



# **The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution**

DPI Roundtable Meeting  
Çırağan Palace, Istanbul

19<sup>th</sup> September 2012





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# THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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## Foreword

This report details the discussion that took place in Istanbul, Turkey on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012 regarding the role that women can play in conflict resolution. Women are crucial stakeholders in peacebuilding and democratic reform and yet they are too often side-lined because of entrenched gender biases. We hope that this record of the discussions that took place during this roundtable will provide a step towards tackling issues surrounding gender bias and help to shed some light on the importance of women in conflict resolution. This roundtable discussion was one of a series of DPI's Turkey seminars and is something that we would very much like to continue with. Many thanks to everyone who participated and made this dialogue so spirited and thought provoking.

DPI aims to foster an environment in which different parties share information, ideas, knowledge and concerns connected to the development of democratic solutions and outcomes. Our work supports the development of a pluralistic political arena capable of generating consensus and ownership over work on key issues surrounding democratic solutions at political and local levels.

We focus on providing expertise and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvements in promoting peace and democracy building internationally. Within this context DPI aims to contribute to the establishment of a structured public dialogue on peace and democratic advancement, as well as to create

new and widen existing platforms for discussions on peace and democracy building. In order to achieve this we seek to encourage an environment of inclusive, frank, structured discussions whereby different parties are in the position to openly share knowledge, concerns and suggestions for democracy building and strengthening across multiple levels. DPIs objective throughout this process is to identify common priorities and develop innovative approaches to participate in and influence the process of finding democratic solutions. DPI also aims to support and strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society and policy-makers through its projects and output. Comparative studies of relevant situations are seen as an effective tool for ensuring that the mistakes of others are not repeated or perpetuated. Therefore we see comparative analysis of models of peace and democracy building to be central to the achievement of our aims and objectives.

This report was prepared with the kind assistance of Stephanie Guthridge.

Kerim Yildiz

Director

**DPI**

September 2012

## DPI REPORT:

### Roundtable: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution

Istanbul, Turkey 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012



*Participants in DPIs roundtable meeting at Cirağan Palace Hotel, Istanbul: Verda Ozer, Nur Kırmızıdag, Eleanor Johnson, Neslihan Özgünes, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Sibel Eraslan, Sıdıka Çetin, Tuba Çandar, Can Zeynep Sungur, Prof. Dr. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Kezban Hatemi, Catriona Vine, Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Işın Eliçin, Melek Ulagay Taylan, Prof. Monica McWilliams, Deniz Cenk Demir, Gülten Kaya, Nebahat Akkoç, Ayla Akat, Feray Salman, Zeynep Tanbay, Adelat Ağaoğlu, Antonia Potter Prentice, Kerim Yıldız, Rakel Dink, Mehveş Evin, Özlem Gürses, Filiz Bedirhanoglu, Gülseren Onanç, Bejan Matur, Ayşe Böhrler, Isabelle Dumont, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Yeter Akın, Kibriye Evren*



*Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Prof. Monica McWilliams, Antonia Potter Prentice, Feray Salman, Bejan Matur, Catriona Vine*

# Session one

## Opening Statement: Catriona Vine,<sup>1</sup> Deputy Director, DPI

A very good morning to you all.

My name is Catriona Vine and I am the Deputy Director of the Democratic Progress Institute. On behalf of the Institute, I would like to offer a warm welcome you all today, and to thank you for joining us in this meeting on the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution.

Issues surrounding gender are central to the work of DPI. Some of you already know our work very well, but some of you may not, so I will provide a brief overview of our work for you:

DPI was founded with the aim of broadening the bases of support in society for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Through our work we seek to contribute to the establishment of a structured public dialogue on peace and democracy building and to identify common principles and priorities and develop innovative approaches to democracy-building.

