer interpretation of Sharia is in place; the legal status of women was changed to some degree at the beginning of 2000, as women strongly participate in economic life.

In Tunisia, Ben Ali presented himself as the defender of women rights and used this to legitimize the regime. He warned that a change in the regime would rollback gender relations (referring to the Code de statut personnel of 1956, which declared women and men as equal). Bernard Schmid asked whether the newly elected moderate Islamist political party Ennahda would change these women's rights. He doubted this. Women's rights do not fit well in the moral discourse of Ennahda of breaking with colonialism, stopping corruption, improving social justice (with social justice they do not mean abolishing social classes but strengthening economic liberalism). A strong moral discourse could have an effect on gender relations in Tunisia, despite the fact that almost half of the members of parliament of the Ennahda party are women. Anxieties were raised when Souad Abderrahim, a female Ennahda politician, remarked in November that single mothers are a disgrace for Tunisia, and that they «do not have a right to exist». Schmid does not consider this a sign of a possible repressive rollback or a sign of legal changes, for three reasons. First, Tunisians would not allow this. Second, Ennahda is used to making alliances and democratic politics; they will run a certain moral discourse but not change the law. Third, Ennahda does not have a majority in parliament.

The situation is different in Egypt, as the Muslim Brotherhood, considered the largest and best-organized political movement in Egypt, has a more authoritarian approach in comparison to Ennahda

in Tunisia. The Muslim Brotherhood are equally used to forming alliances, but the context in Egypt is different; the revolution is not finished, democracy not achieved, and the military is still in power. Sexism and homophobia, violence against women and gay people is rampant, but the presence of women and gay people in the uprising in Tahrir square and in the mass movement was high. Women's rights organisations demonstrated in March 2011, at the height of the revolutionary wave. These changes in gender relations however have to be considered short-term rather than long-term.

The presence of women in the uprising in Libya was different. Women were active in demonstrations for human rights and presented themselves unveiled, but the uprising was mostly a young man's mass movement, including young radical Islamists. In August 2011, women lawyers tried to bring Muammar Gaddafi to court because of the rape and abuse of five female bodyguards.

**Selmin Çalışkan** from the European Women's Lobby (EWL) centred her speech on Afghanistan, criticizing the current civil-military approach and asking what peace, security and justice means for women and civil society. Her experience goes back to her time working first for Medica Mondiale and then for the German Development Cooperation in Afghanistan.

Çalışkan considers the civil-military approach, adopted increasingly over the last ten years, a «vicious politics», giving the military more and more civil tasks, mainly aiming to legitimize the military in the region as «to win hearts and minds». She pointed out the contradictions of this civil-military approach with two examples from Afghanistan: participatory and gender approaches are neglected when the military digs wells; a women's safe-house protected by ISAF soldiers is a contradiction, as soldiers are potential violators of women.

She highlighted in her speech that in Afghanistan, the rights of women and civil society are endangered. The rate of violence against women and mortality in childbirth is high. Regarding the implementation of UN resolution 1325, she remarked that more women in the security sector do not change the sector's system of violence and masculinity, and does not solve conflict. Female police officers constantly complain about sexual harassment by their colleagues. As far as civil society is concerned, war victim's organizations continue to work underground, in fear of war criminals. For Çalışkan, the only way to improve women's civil rights is a strong civil society. Çalışkan further



points out the need to make sexual violence part of any security concept and peace keeping mission. Sexual violence is high in conflict and post-conflict areas. In Kosovo and Congo, men of peacekeeping missions and the UN administration are involved in women's trafficking, and are therefore agents of violence. New rules of engagement for UN missions are needed that facilitate bringing sexual violence perpetrators to justice and to protect women from rape. UN peace and reconciliation resolutions need to lay the groundwork for the sentencing and conviction of perpetrators of sexual violence. She is convinced that it is possible to demand that rape be a topic on the peace negotiation agenda.

