# New Routes

## A JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH AND ACTION

# Gender
# perspectives

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# Talking it out

## - gender perspectives in peace and conflict

The book *Talking it out – stories in negotiating human relations* written by the Sudanese scholar, diplomat, legal expert and author, Francis Deng, came across our desk at LPI the other day. It is a striking title, which we would like to borrow for this special gender issue of New Routes. Gender perspectives is a matter of presenting many views. We are providing a collection of voices, experiences, stories from around the world, contributions to a very much-needed awakening.

We did something similar five years ago, in 2001. The compilation of articles on the theme "Targeting women" was an attempt to bring forth a discussion around women as both victims and actors. It was a very rewarding exercise, then as well as now.

During the editorial work with this issue we have felt a striking lack of male contributions. In the field of peace research and action in general there are no difficulties to find male researchers, writers or lobbyists. But when it comes to the gender aspect on peace-building and conflict resolution, this seems to be very much a female issue. Have we still not reached the understanding that this is a common issue for men *and* women? In many places women certainly have to step out and make their voices heard, but why are there so few men that realize the need to speak out together with them, as their fellow-beings?

It was an interesting experience to do some mapping of peace organizations around the world. Without any pretensions to give a comprehensive picture of the situation, we found an obvious difference between women's and men's respective approaches to the issue of conflict resolution and nonviolence.

While there is a multitude of associations of women focusing on world peace and conflict resolution among nations, it is very difficult to find any equivalent among the male population.

Certainly, there are men's associations for nonviolence, but the majority of them work on an individual or family-based level. Somehow, this stands in contrast to society at large, where the existing order seems to be men in the public and women in the private sphere. Do people feel a need to seek the opposite perspective in order to change things? If this is a true picture, it would be worthwhile to further investigate what the reasons and consequences are.

The question of gender perspectives in peace and conflict resolution is not confined to any geographical, political or social domains. Therefore, this issue of New Routes illustrates the matter from a variety of angles. From the viewpoint of so-called bush wives in Sierra Leone we learn that rehabilitation programmes need to be more gender sensitive. Nine women theologians from seven countries have participated in a course in Jerusalem this autumn. Many of them bear witness to the great potential of women in these concerns.

When we published the New Routes issue "Targeting women" in 2001, the UN Resolution 1325 was quite new. With its aims to enhance women's participation in peace building and negotiations it poses a number of challenges to many powerful constituencies. On the centre spread you'll find an outlook on the effects of the Resolution up to today.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency puts great emphasis on the mainstreaming of gender issues and has provided extra financial support for this issue. We hope that you will find much interesting reading and do welcome your comments and input. Please visit our website (www.life-peace.org), where you will find full-length versions of some articles and other material.

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*Since the early 1990's, LPI has been involved in peace-building in Somalia. An important aspect of the work is to involve local actors at the grassroots level. The empowerment of women is an essential factor in these efforts. During a women's conference in August, 2006, arranged by LPI, the participants discussed future perspectives of the vulnerable peace process and the complicated road to democracy. Photo: Kirsi Saaristo/LPI*

# Afghanistan:
# Gender dynamics in war and exile

The rapid changes in gender roles and behaviour give rise to a number of questions and contradictions in Afghan society. Regarded in a broader perspective, gender patterns have been changing throughout history and are also today widely differentiated, depending on geographic, social and individual factors. The experiences of war and exile open up a scope of possibilities and challenges for men as well as women.

The growing visibility of women in public spaces at the centre and in the provinces of Afghanistan is the cause of delight to some and despair to others. Women now sit in unprecedented numbers in decision-making positions, yet acts of violence against female institutions escalate. Elsewhere domestic violence drives women to commit suicide or flee their homes despite the certainty of dire consequences. This contradictory being of women in Afghanistan today springs largely from the rapidity with which attitudes towards traditional male/female behavioural norms are changing, while alternatives remain clouded.

Clearly an examination of the

signify qualitative social adjustment, or are they purely cosmetic? To answer these questions is no easy task, for Afghan society is by no means uniform throughout the country. The complicated web of differences in male/female relationships depends on the region, economic and educational status, urban or rural residence, and individual ability to manipulate power. Generalizations are always misleading.

Three general factors, however, can safely be said to apply to the present as well as to the past. One, the family is the single most important institution in the society and functions as the major economic, social and political unit of the society, providing security

in the family. And, because the service infrastructure is so inadequate, family networks replace government as the support system in which reciprocal family rights and obligations are clearly defined and readily acknowledged by all. Two, families are governed by patriarchal attitudes that value honour above all. Three, since women are regarded as the embodiment of family honour, men, the ultimate arbiters, are bound to ensure that all members, male and female, conform to prescribed forms of acceptable behaviour. Non-conformist behaviour invites social ostracism and community pressure acts as a formidable control factor.

The necessity to uphold honour gives rise to restrictive prejudices and institutions. For women these included purdah (seclusion), the veil, and the curtailment of independent movement in public spaces, for these practices more easily guarantee chastity and thereby symbolize the respectability of the family. Early and forced marriages, as constrictive for males as for females, keep patrilineal ties intact. Prejudices against education and work for women outside the home assure conformity to social norms. Gender roles, therefore, follow defined paths: male prerogatives reside in maintaining the economic welfare of the family, political ties and relationships with outsiders; female roles stress motherhood, family nurturing, child socialization and the passing on of the society's values to the young.

Paternalistic protectionism perpetuates restrictive customary practices diminishing personal rights. In the distant past, a few women spoke out against forced subordination, the

## "The honour of the people of Afghanistan consists in the honour of their women."

dynamics of developments on gender issues is of utmost importance. How have traditional patterns been affected by war and exile? Do the changes

from birth to death to each man and woman. Individual status, child socialization, education, economic security and protection are embedded

pressures of conformity, curtailment of capabilities, and frustrations that thwarted ambitions. On the whole, however, women seldom questioned the existing order. Some even actively rejected calls for change. Traditional protected roles provide women with many rewards; independent roles are fraught with insecurity.

## Distinctive roles

Thus, in public, both men and women uphold the ideals of their distinctive roles even though matriarchal influences within the home are often strong. While household responsibilities are certainly gender-specific, the interconnected-ness of male/female roles in the economy of rural households accord women considerable respect and status, if not equality. In urban areas, on the other hand, particularly on middle and lower levels where the inter-dependence of roles is less strong, women tend to be more rigidly confined, less self-assured, and focused largely on serving husbands and nurturing children.

This is not to say that there were no spokesmen for women's rights. Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) passed laws designed to align customary social practices with the prescriptions of Islam in order to improve the status of women. He forbade child marriages, forced marriages, and the levirate, he upheld hereditary rights for widows and ruled that women could seek divorce, and he granted freedom to wives in case of non-support. Nonetheless, he also decreed that men were entitled to full control over the behaviour of their women because "the honour of the people of Afghanistan consists in the honour of their women". Therefore little changed. King Amanullah (1919-1929) attempted a wide range of social reforms that included schools for girls and expanded roles for women. Conservative leaders rejected these innovations, the king lost his throne, and nothing changed.

Constitutions from 1923 onwards guaranteed numerous rights. Following the 1959 announcement offering government support for the voluntary end of seclusion and removal of the veil, girls were encouraged to attend secular schools and take up public careers along with men. Women responded in ever increasing numbers, but only with the blessings of male family members. Social interactions between men and women were still expected to take place within the confines of the extended family, not with colleagues at the work place. Family, therefore, continued to dominate the individual.

Nevertheless, the 1964 Constitution automatically enfranchised women, gave them the right to vote and other guarantees such as compulsory education and freedom to work. There was no need for a suffragette movement in Afghanistan, for the male dominated government simply handed women these rights and backed their commitment by providing jobs throughout the government system. Women in Kabul emerged into a variety of public spaces, in the private sector as well as in government, and even to some extent in the provinces. There was no public outcry against this major innovation, largely because of the government's insistence that it remain voluntary in nature. In addition, women acted with propriety and moved decorously throughout public arenas with no loss of honour to themselves, their families, or the nation. Public attitudes, therefore, gradually became reconciled to women's participation in the totality of the society. The seed of positive evolutionary change was finally planted.

## Skepticism and cynicism

However, as the years passed, under-currents of discontent surfaced. In 1968 women took to the streets for the first time to demonstrate against a law

In the beginning of the 20th century, certain reforms were made in Afghanistan that gave women more freedom. This photo from 1928 shows the first schoolgirls to be sent to Turkey for study. Photo: Prince Enayatullah Siraj/KES Collection

*Only men and children in this Afghan refugee family appear in front of the camera, the women probably dwelling in the tents. Photo: LPI*

prohibiting them from studying abroad. They demanded the rights the constitution guaranteed. This overt political act could hardly be considered ladylike behaviour. By the end of the 1970s skepticism and cynicism were pervasive. Many labeled the emancipation movement a cosmetic sham, espoused by the power elite for its own aggrandizement and perpetuation. The religious conservatives went further and predicted the imminent arrival of sexual anarchy.

The unrest resulted in a coup d'etat in 1978 that overthrew the monarchy and ushered in a series of leftist regimes under Soviet tutelage that followed a

effort to mobilizing women so as to bring them to the forefront of political activism. Women in Kabul learned to be more assertive, but they also exploited these heady opportunities by flaunting their sexuality in public. Even liberal male proponents of emancipation were embarrassed by their brashness. The provinces reflected little of Kabul's intensely westernized lifestyles and the rural-urban divide widened. Rural families viewed the communist goals and their aftermath as anathema and fled in the millions to Pakistan and Iran.

Throughout Afghan history when threats from outsiders loomed, the

soon, because of casualties on the battlefield and because fighting men were absent from home for long extended periods, the number of female-headed households, a rarity in the past, increased substantially. This altered the lives of refugee women significantly. Since most traditional social support networks were undermined by war and exile, women necessarily acquired new skills, engaged in new activities, adopted new means of coping and learned to make decisions that would formerly have been the prerogative of men. It is these remarkably strong coping mechanisms that have allowed this badly battered society to maintain its cohesiveness with its essential values in tact.

Most importantly, newly awakened ambitions gave women from all walks of life, in refugee camps, in Kabul, and in refugee communities abroad, wider visions of the contributions they could make to the general well being of their communities.

The introduction of new ways of thinking and acting inevitably reshaped the cultural fabric of the society. Both men and women received perplexing signals as conflicting ideologies were rapidly introduced one after the other. These dizzying changes in attitudes towards acceptable behaviour robbed many of the clear perceptions that came with traditional roles. Many were at sea as to how to behave. Often the question of appropriate gender roles became divisive and highly politicized. Ambivalent situations arose when those taught to value progressive lifestyles resided with extended families that insisted on traditional behaviour.

The generational gap was particularly wide. Grandmothers, for instance, finding they were no longer accorded the respect they once enjoyed backed away from the responsibilities they once enjoyed. Although antipathy toward work thought to diminish honour continued

## Do men feel emasculated because women are more self-sufficient?

verbalized commitment to total male/female equality. Their goal was to bring about a complete attitudinal change among men and women as to women's role in society, and they devoted much

society intensified its restrictive, protective attitudes toward women. Tightened restrictions were thus predictably imposed on refugee women as they moved into exile. But

strong, economic need often forced these prejudices aside. Single women who emerged as the primary sources of income for their families not infrequently prefer careers to marriage for fear that self-esteem might be jeopardized, aspirations curbed and status minimized. Economics probably has done more to modify male/female relations than all the strident feminist rhetoric bombarding women for so many years.

## Lowered male self-esteem

Young men deprived of an education because they were busy fighting, on the other hand, are neither intellectually nor emotionally prepared to engage in productive activities and can no longer fulfill their roles as primary family providers. It is their lot to bow to the economic leverage of women and face the reality that it is no longer possible to expect total obedience at home. In many households where women no longer need to accept diminishment in exchange for security, male self-esteem is consequently vastly lowered. How this affects the dignity of men is an issue that deserves careful scrutiny. Do men feel emasculated because women are more self-sufficient? Tensions and discontent must certainly arise. These changes notwithstanding, it must be said that in the vast majority of Afghan households venerable attitudes toward the primacy of patriarchal authority, family prerogatives and traditional definitions of acceptable behaviour still prevail.

Before the war the harsher aspects of gender disparities were not addressed in any sustained fashion. The war years provided mixed signals without clear solutions. The anarchy of the civil war years following the departure of the Soviets in 1989 paved the way for the rise of the Taliban (1994-2001). They were determined to cleanse the society of the evils perpetuated by their predecessors, most of which they avowed were rooted in distasteful western ideologies.

Reinstating the sanctity of the family through strict observance of seclusion and the exclusion of women from public exposure was the cornerstone

of their fervid ideology.

The set backs that characterized Taliban rule came to an end in 2001 with the initiation of a democratic state-building process that places unprecedented emphasis on the involvement of women. Never before have so many women been pulled into the vortex of political activities. An Emergency Loya Jirga (Assembly) met in June 2002 to establish the legitimacy of a new government. Among its 1,650 delegates were 200 women, all of whom were selected, not elected. The Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003 provided a legal framework. It included 114 women, of whom 64 were elected, among its 502 delegates. The Presidential Elections held in October 2004 when it is said over 4 million women voted was a warm up for the September 2005 Parliamentary and Provincial Councils Elections in which 5,800 candidates contended, including 582 women.

The President appointed 50 percent of the women in the Upper House of Parliament. The 68 women seated in the 248-member Lower House, however, were all elected. Most had contested seats specifically reserved for women, but 19, from 18 provinces, won on their own merits in direct competi-tion with male candidates. Some even topped the polls in their respective constituencies. How could this be in a nation where tradition decrees that politics is an unsuitable pastime for honourable women?

A coup d'état brought with it an ideology espousing active roles for women and refugee experiences strengthened the self-reliance of

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## Public attitudes gradually became reconciled to women's participation in the totality of the society.

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women. Awakened aspirations nurtured by aid programmes that developed technical skills and intro-duced a whole array of human rights issues gave women a yen for political action. Their plight under the Taliban became the clarion call of international women's organizations that further stimulated their expectations.

Is the tide now turning? For bet-ter, or for worse? While the indecisiveness of the fragile government and the failures of its in-ternational supporters raise doubts in the minds of the populace, the Taliban escalate their violent bid for a come back. Taking advantage of the deeply embedded attitudes toward the centrality of women in the society, they target female humanitarian aid workers and institutions that symbolize unwanted changes introduced, according to their views, by dastardly westerners. The future is unclear. Nevertheless, many Afghan men have developed a new receptiveness to the expansion of women's roles within the family and within the economy. Many Afghan women have heightened their confidence and magnified their aspirations. Hopefully ways may found to utilize this burgeoning awareness so that the nation can move forward.

**Nancy Hatch Dupree**

# 'Bush wives' marginalized in rehabiliation programme

The efforts to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants in Sierra Leone have not succeeded in reaching the most vulnerable groups in post-war society, namely women and children. The programme has been much too uniform, thus enhancing the stigmatisation of women fighters and soldiers. Lessons need to be learned in order to lift and ease the special problems of the so called 'bush wives'.

Women in Sierra Leone have many different experiences of war. They have perhaps both been victims and perpetrators, civilians and combatants, some by force, some for survival and others by choice. During the war many women were abducted by the rebels and subjected to forced marriage; they became so-called 'bush wives', and their husbands referred to as 'bush husbands'. In post-war society many of these women are quite unsure of their legal status. Most of them keep quiet about what has happened to them or what they have done in the war, for fear of stigmatisation and revenge.

Recently there has been a lot of focus on child soldiers and youth in contexts of war, but, I argue, phrases like 'child soldiers' or 'youth' blur rather than clarify both girls' and young women's specific experiences in war, as well as relations between men and women. Strategies used by young women to manoeuvre in war-torn societies are still ill-researched. Most girls and women who fought in the Sierra Leone war are not proud of what they did, and their families as well as people in their communities are both ashamed and afraid of them. Also, life in post-war society offers female fight-

ers in particular no easy alternatives. Projects targeting young women frequently focus on women as victims, as abductees, as rape victims, or as forced wives. There has been little or no emphasis on women as fighters and killers, thereby efficiently marginalizing this aspect of their wartime experiences.

The civil war in Sierra Leone broke out in 1991. In 1997 the first of three phases in a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration(DDR) Programme was launched. The aims of the DDR were 1) to collect, register, and destroy all conventional weapons, 2) to demobilize approximately 45,000 combatants, and 3) to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants (McKay and Mazurana 2004:98). When Phase III ended in January 2002, a total of 72,500 combatants had handed in their weapons and demobilized, of whom 4,751 were women (6.5 per cent) and 6,787 were children (9.4 per cent), of whom 506 were girls (Mazurana and Carlson 2004:6). The framework for the DDR programme in Sierra Leone was set in the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999.[1]

Those who were enrolled in the DDR were provided with some

monetary and material assistance and were also given three to six months of vocational training.[2] There were quite a few female fighters in the various fighting forces, although no one knows exactly how many. Most agree however, that the 4,751 women and 506 girls who entered the official DDR programme are very low figures and do not accurately represent the number of female fighters.[3]

Despite the low female turnout, the Sierra Leone DDR was considered a success by the UN, the Sierra Leone government, and many others, and a model for future DDR processes in other countries (see e.g. Mazurana and Carlson 2004:2). However, the low participation of female combatants despite existing knowledge of their presence has led some to question the design, implementation, and success of the DDR in Sierra Leone (e.g. Mazurana and Carlson 2004, McKay and Mazurana 2004, and Shepler 2002). In general, the UN has been very aware of the shortcomings of DDR and other reconstruction and rehabilitation processes in terms of gender and has developed many tools to better serve women in war-torn societies. For example, in October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, "Women, Peace and Security". In this document, the UN "formally recognizes that achieving gender justice is as central to social transformation as any other form of reparations after war," and also urges "all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants".[4] However, this resolution seemed to have

little effect on the design and implementation of the Sierra Leone DDR, which has been described as, if not gender discriminatory, then "definitely gender blind".[5]

## Invisible girls

The DDR is also a process aimed at adult combatants, but in Sierra Leone many fighters were under eighteen, and as such were categorized as child soldiers. With regard to the demobilization of child soldiers, "The Cape Town Principles" are a strong guiding policy document.[6] But again, as with Resolution 1325, these principles were not fully implemented in the Sierra Leone DDR.[7] In reality, in Sierra Leone, many child soldiers had to either produce weapons or demonstrate experience in using them in order to be registered and sent to Interim Care Centres. In a Save the Children report on girls in armed conflicts, it is also concluded that "despite the explicit reference to girls in the Cape Town Principles, the international community has failed countless thousands of girls by consistently ignoring their particular needs" (2005:8).