We aim to support a public atmosphere of inclusion and focussed discussions where knowledge, ideas, concerns, suggestions

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*<sup>1</sup> Following completion of her LLM in Public International Law at the London School of Economics, Catriona was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 2002. She has practiced in Criminal, Public and Human Rights Law in the UK and internationally. She also has extensive teaching experience in Criminal and International Human Rights Law. She has worked in non-governmental, inter-governmental and government organisations. She is the co-author of three manuals on International Human Rights Law, and has contributed to numerous reports on the implementation of International Human Rights standards.*

and challenges in strengthening and building a more inclusive democracy can be shared.

Our Turkey programme involves research, assessment, seminars, roundtable meetings and briefings. Through our programmes we aim to support, and to strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society and policy-makers.

We believe strongly in the importance of comparative study and to this end we seek to provide opportunities for analysis and reflection of situations that may be of relevance to Turkey in seeking a resolution to its conflict.

Our Turkey programme has conducted comparative study visits to the United Kingdom including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and also to the Republic of Ireland. Participants in these studies have had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the techniques and methods that have been employed in relation to decentralisation of government, cultural and language issues, constitutional issues and issues relating to conflict resolution. We hope that future studies will include South Africa, other parts of Europe, Asia and North and South America. While these studies are useful in providing ideas about possible methods and solutions it is really important to remember that there is no one size fits all solution and that each conflict is unique.



*Catriona Vine*

So turning to the topic of this roundtable, former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said that we can no longer afford to minimise or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peace-making, peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men.

As women and mothers, we know this is logical and true, however putting the theory into practice is much more difficult. Women's peace-building efforts must be supported, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because any nation experiencing conflict needs the strength of its women. Women are the ones who hold their families and communities together during the worst of the conflict. They keep a measure of stability during chaos and during

displacement. As the attention turns to various methods of conflict resolution those contributions must be recognised.

Conflict resolution and peace-building from a gender perspective means changing the system and power dynamics that led to conflict. Sustainable peace requires fully including women and all segments of society as politically viable citizens. Women's participation in resolving and preventing conflict is not an optional, but rather an essential ingredient of peace-building.

Pain and suffering, fear and loss, hate and despair, rage and sadness; these are the emotions that women as well as men feel during conflict. But women also have an immense capacity to transcend their sorrow and look beyond the hatred and bitterness and to build a new and secure future for their families and communities.

By looking at some comparative examples of both successful and unsuccessful efforts to mainstream gender into conflict resolution and peace-building, we can try to extract principles of good and bad practice ensuring that we do not perpetuate others past mistakes and are in a position to implement those methods that have been tried and tested elsewhere. DPIs latest draft working paper which is in your conference packs, entitled Incorporating Women into Peacebuilding and Democratic Reform (in English and Turkish language versions) outlines comparative examples of this.





*Emine Eroğlu, Zeynep Tanbay, Rakel Dink*

I hope that this roundtable discussion will further contribute to the growing discussion of the specific role that women can play in the resolution of the conflict here in Turkey.

And now I would like to invite Bejan Matur to take the floor now. I am sure that I have no need to introduce Bejan to you. She is a member of DPIs Council of Experts and has taken part in all of the activities of our Turkey Programme, including our comparative studies. She will now add her insight on these issues.

Many thanks Bejan.

## Introduction:

### Bejan Matur,<sup>2</sup> DPI Council of Experts, Author and Poet

The participants here today include academics, journalists, politicians, and others, and I welcome you all to this roundtable meeting on the role of women in peacebuilding. We invited many distinguished people to take part in this activity, and we are very pleased and encouraged by such a high turn-out. Today we will aim to discuss the historical and social reality of the current situation we are in, in order to determine where the future is taking us. I will also read some messages, kindly sent by Dr. Sare Davutoğlu<sup>3</sup> and Fatmutoğlu<sup>4</sup>in,<sup>5</sup> who send their apologies for not being able to attend today's meeting.