## **2.6 The sixth panel: conflict prevention and mediation**

**Osnat Lubrani** is UN Development Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Kosovo, but has also worked closely with civil society organizations such as the Women's Commission for Peace and has worked to bring Israeli and Palestinian women together. In her speech, she took up a perspective of a human rights practitioner and asked: «what works, what does not work; what we have done good enough, what needs to be done more?» In short: what are the opportunities to have a stronger impact, and what are the challenges? Conflict prevention and reconciliation is about the repairing of fractured societies and as a complex, messy, painful work, it is hard to measure. It is not necessarily expensive, but it takes time, sometimes more than a generation. The need for measurable results for projects reduces the possibilities for conflict prevention projects, as their results are hard to measure and less convincing for the donors. For successful projects, the EU needs to support long-term projects that change hearts and minds. «There are no quick fixes». Aid effectiveness is another point. NGOs use so much time and energy with their results frameworks, their log frames. Sometimes the people who are most connected to the people, the women leaders in the communities, are not positioned to develop results frameworks for an EU project. She said we must be aware of the financial crisis under which countries will renegotiate their promises made. For nine years, she has been running her most successful project, under the capacity development facility, which is very flexible. It uses knowledge from the region and specialisation has progressed.

Women's experiences are crucial in peace building. Today there is a better understanding of what women do in conflict and post-conflict situations. New tools such as Resolutions 1325 and 1820 have improved the recognition of women's work, rights, and perspectives. The question remains: «How do we implement it, how do we make it a reality?» The answer to the Kosovo riots in 2004 was to improve interethnic relationships by international organizations. Many of these initiatives were youth and women initiatives, considered as having a bridge-building capacity, but they were not very successful. They did not become forces of peace building on a broader scale.

Women are not naive and know what buttons to push to access their country's political agenda. However, the question remains: «What would it take to make women's experiences hard-hitting agenda-setters?» She said women's moderation is sometimes exploited, and that eventually the right-wing agenda wins out. She calls for making fewer compromises, taking the movements in North Africa as an example.

**Helmut Scholz**, Member of the European Parliament from GUE/NGL (Die Linke), and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP, focused his speech on a critical perspective on EU Foreign and Security Policy and the new developments in international law, in particular the role of ICC and the UN-based Responsibility-to-Protect-Clause. Scholz related the need for a shift towards conflict prevention with the millennium goals, citing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: «We must not fail the billions who look to the international community to fulfil the promise of the millennium declaration for a better world». War is no longer an accepted legal situation; today's politics need to address ending wars, not taming wars. Sticking to the millennium development goals is a systemic way to prevent global conflicts and protect human rights. The number and the length of ongoing violent conflicts and the failure of many peacekeeping missions prove that shifting towards conflict prevention with a strong focus on social justice and democracy is necessary. Helmut Scholz then discussed the relationship between different actors in the international community, the UN and the EU, the changes and the opportunities. He asked what the responsibilities of the EU are in the context of an upgraded status in the UN, and pointed to the contradiction between legal framework and facts. The context is that today the UN Security Council is politically and legal-

ly limited, and that the nation states rather than the UN or the EU represents the interests of people. The Left in Europe is divided on the answer to the question of whether the EU is part of the solution or part of the problem. He himself understands his role as an MEP to manoeuvre within these contradictions and to engage in politics to prevent people from being harmed. He understands the EU as one of the international communities with power to act. The EU is bound to its agency principles such as democracy, human dignity, conflict prevention, etc. It can play a responsible role alongside other partners, but can of course abuse the possibilities for other ends.

He pointed to powerful tools, norms, and institutions to change conflict. First, states can prevent conflict and human rights violations when detected and recognized early. Second, deterring violating states can be a powerful tool. Third, sanctioning states that do not follow international conventions can be helpful. Helmut Scholz concluded that the legal relationship among states allows interference in conflicts, but that the means of interference are not to be compromised and military intervention opposed at all times.

**Antonia Potter Prentice** is a senior associate of the European platform for peace-building NGOs, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). She spoke about the EU record on 1325 and about the possibilities for effective application of conflict mediation measures. At the beginning of her speech, she cited Cora Weiss, President of the Hague Appeal for Peace. In her speech at the Nobel Women's Initiative conference in 2011 on ending sexual violence in conflict, Cora Weiss said: «We cannot pluck rape out of war and let the war go on. We must not make war safe for women. It is time to abolish war.»

Antonia Potter Prentice discussed ways to change the paradigm towards abolishing war. She considers the current way of implementing conflict mediation as «rather thin». The result of today's implementation of conflict mediation is that the international community tends to support short-term political agreements rather than bottom-up peace building. EPLO's experience is that gender issues and the representation of women are generally only integrated in bottom-up peace building.