The report's principal criticism was focused on the underfunding of projects aimed at girl soldiers, and the poor and inflexible planning and implementation of DDR processes. For example, in many UN policy documents, girl soldiers are mentioned as a priority target group, but in reality most reintegration programmes tend to be one-size-fits-all (cf. Shepler 2002:10). The reason for not working actively to include girls and women in institutionalized DDR programmes could be that women are often not seen as real combatants, as was noted above. Because many female fighters in Sierra Leone also performed additional roles − they were labourers, 'wives', girlfriends, domestic workers, farmers − this could also have rendered the notion of who was a fighter, and who was not, unclear.

One difference between rebel



Rita Wheazor in the foreground is the director of the organisation War-Affected Women in Liberia, Sierra Leone's neighbouring country. Photo: Callie Long/ACT International

groups and government troops is that the latter designate certain soldiers to carry out tasks such as laundry, cleaning, and cooking. One can belong to an armed force in many other capacities than that of combatant. An army battalion or a rebel group would not survive long without the logistical support that these people provide. The question is what happens to these auxiliary personnel in a DDR programme. As Enloe notes, "In the late twentieth century, women who have been mobilized to serve the military's needs are still vulnerable to the stereotype of camp follower, no matter how professional their formal position is in the military" (2000:40).

In Sierra Leone it was evident that there was an over-classification of girls and young women as bush wives, camp followers, and sex slaves, which "prevented the establishment of DDR programs to address their actual lived experiences" (Mazurana and Carlson 2004:21). It also became clear that both disarmament and reintegration were

explicitly gendered processes, something that was not addressed in Sierra Leone. The focus of the Sierra Leone DDR was on disarming male fighters, and as girls and women had played many different roles in the war, the narrow classification of them as dependants or 'bush wives' effectively excluded them from the process.

When the war was over many of my female informants who had been fighters with the rebels wanted to register for disarmament. Aminata for example, said she wanted to disarm because she really "fought and suffered". But her so called "bush husband" had told her that if she did, 'they' would take her picture and she would be sent to court. This made her afraid, which was why when he later asked her to give him her weapon, she did. "When my 'husband' told me that they will take our pictures and go to court and told me to give him the gun, I had to do it because he gave it to me … But I was not afraid to disarm. I should have disarmed [if] I should have got a gun."

The pictures Aminata refers to were those required for disarming combatants' identification cards. These pictures had no other purpose than to identify registered ex-combatants for the distribution of rations and benefits. Yet the fear of having their pictures taken was one of the reasons Aminata and so many other female ex-combatants never registered for disarmament. The photographs were rather innocent in themselves, but they were taken in a context which was experienced as threatening and potentially harmful, a physical manifestation of their 'shameful' behaviour and of having 'disgraced' their families. These pictures thereby became a strong expression of shame and fear.

Some of those who had wanted to disarm said that the reason they did not or could not was that they could not access a weapon.[8] One eighteen-year-old girl we met in Kono, Tina, said, "I had wanted to go but my husband had the gun and I was pregnant. I was really eager to go, but no gun."

## Unwanted 'rebel women'

It thus appears obvious that the Sierra Leone DDR did not incorporate the recommendations of either Resolution 1325 or the Cape Town Principles and thereby excluded many girls and women who had been eligible for registration. There were also other reasons, local and cultural, that made them choose not to disarm. Many female fighters had been told by their bush husbands that DDR was "not good for women". Many felt that female fighters should not be in such a public place as a DDR camp. It was perceived as negative for women to disarm, as it would make it more difficult for them to be accepted back into their communities, and it would also make it more difficult for them to get married, as they were told that no man wanted a 'rebel woman'.

It has been suggested that one reason many male commanders discouraged girls and women from registering for DDR was that bush husbands wanted to hold on to their bush wives. But it also became clear that it was first and foremost as bush wives that the girls and women were seen by the planners and implementers of the DDR process. Female ex-fighters thus became only 'bush wives', and as bush wives they had no rights to disarm. This need not have been a problem, however, as Resolution 1325 clearly states that a DDR programme is also to address the "needs of dependants" of ex-combatants. Yet it was not until quite late in the DDR process that a micro-credit programme was established to cater to 'wives' of male ex-combatants. However, as McKay and Mazurana (2004:102) point out, "to qualify for the program, the girl or woman had to be accompanied by the male ex-combatant who would vouch she was his 'wife'". This eventually resulted in some men abducting girls to pose as their wives and then abandoning them as soon as they got the money.

Not all women stayed with their bush husbands after the ceasefire; many were released and returned home. For these girls the possibility of disarming seemed even more remote. Many parents expressed feelings of shame at having daughters who were considered rebels, and according to many informants, parents frequently dissuaded them from registering in the DDR on these grounds. According to Schroven (2005:74), who has done work on the subject of women in the Sierra Leone DDR process, if female fighters had associated with the DDR this would only have confirmed their already stigmatized relationship with the rebels and further decreased their chances of being well received by their communities.

Many former abductees, female ex-fighters and bush wives, were afraid and ashamed to admit that they had stayed with the rebels, some for many years. For them to demobilize was seen as something inconceivable, since being a 'rebel woman' was considered extremely shameful. The question of shame had to do with intimate personal as well as social relations, and included the feeling of shame at being called a rebel or having a rebel child (*rebel pikin*). It was not a personal sense of guilt, but rather a social shame, a shame emanating from their having *shamed* their families.

Later, many female ex-fighters regretted not disarming. Mariatu said that she had not disarmed because she was afraid she would be arrested, and that later, when she saw her friends at the DDR camp with "blankets, buckets, plates and so many other things," she regretted her decision, but by then it was too late – DDR registration was closed.

## Negative surroundings

There were also other reasons female fighters did not disarm. One which was often mentioned had to do with the physical layout of DDR camps. It was the opinion of many informants that female fighters should not have been asked to disarm in such an open or public place as a DDR camp. This was also repeated in many interviews with family and community members, who voiced a wish for more private and secluded spaces in which women could have disarmed and demobilized. Providing female fighters with safe, secure, and single-sex surroundings could of course have been a way of combating their fear and shame.[9] Tied to this, but perhaps more important, is the fact that many girls and young women had been sexually and physically abused frequently during their time with the fighters, and continued to be so in the DDR camps. The incentive for those who had escaped or been released to go voluntarily to a camp where there were large numbers of male ex-combatants was not very high, and many of the interviewed girls and young women expressed fear of sexual and physical violence if they had been placed in a camp with male ex-combatants.[10]

The issue of sexual and physical abuse in the camps was a security issue

that could have been dealt with relatively easily by DDR planners and implementers, and this makes it very clear that the DDR process in Sierra Leone did not have as its objective to demobilize the thousands of girls and young women associated in one way or another with the fighting forces. The issue of the suitability of the DDR camps in relation to pregnant and/or lactating mothers was also frequently raised,[11] and the nature of the skills training provided by the DDR was also perceived as biased towards men, since training was geared towards carpentry, masonry, and mechanics (see also Shepler 2005).[12] Again, it is clear that the camps and the activities were not designed for women and girls.

Generally, female fighters "do not occupy a position that can be easily reconciled with predominant gender ideologies', noted Farr (2002:8). Unlike male combatants, they are often excluded from the new army,[13] from new political structures, and are also refused access to retraining or land. Many are also regarded with fear and suspicion when they attempt to return to the lives they lived before war broke out. Gardam and Charlesworth, for example, noted that the treatment of female combatants "by the military institution reflects the subordinate position of women in society generally" (2000:152), and although this was quite well known, little was done during the DDR process in Sierra Leone to address it. So, most girls and women quietly drifted back to their families or communities, and as McKay and Mazurana note, "While this secrecy protected them, it also concealed their need for support" (McKay and Mazurana 2004:35).

In a manner of speaking, war may give young women new opportunities and freedoms (see e.g. Meintjes *et al.* 2001). Some have speculated that the participation of African women in combat might have had emancipatory qualities (Morris 1993), and Turshen for example has argued that war "destroys the patriarchal structures of society that

confine and degrade women. In the very breakdown of morals, traditions, customs, and community, war also opens up and creates new beginnings" (1998:20). With regards to gender relations many see postwar as a moment that opens up opportunities for change, an opportunity to redress inequalities in society through policy and legislation.

On the other hand, others warn against being too eagerly optimistic. Utas for example, writes of the situation in neighbouring Liberia that the war "may have exposed young women to new realities, but to state that their roles in society have changed drastically seems rather exaggerated" (2003:221), and it is no secret that women often are excluded from reconstruction and peacebuilding initiatives" (Gardam & Charlesworth 2000:150f). In the case of postwar Sierra Leone it became obvious that female fighters occupied a difficult and ambiguous position in society, and in many ways it was fear and shame shaped their responses to and their interpretations of the DDR process.

**Chris Coulter**

*This article is an abbreviated version of a chapter in the author's dissertation Being a bush wife. Uppsala: Department of cultural anthropology and ethnology. Uppsala university, 2006.*

[1] The programme was funded by a number of national and international actors such as the Sierra Leone government, donor governments, the UN, the World Bank, and various NGOs (see McKay and Mazurana 2004:98). The programme was divided into three phases. Phase one was conducted by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and the National Commission for Demilitarization, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR), phase two was conducted by the UN Observer Mission to Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), and the third and last phase jointly by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the NCDDR.
[2] There were some DDR programmes which experienced difficulties in the payment to combatants and in organizing vocational projects, thereby delaying the process.

[3] Mazurana and Carlson estimated that in the DDR programme only 6.5 per cent of all registered adults were women and that 7.4 per cent of all children were girls (Mazurana and Carlson 2004). The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children estimated that 7.4 per cent of all adults demobilizing were women and 7.7 per cent of all children and adolescents were girls (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2002).
[4] (UN Security Council 2000)
[5] UNIFEM Freetown, 27 July 2004, personal communication
[6] The Cape Town Principles were adopted by international organizations in 1997 in recognition of the vulnerability of children in armed groups, and explicitly state that child soldiers are all those who were part of any armed group – not only in the capacity of fighter: child soldier means any person under eighteen years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers, and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, refer only to a child who is carrying or has carried arms (Cape Town Principles 1997).
[7] Shepler (2005) has also pointed to malfunctions in the programmes aimed at reintegrating child ex-combatants.
[8] In my survey of 111 girls and women in Kono and Bombali districts for UNICEF/Freetown, 22 percent said that the main reason they did not demobilize was that they had no gun. However, it has to be noted that Mazurana and Carlson reached a much higher figure, 46 percent, in their survey (Mazurana and Carlson 2003).
[9] During a UNICEF workshop in Freetown in August 2004, with many participants from local and international NGOs, representatives from the Liberian DDR, and NGOs working in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, this issue was raised and added to a list of recommendations on how to gender mainstream and improve DDR processes.
[10] This is verified by McKay and Mazurana (2004), by Bennett (2002), and by the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children in its report *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone* (2002).
[11] This issue was also raised by Brett and Specht, who wrote that 'rehabilitation programs need to be adapted to take into account the specific needs of … girl soldiers with babies, taking into account the sociocultural context' (Brett and Specht 2004:100).
[12] These were considered traditional male activities.
[13] Thereby 're-masculinizing' the army (see Enloe 2000:285).

# 'Real men' without guns

The traditional view on men as warriors or perpetrators and women as peacemakers or victims is much too simplified. The issue needs deeper reflection and analysis to better make the complexities of the gender roles understood. In this context the availability and usage of small arms is a crucial matter for the understanding of the implications of masculinity.

The article refers to a policy brief that was launched on 26 June 2006 on the opening of the First Review Conference on the 2001 UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

When gender perspectives are considered in relation to small arms and light weapons availability and misuse, women usually spring to mind, primarily in their role as 'victims' and secondarily as supposedly 'natural' peacemakers. This view not only provides an incomplete picture of the roles of women and girls with regard to gun violence, but it also excludes men and boys as a gendered category. An acknowledgement and exploration of the role of masculinity – that is of the widespread social norms and expectations of what it means to be a man – in relation to the demand and misuse of small arms is urgently needed to better inform effective policy-making and efforts to control the illicit trade in small arms *in all its aspects*.

Ultimately, the question of easy access to weapons is crucial: when small arms are tightly controlled, it is less possible for them to be misused or to flow into the illicit market, even in cultures where violent expressions of masculinity are condoned.

This policy brief explores the different roles that men and boys play in relation to guns – as perpetrators, victims, survivors and agents of change – and suggests the need to encourage more positive and peaceful expressions of masculinity. It calls for a more holistic approach to gender, in order to recognise the diverse roles and needs of men and women, girls and boys. The focus on men and boys does not minimise the particular impacts of the uncontrolled arms trade and armed violence on women and girls, including sexual violence at gunpoint of small arms and light weapons. Nor does it underestimate the diverse roles played by women and girls in armed conflict and violent crime – as victims, carers, perpetrators, survivors. The distinction between 'victim' and 'perpetrator' is not always clear in the case of gun violence and does not necessarily follow gender fault lines. In sum, it challenges the common but inaccurate view that women and girls are always the victims of gun-related and other forms of gender-based violence, and that boys and men are always the perpetrators.[1]

## The powerlessness of men

Guns are used to commit various types of violence, from self-directed violence or suicide, to violence in the home, interpersonal violence (crime) and collective violence (war or armed conflict). Overwhelmingly, violence is committed by men, and often younger men, suggesting that gender and age are key factors in the demand for guns. Most forms of violence can be considered to be related to gender – whether men's violence against women or men's violence against other men. Even self-directed violence may have a gender dimension: some accounts of men's suicide attempts suggest that men commit or attempt suicide when they feel they are not able to live up to the mandates or societal demands of being 'real' men.[2]

Male violence is often explained as an expression of male dominance in society. The reality however is more subtle: at an aggregate level men may be in power, but at the individual level, research suggests that many men actually feel powerless, while at the same time feeling entitled to power in whatever form it comes – status, respect, money, a job, or women. Violence is therefore frequently about men seeking what they believe is rightfully theirs.

Guns play a special role in this equation. Men often feel the need to publicly demonstrate that they are 'real men', and a gun is helpful in making this point. In times of war, men and boys are actively encouraged and often coerced into taking up the roles of combatants. In countries characterized by violence, war, or high levels of gun possession, older men may give young men guns as part of a rite of passage from boyhood into manhood. Guns may also be positively associated with manhood in contexts where their use was valued and encouraged as part of a widely supported rebellion or insurrection, such as the AK-47 symbol of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.[3]

Some of the most violent conflict settings in Africa have seen deliberate attempts by insurgency leaders to exploit the sense of powerlessness that many young men – unemployed and lacking status – may feel. In Rwanda, Nigeria,

Liberia, Uganda and Sierra Leone, local leaders have played up the frustrations of young men and actively encouraged, coerced and manipulated young men and boys to take up and use arms.[4]

Beyond gender, age is another variable that constitutes a strong predictor of violence. Men under the age of 30 are overrepresented in crime and prison statistics, as well as being more likely than older men to commit homicide.[5] This correlation often leads to a general fear of young men, particularly low-income young men or those from marginalized ethnic groups.[6]

## Armed respect

Research among young men involved in organized armed violence in ten countries found that carrying guns is seen as an effective means of gaining status and respect, among both male and female peers.[7] Soldiers, snipers, other gun users and armed male role models in television, film and violent computer games are often cult heroes, with guns routinely glorified in the popular media.[8] These factors could also explain the prevalence of firearms as a method of suicide among men.

However, research has also demonstrated that people exposed to violence have a greater chance of reproducing violence. This is why men and boys can be both victims and perpetrators of gun violence, and why it is often the case that perpetrators will themselves be victims of a form of violence.[9] Rather than a result of biology or demography, men's recourse to armed violence is therefore a complex social phenomenon, with norms and conditions encouraging violence and others restraining it.

A complementary approach to reducing small arms violence and illicit trafficking is to strengthen those factors that help men and boys shun inappropriate firearms possession and violence. Approaches targeting youth in war and transitional settings are particularly important. Postwar recon-



*Is his gun a symbol for power and strength, or does it stand for violence and killing? Photo: Jonas Ekströmer*

struction programmes must therefore pay specific attention to youth, including young men and boys, and support integration of youth into communities.

Programmes ideally should also focus on livelihoods, education and political empowerment. Efforts engaging young men and women in such settings must recognise that demobilization requires more than just offering tools for work. It means providing young people, in particular, with nonviolent ways to achieve a sense of identity and respect in their societies.

## Restrictions and regulations

Two main approaches can be taken to dissociate masculinities, guns and violence. The first one seeks to restrict access to guns by those most likely to misuse them, including youth, people with a history of family violence or people with a mental illness or having suffered a loss and therefore at increased risk of suicide. This approach can be achieved through awareness-raising programmes, community policing or strengthened legislation.