I had prepared a written speech which I planned to read today, but when I woke up this morning I changed my mind. Goethe has an expression which I like. It roughly translates as saying: if you want to reach the hearts of others, just use your heart. Today, I will speak to you with this expression in mind.

Today, we see people suffering; they suffer because people are dying every day. Everybody in this room and around this table has their own individual pain. We can all see the current situation as it unfolds, and while we attempt to express our feelings and thoughts

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*2 Bejan Matur is a renowned, Turkey based Author and Poet. She has written widely on the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature and women's issues. She has also won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. She was formerly Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).*

*3 Dr. Sare Davutoğlu is married to Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey.*

*4 Dr. Sare Davutoğlu is married to Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey.*

*5 Fatma Şahin is Turkish Minister of Family and Social Policies.*

about it as much as we can, sometimes it is very difficult to make our voices heard. I hope that in some way, this meeting will help women to use their voice. There is a tradition befitting the themes of this seminar, from the society that I am from; the Kurdish society. If men are fighting or are engaged in violence, all a woman has to do in order to stop the fighting is take her scarf off and put it onto the ground, because the scarf from the woman's head symbolises her honour and society's honour. I believe that the words of the women around this table today also represent the honour of our society, and sometimes we can have a third eye on the conflict, which allows us to see things from a different perspective. This is why all the representatives of different areas of society are here today, and I encourage all of you to share your ideas and opinions. By doing so, hopefully we can create a common language and an alternative perspective for viewing the current conflict; this is my wish.

The Kurdish problem is most certainly the biggest problem of the Turkish Republic. It is a conflict that has been going on for over 100 years and it has multiple dimensions. While trying to deal with this problem, governments are bound to run into some problems because as you can imagine, this is a very difficult conflict to solve. But I believe that the biggest disadvantage of the Kurdish problem is that this issue has various dynamics that are controlled by different powers, so even though there may be a strong government, this is only one of the requirements needed to solve the problem. So far; this lack of success in reaching a resolution provides us with the big question; why has the problem not been solved? Throughout

the history of the Turkish Republic, all of the past governments have had the Kurdish problem on their agendas and have professed their desire to solve it, we know this. But when it comes to the implementation of conflict resolution, I see that their ultimate intention was not to necessarily *solve* the conflict; the solution was not as high on the priority list as it should have been. This is true of all types of governments, even from different political backgrounds, they have all known that something has to be done but their activities have ended up making the conflict worse and now we have lost many lives. We have paid much more than we were required to pay.



*Gülten Kaya, Kezban Hatemi, Can Zeynep Sungur, Tuba Çandar, British Ambassador David Reddaway*

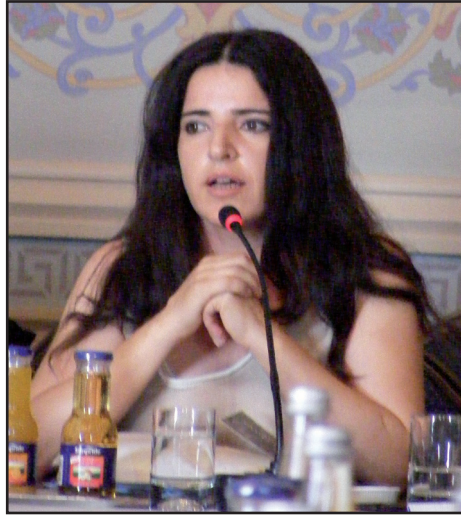
Today, we are concerned with the on-going process, the specific policy of the government regarding the Kurdish problem. I think in order to resolve this conflict, one needs to be able to correctly

identify and be able to describe what the problem is. Without this, no matter how honest and full of good intentions one is, one will not be able to find the best solution. I would say that the government party do not know exactly what the problem is and they cannot describe it correctly. In these types of social problems, you cannot look for the guilty person, you cannot look for people to accuse because if you do, you will end up forgetting about the problem altogether. We do not know who really started this conflict and it is futile, therefore to accuse people and to point fingers. Furthermore, doing so will not allow us to progress towards a solution; it will only invoke the other side to talk about their losses as well. This is where we are right now in Turkey, and if we cannot move past this, we will continue on this fruitless path. So, what are the changes that need to be made? There is a long list, starting with constitutional changes, equal rights, language rights; all of these need to be afforded to the Kurdish people and this is the responsibility of the ruling party.