Analyzing the relationship between gender, the representation of women and conflict mediation, she said that conflict mediation takes place on two levels: the public (track 1) and in secret (track 2). She points to the systemic failure to link these

levels. Women are mostly active in the «secret» level, only a few in the public level (such as Betty Bigombe from Uganda). There are some improvements and progress, but not enough; only a few women's organisations find their way into peace processes.

The problem with the public level is that it is mostly a narrow and closed up mediation space, in which transitional justice and gender are not an issue. Antonia Potter Prentice asked what steps should be taken, and what possibilities exist to bring women into the public level of conflict mediation. She refers to the hopeful example of Guatemala, where Luz Mendez, a Guatemalan activist for women's rights, was the only woman in the reconciliation team. Mendez gathered views from peace activists and women's groups to file them into the official mediation process, using the fact that she was supported by certain politicians.

Antonia Potter Prentice considers power mapping as a necessary and useful tool in order to know how to get the message across, even though women need to change these power paradigms. Another option for women is to argue more strongly for inclusion. Inclusion is considered as an important issue in peace processes and can crack open mediation space. Women's groups also need to be conditional and only support peace processes where women are represented. Another option is positive conditionality: to show what women can offer in exchange for mediators bringing gender issues to the table, so that gender problems are not chipped away easily. Last, it helps to be specific, to say exactly what groups, networks and initiatives do to empower women, to be concrete and bold. To make a difference in conflict mediation processes from a feminist perspective, she suggests: One, power mapping in a conflict situation, supporting women logistically, creating physical and psychological spaces to change the situation. Two, bringing in a gender perspective and not only demanding women representatives in conflict mediation processes. Three, urge people, e.g. Catherine Ashton, who spoke with women's groups in Northern Africa, to keep their promises. Fourth, improve other documents and language since UN resolutions 1325 and 1820 opened the door. This means providing useful language and suggestions for people drafting documents. Five, all these efforts would be more successful in a concerted way.

## 2.7 The seventh panel: international cooperation between women against violence and war

**Aicha Belarbi** is Professor at Rabat University and former development minister and former Ambassador of Morocco to the EU. She asks what cooperation is needed, and what cooperation is possible. The context is the uprising in North Africa against repression and bad governance, the world financial and economic crisis, and the politics of austerity. The context in Morocco is also that domestic violence remains high and women's rights limited. Aicha Belarbi pointed out that Morocco is in transition, and that women fight against limited economic, cultural and civil rights and exposure to violence. Picking up an earlier discussion of the conference, Aicha Belarbi stated that women today have the means to change the paradigm, and this means is voice, power, and intelligence to defend and impose peace and justice. More and more women in the North and the South go to universities and participate in the economic sector. On the other hand, she sees that poverty remains feminine and women are exposed to violence, particularly in conflict situations.

How to fight for peace? She sees women looking for stability rather than power, but points out the need for women to use power more often as a means to fight for peace and be more courageous. Other strategies to be followed are stronger partnerships on the national and regional level. Equality under the law for men and women is important, and UN resolutions that need ratification on the national level are useful in this sense. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of constructing bridges for peace, given that peace is not a dream, but possible with more courage, comprehension, solidarity, love, and networks.

**Karin Ulmer** works for APRODEV, the association of European development organisations related to the World Council of Churches. She works on issues of food, trade and agriculture from a gender perspective. In her speech, she said that more conflicts will be in the future based on food, water, land and biodiversity, and that the area of trade rules and investment policy are very relevant for conflict prevention.

She shows that there is a need to bring a conflict prevention perspective into economic and development concepts. Import and export orientated trade policies may lead to disruption of women's

economic activities that are often directed to cover basic needs. Ulmer provided examples of women in India and Africa fighting economic policies that undermine their efforts for food security and food production and often corruption fighting. In Cameroon, women were the key contributors to a citizens' campaign that was able to force their governments to stop meat imports.