Alternatively, other programmes focus on reducing the propensity to

violence, either through working with perpetrators of violence, or by encouraging resiliency, promoting alternative notions of masculinity based

seeks to assist the hundreds of mostly small programmes working worldwide to engage boys and men in questioning rigid and sometimes violent views of

[1] Barker, Gary and Ricardo, Christine (2005), Young men and the construction of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/AIDS, conflict and violence, background document prepared for the World Bank
[2] Barker, Gary (2005), Dying to be men: Youth masculinities and social exclusion. Routledge, London
[3] Barker, Gary, and Ricardo, Christine (2005)
[4] See for example, Human Rights Watch (2005), Revenge in the Name of Religion. The Cycle of Violence in Plateau and Kano States, May
[5] Archer, J (1994), (ed) *Male Violence,* London, Routledge
[6] Dolan, Chris (2003), 'Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States – A case study from Northern Uganda', in Cleaver F (ed), *Masculinities Matter: Men, gender and development.* Zed books, London
[7] Dowdney, Luke (2005), Neither war nor peace: International comparisons of children and youth in organized armed violence. IANSA, ISER, Viva Rio
[8] Connell, R (1985), 'Masculinity, violence and war', in P. Patton and R. Poole (eds.), *War/Masculinity,* Intervention Publications, Sydney; Myrttinen, H. (2003), 'Disarming masculinities', *Disarmament Forum,* UNIDIR, Vol. 4, pp. 37–46
[9] Butchart A, et al (2004), *Preventing violence: a guide to implementing the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health.* Department of Injuries and Violence Prevention, WHO, Geneva, p. 61
[10] See www.engenderhealth.org/ia/wwm/pdf/map-sa.pdf
[11] See www.promundo.org.br
[12] Founding members of the network are EngenderHealth (US), Instituto Promundo (Brazil), Save the Children-Sweden, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (US) and Sahoyog (India).
[13] USAID (2005), *Youth & Conflict: A toolkit for intervention.* USAID, Washington DC, p. 13

## Brazil has significantly strengthened its national firearms legislation.

on nonviolence and care, and social, economic and political empowerment of youth.

Brazil is an example of a country that has significantly strengthened its national firearms legislation to reduce and strictly regulate civilian access to small arms and light weapons. The 2003 law specifically raised the age limit from 21 to 25 based on evidence that young men were dying and being injured in the greatest numbers in Brazil due to easy access to weapons. Most other nations set the age limit for legal acquisition of a gun at 18, with some, such as South Africa, having raised it to 21. The Brazilian standard, however, compels states with similar alarming small arms homicide rates to consider the question of age, gender and access in concrete terms.

A number of promising programmes are being implemented that seek to shift rigid and sometimes violent attitudes about being a man. 'Men As Partners' in South Africa[10] works in collaboration with the military, unions and schools to engage men in alternative views about manhood, as does the 'Conscientising Male Adolescents' project in Nigeria and the 'Program H' initiative in Latin America and India.[11] These programmes aim to create alternative, nonviolent peer groups, put young men in contact with adult men who serve as mentors and nonviolent role models, and often tap into popular youth culture by making it 'cool' to be nonviolent.

In 2005, a group of organisations came together to form a global network to engage men and boys in gender equality and violence reduction. 'MenEngage'

manhood and, in the process, improve the health and well-being of men, boys, women and girls.[12]

*This article is an abbreviated version of a policy brief written by **Mireille Widmer** of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, with Gary Barker (Promundo) and Cate Buchanan (HD Centre). The text in its full length can be found at http://www.hdcentre.org/Small%20Arms%20Occasional%20papers*

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### Policy recommendations

1. Attention to gender means treating men, women, girls and boys, as groups with particular needs and with diverse roles. The complex relationships between masculinity, youth and gun violence is a key demand factor for small arms and light weapons that needs to be addressed.
2. Curbing access to guns, particularly by young men, is an appropriate strategy to reduce gun violence. This can be done through identifying the problem, strengthening legislation, better law enforcement and awareness raising.
3. Social, economic and political empowerment of youth – male and female – is an important violence prevention strategy, particularly in situations recovering from war. The particular needs of youth should be addressed holistically, through community-based programmes.
4. Nonviolent expressions of masculinity should be promoted and men's roles as caregivers given a greater focus. Group-based activities can also provide positive identity and group empowerment, as well as leadership, teamwork and personal 'governance' skills.[13]

# 'Worse than death: humiliating words'

Currently, both honor and equal dignity are cultural concepts that are significant for people worldwide. What we see today is the transition from norms of honor to norms of equal dignity but also the clash and incompatibility of these concepts. When fear of humiliation overrides the fear of death, this has far-reaching consequences and sometimes leads to the killing of the victim and rather than the perpetrator.

January 11, 1998, in Nairobi, I met with Asha Ahmed. She is a young Somali woman, and was at that time Information/Dissemination Officer at the Somalia Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). She and her colleague described to me how they, over years, had struggled to explain the Geneva Convention and the concept of Human Rights to fellow Somalis. However, so she recounted, to their surprise all such difficulties went away in 1997. "How?" I asked. The explanation was interesting. The ICRC had invited historians from all Somali clans to do research and come up with what eventually became the *Spared from the Spear* booklet by the International Committee of the Red Cross Somalia Delegation (1997).

This booklet shows something remarkable, namely that women and children traditionally were "spared from the spear". It documents that traditional Somali war code explicitly protects civilians against warrior onslaughts. Women were not to be touched. Women represented potential bridges between families and clans, precisely because they could move freely, even in wartime. Asha pointed out: "When you look at this booklet, the Geneva Convention is all in there! At first the Geneva Convention was like Latin to the Somalis!"

In my doctoral dissertation[1] I give Ambassador Dualeh the word. I interviewed him on January 9, 1999. He backs up what I learned from Asha:[2]

There is one thing that never was part of traditional quarrelling between clans, and this is rape, especially mass rape in front of the family. This is new. It happened for the first time when Siad Barre's dictatorial regime sent soldiers to annihilate us. Soldiers would rape our women in front of their husbands and families.
…
It is somehow a "tradition" that young men of one clan steal camels from another clan, and sometimes a man gets killed. But women were never touched, never. There might have been the rare case when a girl was alone in the desert guarding her animals, and a young man having spent a long time in the desert lost control and tried to rape her. She would resist violently, and at the end the solution would perhaps be that he had to marry her. But mass rape, especially rape in front of the family, this never happened before, this is new.
…
Have you noticed how many Somali families live apart? Have you ever thought about the reason why so many Somali women with their children live apart from their husbands? It is because the men cannot live with the humiliation caused by the fact that they were not able to defend their women against the soldiers who raped them. The husband cannot live together with his wife, because he cannot bear to be reminded of his inability to protect her. The perpetrators intended to humiliate their enemies and they succeeded thoroughly. Rape creates social destruction more "effectively" than any other weapon.
…
This is the reason why today Somalia is so divided. We Somalis are united through our common ethnic back-

## Women represented potential bridges between families and clans.

camels from another clan, and sometimes a man gets killed. But women were never touched, never. There might have been the rare ground, we speak one language, and are all Muslims. Why are we divided today? Humiliation through rape and its consequences divides us. The

traditional methods of reconciliation are too weak for this. It will take at least one generation to digest these humiliations sufficiently to be able to sit together again.

At the end of our conversation, Ambassador Dualeh sighed: "Evelin, believe me, humiliation, as I told you before, was not known to the Somali before Siad Barre came to power!"

### Men's pride hurt by rape

Scandinavia houses a large Somali diaspora community. The divorce rate is very high. I remember one Somali woman angrily contesting Ambassador Dualeh's framing in an informal setting in 2001 in Norway. She called out, "It is us, the Somali women, who leave our husbands! Particularly in the diaspora! Because here we receive support for our quest to be treated like human beings! Do you know the saying that a Somali husband will fetch the doctor

when his camels are sick, but not for his wives? How come that our husbands shun us after we were raped? Are we not human beings who need more support after being victimized, and not less? How come that these men are so consumed by their own pride and honor – and how it has been humiliated – that they do not see that we suffer and need help? Instead of helping us they sulk and nurture their feelings of humiliation and their hurt pride!"

When political scientists analyze what underlies cycles of violence and terror, they usually speak of individual depravity and social deprivation, both of which play critical roles. But if we look at the evolution of these human disasters, whether in Europe, Africa, Asia, or anywhere around the world, we consistently find that the force that keeps fueling the extremists, silencing the moderates, and driving the conflict to spiral out of control is humiliation.

During my fieldwork in Somaliland, with its culture of extreme pride and history of extreme violence, I learned an old Somali proverb, "Humiliation is worse than death; in times of war words of humiliation hurt more than bullets."[3]

On December 3, 1998, I was a guest in a *khat* chewing "focus group" session in Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland. Such sessions typically last for many hours, starting in the afternoon and running through half of the night (typically, such meetings are not attended by "respectable" women. I tried therefore to keep "decent" by at least not chewing *khat* myself). I asked the men in the round about humiliation. The hours were well invested and yielded many proverbs, such as "I can only be with people who are equal," or "A man deserves to be killed and not to be humiliated."

For some, humiliation overrides fear of death – indeed, a formidable phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, in much of traditional warfare – and incidentally also in blood feud – women go free. They are, ideally, spared selectively, while men are targeted selectively.[4] And in case such rules are violated or neglected, stark feelings of humiliation may be rendered or maintained in the hearts and minds of those who identify with these codes of behavior.

However, the fact that women are spared in certain settings does not necessarily signify that women are too valuable to lose, or that women stand for more "peaceful" attitudes than their fellow males. Sometimes, I was told in Somalia, it was the women who drove their men into tribal war to address their grievances.[5]

Furthermore, women were not spared under all circumstances. In different situations, women were – and in numerous cultural contexts still are – the ones to be killed selectively, for example, in cases of so-called honor killings. When family honor is perceived to be soiled and humiliated through the rape of a daughter, for example, it



*Acts of humiliation affect both individuals and groups. During the Kosovo war in 1999, the wave of ethnic cleansing forced children, adults and the elderly to flee their homes in panic. Photo: LPI*

is first and foremost the raped daughter who is killed, and rarely also the rapist.[6]

The phenomenon is to be found in many parts of the world, even though they occur most in Muslim countries, despite the fact that Islamic religion and law do not sanction it. According to Stephanie Nebehay (2000), 'honor killings' "have been reported in Bangladesh, Britain, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey and Uganda". Afghanistan, where the practice is condoned under the rule of the fundamentalist Taliban movement, can be added to the list, along with Iraq and Iran".[7]

Thus, women and men – in what I call *traditional hierarchical honor-based societies* – are either selectively identified as persons to be spared or selectively identified as persons to be killed, according to certain rules. And the violation of such rules carries the potential to elicit or maintain feelings of humiliation. In all these cases humiliation and gender – or, more precisely, humiliation and the gender selective taking or sparing of lives – are interlinked in very precisely defined ways.

Apart from such cases, clearly, in the course of human history, killing and dying also occurred with no gender selection involved and no humiliation being invoked. History offers ample examples. Often men, women and children died from the ravages of war, indiscriminately. Wars destroyed whole regions so that their inhabitants withered away from famine and lack of resources. In pre-human-rights times, the latter case typically was not regarded as any violation or humiliation; it was rather seen as "fate" or "God's will" or "natural disaster".

In contrast, nowadays, wherever Human Rights ideals are guiding moral deliberations, the killing of people is deplored and seen as illegitimate, under whatever circumstances (except in clear cases of self-defense, or for military personnel in wars that are perceived



*The separation wall between Israelis and Palestinians is a violation of human dignity. To separate people with stones, concrete and barbed wire is unworthy of any civilized society. Photo: EAPPI*

to be legitimately waged, or for those waiting in the death row in countries that legitimize capital punishment). In present times, predominantly in the West, but also in many non-Western cultural spheres, the overall ethical framework is in the process of changing. Human rights ideals stipulate that people ought to be offered so-called "enabling environments" that give them the chance to build dignified lives. People should not be victimized by warlords who render their homes unsafe and bring famine upon them. And the killing of raped girls in order to redress humiliated family honor is not condoned by Human Rights either. On the contrary, a Human Rights promoter may claim that the act of killing a girl – who has been victimized through being raped – victimizes her doubly and thus compounds

humiliation instead of redressing it. Incidentally, as is widely known, rape has lately increasingly been used as "weapon" in war, thus intensifying the moral dilemma entailed in such cases.

**Passive victims of humiliation**

In my work I use the following definition of humiliation: Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will (or in some cases with your consent, for example in cases of religious self-humiliation or in sado-masochism) and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel you should expect. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established

expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding to the ground. Indeed, one

My conceptualization is that honor codes had their respected place in a world that did not yet experience the coming-together of humankind into

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## With the Human Rights ideals, human worthiness and dignity is regarded to be equal for every human being.

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of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless.

People react in different ways when they feel that they were unduly humiliated. Some just become depressed – anger turns against oneself – others get openly enraged, and yet others hide their anger and carefully plan for revenge. The person who plans for revenge may become the leader of a movement. Thus, feelings of humiliation may lead to rage, that may be turned inwards, as in the case of depression and apathy. However, this rage may also turn outwards and express itself in violence, even in mass violence, in case leaders are around who forge narratives of humiliation that feed on the feelings of humiliation among masses.

There are many points that would merit closer attention but that are not discussed here. For example, what is the difference between humiliation that is felt genuinely and feelings of humiliation that are instigated by propaganda or prescribed culturally? Or, if feelings of humiliation are felt by individuals, how are they elevated to group levels, if at all? Or, what about people who are resilient to feeling humiliated even in the face of serious attempts to humiliate them? Why did Nelson Mandela find a constructive way out of humiliation, and a Hitler unleashed a world war? Why did Mandela not instigate genocide on the white elite in South Africa?

one single family. Today we live in a new reality, the vision and emerging reality of a *global village*, and this new reality can, according to my view, best be tackled with Human Rights norms. With the Human Rights ideals, human worthiness and dignity is regarded to be equal for every human being.

Therefore, I stand in for Human Rights not because I enjoy presenting myself as an arrogant Westerner who humiliates the non-West by denigrating their honor codes of ranked human worthiness. On the contrary, people who endorse honor codes may not be looked down upon. I believe that Human Rights represent a normative framework that is better adapted to an emerging *global village*. Thus, I wish to encourage every inhabitant of the globe to abandon "we" and "them" differentiations and define herself as "we," as "we humanity," who *together* searches for the best ways to provide our children with a livable world.

**Evelin Gerda Lindner**

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[1] Lindner (2001), pp. 342–343
[2] See also Lindner (2000)
[3] Lindner (2006), p. 12
[4] Blood feud has become rampant in Albania since Hodscha's downfall. Today, around 10,000 men sit in their homes and cannot go out, because they fear blood revenge. At the same time, their women can go around freely, thus they have to shoulder all family responsibilities and tasks alone.
[5] Militarism has been examined from a feminist point of view in, for example, *Women and War* by Elshtain (1995). Jean Elshtain examines how the myths of *man* as *just warrior* and *woman* as *beautiful soul* are undermined by the reality of female bellicosity and sacrificial male love, as well as the moral imperatives of just wars.
[6] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, a criminologist of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, feels uneasy with the term "honor killings" and prefers to use the term "femicide". Personal communication, November 2003, Jerusalem.
[7] Nebehay, 2000

# Masculine war – feminine peace?

Women are often made invisible and passive in conflict situations. Their experiences of bearing and nurturing life are overlooked. The tradition of regarding preparations for war as part of masculinity needs to be changed in order to preserve life and environment. Feminist perspectives have to be introduced in family and society, so that men, women and children together bear the responsibility for building and sustaining peace.

On March 8, 2003 an international group of women gathered in the Talai square in Baghdad. Standing in Circles of Peace against the US led war on Iraq, holding banners against the war, photographs of the dead children (because of depleted uranium used in the last Gulf War), listening to the testimonies of women suffering from the genocidal economic sanctions, offering songs of resistance, reading poems of peace, sharing stories of hope, lighting their lamps for peace. It is not a coincidence that all over the world women led the peace demonstrations. In the US itself, women sat in front of the White House in a chain fast for peace when their government declared a desire to wage war against Iraq.

Women are standing against war because war destroys life. Women give life, nurture life and defend life. Women cannot stand by and watch life destroyed.

The women's movement together with peace movements throughout the world are working to promote a world free of war and weapons that destroy all life, including the environment. In different parts of the world women have formed groups and organizations against the unethical practices of governments in war situations.

Yet we have seen a number of women among the troops who have gone to war against Iraq. Yes, we live in a world where many women think and act like men. They see war as a means of resolving conflict. According to me nothing could be more contradictory. As a woman, I regard military solutions to conflicts at odds with the goal of peace. War is violence, how can violence be used to resolve conflict and bring about peace?!

## Suffering behind front lines

Although traditionally women are not the ones who go to the front lines in a war, women suffer the consequences of war in the many forms of violence inflicted upon them in conflict areas, as well as the immense dislocation it causes them and the vulnerable people they care for. War only compounds the violence that women are traditionally subjected to because of their subordinate status. Although international law prohibits these acts of violence as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, rape and other forms of sexual torture are now routinely used as a strategy of conflict in order to shame and demoralize individuals, families and communities. The sexist value placed on their "honour" by their own communities makes women prime targets for rape and sexual torture.

Women left 'wounded by the violence of war' carry these wounds within themselves till the end of their lives, like the Korean and Filipino women used as sex slaves by the Japanese army. In male dominated cultures, the numerous war widows face great oppression as 'single' women. They are marginalized by cultures and left vulnerable to much sexual harassment.

Women and children, being marginal concerns in combat, have been invisible in war statistics. While body count of combatants is often quoted in war reports, they fail to take account of the enormity of casualties among women and children. In Iraq for example, the so-called war against terror has resulted in numerous civilian deaths, including women and children. The earlier sanctions against Iraq, resulted in massive infant and maternal mortality that amounts to more than half a million children victims. But not many have heard of the statistics of these casualties.