But here in Turkey, as I have told you, we continue to move around in circles and we cannot get ourselves out of this loop. The ruling party has a static party line; that first we must stop using guns before anything else can change, and this does not help in finding a solution. The ruling party needs an agenda, needs concrete and visible solutions. Unfortunately for Turkey, its people have lost a lot of energy as has the ruling party, because looking for a solution and continuously hoping for an end to the violence makes us tired – there is constant talk about the conflict and the lack of results. We have been discussing the same conflict for years and we are

looking for a consensus, which of course, takes time. I think that there needs to be more action; if the solution is visible and right there then the people responsible need to take the required action instead of talking too much. However, there needs to be political willingness on the part of the ruling party to do so, and they need to present a united and single voice to the media. If you are talking about stopping guns and arms, it will be very hard to gain a consensus, you will not be able to convince the whole of society to agree to this because everyone is injured, and everyone, from both sides of the conflict, has a past riddled with pain. This pain needs to be faced and people need to move on from it and release some of their anger. When it comes to public opinion in Turkey there are some very negative discourses, on the other hand, we have an advantage because people are open to the solution. I believe that we can turn this advantage into a peace making process; we can enable this in political terms. The ruling party needs to rely on their own society, so as to create a dynamic political process; they need to trust their own society.

The ruling party has some handicaps that I wish they could share with the other parties, society and the people, and then our job would be easier. This is not about honour, because if you think in such a way, then you move away from the solution and closer to the conflict, and today in this room, I believe all of us have pain, because we are in the middle of the past and history, but we can still protect our hope; we have many reasons to do so. And for this reason, we need to confront the pain we are in, we need to leave it behind and only then, can we look for a solution.



*Bejan Matur addressing participants*

I will now read a poem from my book, called *Sons Reared by the Moon*:

*They didn't bring us the news  
that a blood stained sleep  
would herald a morning of brotherhood.  
Your brother returning from a crime  
sees over the walls where he hid his shadow.  
He washes his hands and leaves you  
as a Word in the world.  
I buried them in a place  
between a silent ceremony and a sigh.  
Dead sons. All sacrificed.  
As though the world exists to remind them they were sacrificed.  
We meet face to face.  
Beginning a tremulous lament I say, Enough.*

*Go, don't kill,  
a laugh was cut off on my lips. This must be a nightmare.  
My brother returning from a crime frightens me  
and I waken in blood and sweat.  
Open your eyes. Dig your nails in the places that hurt.  
Is there someone to wipe my breast with a handkerchief?  
My brother is returning from a crime, from dark corridors.  
His overcoat black,  
and his eyes.*

*I will never  
resemble him.*

*At night our feet were caressed and it was said  
we would cross great mountains.  
We crossed great mountains guarded by snow.  
The first day in the garden we saw three stars clear in a row.  
Sure as fate. Blazing a trail.  
I want to look at your feet, said a gentle voice.*

*I didn't tell them we might not meet again.  
All of us knew.  
That mountain devoured its sons  
and barred them behind a voice.  
Some without arms,  
some were blind.  
Brotherhood only survived in legend.  
Brotherhood was compassion.*

Thank you very much for your attention. I will now read the messages I mentioned earlier.



## **Messages from absent participants:**

Firstly, a message from Fatma Şahin, Minister of Family and Social Policies:

On Wednesday, 19th September, you will hold a very important meeting, which will have important participants from all sectors of Turkish society. I attach a great importance to this; however, unfortunately I am not able to participate because of the surgery I am undergoing at present. I wish you a very beneficial and effective meeting.

