

The Time is Now



June 2009



Foreword:

Dear Friends! My name is Aktuigun Pazylova and I'm glad to introduce to you *The Time is Now* 2009. I'm from mountainous Kyrgyzstan and I'm representing the women's NGO Pangea. From 2003 I've been learning from and working for women's and youth organizations aimed at promoting gender equality and human rights. I've been involved in different activities for youth and women empowerment. I believe that peace is possible only within a society where nobody is discriminated, and where everybody's rights are respected. I believe that we all have a responsibility to keep peace. So this is our time to speak out and to act for Peace!

Enjoy your reading!



Ni sa Bula vunaqa and welcome to the Newsletter 'The Time is Now'! My name is Paulini Turagabeci. I am 21 years old and of ethnic Fijian origin. My journey into my advocacy for women's rights and equality for all began when I joined the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) in 2007 through an initiative called the 'Emerging Leaders Forum'. It was a year long training for young women between the ages of 18-25, to actively involve themselves in civil society in their field of work. Since then I have been involved in promoting human rights and democracy, the eradication of human rights violations such as violence against women and racism, and in capacity building and leadership training for young women. This I believe is my involvement in peace work. We wish you well in your various fields of work in peace and reconciliation.

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Women, Politics, and Youths in Fiji: A look at the effects of the 2006 Coup d'état

By Paulini Turagabeci

On December 6th 2006, Fiji was plagued by its fourth coup d'état, less than two decades after its first military take over in 1987 staged by then Colonel of the Fiji Military Forces, Sitiveni Rabuka. It was the culmination of a feud that had been brewing for weeks before the day, between the democratically elected Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase and Commodore Frank Bainimarama. The latter claimed that his actions of forcefully obtaining power were for the interests of the Indo-Fijian population of Fiji. Apparently, Qarase attempted to introduce a legislation that would pardon the 2000 coup d'état perpetrators, and give full ownership of coastal land to ethnic Fijians.

As noble as Bainimarama's claim may be, the ends don't always justify the means. Overthrowing a Government is treason. However, just penalties were not meted out to the Commodore, and those involved in the overthrow of the Government. Bainimarama attained immunity for his actions, and went as far as assuming Presidential powers.

Pressurized by NGO's and neighboring countries to return the country to democratic elections, Bainimarama promised that elections would be well underway after his 'clean-up campaign'. In Bainimarama's opinion, a clean up campaign was necessary, claiming that corruption was strife in many government sectors. Within the following months of apprehending power, the Fiji public witnessed the unceremonious sacking of several government officials. In many cases, these officials were forced into resignation with a simple letter from the 'Prime Ministers' office, flatly indicating that they should vacate office. After several months in 2007, an ambiguous date was set for the elections – January 2009. The public breathed a sigh of relief. Redemption from a dictatorship was anticipated. However, on Thursday the 9th of April, the situation surprisingly took a turn for the worse. The Fiji Times,

the largest selling local newspaper reported the following:

'On Thursday April 9, the Court of Appeal in Fiji ruled that the removal of the elected Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase in 2006 was unlawful, and that the President Ratu Josefa Iloilo had to appoint an interim Prime Minister, but neither Qarase nor Bainimarama, the current prime minister. Josia Voreqe Bainimarama, commander of the Fijian Military Forces and leader of the coup d'état in 2006 against Qarase, had been appointed Prime Minister by Iloilo in 2007. The court ruled further, that upon advice of the new interim prime minister, the parliament should be dissolved to make way for new elections.

After the court's decision, Bainimarama stepped in front of the cameras, stating that he would respect the court's verdict and retreat to the barracks. It seemed to be a celebration day: finally democracy would prevail.

But already the next day, President Iloilo announced the abrogation of the constitution and dismissed the judges and magistrates. He again appointed Bainimarama as Prime Minister, which only supported the impression of him being a puppet in Bainimarama's power game¹.

The status of women

As in all cases of instability, women and children are at the short end of the stick. Although Fiji can be thankful that the political upheaval has not culminated into civil war, the situation still remains difficult and volatile. Moreover, with the poor economic conditions, a study carried out by AusAID on the situation of women in business in December of 2008, found that *'the current political turmoil has brought uncertainty to previous government commitments and policies on gender issues and has affected women's business in Fiji'*². Many business women who were interviewed admitted that the political situation affected them emotionally as well

¹ The Fiji Times; 10/04; Retrieved 2009 – 05 - 07

² Cutura J and Bowman C (2007); Women in Business in Fiji; p.g 1
http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/pwpsd_fiji.pdf Retrieved on 2009-06-03

as financially; several of them were facing bankruptcy and business closure. Data collected from 2004-05 showed that women only make up 31 percent of the economically active population as 6.5% were unemployed compared to the 3.5% of unemployed men.

The statistics are a bit puzzling considering that 28% of females reached secondary level education compared to 18% by their male counterparts, and working women have higher qualifications than men³. The government is not doing a good job in following through their commitments, in light of their Strategic Development Plan 2008-2011, that states that it would ‘...enable women to participate fully in the socio-economic development of the country⁴.