War shadows every gendered relationship and affects families, couples, and individuals in diverse ways. With the decimation of the male population in war, women are left alone to bring up children, earn a living, and replace men in civilian occupations. Children are left to grow up without a father. This situation has been a challenge to women and to cultures, since it has forced women to get out of the home and get into the work force. It has surprisingly contributed to the empowerment of women, as

*Women may be suffering, marginalized and victimized, but they also bear and nurture life. Their experiences and potential should be better utilized in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Photo: Lars Rindeskog*

happened in Europe after World War II. It has also forced peoples affected by war to rethink the use of war as a strategy to resolve conflict. This is true especially with regard to women who have come through the experience, and therefore forces them to work hard to maintain peace.

## Culturally gendered war

In matters of peace and security, a woman is differently positioned than a man. War, militarism and valour are traditionally identified with men. Women and children are regarded as "passive and helpless" members of society whom soldiers have to defend and protect. Traditionally woman is seen as the one who imparts moral values, maintains peace and cares for life in the home in her role as mother and care giver, and her domain is limited to the domestic and private sphere. Women are interested in maintaining peace to enable them to feed, educate and care for the people in their care.

Ironically, the simplistic and sexist imaging of woman as passive, obscures her importance in society and public life as the other half of humanity who should be actively involved in peace-building and social transformation.

The gendering of war is a result of the combination of culturally constructed gender roles with real but modest biological differences. Men's genes program them for violence, testosterone makes men more aggressive than women, men are bigger and stronger than women, men's brains are adapted for long-distance mobility and aggression, while women are biologically adapted for care giving roles that preclude their participation in war. Constructions of masculinity motivate soldiers to fight across a variety of cultures and belief systems. Norms of masculinity contribute to men's exclusive status as warriors, and preparation for war is frequently a central component of masculinity.

Socialisation contributes to the

gendering of war. War becomes a "test of manhood", helping overcome men's natural aversion to participating in combat, and cultures mould hardened men suitable for this test by toughening up young boys. They get the message from a very early age that to be men they have to fight. The violence that children see on TV strengthens this message and provides them with ideas, ways and means how to be violent. We reinforce the message by giving boys toys of violence like guns, tanks, and all kinds of toys of war. We tell boys not to cry because they have to be 'strong'. Tears soften the heart, and we have taught our boys to harden their hearts by fighting their emotions of sadness and empathy. Being a boy or a man is synonymous with exhibiting a strength that is essentially non-feeling and/or violent.

Gender roles adapt individuals for war roles, and war roles provide the context within which individuals are socialized into gender roles. The socialization of children into gender roles helps reproduce the war system. For the war system to change fundamentally, or for war to end, we need to bring about profound changes in gender relations. The gendering of war appears to result from a combination of factors, with two main causes finding robust empirical support: 1) small, innate biological gender differences in *average* size, strength, and roughness; and 2) cultural moulding of tough, brave men, who feminize enemies in dominating them.

Men's sexual energies play a role in aggression. Women symbolize for male soldiers a dominated group and thus cannot be included in the armed ranks of their dominators. Women's labour is exploited more in wartime than in peace, so patriarchal societies keep women in civilian positions. Women are expected to fulfill roles as prostitutes, support workers, and replacement labour for men at war.

Masculine war roles depend on feminine roles in the war system, including mothers, wives, and sweethearts, as well as women who

actively oppose wars. The last two of these contradict each other, but indirectly even women peace activists can reinforce masculine war roles by feminizing peace and thus masculizing war, creating a dilemma for the women's peace movement. Overall, masculinity does contribute to motivating soldiers' participation in war, and might do so less effectively with women present in the ranks.

## Male domination

When we look at the state of world affairs we throw our hands up in helplessness. Each day brings with it news of death, hatred, revenge, exploitation, and domination by the powerful, that keeps innumerable conflicts raging in different regions of the world. If we examine the leadership that keeps war alive, we will recognize the domination of male perspectives and decisions. Man's attempts to resolve conflict and solve problems somehow leads to a further escalation of conflict.

On examination of the national budget allocations of various countries, we observe that it reflects male perspectives – so more money is allocated for defence, while allocations for education, health, child and family welfare are decreased. We find governments focusing on measures of population control to end poverty instead of working towards a just distribution of resources that could prevent conflict. Countries which have large sections of their population steeped in poverty send satellites into outer space, have nuclear capability and have the most sophisticated armaments for the defence of their country, but are incapable of preventing death caused by starvation, malnutrition and disease. Woman's life-enhancing perspectives are completely left out of politics and governance, and as a result we have a world hurtling towards violence, death and destruction.

The qualities of women should not be confined to the home, but should be brought into social spaces so that they can help to enhance life in every field of human activity. The domination of the male experience and perspective in public life has brought about a great deal of imbalance. This is evidenced in environmental degradation, escalation of conflicts, violence, exploitation, oppression and marginalisation of the weak. Women have to enter into politics, economics and peace-building to contribute their life preserving qualities to bring in a balance in all spheres of life. Society needs an injection of women's perspectives that are rooted in life, to bring wholeness to life. It is only then that women can help to restore life to a broken world.

## Working towards change

Women should not wait for war situations to rise up against war. If we are to put an end to governments resorting to war for any reason, we have to think of ways to bring up our children to oppose the thought of war. How do we do this?

We can begin to train our children to resolve conflicts by dialogue. Discourage requests for toys of violence and explain why. If a child is taught from a young age to shun violence and empathise with the weak rather than take advantage of them, he/she will not want to see violence as a means of entertainment or a demonstration of power. We need to change the images we give to children of what it means to be strong.

We should remember that images are built by the media, because they are paid to do so by business houses to promote their products. The arms industry is very strong in the powerful countries of the world. They pay to build images and ideas that will promote the use of weapons. War promotes the weapons industry and so do toys of war. Although so many children use guns to kill other children and so many parents are lobbying for stricter gun control laws, yet the government in the US will not enact laws, because the weapons industry supports politicians with money. This underscores the need to promote a greater number of women who will stand up for peace and life to enter government. Women in decision-making bodies need to operate from a woman's perspective.

Women have to be encouraged to develop feminist perspectives that are rooted in their experiences as women. Women's experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, caring, and nurturing are life-giving experiences, which are closely associated with their bodies. Our socialization has taught women to look at their bodies as dirty and a source of sin. Women therefore tend to negate their life-giving experiences that are rooted in their body. Women give life and work hard to sustain and preserve life. This spirituality of women needs to be validated and reinforced, since it is a spirituality that promotes life and eschews violence. Nurturing qualities need to be developed in men as well. When men are encouraged to be caring and nurturing, they will become sensitive to life.

Peace-keeping requires skills in handling angry people and to be able to encourage them to come to the table to talk about their problems. Women have some innate skills in peace-keeping. They need to be at peace tables brokering peace, bringing in their perspectives as women, which are essentially biased in favour of nurturing life. Increasingly more people need to realise that women's feminist perspective is necessary to steer the world away from destruction.

We are presently standing at an important moment in history. Women have to use this moment as an opportunity to promote ideas and ways to peace, which in turn enhances and promotes life. Women's perspectives can be sharpened through discussion and reflection in women's groups. These groups can help build women's confidence so that they can participate actively in public life and offer ideas of justice, life and peace to heal our world.

**Virginia Saldanha**

# Women excluded from peace processes

In contradiction with the message of the UN Resolution 1325, stressing the importance of women's participation in peace processes and negotiations, women in some of the most severe conflict areas remain excluded. The International Crisis Group has investigated the situation in Sudan, DR Congo and Uganda and come up with a number of recommendations to promote the full inclusion of women in peacebuilding.

The armed conflicts in Sudan, DR Congo and Uganda are amongst the deadliest in the world and have a great impact on women. In response, local women's organizations have emerged in the three countries to put an end to conflict. Nevertheless, these courageous women have been met with rejection and in many cases violence. As a result the International Crisis Group (ICG)[1] has undertaken the creation of a report to educate the international community about the actions and state of women's movements in Sudan, Congo and Uganda.

Their findings report that, although the UN Security Council Resolution 1325: 2000 concerning women, peace and security supports the integration of women into the prevention, resolution, and post conflict reconstruction, it is widely ignored, and women remain unable to participate in these efforts. Moreover, their findings bring attention to the fact that because of discrimination and violence, only a few women are willing to participate in peace efforts. Due to the low participation rate, the women that do engage in the public sphere are a visible minority that is easily targeted and threatened. The international community and the local leaders need to protect these women in order to facilitate their involvement.

Women's participation in conflict transformation is not an issue solely related to gender equality. As mentioned by Don Steinberg, Vice-President for Multilateral Affairs, ICG, women make a unique contribution to peace efforts, as they generally bring a comprehensive approach that includes socio-economic factors, which otherwise would remain ignored. However, in Sudan, Congo and Uganda women's unique perspective remains silenced by violence and discrimination.

## No peace without women

Although women's peace building efforts were critical in the sphere of civil society in Sudan, they were barred from actively participating in both the North-South and Darfur peace negotiations. The women's absence was reflected by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, as both lack any stipulations for women's involvement in the implementation process. In order to change the Sudanese government's approach to gender issues and to include women in the decision-making sphere, ICG has made nine recommendations that can be divided into three general groups.

The first group deals with women's representation: to include women in all formal government structures, to include at least 25 percent women participation in the peace negotiation delegations, and to develop programs for future women political leaders. The second group is related to personal safety for women and includes the protection of female abductees that escape the Lord's Resistance Army from Uganda and to stop financing this group, to incorporate the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in the newly created Voluntary and Humanitarian Work Act, to educate the necessary personnel to handle rape cases properly, and to ensure that the disarmament and demobilization process encompasses women. Finally, the third group focuses on economic issues, such as the inclusion of women in the discussions about resource administrations, and the establishment of a fund to support women leader development and the financial support of women's organizations.

The situation of Congolese women is similar to that of their Sudanese sisters; they continue to be underrepresented in the decision-making spheres. Although Congolese women participated in great numbers during the elections, this did not translate into inclusion. Commitments of the government about gender issues were never materialized and remain a success only on paper. Moreover, sexual crimes such as rape remain a widespread practice that is seldom punished.

In order to increase women's participation in the government and

peace efforts, ICG has made three recommendations to the Congolese government. They take up subjects such as the elimination of sexual violence, the promotion of equal participation for women, the engagement in a mainstream gender approach in the government, which comprises the inclusion of women's rights to the mandate of all ministers, strengthening of the legal system by bringing perpetrators of sexual violence to justice, legal aid to victims, and the creation of a prosecutorial unit that focuses on the investigation of sexual crimes.

## Networking for peace

The situation of Ugandan women is better than that of their Congolese and Sudanese counterparts; nevertheless, much work remains to be done. In response to the gender needs of this country, women's organizations have formed an organized and active peace movement. The approach of this movement is to share common experiences via networking and to develop peace building skills. This approach has proven successful in violence reduction, and if their momentum is maintained, there is a strong possibility that it can serve as an example to other women's organizations in the region.

In order to support the efforts of the peace movement and to continue improving the situation of Ugandan women, ICG has formulated three recommendations for the local government: first to implement and educate the public about the laws related to domestic violence, sexual offences, women and children rights protection, and succession; second to support the efforts of the local women to participate in the peace dialogues with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and to work in conjunction with the Congolese government to assist the female abductees that escape LRA in Congo and to eliminate the LRA bases in that country; and finally to support the demobilisation and



*Noêlla Nafranka was one of the women taking part in an LPI workshop in Bukavu. Photo: Ylse van der Schoot/LPI*

reconciliation efforts and to provide the resettlement packages that were promised.

The International Crisis Group has also made recommendations to the international community including the three countries that were the focus of the study. These recommendations are grouped into six categories: 1) human security, 2) disarmament, reintegration and small arms, 3) security sector judicial reform and justice, 4) reproductive health care, 5) regional and cross-border security, and 6) legal rights. The recommendations seek to address the great challenges that women meet in Sudan, Congo, and Uganda. To ignore them would translate into perpetuating the silence of women's voices in the peace process. This silence would not solely impact women but would also deprive the general population of a special knowledge, which makes peace agreements and actually any policy better, since women tend to incorporate a unique comprehensive perspective that includes matters which otherwise would be ignored by patriarchal structures.

Women's groups have been responsible for the creation of safe environments, where both men and women can discuss topics that were previously regarded as taboo. Moreover, excluding women from the peace agreement may result in gender insensitive practices, which in turn will translate into counterproductive approaches. It is impossible to achieve peace or engage into democracy while ignoring fifty percent of the population. Unless Sudan, Congo and Uganda actively include a gender sensitive approach in their peace agenda, their efforts run a great risk of failure.

**Luisa Montoya**

*The full report, Beyond Victimhood: Women's Peacebuilding in Sudan, Congo and Uganda, Africa Report N°112, 28 June 2006, is found on ICG's website: www.crisisgroup.org*

[1] The International Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy on five continents to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

# 1325 – a historic resolution: Progress, effects and obstacles

*On October 31, 2000, UN Security Council ratified a historic and highly significant resolution on women, peace and security, Resolution 1325:2000. On these two pages we give an outline of the implementation of the Resolution in different contexts during the six years of its existence. Some of its effects on the strategies and practical outcome of negotiations and peace building are presented, as well as a number of useful links on the Internet and proposals for further reading.*

Resolution 1325 is unique in that it does not only focus on the role of women as civilian victims of conflict, although this perspective is included in the document, but primarily on the role of women as agents for peace. The overall aim of Resolution 1325 is thus to increase female participation and influence at all levels and stages of conflict prevention and resolution, in order to fully resolve conflicts and create stable and just societies. The resolution has been translated to a multitude of languages. For full text versions of Resolution 1325, in 77 languages, see:
*http://www.peacewomen.org/1325inTranslation/index.html*

## The United Nations and Resolution 1325

Resolution 1325 urges the member states of the UN to ensure increased representation of women on all decision making levels and all mechanisms related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, and recommends the Secretary-General to increase the representation and influence of women within all levels of the UN system. The resolution also underlines the need for gender mainstreaming within peacekeeping and peace building operations, as well as in negotiation and reconstruction processes.

Some progress has been made in the area of UN peacekeeping and gender awareness. For example, after Resolution 1325 was adopted, Gender Advisors in Peace keeping missions have become norm, and training on gender issues is compulsory for all UN peacekeeping personnel. The progress has, however, been much slower in other areas. In July 2005 only 25 percent of the total civilian personnel serving in UN missions were women. In the police missions in the field at that time, the percentage of women was below five percent, and the equivalent number in the military sections of the missions was approximately one percent.

For more information on the progress of the implementation of Resolution 1325 within the UN, see *Facts and Figures on Women, Peace and Security.*
*http://www.womenwarpeace.org/toolbox/WPS_Facts.pdf*

## The European Union and Resolution 1325

Within the European Union, the process of implementing Resolution 1325 is a work in progress. The Parliament recently adopted a non-legislative resolution that underlines the importance of including a gender perspective in research and all stages of conflict management, as well as the importance of including women in these processes. For resolution in full text, see:
*http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP// TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0245+0+DOC+XML+V0//SV#ref_1_1*

Despite some progress at the political and theoretical levels of the EU, the practical process of implementation of Resolution 1325 within the daily operations of the organization is slow.

A recent report by the European Union Institute for Security Studies examines the implementation of Resolution 1325 within the European Security and Defense Policy. Focusing on the mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina the authors conclude that although the attitude towards gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of women within EU missions is positive, ignorance and prejudice on the topic of women and conflict is still widespread. For report in full text, see:
*http://www.iss-eu.org/new/analysis/analy152.pdf*

## Sweden and Resolution 1325

Much responsibility for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 is put on the member states. Unfortunately only a few states have drafted national plans of action for the implementation of the resolution, and the implementation process is slow. Sweden is one of the countries that have a national plan of action.

Adopted by the government on June 14, 2006, the Swedish plan includes provisions on educational measures aimed at personnel participating in international operations, as well as a commitment to increase the number of women included in Sweden's contributions to peace-support operations. According to the plan, Sweden will work to promote an inclusion of

a gender perspective in peace and security-building operations within the framework of the UN, the EU and the OSCE. So far, however, little actual progress has been made in any of these fields. For the Swedish national plan of action in full text, See:

*http://www.operation1325.se/files/Material_publikationer/ Handlingsplan%201325.pdf*

For an UN-INSTRAW guide on how to successfully construct and implement national plans of action on Resolution 1325, with examples from the work done in Sweden, Denmark and Great Britain, see:

*http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=bl ogcategory&id=186&Itemid=246*

## Women's Organizations and Resolution 1325

Women's organizations play important roles at local, national and international levels, in preventing, managing and resolving violent conflicts around the world. Resolution 1325 is an efficient tool for civil society organizations working with these issues, as well as issues relating to women's rights and influence during and after conflict.

In Sweden there are a number of organizations working with issues related to Resolution 1325. One of these is Operation 1325, an umbrella organization consisting of five Swedish women's organizations devoted to promoting women's rights, peace and security. These organizations are: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (the Swedish chapter IKFF), Women for Peace (the Swedish chapter KFF), the National committee of UNIFEM, the National Organization for the Organizations for Immigrant Women and the Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council. The overall aim of Operation 1325 is the universal implementation of Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Operation 1325 works on both national and international levels, within the areas of training and capacity-building for women, information and political advocacy. For further information and links to member organizations, see: *http://www.operation1325.se/*

## Conflict Resolution Processes, Peace Agreements and Resolution 1325

Resolution 1325 states that women and women's organizations should be represented in, and have an influence on, peace negotiations and agreements. Despite this, women are still universally underrepresented in these processes. However, substantial gains have been made in this area since the ratification of Resolution 1325.

In Somalia in 2002, women's groups from different clans/ parties to the conflict were – after assistance and pressure from international women's organizations – invited to join in the negotiations. Once there, they transgressed conflict lines and formed their own clan, thereby managing to bring gender issues and gender equality onto the agenda and into the negotiations. The resulting peace agreement is deemed one of the most gender progressive in the region.

