



**The International Fellowship of Reconciliation's
(IFOR)
Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)
"Interfaith Peace Building Consultation: The
Need for a Gender Perspective"
September 2010 – Cyprus**

On the verge of the tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the momentum is there to increase the support for women peacebuilders within the different faith traditions, as well as to support the inclusion of a gender perspective in faith-based and inter-faith peacebuilding.

Pioneering progressive theologians, women rights and peace activists from different spiritual traditions and different regions, will analyze -using a gender-perspective- the multiple roles of religion in current conflicts, both as cause of war and as incentive to peace building. The impact of inter-faith peacebuilding initiatives will be analyzed. The interconnections between peace, women's rights and challenging armed violence will be explored. Women activists who work for peace within their religious traditions will share successes of their approach, as well as obstacles encountered in their traditions and how to overcome these obstacles, as well as potential risks.

IFOR, as an interfaith movement for peace and active nonviolence, has an 90-year history of practical experience and knowledge of how religion can be a positive resource for peacebuilding and justice. The role of religion in conflict is receiving increasing attention. While the role of religion in peacebuilding and conflict is still a relatively new field of academic study and research, much public and media attention has focused on the negative role religion plays in conflict (e.g., the increased tensions in the West between Muslim and non-Muslim communities; communal violence in India; Sunni and Shi'ite tensions in Iraq; conflict between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland). Yet there are historical examples of the positive role religion has played in promoting peace and human rights (e.g., the Civil Rights Movement in the USA; the role of the Catholic Church in the People's Power movement against Marcos in the

Philippines), and of interfaith cooperation (e.g., joint peace efforts by Imams and Christian ministers in Nigeria; cooperation between Hindu and Christian communities in the 2002 strikes in Madagascar; joint reconstruction efforts by Muslims, Jews, Orthodox and Roman Catholics in Bosnia).

“We need to look at gender injustice in our communities. As women, even if we fight dictators and establish democracy, the oppression of women and girls can continue. Women cannot own land and women have a low status within the family, where they operate as servants. Many of our religions reinforce this view of women as inferior.”
Netsai Mushonga, Zimbabwe, at the WPP Intercontinental consultation, 2005

The consultation will be a space for innovative approaches in the field of gender-sensitive faith-based peacebuilding.

The Consultation outcomes will be documented in a publication and disseminated internationally. An e- community of practitioners will be established to ensure follow-up after the consultation.

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