Women preparing to March on Int. Women’s Day 2009

Not only has the private sector been adversely affected by the consequences of the coup. NGO’s that have spoken out against the events of December 6th were affected. One such NGO at the forefront of confronting the illegal take over and pressuring the interim government to return Fiji to democratic elections has been the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM). The FWRM clearly states its purpose as ‘*To work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, promote the equality of women, and support democracy and human rights in all areas in Fiji and the Pacific regions.*

Unfortunately the stand made by the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement was not appreciated by the Fiji government. On the 25th of December 2006, (a day that many of us hold fond memories of because of

Christmas), a member of FWRM, along with a few others who bravely spoke out against the military take over, were taken to the army barracks where they were physically and mentally abused. I find it disgusting and cowardly, that any regime should lead by the barrel of the gun and inflict such horrific things upon defenseless civilians, degrading them with inhumane forms of punishment for no legally punishable crime.

For me, there is great paradox in the reality that men carry out wars and in Fiji’s case initiate conflict situations through coups, and that it’s the women that have to pick up the pieces and try to bring a semblance of order into the chaos. Yet women still lack eminent presence at the discussion tables when it comes to conflict resolution, in Fiji and across the globe. My remarks in a sense may sound biased. Thus I will willingly eat my words should anyone prove that any one of the four coups in Fiji’s independent history was staged by a woman!

The status of youth



“Fiji Youths against Racism”, taking part in the National Youth Day

Many young people of my nation, I am happy to note, are playing their role well in their efforts to bring Fiji back to democratic rule. Not only have they involved themselves in raising awareness on democracy and good governance, they have actively

³ Cutura J and Bowman C (2007); Women in Business in Fiji; p.g 1 – 2
http://www.aisaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/pwpsd_fiji.pdf Retrieved on 2009-06-03
⁴ Strategic Development Plan 2008 – 2011, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, November 2006. See section on Gender and Equality and Women in Development, pp. 27 – 29. This plan has not received official status and may not reflect the strategic directions and priorities of the interim government.
⁵ Fiji Women’s Rights Movement; purpose statement; <http://www.fwrn.org.fj/> Retrieved 2009 – 06 – 03.

involved themselves in other areas of civil society. Many of them are part of groups that raise awareness on mental health, the environment and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Of course this does not imply that they have not come against their own opposition. One such group that has been the object of malice of the interim regime is the *Young People's Concerned Network (YPCN)*. In their website, the YPCN introduce themselves as '*a group made up of strong minded and strong willed young people of Fiji who are concerned about issues that affect them and are willing to stand up for these ideals and make their voices heard*'⁶.

Recently, in a press release aimed to encourage young people from across the Pacific not to boy-cot the upcoming Pacific Youth Festival to be held in Fiji's Capital, Suva, in July, the *Young People's Concerned Network* President, Peter Waqavonovono referred to the interim regime as 'undiplomatic and self serving'. I take my hat off to Mr Waqavonovono for refusing to sugar coat his words, knowing that not doing this might bring him into danger. Human rights activists in Fiji have been jailed and even tortured before for having said or written something that didn't favour the government. With the current political unrest I don't blame the governments of neighboring Pacific islands for having reservations about sending their young people to attend the much awaited Pacific Youth Festival in Fiji. What's more, the military council has taken the liberty to censor the Pacific Youth Festival program and organizing committee, meaning that leading Youth and Human Rights activists, afore mentioned Peter Waqavonovono and Jacque Koroï will not be participating. In a blog entry by Fiji Democracy Movement (FDFM) Secretary, Tia Radrekusa, it was noted that the five thematic components of the Youth Festival were;

1. Promoting Healthy Living/Lifestyles;
2. Pacific Identity;
3. Climate Change Adaptation;
4. Governance, Peace and Security; and
5. Skills for Life.

⁶ Young People's Concerned Network; who we are; <http://www.ypcfiji.com/> Retrieved 2009 - 06 - 08

Apparently however, the topic on governance, peace and security has touched some 'pompous' nerves, thus the thematic topics, including the overseas and local speakers have yet to be made final. Ms. Radrekusa then goes on to question how long the voices of the young people will be stifled. She adds, '*The Pacific youth festival (PYF) is obviously then going to be a forum where our youths are seen but not heard*'⁷

The interim government has already stooped low in their bullying tactics, when grown men (or their stooges) terrorized the homes and families of the YPCN members, ransacked and destroyed their democracy shrine twice, put them on travel bans, and threatened them by phone and through the media. It would seem like the country is being run by men who have disillusionments about their mortality. How long does the interim government think it can hold the reigns of the nation? Can they live forever, and continue to enslave the citizens of Fiji under their undemocratic control? They must not suppress the nation's future leaders. Fiji cannot afford to groom frustrated youths who will only fall back into the coup culture. The interim regime should invest in building conflict resolutions through *dialogue and the freedom of speech and quickly put Fiji back on the path of recovery*.

Consequently I must commend the youths of my country who have not retaliated with anarchy and revolt, but continue to advocate and push for democracy through well thought out and strategic actions.