In Rwanda's first post-conflict election, to a large extent due to gender sensitive provisions of the peace agreement, women gained 50 percent seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 35 percent in the Senate. Other states that have made post conflict progress include

Burundi, Iraq and Afghanistan. In Liberia, on the other hand, the goals set in the peace agreement – 30 percent women in the parliament – was not even reached by half, and in other post-conflict states the numbers have been equally bad or worse

For further reading on Women and Conflict Resolution Processes, see:

*Women at the Peace Table; Making a Difference* (Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, United Nations Development Fund for Women, N.Y. 2000)

*From Local to Global: Making Peace Work for Women* Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security – Five Years On Report (The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security)

*http://www.wilpf.int.ch/publications/1325Five_Year_On.pdf*

## Books, Reports, and Internet resources on Resolution 1325

The material available on the situation of women in conflicts is constantly growing. One highly influential report on the topic is Elisabeth Rhen's and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's " *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment"* (Progress of the World's Women 2002, Volume 1, UNIFEM, N.Y, 2002)

Four excellent anthologies, presenting an overview of the roles women play before, during and after conflict are:

*What Women Do in War Time: Gender and Conflict in Africa,* (Eds. Meredeth Turshen and Clotide Twagiramariya, Zed Books, London and New York, 1998)

*States of Conflict, Gender Violence and Resistance* (Ed. Susie Jacobs et al., Zed Books, London & N.Y., 2000)

*Women and Civil War: Impact Organization and Action* (Ed. Krishna Kumar and Lynne Reinne Publishers, London, 2001)

*The Aftermath, Women and Post-Conflict Transformation* (Ed. Sheila Meintjes et al. Zed Books, London & N.Y. 2002).

A reliable and helpful Internet site on women and conflict is provided by INSTRAW (the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women), which offers an electronic Gender Research Guide, a global directory of gender, peace and security research institutions. Moreover, INSTRAW has compiled lists of gender, peace and security journals, databases and scholarships/fellowships, and provides an online directory, covering over one thousand organizations working towards the advancement of women and gender equality: *http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.html/*

Also within the UN system, UNIFEM runs the project WomenWarPeace.org, a program intended to address the lack of information on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls. The web portal contains information from a wide variety of sources, with links to reports and data from the UN system to information and analysis from experts, academics, NGOs and media sources: *http://www.womenwarpeace.org/*

Yet another reliable portal is provided by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, whose project Peace Women monitors and works toward rapid and full implementation of Resolution 1325: *http://www.peacewomen.org/*

Text compiled by **Maja Edfast**,
Operation 1325 in Sweden

# Jerusalem:
# Female theologians discuss peacebuilding

Do women have a special role in promoting peace and reconciliation? The answer from nine women from seven countries is a convincing 'yes'. They are all theologians who take part in an international course in Jerusalem to study women's roles in peacebuilding, exchange experiences and learn from each other. The programme gives rich opportunities for meetings with groups and individuals from different religions, thus offering an added value to their weeks of study.

In Nagaland, India, 98 percent of the people are Christian. They have been fighting for independence ever since 1947, with the only result being internal conflicts. The women started a campaign, "Shed no more blood", and the killings have been reduced. An old tradition in Nagaland is the so-called Phukhareila. When a woman gets married to a man from another village she moves there and is supposed to be a mediator. If the villages start fighting, she goes to the battlefield and makes peace. All initiatives from authorities in the society and church, where all are men, have failed. Now the men ask the women to make peace and to use the old tradition. "Only women can help", they say. It is a challenge and an opportunity for the women.

This is told by Eyingbeni Humstoe, who is a Baptist and student at Trinity College in Singapore, and active in women's movements for peace and reconciliation. She is one of nine theologians from seven different countries who attend the international course at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, during nine weeks in autumn 2006. The course is run by the Church of Sweden. The aim is to give further education and create networks and possibilities for mutual sharing. This year's theme is "Women's roles in promoting peace and reconciliation", and only women are invited. The women are either students or teachers at the institutions and/or are involved in work for interfaith, peace and reconciliation in their churches. Some of the women are ordained, some will be ordained when they have completed their studies and some have other vocations in the church. The participants are expected to bring back their newly gained knowledge to their institutions and churches, and to make use of their experiences to promote peace and reconciliation.

## Patriarchal hierarchy

To be in Jerusalem is very special in many ways, and to see the well-known holy places from the Bible and all the pilgrims is a touching experience. We also see heavily armed soldiers stopping Muslims from entering holy places. We see the wall, the uprooted olive trees, the museums of the genocides of the Armenian and Jewish people, the inequality between men and women, the patriarchal hierarchy in the religions, and that puts us all directly to the problem. The people in this world are crying out for peace. Women have special gifts, but they are rarely recognised, and the male culture and values are so strong. We often explain violence by saying that poor, marginalised and frustrated people don't see any other possibility than to fight and find their identity in gangs and criminal groups. Who are among the poorest people in the world? The women and the children. How many of them are criminals and members of violent groups?

Almost everyone in the group talks about the submission of women. There are laws and traditions where women don't inherit and where it is a catastrophe to have only girls, and therefore a necessity to remarry or to adopt a boy for the inheritance. The violence against women is also everywhere, and on top of that they are often blamed and punished.

Religion is often a part of a conflict or used as a reason, but can the religion also be a driving force for the solution? The women, once again, answer yes. That is a reason for being here, to learn more about the religions, meet people and learn from one another. The group meets representatives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam to learn about their history and the present situation of the three religions. In encounters with interfaith groups, peace organisations and individuals, we meet different

people and hear their stories. We listen and discuss. We visit groups in the villages and in the cities. We study Sarah and Hagar from the different perspectives of the three religions.

Dr Helene Egnell, a pastor in a local parish of the Church of Sweden, is our guest lecturer for a week in December. She deepens our knowledge about female approaches to interfaith dialogue, which is the subject of her dissertation. Our experience, as well as Helene's research, says that in general it is easy for women to talk when they meet and to discuss at a woman to woman level. When we walked in Old Jerusalem some of the women stopped and talked to other women over the barriers of language. Simple conversation about children, food and clothes. Smiles and laughter. We look forward to many more encounters.

## Giraffes don't fight

Are women different concerning peacemaking? Emeline Endossi, a Lutheran teacher from Makumira Theological College in Arusha, Tanzania, answers yes:

"The first priority for a woman is her children. Will a woman start a war that kills her children? Many men also love their children, but when it comes to conflict they lose sense and think it is best to show their strength. Women think it is best to live and nourish the kids. If women were in power and if men listened to them, we could often solve the situations without violence."

Emeline gave a wooden giraffe to STI. It is a Tanzanian symbol for peace. It is a big animal that never fights.

Power is, of course, an important factor in peace and reconciliation and has to be considered during our course weeks. Over and over again, the subject of women as marginalised people comes up. Women have great possibilities to work for peace and reconciliation but are limited by dehumanisation and illiteracy. The



*"We live together separately", says one of the guides, showing Jerusalem, city of two peoples and three religions, to the group of female theologians. Photo: Kerstin Pihl*

and also stirs up conflicts. People get displaced because of the construction of dams, highways, luxurious houses and industries. The displaced people never receive the advantages of this but instead lose their meagre property and their dignity. This is a serious problem in India. Margaret Kalaiselvi, a pastor in the Church of South India and a teacher at Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary in Madurai, and Percis Peters, a pastor in the Methodist church and a student at Gurukul Theological Seminary in Chennai, see this as a growing basis for anger among young people.

The violent games and films people play and watch also foster a culture of violence and of dehumanisation of 'the other'. 'The other' can be a rich person, a woman, someone of another caste or someone from another religion. The Indian government is doing a lot to promote a peaceful coexistence, but it is not enough. Although the Christians are in the minority, they can play an important role. Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary has a theme for the work: "Living faiths in communities – towards gender justice".

The leaders and their sensitivity to the context are important. Deborah Garcia, a Baptist and teacher at two theological seminars in Managua, Nicaragua, is engaged in the education of leaders at several levels. They work with the understanding of new paradigms and the globalisation process to be able to promote peace in a society deeply injured by wars, and now threatened by strong conservative movements in both society and church.

## Dangerous criticism

Dehumanisation is coming up all the time. Mariefe Revollido, a teacher at Aglipay Central Theological Seminary of the Philippine Independent Church, also mentions this. The Philippines have been exploited by colonisers and still experience an unjust society with a lot of corruption and violence. To criticise the rulers and to defend the poor is dangerous, and her husband is under threat. A bishop has recently been murdered, because he



*A Palestinian and a Tanzanian woman picking olives together. The olive branch is an often-used symbol for peace. Photo: Kerstin Pihl*

Circle of Concerned Women Theologians is a pan–African association of women who study the role and impact of religion and culture on African women's lives. It empowers female theologians to interpret the Bible from a women's perspective and to bring the message to illiterate women, who are often trapped in a male culture that dehumanises them.

Bridget Masaiti, a Methodist from Zambia studying at the School of Theology in KwaZuluNatal, South Africa, is a member of the Circle. She told us about her own empowering, and how she was able to go to her family and make peace and reconcile with her mother.

Globalisation is a factor that creates a growing gap between rich and poor,

followed the motto 'The church must be with the people'.

The dehumanisation and the otherness is very evident in the Holy Land. Just walk around in the streets or pass a checkpoint, and you will see it. Just listen to people on both sides talking about "the other". All of us feel the anger as we see the uprooted trees and the dividing wall especially in Bethlehem, where it will soon strangle the whole town. We are back again to the question of power and how it relates to peace and reconciliation. Another question is how to convert the anger into a peaceful force.

Safâ Abu Assab, a Moslem Palestinian, talked warmly about Ramadan as a tool for peace and reconciliation. During Ramadan people ask for forgiveness and try to sort out problems. Safâ uses to invite neighbours for breakfast or Ifthar, the breaking of the fast, during Ramadan. It is a way of seeing each other, to share and become friends. It is a good way of preventing conflict, and the meal is important in the three religions. In December the group will celebrate Hanukka and Christmas with an interfaith group that meets regularly at STI.

The Swedish participant, Karin Aldén, studying theology in Lund to become a pastor in Church of Sweden, diocese of Stockholm, sees that she is very privileged, living in a rich and peaceful society, but that the ministry of reconciliation is ongoing, as conflicts are always present where at least two people are together.

During eight weeks the women work with their new impressions and experiences. An intense process has already started in the group and we discuss the issues of power, marginalisation, empowerment, human rights and how they relate to women, and their role as religious women to promote peace and reconciliation. One moment we think we have understood something, but suddenly someone gives another perspective, and we have to re-think. "I'll never be the same person", said one of the participants. Everyone is of course aware that there are conflicts among women, too, but we have



*Jewish, Christian, Muslim - women from Palestine, Israel, USA, Tanzania and Nicaragua sharing bread for peace. Photo: Kerstin Pihl*

to focus on the rich possibilities in the 50 percent of humanity.

The Church of Sweden runs this course because of the ministry of the Church, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:18: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation". The religion should be a tool for peace and reconciliation, and this course focuses on the special role of women. These women will not put their new experiences in a drawer as a good memory. They will go on working with all of their possibilities for a just society, and for peace and reconciliation.

**Kerstin Pihl**

**The Swedish Theological Institute** is located in the centre of Jerusalem, ten minutes walk from the Old City. The work started in 1951 as an institute for dialogue with Judaism, which is still very important. Today the dialogue with Islam and meeting with people from the three religions is also a major part of the activities. STI is also a meeting place for Swedes living in or visiting Jerusalem. A Swedish worship is celebrated every other Saturday evening.

# Soldiers' mothers - strong and suffering

In the 1990s in contemporary Russian society, a collective male dominance limited the political voice of women in the formal political arena. Subsequently, women are oppressed by the patriarchal power structures of Russian society. Similar to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina and the Mothers Front of Sri Lanka, during periods of civil unrest, women who are desperately seeking social justice for their families, have politicized their social roles as Mothers, which in turn has enabled them to collectively enter the arena of political dissent.

In 1989 during the last days of the Soviet-Afghanistan War, 300 women formed the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers (CSM) in Moscow, Russia. This organization of women campaigned to free their sons from military service. The CSM lobbied the Soviet government for the return of 180,000 young men from the battlefront in the 1979-1989 Afghanistan war and regions in the Soviet Republics. Similar to the CSM the Soldiers' Mothers Organization (SMO) was established in St. Petersburg in 1991 in order to educate draftees and their relatives about the law, and to help mothers to save their sons from military service. At the time of the Chechen war in 1994, the SMO of St. Petersburg along with the CSM of Moscow or, as they are collectively known, the Soldiers' Mothers, took a leading role against the use of Russian military aggression in the Chechnya region. During the anti-military campaign the activists were exposed to the inhumane conditions of the Soviet armed forces. Subsequently the Soldiers' Mothers

expanded their protest agenda to reform the organization of the Soviet military forces.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev responded to one of the Soldiers' Mothers' demands for reform, and in 1990, Gorbachev signed a non-official decree, which demobilized the army's construction battalions in which younger recruits had been treated abusively by older conscripts. The Soldiers' Mothers were concerned about the high level of physical and psychological abuse that Soviet soldiers experienced and, thus, established a Rehabilitation Centre for Soldiers who left the Soviet army for health reasons. In addition, the Soldiers' Mothers set up seminars on human rights education, and the organization also administered legal advice to conscripts and their parents. Eventually in 1992 the post-Soviet Russian government passed a law that ensured that new recruits into the Russian army would have the right to alternative service.

In November 1994, when the 1994-1996 Russian-Chechen War began, the

focus of the Soldiers' Mothers shifted from writing petitions and lobbying to address military reform issues that they proposed, to organizing and staging regular demonstrations opposing the war.

## Collective sympathy

The fact that the Soldiers' Mothers of both the CSM and the SMO actually entered the Russian-Chechen war zone in 1995 was an act of courage, which captured the collective sympathy of not only the international community but the Russian people themselves. Subsequently, it was largely public opinion that was guided by the Russian media that forced the Russian government to end its military campaign in Chechnya. In August 1996 a five year Peace Accord was negotiated which left Chechnya's status as an independent nation undetermined: Chechens considered themselves to be an independent nation, while Russians still listed Chechnya as part of the Russian Federation.

The CSM and SMO are organizations that were created and organized by women who framed their political activities within a politicized Motherist identity, in order to save Russia's sons from the hardships of Russian military service and the horrors of war. The women have a highly developed 'Maternal' social consciousness, that has been reinforced by agents of socialization in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods in Russia. The CSM and SMO are not feminist organizations that seek to advance strategic gender interests and reform the infrastructure of the patriarchal Russian state. Conversely, they are 'feminine' organizations, which advance practical gender-related interests. Sonia Alvarez

makes an important distinction between feminist and feminine organizations. She proposes that: "Whereas feminist organizations focus on issues specific to the female condition … feminine groups mobilize women around gender related issues and concerns" (1990).[1]

## The Motherist identity

The role of motherhood is socially constructed by a social system of power and domination.[2] In the twentieth century, the ideas of a traditional Russian patriarchal society has filtered through Soviet and Russian political, social and religious ideologies. Women are seen as narrators of family histories, kin keepers and keepers of the hearth. The gender roles that women play, have been learned from Soviet and 'old' Russian, primary and secondary agents of socialization. These agents of socialization included in the Soviet period: the school system, the Pioneers [Scouts], the Komsomol [Young Communist League] and the media. Soviet institutions acted in tandem with a system of Russian values, which were acquired from the family, religious ideologies, and classical Russian art and literature. This Soviet-Russian dualism of ideas has created a complex myriad of stereotypes that Russian women have incorporated into their daily lives. The dual image of a woman as a 'suffering mother', and a 'strong woman' reinforces the concept that the ideal Russian woman is a 'mother', who is a competent caregiver.

During the Soviet period, women were subjected to active pronatalist policies in Soviet-Russia. These policies coercively promoted gender roles and particular cultural forms of motherhood. Pronatalism has been described as the encouragement of all births that are considered important to the well-being of the family and individual. During the 1950's in Soviet-Russia, in an effort to replenish the loss of several million Russian lives during the Second World War, Jozef Stalin's government introduced the pronatalist

and pro-Russian nationalist idea of the 'Heroic Mother'. To be awarded the prestigious title of Heroic Mother, a Russian woman had to give birth to at least nine children, and for her maternal efforts she was awarded a medal by Stalin and her picture was printed in the Soviet daily newspaper Pravda [The Truth].

Not only was a Russian woman in the Soviet period expected to be an exemplary mother, but she was also expected to be a 'strong woman'. Vera Dunham describes the strong woman as a heroine of Soviet-Russian fiction. She writes:

> The heroine, in contrast to the hero, shows consistently fullness of character: tsel'nost. She has a multi-faceted character of wide range, encompassing positive qualities such as selflessness, endurance, generosity, ability to adjust to stress, ability to solve immediate problems … Moreover in contrast to a man, woman represents strength which is derived from an ability to relate actively to the family, to the collective and to society.[3]

However, regardless of whether a woman was a 'strong woman' or a Stakhanovite [super worker][4], maternal cares and the double duty day restricted women from receiving political promotions to managerial levels in factories and to administrative positions on collective farms in Soviet-Russia. Women who were living and working on Israeli kibbutzes or Russian collective farms in the Soviet period and today, are governed by what Cynthia Cockburn describes as " … a modernized form of collective male dominance".[5]

## The arena of political dissent

In contemporary Russia and during the Soviet period the feeling of maternal responsibility is a key factor in a Russian woman's identity. During the Soviet period many examples of Soviet-Russian samizdat [underground

writings] have been signed by hundreds of mothers, who were protesting the political or religious persecution of their sons. The discourse from this unofficial information network has been recorded and preserved in the Arkhiv Samizdata (AS) [Underground or Self-Published Archives] located in Berlin, Germany. It contains 6,525 underground documents, dated from December 1963 to December 1991.[6]

Even though this was an opportunity for women to write about social problems that concerned them as individuals or as a collective, the overwhelming majority chose to write about the problems that their male kin were experiencing. In a systematic, ten per cent sample of the 1,250 samizdat archive documents written during the decade 1964-1974, thirty six per cent of the documents that are written by women to the Soviet authorities or to the general public, were letters seeking information about the conditions of their son's and husband's incarceration.[7] An additional thirteen per cent are about the incarceration or persecution of other non-related males.