«From the village council to the negotiation table.» This slogan, which was used for the UNSC Resolution 1325, could also be used for trade policies, according to Ulmer. There is a need for more women's representation and women's voices in the negotiations for trade and investment agreements. There is increased investment by European companies in bioethanol production, agro-industrial infrastructure and energy projects, which cause environmental harm, contribute to the depletion of natural resources, to land evictions and human rights violations. There is a need for more regulation of European companies and balancing of investors' and citizens' rights. APRODEV is demanding that civil society organisations be heard and file complaints in cases of prejudice against the interests of small-scale and women farmers. To this end, a mechanism should be set up that receives complaints and mediates on conflicts of policy incoherence with the involvement of the European Parliament's Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) Rapporteurs and PCD focal points in the EU delegation. In addition, there is a need for more research projects and monitoring by local partners on issues critical to their natural resource based livelihoods, such as preventing privatization of knowledge, patenting of seeds, and commercialization of public goods and resources.

**Karen Fogg** is former EU Ambassador and IDEA Secretary-General and Associate Fellow of the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies. She focused on the possibilities of agency in and towards the EU, and on international cooperation by women and for women.

She suggested «unpacking» the international community and points out that the EU is not one body, that the EU in Brussels might be more or less progressive than the EU member states. This is becoming visible in how the EU takes its place in the UN, having obtained a resolution. There is an internal squabble in the EU over how it actually speaks of itself. The EU works closely with the UN, but also with other international communities, such as the African Union, and it can be very effective.

The EU has potential in the area of conflict mediation. Wording has improved massively, mostly in terms of the participation and diversity of civil society. Nevertheless, she was not sure that the message is getting through to local organisations and there is a lot of bureaucracy involved in project application.

Referring to EU development policy, she emphasized that the EU has just put democracy, good governance and human rights as top criteria for projects. Although the European Commission is quite successful here, the massive problems and challenges in external relations remain. Since the Lisbon Treaty, a division has emerged between what is known as Ashton's empire, the External Action Service, and all the other major instruments of foreign policy, such as trade, development, aid, and is affecting the debates on climate change and migration. This has resulted in a rivalry over who can speak on foreign policy for the EU.

The notion of conflict prevention is abrogated among people working on intergovernmental common foreign and security policy and replaced by the notion of short-term crisis management. People working in the field of development and human rights do not use this word, but work for conflict prevention every day, when they do conflict sensitive development work. Long-term versus short-term approaches is her concern, and from this perspective she considered a conflict warning system as a tool that evokes short-term rather than long-term processes.

Peace is not a unifying concept in Brussels. Stability is, but this is going out of fashion. We are left with no unifying concept for external relations. However, peace can be a unifying slogan and the conference participants should reflect on capturing this notion as a slogan. Inclusiveness is another notion and can be applied to peace agreements and constitution building. Elections are still seen as a panacea for democratic society, but elections also have the potential to create conflict. Therefore, the design of electoral systems is very important, especially for women's participation and representation. This is quite technical, but if we want to be effective in lobbying, we might need to grasp some of these technical issues.

There is a lot of frustration in the EU, Fogg emphasized, but it is possible to change the EU, the driving actors being civil society. For example, the EU has not come up with directions for change and innovative ideas for the Middle East, but has merely opened its wallet. Civil society can come in here

with innovative ideas backed up by a large platform of organisations. A lot of work needs to be done here to help the EU move forward and have a stake in the Palestinian state-building process.

Karen Fogg drew attention to two issues: networking and international lobbying. One, networking does not always need to take place in meetings but through websites and emails, and is extremely important for exchanging experiences, knowledge about what is going on, tips and good examples. Two, transnational lobbying is complex, but more can be done. Civil society organisations exist, can work within a state, towards governments, and with women's organisations in other countries and continents.

## **2.8 The concluding panel of the conference**

In the concluding panel of the conference, the previous debates were summarized and suggestions made for a common proposal for awareness and prevention. Birgit Daiber highlighted the need to support activities to end conflicts, to create networks in order to respect and capitalize on our experiences and to insist that resistance to conflict and peace building has to be a bottom-up process. She recalled that most women in power today have lost their rooting, and that promoting women's leadership only helps when women do not lose touch. The role of the international community was discussed, but what is necessary here is to unpack and differentiate what we mean by international community. The question of how to put women's issues and perspectives on the agenda is not a question of «being nice» or «soft power», but needs a strategic approach. We need more strategic discussions on what we want to achieve, in which way, with which instruments, and how to organize for that. She concluded by citing Judith Butler, highlighting the necessity of civil resistance and strategies to oppose violence.