⁷ T Radrekusa (2009); Planned Pacific Youth Festival to be censored by the totalitarian Fiji Government; <http://blog.fjidademocracymovement.org/> Retrieved 2009 - 02 - 06

Resolution 1325: A creative perspective

By: Paulini Turagabeci

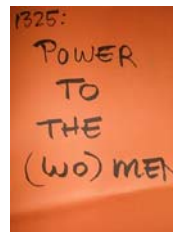
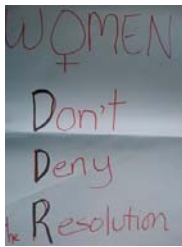
Since arriving to the Netherlands to participate in the International Orientation, I have been introduced to the United Nations Security Council's Resolution (SCR) 1325 on women peace and security. Although I have a background on Human Rights, and in particular Women's rights, I have to admit that Resolution 1325 was completely new to me.

In short, the resolution which was adopted in the year 2000 by the United Nations Security Council, stresses the need for women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

It was noted that women bore the brunt of armed conflicts, and thus should have a visible role in conflict resolution especially in discussion tables.

SCR 1325 is important because it is effectively international law, it has a global constituency of advocates including civil society, and the UN and national governments, and it is complemented and supported by other existing international women's rights tools.

On May 24th, WPP took the initiative to raise awareness on resolution 1325 by conducting a workshop. The workshop itself was a fun and creative way to engage the participants in ways they could be a part of raising awareness on Resolution 1325. Here are some of the creative posters the participants came up with



Find the following words in the peace puzzle below

CONFLICT
INCLUSION
WPP
ADVOCACY
IFOR
WOMEN
PEACE
RESOLUTION
GENDER
YOUTH
ACTION
PARTICIPATION
EQUALITY

W	F	V	C	B	C	G	R	Y	N	F	A	L	I	M
D	R	D	E	R	F	E	G	J	M	B	Q	I	N	X
P	E	R	C	F	D	T	C	I	L	F	N	O	C	A
P	S	D	A	N	R	Y	B	G	L	Z	S	H	L	C
W	O	M	E	N	G	R	T	H	U	Y	D	G	U	T
E	L	G	P	D	Y	O	L	I	C	X	X	B	S	I
I	U	C	E	Q	S	F	T	A	L	H	E	G	I	O
Y	T	P	A	R	T	I	C	I	P	A	T	I	O	N
U	I	Y	T	R	X	O	H	N	V	R	U	U	N	Z
Y	O	U	T	H	V	P	O	L	B	A	W	Q	Z	V
F	N	V	R	D	J	D	S	X	E	E	S	P	E	E
O	K	M	A	N	O	I	U	T	D	X	S	P	I	X
P	J	N	O	N	V	I	O	L	E	N	C	E	O	L

Being part of a world peace movement

By Aktuigun Pazylova

“For it isn’t enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn’t enough to believe in it. One must work on it.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

One of the biggest responsibilities of humanity might be to maintain peace in the world. The international peace movement includes a variety of organizations, alliances and individuals that are actively working for peace and an end to war and violence across the globe. Many of these organizations strongly believe that peace can only be achieved through nonviolent means. One of these organizations is the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). IFOR was established in 1919 by socially engaged citizens who committed themselves to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of economic, political and social transformation.⁸

This year I participated in the International Orientation program of the IFOR Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)⁹ and received an opportunity to learn more about the work that this program is doing. WPP's objective is to increase the empowerment of women through active nonviolence. During my internship I realized many things. I believe that if each of us will contribute in one way or another to the global peace movement, these contributions together will guarantee peace for each family, community, and country.

WPP's International Orientation provided insight into how organizations working for peace and gender equality within the peace movement operate and what tools they use in achieving their goals. It provided me with the chance to be involved in international processes, to learn from events taking place outside my home country of Kyrgyzstan. I felt it was quite an eye-opening experience. For instance, I

⁸ For more information on the IFOR, please visit its website: www.ifor.org

⁹ For more information on the WPP, please visit its website: www.ifor.org/WPP

learned how to deal with media, how to behave when interviewing and how to deliver a message, if you want to be heard. Meeting different people from different countries allowed me to exchange information and experiences, and to analyze and compare situations of other countries with my own. In discussions with my fellow intern Paulini from Fiji, I realized that the situation of young girls in our countries is quite similar. Girls in our countries are confronted with violations of their human rights, such as the right to work and to study. We also discussed that we feel quite restricted by our cultures. All of this has inspired me, and strengthened my belief in my own abilities and usefulness.

Peacekeeping in Post Soviet Kyrgyzstan

I started to think about working for peace while studying at the Faculty of International Relations. Learning about the history of wars and conflicts encouraged me to become a volunteer of the Kyrgyz Red Crescent Society. I was especially curious about what had happened in Afghanistan, since a lot of people from my country were involved in that war; wives had lost their husbands and children their fathers. Another conflict that I felt confronted with was the Civil War in Tajikistan, a neighboring country of Kyrgyzstan. Many refugees from Tajikistan and Afghanistan have found shelter in Kyrgyzstan. People born in Kyrgyzstan are sometimes angry or frustrated about this, since Kyrgyzstan is a developing country, with 40%¹⁰ of the population living below the poverty line. They feel that the influx of refugees only increases the economic instability.

