



PeaceWomen Across the Globe
FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT
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Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde
Женщины мира за мир на земле
MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo

DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO

ピースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち
全球和平妇女

02 | 2011

Newsletter



Three Courageous Women Receive the Nobel Peace Prize

► By Annika Müller, independent journalist

Millions of women across the globe participate in peace and justice work. Not often have they received a Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. Since 1901, the prize has been given 89 times to men and only twelve times to women. However, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman are now three more women Nobel Peace Prize recipients. Recognition of women's important role in conflict situations has long been overdue.

«We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women obtain the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society», stressed the Nobel Prize Committee. Women's frequent and important mediating role between conflicting parties is rarely honored. The Nobel Peace Prize has more often recognized heads of state and international organizations with great power. The intention of the project «1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005» was to draw attention to women's grass roots contributions. This year the message has been heard: Three women will receive the prize in Oslo.

Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee was a courageous social worker who invited women of Christian and Muslim origins to join nonviolent protests against the violent Liberian ruler Charles Taylor and the civil war. According to the Nobel Prize Committee, she «mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women's participation in elections».

The Nobel Peace Prize for the Yemeni journalist Karman is «a signal that the Arab Spring cannot be successful without including the women in it», said the head of the Nobel Prize Committee. 32-year-old Karman founded the organization «Women Journalists Without Chains» in 2005. She is perceived as the leader of the protests against president Ali Abdullah Saleh that started in January. Karman's recognition is a symbolic acknowledgement of all Arab Spring activists.

Unlike Karman and Gbowee who were not known to an international public until the prize was announced, Johnson Sirleaf's commendation came as less of a surprise. Johnson Sirleaf was elected the first female head of state in Africa in 2005. Honoring two people from Africa and a person from the Arabian Peninsula is likely meant as another signal for the many opposition movements in the region. We believe the selection of three women is also inspired by the Arab Spring.

EDITORIAL

Friends of PeaceWomen Across the Globe

We developed the idea «1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005» together with an international team of women nine years ago. Millions of women work daily towards lasting peace and human rights, and challenge hunger and all forms of exploitation. In consideration of their efforts, it annoyed us that Oslo continuously rewarded powerful men and established organizations.

An important and symbolic goal has been reached: this year's Nobel Peace Prize goes to three women. The honour awarded to these women for their dedication to democracy and non-violence shows an increased acceptance of women in peace work and recognizes our slogan «No Women – No Peace».

However, more work is ahead of us. Women's voices are silenced in the Arab Spring movement towards democracy. PWAG intends to support women's local struggles in Egypt. Democratization processes are bound to fail without women's participation.

The know-how of PWAG's network of women is needed in Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan and many other countries. With our necessary support, women are able to share their knowledge and connect their actions. It is more important than ever that women are part of peace talks both as active participants and with their wealth of experiences.

*Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold
Co-President*

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Egypt – The Spring of Women?

► *By Annika Müller, independent journalist*

Egypt is in the middle of its parliamentary elections. That brings up an important question: What will the role of women be in the new system?

«We did not only protest for democracy, but for equality as well», writes activist and writer Jumanah Younis in her blog. Freedom, Justice, Equality – these were the slogans that women chanted in unison with men on Tahrir Square. The regime change is in progress now, but Egyptian women still have to fight for a better status in society. When the dictatorship was collapsing, Egyptian women were excited. They had suffered from severe oppression. «The revolution has changed our country already», cheered an older woman for BBC's cameras during the first week of the revolution in January. «Men treat us with a lot of respect». The hope was that conservative gender roles would disappear with Mubarak.

Once euphoria lifted, Egypt's deep-seated patriarchal hatred against women reemerged. Mubarak had barely been deposed when revolutionary Egypt's face changed. Sexual harassment and humiliation of women are once again ordinary. Military-executed virgin tests on demonstrators and sexual assaults of foreign journalists have caused international outrage.

Not even one woman has been appointed to the military council that will discuss the wording of the new constitution. According to Egyptian women's right activist Nawaal al-Saadawi, many women fear that an election of conservative parties will damage the women's right movement and undo the few achievements from Mubarak's era. However, the women who want to retain and expand their rights are now labeled supporters of the old regime and «daughters of Suzanne Mubarak», someone repudiated by opponents of women's rights as Western-oriented since she supported women's literacy and initiated first laws against widespread genital mutilation.

«Under Mubarak's rule, we had laws that afforded women some rights. But the problem was that nobody knew of these laws and rights», explained Amani Eltunsi, founder of the radio station «Girls Only». Now that women are more aware of their rights and more confidence to insist on their implementation, the government could restrict them even more.