Diana Francis considers civil society the first actor for peace building, particularly for women's issues, because this is where women have the strongest voice. Governments should serve civil society, because democracy requires respectful and equal participation in all fields that affects people's lives. For a global movement, clear founding values are necessary, and we need to pre-prepare to act rapidly and mobilize. We need power for change and therefore have to take power seriously. However, we do not need a super structure, because we are multiple and diverse. We need international net-

works and must work together with male colleagues. We need to use empathy and anger to win people over. We need to act first on our governments and then later talk about the international community. We need to confront the structures of violence by bearing in mind the power of the military industrial complex and showing how economic and military power goes together. We must not lose sight of the links between violent conflict, economic and resource control, and democracy and human rights. Failing to do this we would be blind to the causes of conflict and the agenda for positive peace. We should join with other movements, with which we can make common cause.

**Naomi Chazan** cited Karen Fogg: «What can one do for women? What can be done by women?» She sought to frame and operationalise this question. The answer is «mainstreaming» in its most profound sense of the term: mainstreaming in representation, participation and decision-making, but mostly importantly through the constant injection of women's perspectives into every single major issue on the agenda. We must engage in major issues, many of which we (women) have avoided. It is time to engage in everything that is around us, to force decision-makers to consider gender issues. The tool is obvious; it is called «voice». The tool of women, for women, is voice. We have a voice. There are many who want to silence those of us who live in conflict situations - as soon as we shut up, they win. Because when we do not have a voice, we cannot develop, the key is voice.

Women and civil society, the key vehicle for us, must become a critical part of the power equation. Only one thing counts and that is the result. If the Palestinian occupation continues, no women's organisation can claim they are successful. Moreover, if the situation in Congo does not change, no one can claim success. It is time we went to work.

**Luisa Morgantini**, former vice-president of the European Parliament and peace activist, pointed out the major aims: to live in peace, justice and equality. The struggle is to end the militarization of states and the militarization of our minds. We use the tool of non-violence against violence. Our power as women is to cross borders, to communicate, to build bridges, to recognize differences and asymmetries, to overcome our status as «enemies», and to decide to fight together. The Women in Black in Israel and Palestine shared their experiences. The issue of water, mentioned in the discussion, is an important issue for women and needs to be addressed. It is important to develop

our network.

**Ruchama Marton** took up the discussion on alternative history, and said that history is distorted in so many ways. Critical positions are silenced, and so is our work. There is a need to write down history in many languages, in Arabic, English, and Hebrew, because this knowledge vanishes in 30 or 40 years, and the youth needs to know about this. It would not cost much.

### **3 DEBATE AND CONCLUSIONS**

The presence of long-standing women peace activists contributed to the richness, depth, openness and experience of these discussions. The debates centred on the following questions: which strategies need to be changed and improved to strengthen women in the struggle against violence and war? How to support women in civil resistance to war and in reconciliation processes? Which tools should be used and which partners can help implement a feminist agenda? How to enhance empathy and solidarity? How to strengthen networks?

#### **3.1 Strengthening women's perspectives and a feminist agenda:**

\* **Support locally owned structures and initiatives:** Women are at the centre of resistance to violence and support for reconciliation on the ground. This goes back to the skills of «soft power», which are often attributed to women. Ex-amples include the skill of dialogue and persuasion in opposition to the power to tell others what to do - this does not mean that women are always peaceful and men always violent. Women are also attributed the ability for empathy and a preference for civil solutions. Besides soft powers, women's activities and networks of resistance and solidarity are important for their impact in civil resistance to war and in reconciliation processes. The structures in which they move are flexible and independent. They overcome the notion that there are no partners on the other side, and are therefore subversive. These structures and local initiatives need support in order to promote long-term peace-building and reconciliation processes.

\* **Women need to use their voice to put their issues on the political agenda:** Women often are blocked in getting their aims into the public peace-building agenda. The fact that more and

more women are present today in public positions does not change this, as most of these women have lost their connection with the grassroots. To turn feminist positions into a concrete agenda, there is no other way for women than to use their voices - loud and with vigour. To make their positions powerful, they need to constantly and concretely criticize, demand and suggest alternative approaches.