Though Kyrgyzstan was declared an open and democratic country within its territory, several conflicts took place. For instance, there were the conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations in the Uzgen region in the early nineties and clashes with terrorists in Batken in 1999. Both of them were located in South Kyrgyzstan, which is still one of the most vulnerable and volatile parts of the country, due to its isolation, problematic borders and poverty.

¹⁰ For more information on Kyrgyzstan statistics please visit:

<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/kg-kyrgyzstan/eco-economy>

Another example is the USA's airbase of the international antiterrorist coalition, which is located 30 kilometers from the capital city of Bishkek. It is the object of strong discussions and disputes between executive and legislative bodies and civil society. On December 4, 2001 the Kyrgyz Parliament signed an agreement with the U.S government and eleven other member-states of the international antiterrorist coalition. Despite the fact that geographically Kyrgyzstan is far from Iraq, there was a threat of becoming involved in the Iraqi war. Nevertheless, the Kyrgyz government supports the position of Russia regarding this issue and recently the President decided to exclude the US Manas Air Base from the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. This year the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan ratified a bill to shut down the U.S. Manas Air Base, with 78 'for' and one 'against' voices, while one member of parliament abstained from the voting.¹¹ In my opinion, it is a very brave decision for such a "small" country with "small" ambitions like Kyrgyzstan, since the US plays an important role in development issues of Central Asia countries and in this case, there is a threat for Kyrgyzstan to lose US support.

In 2005, following the "colored revolutions" in the post-Soviet zone, such as the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan got through the Tulip Revolution. The revolution was predictable as the ex-President of the country did not intend to pass on leadership in a democratic way. Though it was a relatively peaceful process, the following years were not easy for the whole country. Numerous demonstrations, meetings and protests against the policy of the current government led by the opposition are still taking place. The energy crisis in Central Asia has only aggravated the situation.¹²

Economic and political instability can cause chaos. I feel that peace is totally dependent on the welfare of a country and its neighbors. International and local organizations try to support peace via preventive

measures, and I think they play a great role in peacekeeping and peace building processes.

More women - less violence

Another task for the peace movement in Kyrgyzstan is to involve women in the decision-making, in conflict prevention, and in other related activities. In this regard Kyrgyzstan became one of the 12 countries where the three-year program (2007–2009) "European Commission / United Nations Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace" is being implemented. This program supports stronger action on gender equality and women's empowerment in national development processes and in co-operation programmes supported by the EC.¹³ The program also includes a focus on effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000 to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in responses to conflict and post-conflict situations.



"Kyrgyz girls" Photo by Mambet Kalpaev

Working for the women's NGO "Pangea" in Bishkek, I am absolutely sure that the absence of women in political and diplomatic positions will never result in sustainable peace across the globe. That is why one of the objectives of Pangea is to promote women's participation in politics, to support them during elections, and to fight for gender equality in general. After the elections on 16 December 2007¹⁴, we

11 For more information on Manas Air Base please visit: www.24.kg,

<http://eng.24.kg/politic/2009/02/19/7128.html>

12 Read more on the Central Asia energy crisis:

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav111808.shtml>

13 For more information, please visit: http://unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=98

14 More about the December 2007 elections read: http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2174_E.htm

currently have 24 women deputies in the Parliament. In spite of this, the general opinion on the need for gender equality and gender justice in society hasn't really changed¹⁵.

Nevertheless, there are changes still happening, we can't deny it. Moreover, I would say that we have to realize these changes and move further towards peace for everyone, joining efforts for peace, for happiness and joy!

Finally, I would like end by raising the question, "Is sustainable peace ever possible on earth?" I'm sure you have asked this question already yourself, if not, maybe the time to act is now!



Gender activist with a girl from Pamir. Photo by Mambet Klapaev

Health Rights Of Women Assessment (HeRWAI): an interview with Marije Nederveen.

By: Paulini Turagabeci



Marije Nederveen has come a long way from the young girl, who, fresh out of high school decided to study Japanese Language and Culture, consequently spending a year in Japan and being employed on the

side in a theme park.

These days, after completing her Masters in Developmental Sociology at Leiden University, the Netherlands, she works as a Program Officer Women's Human Rights, at 'Aim for Human Rights'. Aim for Human Rights is located in Utrecht, the Netherlands. It is an organization that supports other organizations that fight for human rights all over the world.

Marije has worked extensively in the arena of Youth and Sexual Reproductive Rights (SRR), being the Executive Coordinator of YouAct, a youth network that advocates for the rights of young people regarding their sexual and reproductive lives, a part time Coordinator for CHOICE for youth and sexuality, and a conference organizer, to name a few. Thus I found her the perfect candidate for an interview.

Since her experiences and achievements are diverse, we decided to narrow down the interview to questions that specifically focus on her current responsibilities as Program Officer, which include the implementation of the Health Rights of Women Assessment Instrument (HeRWAI) program, of *Aim for human rights*. She is supporting its users and trainers worldwide and assessing its effectiveness through effect measurements and evaluation. I was especially interested in the HeRWAI instrument because it was new to me and it deals specifically with the health rights of women, something I believe can be enhanced back in my home country, Fiji.