The supportive role that Polish and Russian women played during the Soviet period did not diminish, and it was actively encouraged during the 1980s. During the perestroika [reform] years of Mikhail Gorbachev's government in the mid-1980s, Russian women wrote not once nor twice in the Soviet underground press about their male relatives, but many times. It was by default that Russian mothers entered the arena of dissent, which enabled them to publicly express their fear and sadness over the suffering of their sons.

## Political motherhood

What the data from this archival investigation suggest is that the construction of gender differences that has historically regulated women as subordinate, serves to reinforce male national power, making identification with 'the nation' synonymous with male needs, male frustrations and male

*Every Thursday for twenty years women, wearing white head-scarves and photos of their lost relatives, demonstrate at Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, against the disappearance of 30,000 people during the years of military dictatorship. Photo: Inga Lantz/Pressens Bild*

aspirations. Thus, Russian women during the Soviet period accepted their prevailing feminine role as a 'Mother' and asserted their rights according to this role.

The Soldiers' Mothers is a form of political motherhood, which is represented by these women's commitment to their family and to challenging the state about the conscription of their son(s), or the disappearance of their children. Sara Ruddick describes political mothers as women who "... often come together out of shared pain: they appeal to mothers and others who are living in relative safety, by making their pain visible. To cite a paradigmatic example, the Madres [of Argentina] literally paraded their suffering by wearing

photographs of their lost children around their necks."[8]

In addition to using the symbol of the 'suffering mother' to solicit support for their cause, a philosophy of public nonviolent protest was endorsed by the Madres of Argentina. Diana Taylor argues that: "The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo realized that only by being visible could they be politically effective. Only by being visible could they stay alive ..."[9] This commitment to nonviolent protests enabled the Madres and other Motherist groups such as the Mothers Against Silence of Israel (or the Parents Against Silence of Israel)[10] and the Mother's Front of Sri Lanka, to mobilize broad support for their cause, without having to directly confront the dominant male

discourse or the military forces of the government in power.

In Sri Lanka, where the ongoing civil war has led to thousands of deaths and the abduction of approximately 60,000 young and middle-aged men, 1,500 women formed the Mothers' Front on July 15, 1990 in the southern district of Matara. Even though the Mothers' Front received bomb threats and were harassed by the authorities, they were able to publicly protest the disappearance of their sons and husbands through rallies and petitions to the government. By 1999, 25,000 women were members of the Mothers' Front.[11] Ironically the women of the Sri Lankan Mothers' Front and the Russian CSM and SMO had been excluded from the political realms of power precisely because of their subordinate status as women/mothers, which now, due to the politicization and mobilization of their Motherist identity, enabled them to enter dangerous zones of conflict.

Following the example of the Argentinian Madres and the Sri Lankan Mothers' Front, the Russian Soldiers' Mothers also entered dangerous conflict zones. During the height of Russia's campaign against Chechnya in 1995, Russian television showed images of the Soldiers' Mothers braving bombs and artillery fire in and around Grozny, Checnya's capital city, to pull their sons out of what they believed to be a pointless war. The CSM were evicted from their offices in Moscow, and both the CSM and the SMO were thrown off trains, lied to and confronted by both Russian and Chechen soldiers, and yet they continued to campaign for the end of the war. The Soldiers' Mothers marched to the front lines of Grozny in Chechnya, where they demanded entrance into prisons and scoured the countryside in search of their sons. Some Soldiers' Mothers freed their sons from prison, some found their sons already dead, and some found – nothing (Caizza 1998).

The Soldiers' Mothers received tremendous public support for

organizing the Mothers' March for Life and Compassion in March 1995, which was covered extensively by the International and Russian media. In September that year the CSM was awarded the Sean McBride Peace Prize and the Right Livelihood Prize (also called the Alternative Nobel Prize).

## Fading media interest

After a turbulent three-year period of political, economic and social strife in Chechnya, the tentative Peace Accord between Chechnya and Russia was terminated in October 1999 when the Russian-Chechen War was renewed.[12] The key role that the Russian and international media played in supporting the Soldiers' Mothers campaign during the 1994-1996 Russian-Chechen war has been visibly absent during the 1999 Russian-Chechen war. The Russian military forces have prevented the International and Russian media from entering the region and reporting on the 1999 war. The Soldiers' Mothers along with other human rights organizations have been marginalized in Russian society, and though they have held demonstrations against the war, there has been little public interest or support for their cause.

Undaunted, the Soldiers' Mothers continue to negotiate within a maternal framework that broadly embraces a human rights perspective. Their anti-war perspective challenges the lack of democracy within the Russian military forces. For example: the CSM is presently contesting a recent revision by the Russian Parliament to the 1990 Alternative Service Decree for conscripts. The period of alternative service for army recruits has now been extended from two to four years. Though the Soldiers' Mothers work within a Russian maternal framework, they reject wars based on nationalist, political or territorial claims and contest the use of military force on a universal level. Lubov Kuznetsova of the CSM summarizes the Soldiers' Mothers doctrine in an interview in the *St. Petersburg Press*, 7 February 1996: "Our



*Women in Black is a worldwide movement where women silently protest against injustice, war and militarism, here in Serbia. Photo: LPI*

philosophy is a Mother's philosophy – that our children should be healthy and happy. For this we need peace.

### Valerie Zawilski

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[1] Sonia Alvarez, Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition (1990, pp 24-26)
[2] Jetter et al. (1997, p 4)
[3] Dunham in Black (1969, p 460)
[4] In a Soviet mine in the 1930's in the Ural region of Russia, an industrious worker named Stakhanov became famous for his daily output of work, which surpassed the average worker's output. He was recognized by the Soviet state as a Labour Hero and was used as a role model for all workers in the Soviet Union. Even though women had little administrative or decision making power on collective farms, women received the majority of Stakhanovite awards on collective farms throughout the Soviet period.
[5] Cockburn (1999, p 108)

[6] The Arkhiv Samizdata (AS) is a resource base that was published under the title Sobranie Dokumentov Samizdata until 1977, at which time the archive was re-named Materialy Samizdata. As a rule poetry, novels and other works of belles-lettres are not included as an integral part of the AS, which contains primarily documents of social, political, economic or historical significance concerning Soviet-Russian society. Approximately thirteen per cent of the archival documents are written solely by women.
[7] In my examination of these documents I found that in the decade of 1964-1974 74 per cent (925) of the documents were on political problems and 26 per cent (325) were on religious issues.
[8] Ruddick (1997, p 375)
[9] Taylor in Jetter et al. (1997, p 187)
[10] Simona Sharoni claims that despite the insistence of members of the group Parents Against Silence that the group included men, the media and public insisted on calling the group Mothers Against Silence (Sharoni in Jetter et al 1997, 153).
[11] De Alwis in Basu and Jeffery (1997) and Vickers (1993, p 124)
[12] In January 1999 Russian President Boris Yeltsin planned to visit Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. When the separatist region's leaders made it clear that they were ready to welcome Yeltsin only as a foreign leader, the Russian government canceled the state visit to the region and it subsequently broke off diplomatic relations with the leaders of the Chechen region.

# Colombia:
# The manifold plight of displaced women

> The history of violence in Colombia is as old as the country itself. However, during the last fifteen years the armed conflict has intensified, resulting in between two and three million Colombians forced into internal displacement during 1996-2004. Of the roughly 2.9 million Colombians who have been displaced, 58.2 percent are women, and approximately 70 percent of the total displaced community consist of women and children.

The crisis of displacement has affected the entire country. Research done by Paula Andrea Rosiasco, a researcher working with the Colombian government, indicates that 74 percent of the Colombian territory are affected by displacement.[1] Aside from the large numbers and geographical scope of internally displaced persons, displacement affects virtually all of the ethnic minorities in Colombia, making it challenging to generalize national approaches, as each community has specific needs.[2] Addressing this humanitarian crisis is of the utmost importance, and in order to do so in an effective manner the causes of displacement must be understood.

There are three main causes of displacement in Colombia: military conflict, counter-narcotic operations, and land and natural resource appropriation. However, these three causes originated due to economic pressures. A survey done in 2000 indicates that among the 42.3 million inhabitants in Colombia, 62 percent of the population belong to the lower class, 33 percent to the middle class (this number is in decline), and 5 percent are part of the upper class.[3] In global terms, Colombia's displaced population is the third largest in the world after Sudan and Angola.

In addition to displacement Colombian women face further challenges as they have a triple role within society: first they are in charge of reproducing the workforce, second they are the main caregivers, and third they are income earners. For displaced women these roles become more cumbersome, as women often become the sole income earners and are entirely responsible for the wellbeing of the family unit.

War causalities have often included women. According to a United Nations' report in 2003, of 220 women who lost their lives as a direct result of armed conflict, 5 percent of the murders were performed by the military forces, 26 percent by the paramilitaries (often in association with the Colombian armed forces), and 16 percent were perpetrated by the guerrillas. The remainder of the murders were not accounted for.[4] Other sources report a much higher number of women murdered as a direct result of the armed conflict.[5] According to the Association of Colombian Women for Peace, during the period from July 1996 to June 2004, at least 2,110 women lost their lives due to the armed conflict.

Women have also become war booty and an extension of the war territory. They are used as the prize for the strongest competitor and the instrument of punishment for the loser, because the winner uses rape as a form of provocation or to settle scores.[6] As a result of these practices, 36 percent of the displaced women have been raped. On many occasions, displaced women have also witnessed the murder of their partners and children.[7] A UN report reveals that all sides in the conflict have been guilty of atrocious crimes against women and girls. These crimes include rape, murder, torture, kidnapping, and sexual mutilation.[8] The relationship between gender and violence is prominent. Armed groups believe that by targeting women, they will destroy the lifeblood of their enemies. In some cases, the torture of female family members is not only aimed at destroying the possibility of reproduction or for humiliation, but also as a way to obtain information related to the political activities of the spouse or children.[9] The use of these military tactics places women in a vulnerable position within the armed conflict.

The Colombian government has also engaged in exploiting women. The Uribe administration has expressed its intentions to utilize women in programs such as the peasant soldier effort (soldados campesinos), which recruits civilians to work as part time soldiers. One goal of the program is to enrol

100,000 youth by the close of the Uribe administration's term in office. According to Colombian NGOs, the government obliges women to present guns to their sons in a ceremonial act to lend legitimacy to the war effort and encourage support of the patria. As a result of this symbolic ceremony, families of the peasant soldiers risk becoming military targets of guerrilla forces in their homes and work places. The Administrative Department of Security has already reported that guerrillas have threatened female family members of soldiers, thus dragging the civilian population further into the conflict. Moreover, the Colombian government utilizes women's bodies in war propaganda that encourages guerrillas to desert. One pamphlet released over guerrilla territory entices desertion through the picture of a nude woman.[10]

## Marginalized groups

The abuses suffered by women during the war do not cease after they have fled the area of conflict. Once women arrive in their new communities they encounter new challenges and abuses. Moreover, they bear the effects of torture, sexual abuse, and discrimination without any treatment. Displaced groups represent the most dis-advantaged and marginalized groups in Colombian society, including women, children, peasants, and members of the country's indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, who have been driven out of their areas by violence and armed conflict.[11] Out of the 84 indigenous groups living in Colombia, virtually all have been affected by displacement. Afro-Colombian and indigenous people represent approximately one third of the total internal displaced population. However, they only represent 11 percent of the country's total population.[12]

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian women are even more likely to be victims of violent crimes. They frequently face discrimination on several grounds simultaneously. According to Amnesty International, the Colombian Army assaulted many Afro-Colombian and indigenous women sexually. When these cases were reported, the victims declared that the alleged perpetrator usually accused the women or teenage girls of belonging to or collaborating with the guerrillas.[13] The army's counter-insurgency forces often view civilians, who have been victims of the armed conflict, including those who inadvertently came into contact with guerrilla groups, not as innocent victims but as part of the enemy. These views have been put into practice through the stigmatization and harassment of the civilian population, especially those living in areas of territorial dispute. These attitudes and views by the Colombian army have had a disproportionate impact on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, as they are perceived to work in collaboration with guerrilla groups.[14]

In other cases women have been victims of paramilitary curfews in areas under their control. Women found violating such curfews have been raped and then killed.[15] Paramilitaries are also well known for establishing strict traditional behavioural codes that women must follow. Their dressing habits are controlled, and they are not allowed to wear any revealing clothes such as miniskirts, jeans, or tops that show their stomach. Women who have been accused of adultery or prostitution have been paraded naked around the town, wearing signs that state their so-called crimes.[16]

When women have attempted to organize to protect themselves, they have been systematically intimidated. A clear example of this occurred in Bojaya, Choco, in May 2002, when five women leaders were murdered and 200 more were forced to leave their homes. Due to this forced displacement, the women had to abandon their agricultural projects and were forced back into poverty.[17]

In 2002, 17 percent of human right defenders assassinated in Colombia were women. Over the past four years, 33 women leaders were murdered, two more disappeared and four were raped. Most of them belonged to the National Association of Black, Rural, and Indigenous Women, the largest women human rights groups.[18]

## Extreme poverty

The situation of the displaced population is critical, according to the World Health Organization. In Colombia eight out of every ten displaced persons consume less than half of the recommended daily calories.[19] The Internal Monitoring Center confirms this data through research that indicates 80 percent of the internally displaced populations live in extreme poverty and lack access to nutritional foods, and half of the population suffers from anaemia.[20] According to the Asian Development Bank the nutritional status of women is lower than men's globally, thus any decrease in food sources will affect women first and to a greater degree. This phenomenon is a consequence of the patriarchal food distribution present in male dominated societies such as Colombia, where men are fed first, followed by the boys, then the girls and if anything is left then the women.[21]

Since over 53 percent of the displaced population are women, and since more than 70 percent of the total displaced population consist of women and children, women bear the primary responsibility for providing for their family members.[22] Displaced women face further obstacles, because households headed by women experience more challenges than traditionally structured ones. This disadvantage trickles down to the children, translating into higher rates of illiteracy amongst the women-lead households.[23] Due to their long-standing domestic roles, displaced women are often less prepared for operating in an urban environment than their male counterparts. However, they are expected to bear the brunt of the responsibilities.[24] After arriving in cities,

*Some 1,700 indigenous Awa people were displaced by the Colombian army in July 2006, many of them in the town of Ricaurte, Narino, in southern Colombia. Photo: Garry Leech/Colombia Journal*

including women also lack access to healthcare. Only 22 percent of the internally displaced population have access to health care.[34] Women, including internally displaced women throughout Colombia, have limited access to the privatized health system. As concluded by the UN Thematic Group on Displacement, this situation is exacerbated for displaced women who are frequently suspected of being members of the irregular forces.[35] As a result, only 56 percent of women had access to pre-natal services, resulting in nearly one third of the displaced women having either miscarriages or still births.[36] Apart from the immediate physical injury and mental anguish, women who are raped run the risk of becoming pregnant or contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Displaced women have an increased likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS, and the pregnancy rate amongst displaced teenagers is currently 30 percent, a much higher rate than the national average of 18 percent.[37]

## One hour's employment

Displacement has also been worsened by high unemployment. In 2004, the unemployment rate nationally was over 20 percent, and although the rate has decreased to 12.5 in 2005, unemployment continues to be an additional challenge for displaced people.[38] However, unemployment rates provided by the Colombian government can be deceiving, as people working for more than one hour a day are considered employed, as long as the work is stable.[39] Moreover, if displaced persons do find employment, they earn an average of 61 percent of the Colombian minimum wage.[40]

Unemployment has further consequences upon displaced women. According to the Colombian Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Services, spousal violence has increased significantly within the displaced population. Unemployed husbands take their frustration out on their wives

an additional 18 percent of the households break up, and more women are left alone with the responsibility of providing for the home.[25]

Almost 50 percent of the displaced community are composed of children.[26] Twenty percent of the minors are under six years old. Approximately 20 percent of internally displaced children experience absolute malnutrition. Moreover, children in the displaced community are six times more likely to die than other children in Colombia.[27] Fifty-five percent of these children lack access to education due to poor capacity in the public school system.[28] According to other sources, this number is much higher. There are estimates that suggest as many as 70 percent of the displaced children do not attend school.[29] In addition to poor living conditions, it is important to note the psychological trauma suffered by these children. According to studies conducted by the United States International Agency for Development displaced children are

more likely to join the armed groups.[30] The wellbeing of displaced women is closely linked to the welfare of their children. Thus, in order to improve the situation of displaced women there needs to be attention paid to the situation of their children.

Women's role in the armed conflict is not entirely passive; women compose almost half of the guerrilla forces. Many women that have joined the armed forces suffer from discrimination and abuse. Young women are encouraged to engage in sexual relationships with their commanders. These relationships are not forced, but having a commander as a partner can ensure these young women will have a favoured position within the ranks.[31] Sometimes rape is used as a punishment for disobedience. A female recruit is raped until she is deemed to have learned her lesson.[32] Furthermore, 70 percent of young women in the guerrilla forces have sexually transmitted diseases.[33]

Internally displaced persons

or partners through physical abuse. Approximately 52 percent of displaced women experience domestic abuse, versus 20 percent of non-displaced women. However, national figures including displaced women indicate that only half of the battered women seek assistance and less than 9 percent press charges.[41]

However, some displaced groups have organized in order to defend their rights and assert their demands. In 2000, representatives from the displaced population formed a national coordinating body to advocate for improvement in government assistance. Despite constant attacks on popular leaders and the assassination of hundreds of community leaders, these community initiatives continue providing much needed legal advice, psychosocial support, food, and medical assistance.[42]

In order for any relief efforts to be successful within the internally displaced communities it is important to acknowledge the effects of displacement and how they impact different portions of the population, like women and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance to take into account that displaced women bear the brunt of the responsibilities for the welfare of the family unit, and as such their wellbeing should be prioritized. In addition, the causes of displacement, such as civil conflict, illicit crops, and appropriation of land and natural resources, need to be taken into consideration for a long-term solution of displacement. Finally, there needs to be an awareness of the impact of war on women, which includes sexual violence such as rape, forced prostitution, and sexual slavery, strict behavioural codes, the murder of their spouses and children, being prevented from organizing in order to protect themselves, and abuses within the armed forces such as discrimination and control of their reproductive rights and violence.