\* **Feminist perspectives are inclusive:** Feminist perspectives do not end in gender mainstreaming. Feminist voices need to advocate mainstreaming in its original sense. A feminist perspective is inclusive, focuses on diversity and social justice. Feminist perspectives are important to overcome nationalism, injustices, and undemocratic environments, and so focus on the root causes of conflict.

\* **Bring women's experiences into all peace building and reconciliation efforts:** Since the 1990s, a lot of information is available on how women contribute to peace building and reconciliation. Nevertheless, this has not brought real conclusions. UN resolution 1325 was a big step, but the implementation of feminist perspectives on the ground is not sufficient. Women are rarely represented in peace negotiations. There is an urgent need to acknowledge women's experiences and perspectives in all peace building and peace negotiation processes, and have women represented in those.

\* **Civil society is the main actor for change:** Civil society remains the main actor for sustainable peace, democracy, social justice and women's rights. Women's activities and positions are strongest in the civil society sector. As seen in Northern Africa, it can have a real impact in changing the paradigm. All efforts should be used to look out for new partnerships, for cooperation with other civil society networks, to end wars and achieve social justice. Civil society remains the main agent for change and emphasis needs to be put on supporting and developing it.

\* **Support networks to exchange and learn from each other:** Creating room for dialogue and strategising is essential to bringing women's positions to the political agenda and end war. Room for communication not only gives space for reflection, but can also be an important space when peace activists cannot meet in everyday life because of the separation of their societies. It can enable women to step out of daily work, listen, and learn from each other, to recognize and

acknowledge injustices and grievances, without the need to construct oneself as victim. This is where counter-narratives and a vision of peace against dominant discourses can be generated. Women's networks are strong in open dialogue, because women bring difficult issues to the table, even if they disagree. This openness can be improved. Within feminist networks, there should be room for all.

\* **The urgent need for new mechanisms of conflict prevention:** War and violent conflict tend to involve a variety of actors. Weapons are traded and this trade blocks peace-building efforts. The international community often prioritizes short-term conflict mediation and peace-building processes over addressing root causes. On the other hand, organizations working in post-conflict areas report that real reconciliation processes are very long, sometimes over 20 years. They also describe that violence including sexual violence against women does not stop with the end of war but remains particularly high in close relations. There is therefore an urgent need for new mechanisms of war prevention.

### 3.2 Suggestions for enhancing conflict prevention:

\* **To abolish social injustices,** a main factor for conflict and war, governments and the international community need to be pressed to fulfil promises made on the millennium development goals. Early warning systems on the ground exist but politicians and civil society often do not react strongly or early enough. New mechanisms which do not favour short-term and military solutions and which enhance empathy and solidarity have to be found to raise consciousness among civil society actors and politicians.

\* Peace-building and reconciliation processes need to **address root causes**, power asymmetries and social injustices to make real dialogue possible and to prevent similar issues provoking new conflicts in the future. Reconciliation processes are difficult and long. Humiliation and trauma needs to heal with time and in a counselled reconciliation process. Conflict mediation usually seeks short-term results. The focus has to be put on locally owned processes and self-sustained peace. Reconciliation is a long process and builds on relationships that are not easily measurable. More needs to be done to fight (sexual) violence in post-conflict societies. UN Resolution

1820 needs more mechanisms for strong implementation on the ground. It was suggested that peacekeeping missions need rules for engagement so that sexual violators can be brought to the courts.

- \* All peace agreements need to include human rights principles and women's rights. The North remains responsible for violent conflicts in the South given the colonial history and today's neo-colonial trade policies that often provoke human rights violations. The actors in the North, e.g. the EU, are not a hegemonic block and tools can be used to end wars non-violently (sanctioning or deterring states). There is a need for more engagement in ***abandoning weapons manufacturing and trade***. Weapons' trading prolongs wars and blocks dialogue and peace-building processes on the ground.

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## **Project and conference documents**

- \* The contribution of women to peace and reconciliation - project documentation. Ed. Birgit Daiber, RLF Brussels, 2012. [http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/books/peace\\_and\\_reconciliation/](http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/books/peace_and_reconciliation/)
- \* The contribution of women to peace and reconciliation - project report. By Birgit Daiber, 2011. <http://rosalux-europa.info/publications/articles/women-peace-reconciliation-report/>
- \* Conference photos: <http://rosalux-europa.info/galerie/index.php>
- \* Conference audios: <http://soundcloud.com/rosalux-europa>

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