¹⁵ For more information on gender reports please visit:

http://unifem.org/resources/listing_by_section.php?WebSectionID=12

1. Could you please give us some background information on the history of HeRWAI and its aim?

The Health Rights of Women Assessment Instrument (HeRWAI) is an impact assessment tool designed by 'Aim for Human Rights' in cooperation with other organizations from various parts of the world. It was developed from 2004 until 2006 when it was published. One of the 'attractions' of HeRWAI is that it is a tool that will allow parties to produce relevant rights based arguments which can be used to lobby for policies that improve the implementation of women's health rights.

In the guidebook itself, it explains that when analyzing a policy, HeRWAI can help to:

- Make a direct link between the policy and relevant human rights issues;
- Gain a better understanding of the current situation;
- Make an assessment of the human rights impact of the policy, both now and in the future;
- Form a conclusion about what the government should do and what your organization will do to press the government into action.

2. So I understand that HeRWAI is an assessment instrument for the health rights of women, but how can you link this assessment instrument to issues relevant to youths?

When you talk about Human Rights Assessments, it still sounds a bit mystifying and inaccessible. Because it's new, not many people have thought to make it available to young people. However it would be a good idea to develop an assessment tool that specifically caters to youths and rights that are relevant to them. A lot of young people are working from a rights based approach, based on their own experience. They know and are trained in the rights that they have and they get more successful in participating to claim those rights. However, to build solid rights based arguments on why a particular right should be implemented for a young person; they often don't make the connection with the international human rights standard. They do not know how to build the argument why the state is obligated to cater to those rights in all the policies

they develop and implement. The state is the main body responsible for implementing human rights and the government needs to be held accountable to do this. For instance, when a young person doesn't have access to certain services like getting contraceptives it could be considered as being a violation of their right to health and information. Policies should confirm that right. The young person may only go as far as protesting against the unfairness of it all. However, it's important that he or she sees the gap in the system, which is the lack of policy to implement the right. It's important to not only address the problem, but also recommend solutions on how such a policy can be implemented.

3. Have youth organizations been trained to use the HeRWAI?

Yes there have. The first group was made up of members of Youth Action Nepal, and a member of this group, Punya Bhandari, is now one of our HeRWAI trainers. Moreover, in our upcoming training in Nepal we will train another member of the organization to become a HeRWAI trainer. In 2005 I was also part of the trainer's team that went to Pakistan to help initiate the initial set up of a group called the Youth Advocacy Network, which was initiated by the World Population Foundation (WPF) Pakistan and CHOICE for youth & sexuality. They have now been trained to use HeRWAI and it's very satisfying for me to see that they are now able to work with HeRWAI. This strengthens my belief that young people need the training to work with these tools, as they are perfectly capable in working with them as long as they know how. This will improve their capacity to work as rights based advocates.

4. What do you think young people could do to improve their work?

Get training on Human Rights Impact Assessments and how it relates to youth issues and develop skills that can help you do the assessments. I also want to stress participation in a sense that you should involve the people affected by a certain policy. If you were to design an assessment tool specifically for young people, its best to involve young people

themselves, not only because the assessment will be more user friendly to them but participation is a basic human rights principle. This is where it all starts.

5. What are you currently doing and what are your future plans?

I will be going to conduct a Training of trainers (TOT) in Nepal. The ten invited participants will be people from China, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and Nepal. Nepal was one of the first countries HerWAI was introduced to. They've translated HerWAI into Nepalese and we hope to launch this translation soon in cooperation with the Nepalese HerWAI trainers. In addition, I am currently working on a research on how people have worked with HerWAI so far and how the tool improved their work. I will also be conducting this research in Kenya with people who have used HerWAI.

6. Are there any other comments you would like to add to inspire the youth with?

If you would like to learn more about Human Rights Impact Assessment go to www.humanrightsimpact.org, but you are also more than welcome to contact me marije@aimforhumanrights.org. One of the things I have definitely learnt as a youth advocate was to proactively ask for information and skills when you need it. And I wouldn't be where I am now, if others hadn't invested the time in me, so looking forward to see how we can cooperate in future!

This interview has shown me how we can fall short of making the connection with international human rights standards when our rights are violated. I think it is essential to have an assessment instrument to help us make these connections that assist in our advocacy work. Thank you Marije for your time, I wish you all the best in your work and your travels.

Women and Music – A Powerful Combination for Peace

By Aktuigun Pazylova

Women making beautiful sounds via musical instruments and voices during a sunny day aimed for peaceful life. This event called "Voices of Peace from the Balkans and the Caucasus" was devoted to 24 May 2009 – International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament – and was organized with the joined efforts of IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)¹⁶ and Musicians without Borders (MwB)¹⁷.