**Luisa Montoya**

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# Men in public domain - women in private sphere

Gender roles are of vital importance in the construction, running, and maintenance of nations and states. Factors of gender therefore have to be taken into account when a complete analysis of a region is made. With examples from Iraq and the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan the article presents an outline of the relevance of gender roles in the Constitutions of the respective country/region.

Upon examining the Constitutions of Iraq and of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, one can see that in both cases specific gender roles are enshrined in several articles of the Constitution. Further, these articles manifest themselves in the state apparatuses and in the social interactions between men and women in both contexts. Gender, nation and state will be discussed here in the specific context of the reconstruction of the Iraqi state after the 2003 American-led invasion. Further, the institutions of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan will be examined in terms of gender, as they are often cited as models for the rebuilding of the Iraqi state because of what is perceived to be relative stability in the Kurdish region in Iraq.

In this specific context, gender should be understood not as something fixed or biologically determined[1] but as a "fundamental social relation."[2] It is something that is socially constructed and maintained using various mechanisms, including political and legal ones. Jane Flax, an American feminist theorist, says that if one is concerned with "issues of power and justice", one must necessarily be concerned with gender systems because they entail relations of domination.[3] When looking at the cases of Iraq and the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, relationships of dominance and the struggles against such dominance abound throughout their histories.

In the context of Iraq, it is useful to look at Chandra Talpade Mohanty's conceptualization of the world as "definable only in relational terms, a world traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance ..."[4] Indeed, politics in the Middle East, and more specifically the history of the construction of the Iraqi nation, need to be understood in terms of a history of dominance by foreign powers, or Britain, in the case of Iraq.[5] One cannot fully understand this history of foreign domination and its complexities without taking into account the ways in which existing gender roles were manipulated and the ways in which new gender roles were created in order to maintain a relationship of dominance and subordination during the British Mandate period (1918-32) between the British and the Iraqi subjects.

As Mohanty asserts, two fundamental aspects of imperial rule, which in this case are manifested in the British mandate over Iraq[6], are: "1) the ideological construction and consolidation of white masculinity as normative and the corresponding racialization and sexualization of colonized peoples; 2) the effects of colonial institutions and policies in transforming indigenous patriarchies …"[7] These ruling mechanisms have left their mark, so that in studying the present day reconstruction of the Iraqi state, one can observe the adaptation and use of such ruling mechanisms in the Iraqi Constitution.

## Kurdish nationalism

The case of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan differs from that of Iraq and other Middle Eastern nations. Unlike the emergence of pan-Arabism, a nationalist movement encompassing Iraq amongst other Middle Eastern states, Kurdish nationalism did not develop out of an anti-colonial 'national-liberation struggle'. Kurdish nationalists, from the beginning have primarily been opposing dominant powers within Middle East, including Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.[8] This is not to say that the Kurds living in these regions were not directly affected by the actions of the European powers at the end of the First World War. As one can clearly read in the preamble to the 1992 Constitution of the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan, in 1925, Southern Kurdistan was annexed to the new state of Iraq.[9] This occurred despite the fact that the right of Kurdish Self-Determination was recognized in the Treaty of Sèvres, signed by the Allies in 1920.

Further, the definition of Kurdish nationalism in the Kurdish region of Iraq sees the Iraqi state as the primary enemy and the 'West' as a model of the ideal state. In the preamble of the Kurdistan Regional Government's

Constitution it says, "The federalism formula is seen as an ideal solution … It [the draft constitution] is to be guided by the principles and values of democracy, pluralism and respect of human rights … in harmony with the principles of the New World Order. The peoples and nations that have chosen the road of federalism have achieved great success, such as in the United States …"[10]

This is not to say that gender and the definition of specific roles for males and females in the creation of the Kurdish nation are not present. On the contrary, the Western Liberal model of the state, which is enshrined in the Kurdistan Regional Government's Constitution, does not diminish the importance of a gender analysis of the Kurdish nation and its institutions.

In her book, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State,* Catherine MacKinnon provides a useful analysis of the ways in which the American Liberal state is gendered.[11] In the liberal theory of the state, actors are seen as rational. The state is seen as a neutral arbiter and the law is not predisposed to serve one specific group. As MacKinnon proceeds to point out, the reality of the liberal state framework is quite different than the theory of the neutral arbiter. She expands on this assertion by explaining that, although the liberal state works on the assumption of gender equality, the equality is based on a male conception of gender in which male interests are served. Gender difference is seen as a given, whereas it is really a perception. To prove this, MacKinnon draws on the family and kinship rules and sexual mores in the liberal state and how they reproduce ownership of the female and her reproductive capacity. The law provides legitimacy to the state and veils its use of dominance by making subjectivity seem objective. The law sees and treats women the way men see and treat women. Furthermore, the state is seen as a mirror of society, and gender inequality exists independent of the

state. Thus, the state reinforces existing gender inequality by legitimizing it.[12]

## The role of ideology

Many see the reconstruction of the Iraqi state and the consultations surrounding the new Constitution as a move toward more freedom and better conditions for women. In 2003, the American-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) created an 'advisory group' in order to "ensure that women play 'a very prominent role' in the new Iraq".[13] According to an article about a national forum held for Iraqi women on July 10, 2003, in the Arab world, "women have traditionally played a low-key role in public life", and "Women's rights 'were choked during the Baathist suppressive regime'", according to Ala Talabani, co-founder of Women for a Free Iraq.[14] In this article there is no mention of the ideological approach of the organizers of the national forum, nor of the CPA. If one conducts further research into who the article is quoting, one will discover that the women quoted are supported by the Independent Women's Forum (IWF), an American, Republican, anti-feminist organization.[15, 16]

In 2004, the IWF received a 10 million dollar grant to "provide leadership training, democracy education and coalition building assistance" to Iraqi women.[17] The fact that the most prominent outlet for the voice of Iraqi women is guided by an anti-feminist, Republican ideology has deep repercussions for the composition of the Iraqi Constitution as well as that

holds quite a lot of sway in the Kurdistan Regional Government. She is a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the principle political parties in the region. Although PUK is an urban and middle-class based political party, it does not fundamentally challenge the feudal structure of Kurdish society that still contributes to the oppression of women in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan.[18] Even though women were consulted in the writing of the two Constitutions, there are still specific gender roles laid out for men and women and what their respective roles should be in the running and maintenance of Iraq and the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan.

## Private and public spheres

As stated above, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Constitution refers directly to the principles of the New World Order and the American model as the ideal state. Although not as explicit in the Iraqi Constitution, three main elements of the liberal state are mentioned throughout the document. These three elements are the right to privacy, economic freedom and the sanctity of private property.[19] As outlined by MacKinnon the liberal state is not gender neutral. The state or public space is seen as the sphere of men, whereas women are relegated to the private sphere. Yuval-Davis cites Carole Pateman's work on theories of the 'social contract' to illustrate this point. As acknowledged by Yuval-Davis the 'social contract' is the very basis of the Western social and political order. The theories of the 'social contract'

## The equality is based on a male conception of gender in which male interests are served.

of the maintenance of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Constitution. For example, Ala Talabani, one of the women featured on the IWF website,

place women in the private domain, where women do not have a space to articulate their interests except within the constraints of the family structure.[20]

*An Iraqi woman in Basra walks next to posters promoting women's rights in the new constitution. However, expectations and reality are not always identical. Photo: Nabil Al-Jurani/Pressens Bild*

This is manifested clearly in the Iraqi Constitution. When outlining the roles of a Minister, a member of the Council of Representatives, the President, and the Prime Minister, each position is referred to using masculine pronouns such as 'he' and 'him.'[21] Although the Constitution claims that it will "pay attention to women and their rights" and Article 20 says that, "Citizens, male and female, have the right to participate in public matters", these phrases do not seem to carry any weight later on in the description of the state apparatus and power structure of the new Iraqi state.[22]

Although not referred to when describing the state apparatus, women are directly referred to in Articles relating to the family and the home in both the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Government's Constitutions. According to Article 29, 1st section, part a) of the Iraqi Constitution, "The family is the foundation of society and the state should preserve its [the family's] existence and ethical and religious value". Part b) goes on to say "The state shall guarantee the protection of motherhood …" Article 30 ensures, "the basics for a free and *honourable* life for the individual and the family – especially children and *women*" (emphasis added).[23] Not only is the family seen in this case as the foundation of society, it is defined in religious and ethical terms, and the specific protection of motherhood is guaranteed.

Generally it is useful here to refer to the school of nationalism scholars that Nira Yuval-Davis refers to as the 'primordialists'. They see nations as an "'automatic' extension of kinship relations".[24] As Carole Pateman says, "the public realm cannot be fully understood in the absence of the private sphere …"[25] One can conclude on this point that men and women have very specific roles within the Islamic family structure. Foucault's assertion in *The Technologies of the Self* that, "From the state's point of view, the individual exists insofar as what he does is able to introduce even a minimal change in the strength of the

state …,"[26] is quite useful in understanding the special place of motherhood in the building and maintenance of the Iraqi state. Without the role mothers play in reproducing and educating the nation, the Iraqi state would collapse. This conclusion is also relevant to many other cases in the Middle East.

Although the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan is often seen as a model for the new Iraqi state, there does not appear to be any fundamental difference in the Kurdistan Regional Government's conception of the place of the family in Kurdish society. Article 8, section iii) says, "The family unit is the natural and fundamental group of the society. The protection of mothers and children shall be guaranteed." It also refers to "moral and ethical values".[27] In both cases, the mother is associated with the family, which necessarily falls into the private sphere. So in both Constitutions, it is evident that specific roles have been assigned to men and women in order to maintain and run the state. Women are associated with the private sphere and are referred to as mothers and only lightly as participants in the public sphere, whereas men are seen as the real holders of power, especially in the Iraqi Constitution.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty asserts many times over in her work that one needs to constantly keep in mind what she refers to as the "simultaneity of oppressions",[28] especially when studying the politics of the Middle East, a region where histories of dominance and subordination, anti-colonial struggles, and struggles against oppression abound. One cannot separate one struggle against oppression from another. The cases of Iraq and the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan illustrate well the utility of using gender as an analytical tool, because they show how fundamental gender roles are in the construction, running, and maintenance of nations and states. Due to the precariousness of many of the states in the region and the nationalist movements that are still prevalent, one

cannot undertake a complete analysis of the region without taking into account factors of gender.

**Nadeen El-Kassem**

[1] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p 9
[2] Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p 138
[3] Ibid., p 138
[4] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction, Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p 2.
[5] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), p 316
[6] Although Iraq was not part of the British Empire, the British Mandate period in Iraq can be said to exhibit similar relationships of dominance and subordination and mechanisms of control that were part of British Imperial Strategy.
[7] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction, Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p 15
[8] Shahrzad Mojab, "Conflicting Loyalties: Nationalism and Gender Relations in Kurdistan" in *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism*, ed. Himani Bannerji, Shahrzad Mojab and Judith Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p 118
[9] Kurdistan Regional Government, "Preamble" in "Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region," Kurdistan Regional Government Official Website, 25 October, 1992, http://www.krg.org/articles/article_detail.asp?LangNr=12&RubricNr=107&ArticleNr=3882&LNNr=28&RNNr=70 (accessed 07 November, 2005)
[10] Ibid.
[11] Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989)
[12] Ibid.
[13] Associated Foreign Press, "US-led administration to give prominent role to Iraqi women" *Associate Foreign Press* (31 May, 2003)
[14] Associated Foreign Press, "Iraqi women hold national forum" *Associated Foreign Press* (10 July, 2003)
[15] Independent Women's Forum, "About IWF", Independent Women's Forum Website, 14 November, 2005, http://www.iwf.org/about_iwf/default.asp (accessed 14 November, 2005)
[16] Independent Women's Forum, "A Quest for Political, Economic and Social Participation in a Democratic Iraq", Independent Women's Forum Website, 16 October, 2004, Updated 26, July, 2005, http://www.iwf.org/iraq/iraq_print.asp?ArticleID=625 (accessed 7 November, 2005)
[17] Independent Women's Forum, "IWF awarded Grant to support Iraqi women", Independent Women's Forum Website, 28 September, 2004, http://www.iwf.org/iraq/iraq_detail.asp?ArticleID=677 (accessed 14 November, 2005)
[18] Susan McDonald, "Kurdish Women and Self-Determination: A Feminist Approach to International Law" in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers Inc., 2001), p 147
[19] The Iraqi Transitional Government, trans. The Associated Press, "Article 17," "Article 25," "Article 27," in "Text of the Draft Iraqi Constitution", The Iraqi Transitional Government Official Website, http://www.iraqigovernment.org/index_en.htm (accessed 7 November, 2005)
[20] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p 2
[21] It is not possible, in the scope of this paper, to examine the reinforcement of patriarchy through the Arabic Language. It is striking, however, that in the version of the English translation posted on the Transitional Government Website, gender neutral language is not used in the Constitution.
[22] Ibid., "Preamble", "Article 20"
[23] Ibid., "Article 29-30"
[24] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p 1
[25] Carole Pateman in Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p 2
[26] Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: a seminar with Michel Foucault.* (Massachusetts, University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p 151
[27] Kurdistan Regional Government, "Article 8" in "Constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region", Kurdistan Regional Government Official Website, 25 October, 1992, http://www.krg.org/articles/article_detail.asp?LangNr=12&RubricNr=107&ArticleNr=3882&LNNr=28&RNNr=70 (accessed 07 November, 2005)
[28] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Introduction, Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism" in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p 10

# Challenging the media in Israeli war context

Anat Sargusti works for Israeli television. She recently visited Sweden to attend a seminar on Reporting the World, arranged by the organization, Kvinna till kvinna (Woman to Woman). Her story is an example of challenging the conventions and trying to offer broader perspectives in the media context. The setting is last July, as the war between Israel and Hezbollah was approaching.

It was Wednesday morning on July 12, and I was at the Tel Aviv office of Channel 2 News. I was preparing myself for an interview with a Sri Lankan woman, who established a women's organization in her country under the name "Association of War Affected Women".

I did some readings and was on the phone with her escort to explain the exact location of my office. Everything looked very ordinary around me. And I was so happy I got a chance to do this story. It is not trivial to have a story like this in the leading TV news edition in Israel. A woman, a head of a peace organization, and the Third World – this is not the right menu for mainstream news organization in Israel and, I think, in most of the western countries. So for a moment I thought this may be a small victory for feminism and peace approaches in the media.

And then everything changed in a second, and all feminist ideas vanished at the same moment, not to mention peace. I heard the military correspondent saying something bleary about soldiers and kidnapping. And in a minute the whole lazy routine atmosphere changed completely, and everybody around me got into the emergency phase.

Hezbollah put an ambush on the northern border between Israel and Lebanon and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed two others. Not long after, a tank that was chasing the Hezbollah fighters hit a mine and eight other soldiers died. At that time the information was still under censorship, but shortly after, shelling started on the northern part of Israel.

I did manage to interview the Sri Lankan woman, but this was it. In seconds all of the crews went elsewhere, most of them to the north. Needless to say, the interview has not been aired since.

From this moment on two things happened simultaneously: on one hand we started an open broadcast, and on the other we planned what to do next. Eventually the mode was open air, with very short commercial breaks according to the military situation. Most of our correspondents were sent to strategic points along the northern border, and the anchor-persons were called to the studio in Jerusalem. Later they separated, and one was stationed in the new temporary studio in the north and the other stayed in the main studio in Jerusalem.

To the main studio in the suburbs of Jerusalem started a march of ex-army generals, who came one after the other to give their piece of analysis. It was an endless chain of men, in addition to the male correspondents who gave their input from the field. They all spoke in one voice, used the same jargon, and there was no space for other voices to evolve.

I can tell you that during the first two weeks and more we hardly saw any women on the air. We had two anchor-women co-hosting the news together with the anchor-men in both commercial channels, and the army spokesperson is a woman. But this did not fill the hole of the gender perspective so needed in extreme situations like a war.

## Attempts to broaden the view

After a few days of war I called my editors and asked them to refresh the guests in the studios with some female voices and faces. I even went out of my way and job, and made a list of women who could come and talk about the war. I can tell you: I totally failed. I even called the leading anchor-woman – a young 27 something year old, and very good looking – and asked her to pay attention to the fact that all of the guests were males. And even she could not deliver the goods. She told me she also tried to speak to the editors and have them invite women to the studios. No chance.

The only women who were invited and could come and speak up were mothers of soldiers, or wives of soldiers, or mothers whose houses were destroyed by a rocket. So the war amplified the so-called classic position of women in society – as "women-of", or as victims.

The second thing I tried to do was to bring to the air some members of the community of the Arab citizens

of Israel. Arabs comprise 20 percent of Israeli society, and most of them live in the northern part of Israel and therefore suffered even more from the shelling and attacks than the Jews, because they do not even have shelters. I failed also in that field.

The third thing I tried to do was to bring over some voices and perspectives from the other side – the Lebanese side – to the Israeli audience. It happened that on the second day of war, I got an e-mail from a Lebanese woman in Beirut, who circulated an electronic daily journal. It was a very interesting personal perspective, because I felt it could relate to everybody. She described the daily life in a city under attack, and how she was trying not only to survive, but also to keep some sanity.

