



WOMEN LEAD TO PEACE ROUND TABLE ON 21ST JANUARY

Introduction

The experience of women and war has been documented, reported, acknowledged- and then largely forgotten when it comes to discussing peace and the future of the State. A pattern which is being repeated in relation to the Syrian conflict and which many, including some member States are seeking ways to redress.

On December 19th 2013, women from Syria addressed delegations, UN representatives and INGOs in the Palais de Nations. They spoke of the reality of life in Syria during the conflict, the roles that women were playing in taking on the responsibilities of relief and recovery, community peace making and reconciliation, as well as documentation and support to victims of violence. They denounced the absence of women and the voices of those who have the greatest stake in peace, from the international forums and processes where the future of Syria is being discussed and called for a change to the narrative of negotiating only with those who use violence.

As in all conflicts, the perspectives and contributions of women are essential to any effort to end the violence and promote a sustainable resolution and democratic and just peace for the country.

Between 2000 and 2011, one in five peace agreements failed within the first five years; more flailed or failed within the first decade. The World Bank (WDR 2011) has recommended that for peace to be sustainable it must be inclusive meaning that the substance, the process and the stakeholders must be broad enough to include the voices and concerns of the communities most affected. These findings affirm case studies that demonstrate the qualitative contributions of civil society to peace making (multiple examples). It is further backed up by quantitative research of peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2004 that the involvement of civil society reduced the risk of peace agreements failing by 64 percent (Nielson 2012).

In December there was a growing consensus that women needed to be at the table in the peace talks to make them succeed. The question was how to ensure women's independent and effective participation in Geneva II.

Round Table on 21st January

To bring cogency to the realities of war, its gendered dimension, and to explore what is meant by including the concerns of the communities most affected and the impact; the NGOs CODEPINK, MADRE, the Nobel Women's Initiative and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, co-sponsored by PGGC Graduate Institute, are bringing women from countries that have experienced war and the various outcomes of their so called peace.

From Liberia to the Balkans, to Colombia and Sri Lanka as well as Northern Ireland, and of course, Syria. Nobel Laureates Shirin Ebadi, Mairead Maguire and the renowned academic, and writer on gender and militarism, Cynthia Enloe, will attend and contribute.

The round table will have ten women with a moderator to tell the truths about conflict and to discuss peace.

The discussions will be held in three parts:

- Part 1. 10:00 to 11:15 from war to a treaty and holding on to peace
- Part 2. 11:30 to 12:45 the realities of war: experiences of conflict and its gendered assumptions.
- Part 3. 13:30 to 15:00 the participation of women in Geneva II peace talks and beyond: Modalities of how to break the confrontational narrative.

The event will be held at the Graduate Institute Maison de la Paix and is open to States, NGOs students and academics.



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