Since the early eighties, the International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament has been marked on 24 May by women around the world calling for peaceful resolution of conflict, and an end to the horror and devastation of armed conflict. "Women are victims of unbelievably horrific atrocities and injustices in conflict situations; this is indisputable. As refugees, internally displaced persons, combatants, heads of household and community leaders, as activists and peace-builders, women and men experience conflict differently. Women rarely have the same resources, political rights, authority or control over their environment and needs that men do. In addition, their caretaking responsibilities limit their mobility and ability to protect themselves.¹⁸"

IFOR's Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) traditionally celebrates this day in order to raise awareness on and increase support for women's peace initiatives. This year, WPP in partnership with Musicians without Borders (MwB) conducted a public event, gathering women activists and musicians from the Balkans and the Caucasus in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The goal of the day was to join pioneering women peace activists and musicians on May 24 to discover the power of women working for peace. Interactive panel discussions and musical intermezzos, workshops, a documentary screening,

¹⁶ For more information please visit: <http://www.ifor.org/WPP/index.html>

¹⁷ For more information please visit: <http://www.musicianswithoutborders.nl/>

¹⁸ "Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building (Progress of the World's Women 2002, Vol. 1 Elisabeth Rehn, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf)

conversational moments during the breaks, and a final concert made this day interesting and, further, unforgettable. The air was filled with a warm atmosphere of friendship between women united with one goal: To work for peace.



“Georgian musician” Photo by José de Vries

During a panel discussion between women activists from Kosovo/a, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Georgia, Armenia and a representative of the EU Parliament and a political journalist, the activists shared their opinions about situations in their countries and about women’s situation in particular. The stories they shared were quite different and similar at the same time, as different problems and different histories and developments led them to a common problem – the absence of peace! During musical intermezzos by the female musicians from the Balkans and the Caucasus, the whole audience was taken into a trance: their music seemed to be full of sadness and hope at the same time. Their music took us to the time and space of its origin; everyone reflecting on their own personal stories. After the concert the women were even more tightly connected and inspired, and ready to move further.

“If you want a real long-term sustainable peace, you have to involve the whole society...” said Lesley Abdela, one of the panelists, and a political journalist and gender and post-conflict specialist from the UK. Women’s presence in decision-making remains catastrophically low. Women all over the world are being ignored; their activities towards peace are being criticized, and even prosecuted. It is only a matter of justice: “women can and must participate in peacemaking, because it is fair”, she stated.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security¹⁹ adopted on 31 October 2000 is a significant achievement in peace building. The Resolution 1325 marks the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women, recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make toward conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building, and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.²⁰ How to read this document, how to deal with it, how to use and how to understand it was the goal of a WPP workshop conducted in the second part of the day. Within the framework of the workshop participants shared their opinions on gender and conflict. In addition, slogans (such as “Power and Peace to the wo(men)” and “Don’t Deny the Resolution”) and ideas on playing with the numbers 1325 were created with the goal of using them in future activities around the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The WPP 24 May²¹ event this year brought to its organizers and participants success, inspiration and a will to continue in this spirit of peace building. In general, it was a day of peace, women and music – one of those days which have a magic power!

¹⁹ Full text of UN SCR 1325: <http://www.un.org/docs/scres/2000/sc2000.htm>

²⁰ For more information please visit: <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/UN1325/1325index.html>

²¹ For more information on 24 May please visit: www.ifor.org/wpp

Speak out against honor killings!

By Paulini Turagabeci

Every year, many women and girls lose their lives due to a brutal code of family honor and male supremacy, in what is now commonly known as ‘Honor killings’.

Described by Human Rights Watch, ‘Honor crimes are acts of violence, usually murder, committed by male family members against female family members, who are held to have brought dishonor upon the family. A woman can be targeted by individuals within her family for a variety of reasons, including: refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a divorce—even from an abusive husband—or allegedly committing adultery. The mere perception that a woman has behaved in a way that “dishonors” her family is sufficient to trigger an attack on her life²².

There are statistics that estimate how many women have fallen prey to this abhorring practice, but in an attempt not to single out any one nation as an example or guinea pig to these statistics, I leave it to the reader to make it his/her own initiative to find out about the situation in his/her country. However, because honor killings are often viewed as a ‘family affair’, all-inclusive and consistent statistics are often lacking. What it does prove however, is that in many cultures, power structures are maintained through the use of violence against and domination over women.

I remember one beautiful morning when I sat down to watch the 700 Club (an American Christian talk-show), a program I watch religiously. One report aired that day and changed my life, making me thankful for the simple yet safe life I lead. My TV screen showed the blurry images of a young girl in red, her hair tossing about as she stood in the circle of many men who stoned her and watched

mercilessly as she died before their eyes in a pool of blood. The victim was a 17 year-old Kurdish girl named Du’a Khalil Aswad; her crime – seen talking and allegedly being in love with a boy from another religious sect. The images were caught on camera and it really moved me to tears when I watched how Du’a stumbled in silence and all I could hear were the loud jeering of the men who seemed to enjoy her violent death. In another documented case, sisters Amina (18) and Sarah (17) Said of Texas were allegedly shot by their father and were found dead in a taxi at the entrance of an Irving hotel. Although widely known as honor killings, there is nothing remotely honorable about a father who kills his own daughters with no guilt or remorse.