The good news is the movement to found a new women's party called «Union of Egypt's Women». The party aims to fight discrimination, increase women's political involvement and encourage five million women to participate in the elections.

Egypt needs the serious involvement of women for a successful revolution. According to the World Economic Forum, Egypt is rated 125 out of 134 in terms of equality, 42 percent of its women are illiterate and 90 percent of women in rural areas are circumcised. As the second most populous country on the continent, it could serve as an example for other African countries if a second revolution succeeded.

Women in Egypt – as well as in Tunisia, Libya and Yemen – courageously opposed a brutal security apparatus. They now should have the right to be part of the restructuring of the country. The collapse of the dictatorships is just the beginning. After the political revolution, a social and cultural revolution is required. Denigration of women and insistence on outdated traditions have to stop. «We are only setting foot on a lengthy and trying path», says Asha Hagi Elmi Amin, a PeaceWoman from Somalia. Egypt's women have a long way to go and should receive as much support as possible on their journey.

PWAG Supports Democratization Processes in Egypt

«I teach creativity and dissidence. What I mean by creativity is linking. You have to link the global with the local. We live in one world, not three worlds. So if I speak about Egypt, I have to speak about the world. If I speak about women's issues, I have to speak about global politics.»

Nawal El Saadawi, author from Egypt.

The idea at the core of the new Egyptian PWAG project is to creatively initiate democratization processes. We connect and enable dialogue between Egyptian representatives of different social strata and PeaceWomen, and thereby link the local with the global. Conversations enable the women to find common ground in creative ways. As a rule, communal decisions are easier implemented and tend to result in sustainable outcomes.

PWAG will host large dialogue forums in Cairo and Alexandria from January 8 - 19, 2012. According to our local PWAG partners, «dialogue» is particularly important and meaningful in the transition towards democracy.

PeaceWomen from Mexico, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Somalia, Sudan and Liberia will offer their know-how and share their experiences. Their goal is to have «the whole system in one room». This project creates a space in which groundbreaking social and political debates pave the way towards a common identity that embraces the political participation of women.

During this time, we will encourage dialogue by showing our exhibition «No Women – No Peace».

PeaceWomen from our mediator pool will get to work in Egypt for the first time. «Women Peace Mediators» is a PWAG project that brings together women with great mediation and conflict-resolution skills. They will employ their expertise in different projects.

Tanja Mirabile, Manager of Strategies and Organization



Women's achievements in Egypt are important

► *Interview: Annika Müller, independent journalist*

Asha Haji Elmi Amin founded the organization «Save Somali Women and Children» during the civil war in Somalia in 1992. Her network of women called «Sixth Clan» was able to successfully negotiate between the solely male delegates of the five opposed clans. It was the first time that Somali women were part of political decisions. In the following years, the «Sixth Clan» achieved a women's quota of 12 percent in federal parliament. Asha Haji Elmi Amin was a representative until 2009. Furthermore, she was a nominee in the project «1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005», was awarded the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize in 2008, and received a «Clinton Global Citizen Award» in 2009.

Asha Haji Elmi Amin, you experienced first hand how important it is to incorporate women in political negotiations in Somalia. Together with other PeaceWomen, you will offer your expertise to Egyptian women. How will you be able to assist Egyptian women in the democratization process?

I want to show how women can get involved in a new Egypt. My experience illustrates how important it is that women become active in this early ground-breaking stage.

Why is it crucial for Egypt's society that women have more say in politics?

Women support the concerns of the majority. Nonetheless, it is often the case that only conflicting parties are involved in the creation of new governments or in conflict resolution. Men sitting at negotiating tables in Africa tend to be powerful, influential and represent individual interests. Women represent the silent majority and bring topics to the table that are concerned with civil life rather than military viewpoints.

What are the problems that Egyptian women face?

Religion is used as a guise to marginalize and exclude women from important decisions. In addition, there is a risk that women don't react fast enough. If they don't take part in shaping the constitution, their concerns won't be incorporated. Strategically, it is extremely important that women get involved as soon as possible – otherwise I can guarantee that Egyptian women won't be part of anything. The situation in Egypt is a historically unique opportunity!

What can international organizations do to strengthen Egyptian women?

Egyptian women have to network and come up with unified concerns, which means that they have to overcome internal differences before they join negotiations. We can help Egyptian women in this process.

Can the women's movement in Egypt become an example for other African countries?