I managed to convince my editors to let me have a daily piece based on her diary. Of course, the first thing I did was to enquire if it was genuine and authentic. When I was certain on that side, I contacted her directly through e-mail and asked her if she was willing to have a phone interview. It took her a day to answer, and she said she would not be very comfortable with it as she did not want us to think she is pro-Israeli, because she was not. But she did not mind me taking parts of her diary and putting it on the air.

So that was what I did, and every night I published a piece of her journal. Slowly we got a broader picture of her and the way she tried to live in these extraordinary situations. At the beginning I knew very little about her personally, but as the war got deeper and longer, I got to know more and more.

My view is that war is not only one-sided, it has at least two sides, and I wanted to bring the other side, give it a face and a name, and she gave me the opportunity to do this. I think it helps people understand the price of war that civilians on both sides of the border have to pay.

**First-hand description from Beirut**

First I only knew that the woman's name was Rasha and that she was 37 years old. Later the puzzle was filled in more and more. She was born in Toronto, Canada, of a Palestinian father and a Lebanese mother, who were studying there. She grew up in Lebanon, and at some point when she was already a grown-up she moved to live in New York City. She was there for several years, in which she visited Lebanon many times, wondering if she wanted to go back to live there. This was not trivial, because you have to understand that Lebanon was under a civil war from 1975 until the late 1980's.

So she grew up under a civil war and under a war with Israel for many years. And this is the background of her hesitation to go back. During the last years Lebanon was re-built and the economy was flourishing, and life seemed to go back to normal and even got better.

So Rasha decided to go back to her homeland and build a new life there. She arrived in Lebanon on Tuesday, July 11. On July 12 the war started. She was furious, confused, and sad. She described in perfect and very articulate English all her feelings and thoughts, her whereabouts, talks with friends, and the civil situation in her country in general and Beirut in particular. For me it was extremely interesting to hear first-hand a description of the situation on the other side.

The Israeli audiences were exposed to the rationale of war and were shown mainly Hezbollah fighters swearing to continue, cursing Israel. They were exposed to wounded people who spoke only in sound-bites of 12 seconds tops, in which you cannot bring an idea across. I tried to counterbalance that by giving a face, a name and a 3-dimension sense of one Lebanese woman.

I got two kinds of feedback. On one hand, many people told me this was an eye opener, because they could hear almost first-hand something intelligent, not extremist, coming from

## All feminist ideas vanished at the same moment, not to mention peace.

the other side of the border, from someone who is our "enemy". On the other hand, hard people were angry with me because they did not want to see the other side – the enemy – as a human being, and they did not want to identify with them; they wanted the Lebanese to suffer.

Rasha was not a fan of Hezbollah but a proud Lebanese, and as such she did not support the Israeli invasion and attacks. But she did try to keep some sanity in an insane situation. This went on for ten days, every night, until an editor decided that it was enough, that the item was not interesting anymore, and it went off the air.

In situations like that there is an unwritten demand for items about security. The whole discourse tends to be of security terms. This approach excludes completely any other perspective, like social, gender, class etc. I think it is dangerous and has a great influence on how the audiences think, and more than that, on how our leaders tend to decide, because these are the terms they use, this is the perspective through which they see the world, its problems - this is their reference point of view.

This is a game of power in which other communities – other than the hegemony - have no space, they do not have a sense of belonging, and it does not bring into the public life other world-views such as those who believe in a dialogue, in negotiations, in peaceful solutions. So it helps deterioration.

**Anat Saragusti**

# Peace initiatives:
# Action groups and networks engaging men and women

Around the world men and women organise to promote peace, nonviolence and justice. The structures and methods vary, but the goal is much the same: to enhance a life in safety, and harmony for all human beings.

Only a few examples are presented here among a multitude of organisations and movements. The search behind this survey indicates that women tend to strive for peace and security among all people on a national and international level, while men are more concerned with men's violence against women in family and society.

## Women's organisations
### United Nations Development Fund for Women UNIFEM
www.unifem.org
Created in 1976 by a United Nations Resolution after the 1975 UN First World Conference on Women, UNIFEM finances and provides technical assistance to programmes that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. Currently, it is active in twelve countries in Africa, ten in Asia, five in Eastern Europe, and five in Latin America and the Caribbean. Supported by Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, UNIFEM supports women to actively participate in peace building and reconstruction efforts and assists them to make their voices heard in post-war elections. A positive example of UNIFEM's programs is the high participation of women in Liberia's national election. Previous to the involvement of UNIFEM only 20 percent of women were registered to vote. After their campaign for education and encouragement, women totaled 51 percent of total voters.

Another accomplishment achieved by UNIFEM is the creation and management of the Women, War and Peace portal (www.womenwarpeace.org) which provides extensive information on women's safety in armed conflict and their efforts in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace building.

### Women Waging Peace
www.womenwagingpeace.net
The Women Waging Peace Network was created in 1999 to connect women peacemakers from conflict areas, such as Sudan, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Bosnia, the Middle East, and Sierra Leone, with each other and with policy makers in order to put gender issues into the mainstream agenda.

The role of women in peace building is vital yet unrecognized. Women's expertise in grassroots activism, investigative journalism, human rights law, cross-conflict mobilization for peace, military reform, formal and informal negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction make them ideal candidates to lead peace efforts. However, in order to facilitate the involvement of women in these activities there is much work to be done in capacity building. Women Waging Peace seeks to fulfil this need through strategic consultations and training with women from diverse war-stricken regions. Training efforts focus on helping women develop their skills as they build an advocacy agenda.

### Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz, IMP (Colombian Women's Initiative for Peace)
http://www.mujeresporlapaz.org/boletinvos.htm
IMP was created as a result of the Colombian Women's Conference for Peace in Stockholm, Sweden, September 2001. It is composed by 22 women's organisations and 246 regional conferences covering women from the following sectors: indigenous, African-Colombian, peasants, union leaders, feminist activists, young leaders, and academics. The main objectives of IMP are to advocate for the inclusion of women's organisations in the peace talks and the reconciliation efforts, and to reduce the impact of the armed conflict on women. Some of the accomplishments of IMP include the organisation of the Women's March Against War in 2002, where more than forty thousand Colombian women participated, and the launch of the International Meeting of Women Against War that took place in August 2004 in which over thirty international delegations took part.

### Women in Black for Justice Against War (WiB)
http://www.womeninblack.org/index.html
Women in Black is an international network of women committed to peace and justice efforts though active opposition to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence. WiB operates through regional charters that organize independent events. The main characteristic of this organisation is their use of black clothes to symbolize the mourning caused by war. The WiB is best known for its vigils against any manifestation of violence, militarism or war, where women wearing black stand in a public place in silence, at regular times and intervals, carrying placards and handing out leaflets.

In recent years WiB has grown into a worldwide movement. In June 2001, when Women in Black in Israel/Palestine called for vigils against the occupation of Palestinian lands, at least 150 WiB groups across the world mobilized their local groups. Countries reporting vigils included Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Maldive Islands, Mexico, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the USA.

## Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

http://www.peacewomen.org

WILPF is one of the oldest women's organisations operating today. It was founded in April 1915 in the Netherlands by 1,300 women from Europe and North America. In the founding meeting women came together in a Congress of Women to protest the killing and destruction of World War I. Currently, WILPF works with the United Nations by jointly participating in their programs addressing gender issues.

During its long existence WILPF has had various accomplishments, such as the inclusion of peace and disarmament issues at the International Women's Year (1975) and into the activities celebrating the decade for women (1976-85).

Finally, the WILPF is active in keeping the international community informed about peace issues through its international journal, *International Peace Update*, and their website, which provides accurate and timely information on women, peace and security issues and women's peace building initiatives in areas of armed conflict.

## The Committee of Soldiers' Mothers (CSM) The Soldiers' Mothers Organisation (SMO)

http://www.civilsoc.org/nisorgs/russwest/moscow/colleen/soldmat.htm

http://soldiersmothers.ru

CSM was founded in 1989, with the main purpose being to expose the human right abuses occurring in the Russian military. According to the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the abuses ranged from deaths due to hazing or severe punishments to lack of health services for the soldiers. The committee offers legal and material assistance to families that have suffered the loss of their sons in the army, it lobbies the government for changes in the laws dealing with military service, and publishes records on deaths occurring in the army. Furthermore, this organisation advocates different alternatives to military service and the protection of fugitive soldiers.

Similar to the CSM, the Soldiers' Mothers Organisation (SMO) was established in St. Petersburg in 1991 in order to educate draftees and their relatives about the law, and to help mothers to save their sons from military service.

Since its creation it has assisted with the return of more than 170,000 draftees and soldiers to their families. Moreover, this organisation receives over 300 persons per week for legal consultations about military responsibility, constitutional rights, and the health requirements for military service.

# Men's organisations
## Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW)

www.sahayogindia.org/masvaw.htm

In 2001, women's groups in Uttar Pradesh, India, launched a state-wide campaign called Stop Tolerating Violence, with the aim of focussing attention on the direct and indirect violence against women from all groups of society. Several male activists were involved in this campaign and realized that this was not just an issue for women but one that involves society at large. Individuals, activists and NGO workers – all male – participated in the forum. In order to meet the need to direct special attention to involving men with the issue of violence against women, the campaign Men's Action for Stopping Violence Against Women (MASVAW) was started.

The objectives of MASVAW are: 1) to increase the visibility of violence against women and facilitate the process of challenging set attitudes and beliefs around it; 2) to develop a rights-based approach among NGOs for addressing and mainstreaming violence against women and initiating a campaign of men against it; 3) to increase awareness among men about violence against women as a larger social issue; 4) to motivate men to shun violence, protest against violence, support survivors and provide new role-models.

## Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA)

www.mavaindia.org

Dating back to 1993, Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA) is the first men's organisation in India directly intervening against gender-based violence on women. The organisation came into existence in response to an advertisement calling for men "who feel that wives are not for battering and they could do something to stop or prevent it". As of today, MAVA reaches out to over 3,000 men and women facing various gender-related problems. MAVA has a team of veteran professionals in the field of psychiatry, law, sexology and social work, who volunteer their services whenever needed.

MAVA's vision is to have a gender-just society, where men and women live in harmony and with self-respect, by providing spaces for mutual growth and well-being

MAVA's mission is to bring about social change, particularly in traditional, male-dominated attitudes and help to stop or prevent violence and abuse of women by working primarily with men.

## Program H

See www.promundo.org.br

Program H was developed by the Brazilian NGO Promundo with the aims of promoting gender equitable behaviours and attitudes among youth and encouraging young people

to question traditional gender norms. It seeks to contribute to their sexual and reproductive health, to prevent gender violence and to reduce violent behaviours, particularly among young men. The 'H' stands for the Spanish word for man, *hombre*. There is also a program for women, called 'M' after the Spanish word for woman, *mujer*.

Program H uses educational workshops, lifestyle campaigns and innovative approaches to attract young men to health facilities and a culturally sensitive impact evaluation methodology. Promundo has developed and implemented an evaluation methodology that allows the measurement of attitude and behavioural changes in young men.

After extensive testing and evaluation of the Program H materials in six countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Jamaica, Peru and Mexico), the program is now used in Brazil, Asia (in India, where it is called Yari Dosti, Thailand and Nepal), Central America (Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama) and the United States and Canada.

## White Ribbon Campaign

www.whiteribbon.ca

The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) started in Canada in 1991, after a man who had not been accepted into a graduate programme in Montreal on 6 December entered a classroom and killed fourteen female students in revenge. One year later, a handful of men in Canada decided to urge men to speak out against violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon would be a symbol of their opposition. After six weeks one hundred thousand men across Canada wore the white ribbon. It is now active in more than 40 countries worldwide.

WRC is an educational organisation that encourages reflection and discussion that leads to personal and collective action among men. It distributes education and action kits to schools and maintains a website. It relies on volunteer support and financial contributions from individuals and organisations.

**Luisa Montoya**
**Kristina Lundqvist**

# LPI News

## Interfaith delegation from East Timor

Towards the end of September 2006 LPI and Progressio, in cooperation with the European Religious Leader's Council in Norway, arranged a ten-day study visit to Sweden and Norway by the local working group involved in the implementation of a project in East Timor.

The study visit is part of a project seeking to strengthen the capacity of faith-based communities in East Timor to actively contribute to the ongoing process towards sustainable peace as well as the promotion of interfaith dialogue. The local working group has been given the task by the East Timor National Interfaith Conference held in Baucau (reported in New Routes 3/2006) to establish a National Inter-Religious Forum in East Timor.

The visit to Sweden and Norway was an opportunity for the group to meet with a number of different organizations as well as with representatives of Sida, the foreign ministries of the two countries and the Norwegian government. The trip and the meetings it included meant



*The interfaith group from East Timor (from left Mohammad Anwar Da Costa, Fr. Martinho, Fr. Gabriel and Rev. Augustinho De Vasconselos) at their study tour to Sweden and Norway, here in front of the entrance to Stortinget (the Norwegian Parliament) in Oslo. Photo: Kristina Lundborg/LPI*

that reflection and analysis of the role of faith-based communities in post-conflicts settings were extended even further, both within the local working group and among the different organizations and government departments that the group met with.

Furthermore, the visit of the local working group gave the organizations and the government representatives they met with a much appreciated

chance to hear an updated view on the events in East Timor from involved civil society representatives. The need for reflection, analysis and input from other actors with more experience within the field will continue to be of great importance to the local working group, as they continue their work in order to launch the Inter-Religious Forum in East Timor.

**Kristina Lundborg**

## Reconciliation

Runo Bergström, LPI resident representative in Congo Brazzaville, visited Zimbabwe for the board meeting of the Center for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA). Among the inputs at the CPIA meeting were experiences from the reconciliation committee in Ghana. A conference looking at possibilities for reconciliation in Zimbabwe was arranged in connection with the CPIA meeting. Among the 100 participants were representatives from the government of Zimbabwe, the media, churches, NGOs, the army and embassies in the SADEC counties, Sweden and Norway.

## Staff changes



**Luisa Montoya** from Canada and Colombia is the new intern from Project Ploughshares. Luisa has a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of New Brunswick, Canada. At LPI Luisa is primarily working with gender issues in relation to peacebuilding. She is also engaged in the data collection for the joint Uppsala Program on Religion and Conflict.

## Horn of Africa

The regional LPI office in Nairobi, Kenya, has been closed due to restructuring of the work. The Horn of Africa Programme with work mainly in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia is currently coordinated from the head office in Uppsala. **Kirsi Saaristo** and **Abdi Aden Ali**, staff related to Somalia, continue to work out of Nairobi and Somalia itself. **Shane Quinn** is the Uppsala-based programme officer.

## HAB Bulletin

The production of the publication Horn of Africa Bulletin, issued by LPI since 1987, is temporarily suspended. LPI will in consultation with the readership and donors consider the need for a re-start or replacement of some kind of media bulletin related to peace and conflict in the region.

## LPI in DRC

Some LPI partners, previously trained in monitoring elections, have closely followed the second round of the presidential elections in DRC that took place on 29 October, 2006. A report on the conditions prevailing before and during the polling day will soon be available.

LPI has now started an internal evaluation of its partners and their activities in North and South Kivu. The outcome of this process will serve as a basis for the development of LPI's new peace-building programme in DRC.

## Human rights

A regional seminar with representatives from NGOs in Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, São Tomé & Principe and the Republic of Congo has been arranged in Brazzaville as part of the LPI peacebuilding program. The event was hosted by the local NGO ADHUC. LPI has also been asked to coordinate the Human Rights Day in December in collaboration with UNDP, among others.

## Nordic call

Five church-based humanitarian organizations in Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden have agreed to work together in lobbying their governments to fulfil their responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

The Responsibility to Protect, as this new international norm is called for short, embraces three key responsibilities. The responsibility to prevent urges governments to address the root causes of internal conflict and human-made crisis; the responsibility to react expects governments to respond to situations of compelling human need with appropriate measures, including coercive ones; and the responsibility to rebuild ensures that destruction and damage, both physical and social, caused particularly by the harm of a military intervention are sufficiently redressed.

All five organizations, Church of Sweden, Norwegian Church Aid, DanChurchAid, FinnChurchAid and Icelandic Church Aid, have committed themselves to presenting a series of demands to their respective governments, covering fields related to all the three aspects of the Responsibility to Protect.

The policy statement can be downloaded from either of the websites of the organizations or LPI, www.life-peace.org

## Peace researchers

The Swedish-based network of peace, conflict and development research (www.peacenetwork.se) organized a conference on globalization and peace-building in Uppsala on November 6-8. Keynote speakers were Professor Hamdy Abdel Rahman Hassan from Cairo, Egypt, on "Challenges and opportunities to peacebuilding in the Middle East" and Professor Oliver Richmond, St. Andrews, Scotland, on "Peacebuilding in post-conflict regions". A number of different panels dealt with issues like global war on terror, globalization and the challenges to development, third party conflict prevention, environmental and natural resource management and conflict prevention. LPI researchers Dr Anne Kubai and Dr Tarekegn Adebo contributed to the conference. The conference was facilitated by the network coordinator Professor Ashok Swain at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.

Nothing is separate,
Our loneliness is an illusion.
We share the pains and the confusions,
The joys and peaceful days
Of all our many, very varied selves:
The totality is sacred …

And thus throughout our lives,
Throughout our civilisations, we have stamped
The stain of self and judgement,
Even on the ones we love the most –
Perhaps them more than any,
And they inevitably pass it on.

Thus we have armed ourselves and others
Against the enemies of ego.

How to disarm ourselves?
Again it's simple, but perversely hard:

To understand what's happening
And to remain awake against
The sleep of self and custom.

Then shall the weapons of destruction fall
Unnoticed from our mental hands,
And the grace of individual lives
Merge within the glory of the All.

*Adam Curle, 2005*
*1916-2006*