I believe the media is doing its best to bring such violent and unacceptable acts into the open, but the truth is that many women will never receive justice, and many more will die unnoticed. As long as we keep silent, we cannot expect lives to be saved from such inhumane acts.



Source, “Khalid Tanyeer” AP photo

Nevertheless, the media, the public and non-governmental organizations can only do so much. If they operate under an un-cooperative and slack government, what hope is there of creating reform and building policies and legislations that severely punishes honor killings? For example, in 2005 BBC news reported that the Pakistani Parliament refuted a bill that reinforced the law against honor killings or what is locally known as ‘Karo-kari’ after being

²² “Violence Against Women and “Honor” Crimes”. Human Rights Watch.

http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/04/un_oral12_0405.htm. Retrieved on 2009-06-04

declared un-Islamic by a majority vote. Karo-kari is 'a tradition whereby a man can kill a woman, claiming that she brought dishonour to the family, and still expect to be pardoned by her relatives²³'.

For lack of another word to describe it, 'honor killings' - as dishonorable as they are - are a perverse aspect of culture, yet culture is not immune to change. Culture inevitably changes. We can quicken and initiate this change for the better by speaking out against honor killings through the resources available to us, pressuring our governments to tighten its policies against such violence, insist that all perpetrators be brought to justice with harsh penalties, and continue to campaign, demonstrate, and work against it. In the famous words of Barack Obama himself, 'Together we can!'

Peace March Signs
by Raymond A. Foss

Signs caught my eye
so much a part of the message
Along with the feet marching,
were the signs, "End War",
"Make Levees, not War",
"Blessed are the Peacemakers",
"Peace begins with Peace",
"Veterans for Peace",
"War Just Makes It Worse," or
"Is the World Safer Now?"
Many of them made me think,
and wonder how much the
rest of the country
thinks long and hard about
the wisdom in the war strategy

Conflict Conference: Where is the peace? Where is the end of conflict?

By Aktuigun Pazylova

10 years after the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo/a, 15 years after the Rwandan genocide, 30 years after the end of the Cambodian genocide...Where is the end of conflict?

The International Conflict Conference took place on May 18, 2009 in Amsterdam. It brought together young activists and experienced professionals. The conference was conducted under the theme: "Prevention of and response to mass atrocity crimes, what did we learn?" This question was asked to experienced NGO leaders, writers, politicians and representatives of militaries who presented their perspectives, one after another, while seated on stage.

The structure of the conference consisted of presentations discussing the political, humanitarian and military aspects, followed by a panel discussion. Remarks resulting from the discussions included: "Military intervention must be the last instrument in conflict resolution," "Political challenge means legalization of the responsibility," "Politics starts from speaking out," "Optimism is expectation, and hope is certainty," "Politics is least perfect."

The discussion on "sense of responsibility" led the participants to the idea that we all have the ability to respond and speak out loudly, and that politicians need to respond. The speakers underlined three types of responsibility: responsibility to prevent, to react, and to rebuild. For me personally in the context of politics, the word "responsibility" resonates with the word "intervention;" responsibility and intervention coming together, because politics uses responsibility to legalize intervention. This was confirmed later in the discussion when someone stated, "Conflict resolution is our responsibility, military (or other) intervention is one of the instruments of conflict resolution".

We have become used to statements that everything happening in the world is natural and inevitable, and makes sense. We have the same attitude towards

²³ "Pakistan rejects pro-women bill". BBC News.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4311055.stm Retrieved on 2009-06-04

conflicts. We try to prevent them; next we try to interfere; then judge the conflict parties; console the victims and try to help them recover. This is the circle we are used to, and it appears to be natural, as we don't have intentions to break the rules and make an effort to change the course of things. For example, why not involve women in peacemaking? The role of women is very important in achieving peace. After all, women want to be a part of the peacemaking processes, to speak out loudly, and to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong.



Paulini and Aḱtuigun with James Orbinski

The main objective of the United Nations is to maintain peace and prevent wars, as it was created for this purpose after the Second World War. Nevertheless, the past decades are full of examples of wars and conflicts, murders and horror. The conference gave an opportunity for the participants to review the United Nations peace operations. It led to a lot of diplomatic answers, such as the UN being totally dependent on its member-states, i.e. on the 192 countries, and there must first be a radical reform within the system itself.

It must be very difficult, I suppose, as the UN members differ in their way of thinking and decision-making. So why do we need the UN, if it can't bring all of us together to agree on solving an issue?

There was a suggestion from one of the speakers that we should make a distinction between military

assistance and humanitarian aid, that we shouldn't confuse them. Both of them aim at increasing one's presence in a region, often because a region has strategic meaning, for example because of its natural resources. Many young people at the conference were eager to know more on this, and were raised this question several times – the question about the interest of the North behind interventions in domestic affairs of countries in the South, of those in conflicts in particular.

The International Conflict conference was organized by young people of the Dutch United Nations Students Association²⁴. It is laudable that young people don't just stand on the side; they are concerned, they are involved, and they care. In this sense, yes, the conference reached its aim.