Absolutely. African countries have often been inspired by Egypt. Egyptian women's achievements are important. I believe that women have the ability to take charge. We are only at the beginning of a strenuous process.

Women Lead the Way – PeaceWomen in Sudan

PWAG's International Secretariat completed a mission in Sudan in July. We wanted to analyze the current socio-political conditions in Sudan and understand how the local network of PeaceWomen works. The visit took place in a historic moment: South Sudan's declaration of independence on July 9, 2011.

The IS discussed current efforts and new political opportunities together with the regional coordinator Maha ElZein and the Sudanese PeaceWomen. We realized that local women's organizations and women-led Sudanese peace organizations' courses of action are clearly restricted. Financing from UN Women and other international donors is reserved for registered NGOs and thus controlled by the government.

The IS had a unique opportunity to join the first Women Leadership Seminar after the separation of Sudan. PeaceWomen from Abyie, Darfur, Blue Nile, White Nile, Kordofan as well as South Sudan were present. The participants expressed their feelings about the new political situation without restraint. They discussed the complex history of the conflict, the political circumstances, how religious-cultural and political diversity should be handled, and a schedule for joint activities in the years to come. The women founded the «Platform for Sudanese Women Building Peace».

As an immediate result of the seminar, a publication with biographies, visions and activities of PeaceWomen will go to print in the next few weeks. If security circumstances allow for it, two-way visits will take place within and outside of Sudan. In order to accommodate fast-changing political situations, the program structure will be as flexible as possible and geared towards PWAG's goal to improve visibility and networking opportunities of women. The IS will continue to advise Sudanese PeaceWomen and show solidarity.

Cordula Reimann, IS PWAG



NEWS FROM PEACEWOMEN ACROSS THE GLOBE

► It is incomprehensible and sad that we have lost seven PeaceWomen during the last half a year. May they rest in peace: Kip Tiernan (USA), Ade Rostina Sitompul (Indonesia), Dekha Ibrahim Abdi (Kenya), Sr. Mary Soledad Perpiñan (Philippines), Helena Greco (Brazil) and Wangari Maathai (Kenya).

PEACEWOMEN ACROSS THE GLOBE CONGRATULATES

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman: PWAG congratulates the women who will be honored with the Nobel Peace Prize this year. The recognition goes to women who strive for lasting peace, political change and justice. PWAG applauds the meaningful decision in Oslo!
- Zainap Gashaeva: She received the Ida Somazzi Prize for her human rights and documentary efforts in Chechnya. Thanks to her important work, the Chechnyan archive opened in Bern on 2011/10/26.
- Elizabeth Neuenschwander: The Swiss PeaceWoman became an honorary citizen of the township of Schangnau. The 82-year-old woman's incredible dedication is the topic of the new publication «Von Schangnau nach Kabul» (From Schangnau to Kabul).

EVENTS

- **2011/11/25 – 2011/12/10**, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign. «From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World». More information can be found on the following website: www.cfd-ch.org/16tage/index.php and <http://16dayswgl.rutgers.edu>
- **2011/12/5 – 2011/12/31**, Exhibition «No Women – No Peace» in Oslo. The exhibition will be shown on the occasion of the Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremonies 2011 on December 10th for Tawakkul Karman, Leymah Gbowee and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The exhibition will be placed next to the Oslo City Hall and the Nobel Peace Center.
- **2011/12/12-2011/12/16**, Exhibition «No Women – No Peace» in Berlin. The exhibition will be shown at Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hiroshimastrasse 28, 10785 Berlin. www.fes.de
- **March 2012**, Dialogue forum «PeaceWomen Support Democratization Processes in Egypt» together with the exhibition «No Women – No Peace» in Cairo and Alexandria. Organized by PeaceWomen Across the Globe, in collaboration with PeaceWomen from Nepal, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Sudan, Liberia and Mexico, and local partner organizations. An action plan to increase women's participation in the transformation process will be presented and discussed.

REMARKS

- The movie «Pray the Devil Back to Hell» (Women for a Free Liberia) can be ordered from us (original language with German subtitles). Leymah Gbowee, one of the protagonists, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her courageous work. We highly recommend the film! Cost: CHF 25.– plus shipping.
- PWAG would like to thank independent journalist Annika Müller for the rewarding collaboration! <http://annikamueller.wordpress.com/>

Donations

PeaceWomen Across the Globe needs your support!

Please help the organization and the projects of PeaceWomen Across the Globe with a donation or by buying a «Peaceshare».

Thank You!

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