For me personally, any matter of conflict, whether at the interpersonal level or concerning a conflict between countries, always causes indignation and even misunderstanding. Why do powers continue the race for superiority in terms of armed forces; why do conflicts still continue to take place in the XXI century? The reasons remain unclear; we even have statements of scientists trying to prove and explain the natural "sense" of conflict: "Conflict is a fact of life. Conflict is sometimes necessary to bring about justice where injustice exists²⁵."

That may be true, but we continue to hope and act for peace, we unite in alliances and join our efforts in working for peaceful resolution of conflict, and condemn those who make conflict violent, we even beg and pray. And that's the way it is!


²⁴ For more information please visit: www.sibamsterdam.nl

²⁵ For more information please visit: www.sibamsterdam.nl

Women Nobel Peace Price Laureates:

The Nobel Prize has been awarded to 35 women since 1901, 12 of them has been awarded in Peace

<p>Bertha von Suttner Austria 1905</p> 	<p>Honorary President of Permanent International Peace Bureau, Berne, Switzerland; Author of '<i>Lay Down Your Arms</i>'</p>
<p>Jane Addams USA 1931</p> 	<p>Sociologist; International President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom</p>
<p>Emily Greene Balch USA 1946</p> 	<p>USA Formerly Professor of History and Sociology; Honorary International President, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom</p>
<p>Betty Williams UK 1976</p> 	<p>Founder of the Northern Ireland Peace Movement (renamed Community of Peace People)</p>
<p>Mairead Corrigan UK 1976</p> 	<p>Founder of the Northern Ireland Peace Movement</p>
<p>Mother Teresa India 1979</p> 	<p>Leader of Missionaries of Charity, Calcutta</p>

<p>Alva Myrdal Sweden 1982</p> 	<p>Former Cabinet Minister; Diplomat; Writer</p>
<p>Aung San Suu Kyi Burma 1991</p> 	<p>For her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights</p>
<p>Rigoberta Menchú Tum Guatemala 1992</p> 	<p>In recognition of her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples</p>
<p>Jody Williams USA 1997</p> 	<p>Work for the banning and clearing of anti-personnel mines</p>
<p>Wangari Maathai Kenya 2004</p> 	<p>Her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace</p>
<p>Shirin Ebadi Iran 2003</p> 	<p>Her efforts for democracy and human rights. She has focused especially on the struggle for the rights of women and children.</p>

Want to Become the Next IFOR/WPP Intern?

The annual orientation lasts 6 weeks at the IFOR international secretariat in Alkmaar, the Netherlands. Each year we select two young women who are active in civil society organizations (CSOs) to deepen their knowledge in various aspects of peace, gender and non-violence activism.

The orientation includes practical office work, an introduction to international peace work and exposure visits to relevant organizations.

The Interns will produce a newsletter with information on own reflections and experiences, peace/gender/youth events, courses, internships, and other relevant topics. This will be distributed throughout IFOR and the wider peace movement, via regional newsletters and relevant websites.

Some criteria for participants are:

- ▶ Participants must have a prior interest in and commitment to peace issues and/or gender issues.
- ▶ Participants must be women of 30 years of age or younger.
- ▶ Participants must have adequate English-speaking skills.
- ▶ Participants must agree to take part in all evaluations of the program.
- ▶ Participants should have some leadership potential and be willing to spread what they have learned to others, especially women and/or youth, within their organization.

Do you want to apply for the 2010 International Orientation? Deadline 15 December 2009. The International Orientation takes place during spring time in Alkmaar, the Netherlands.

For the application form and other information please visit the WPP website:

http://www.ifor.org/WPP/education_int_orient.htm

or contact Cristina Reyna c.reyna@ifor.org.

Please fill out the form and return it to:

IFOR, WPP, Spoorstraat 38, 1815 BK Alkmaar, the Netherlands.

Or email Cristina Reyna: c.reyna@ifor.org

Name:

Date of birth:

Name on your passport:

Passport number:

Nationality:

Issued on (day/month/year):

Issued at:

Expires on (day/month/year):

Organization:

Address:

Country:

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

Give the best time and way (email or telephone) to reach you:

1. Why are you interested in participating in the International Orientation?
2. What is your involvement in peace work?
3. What is your organization's involvement in peace work?
4. What do you hope to gain by participating in the International Orientation program?
5. Which will be for you the most important activity in this International Orientation?
6. How will you spread what you have learned during the International Orientation with others?
7. Have you ever participated in any similar activities before? If yes, when and where?
8. Dates in 2010 (months) you would be available for participation in the International Orientation:
9. Which months will it be impossible for you to participate?
10. Are you a member of an IFOR branch, group or affiliate? If so, which one?

The Time is Now was produced by Aktuigun Pazylova (Kyrgyzstan) and Paulini Turagabeci (Fiji) in the framework of the Women Peacemaker Program (WPP) International Orientation as a forum for youth across the globe. The Women Peacemakers Program is an initiative of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). Since 1919, IFOR has pioneered spiritually based active non-violence. For more information about this newsletter, to apply for the International Orientation Program, or for more information about the WPP and IFOR branches in your country please visit www.ifor.org