Secondly, a message from Sara Davutoğlu, wife of Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Foreign Minister of Turkey:

Due to my participation in the United Nations General Council meetings in the US on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September, I am unable to participate in the democratic Progress Institutes roundtable on gender and peace building. I am deeply sorry about this. The problem we face is one of discrimination and violence. The programme for the roundtable is a very positive one with regards to the role of women in conflict issues and violence. It is very important to mention the role of women in the context of such issues. Changes in our perspectives should go beyond the identification of women as only being part of negotiations, but this is the most fundamental element of peace building. Although we may have different approaches to the solutions, we should adopt the same line with regards to peace building. This is why I think that the kind of roundtable meeting taking place will positively

contribute to change. I would like to emphasise that I sincerely wish that women's role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution issues will increase in the future.

### **Moderator – Feray Salman:<sup>6</sup>**



*Moderator Feray Salman*

Good morning everybody. I am very pleased to be here today and to Chair this meeting. My name is Feray Salmon and I would like to welcome you all to this roundtable meeting organised by the Democratic Progress Institute. Our first speaker today is Antonia Potter Prentice, an expert in humanitarian development and peace

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<sup>6</sup> Feray Salmon is the General Coordinator of the Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP).

building issues. She has worked for seventeen years in organisations such as Oxfam GB, EPLO, and Médecins du Monde. Antonia will talk about the importance of gender in conflict resolution, specifically Women and gendered perspectives in peace processes: why this matters, why it is challenging, and what we have achieved so far. I would now like to leave the floor to her.

**Antonia Potter Prentice,<sup>7</sup> European Peacebuilding Liaison Office: Women and gendered perspectives in peace processes: why this matters, why it is challenging, and what we have achieved so far**



*Antonia Potter Prentice*

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*7 Antonia Potter Prentice has 17 year's experience across a diverse range of humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues in the not for profit sector, most recently specialising in women's empowerment and gender. This includes extensive management and leadership at a strategic level. Educated at Oxford and the London School of Economics, she has worked in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor, Switzerland (Geneva), India, USA (New York), and Indonesia for non governmental organisations including Save the Children, Concern Worldwide, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Oxfam GB and Médecins du Monde. Currently she is working at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office as a Senior Associate on their Gender and Peacebuilding programme.*

Thank you Feray and thank you so much for the warm welcome. I am ashamed to say that this is my first visit to this wonderful country! We also have such an unbelievably beautiful view of the Bosphorus outside of this room!

I am particularly looking forward to sharing ideas and views on this interesting subject. I shall be very respectful of the time, and also of the fact that I have some very fascinating colleagues sitting to my right. So I am just going to spend a few minutes to give you a little bit of the global picture of what we call the gender, peace and security agenda and then the other speakers will be telling you about some specific experiences of their own. I think most of us are keen to have question and answer sessions so we can really learn from each other and from the different contexts from which we come, so I look forward to those. Thank you very much for your warm welcome.

I am going to start by talking about these contentious terms; women, sex, and gender. I refer to both women and gender because this is an issue that still confuses and upsets people; so it is important to try to be clear. I see that you are nearly all women, however I am very happy to see some men in the room. It is true that at every single talk I have given on this issue I am afraid there has always been a large majority of women over men which is something that I think needs to be addressed. But allow me to just quickly summarise: one's sex is what the biology of one's anatomy determines one to be; one's gender is the construct put upon that sex identity by any given society, which governs the relationships between the sexes in

those societies.

So, in what I like to call our niche community, the gender, peace and security community, we tend to use both terms: we talk about women to highlight the fact that women are disproportionately affected by conflict, and that they are disproportionately excluded from processes to resolve it and to build new societies. We use gender, reminding people that men and women (and indeed boys and girls) have different perceptions and experiences of the same events (both in peace and war time). And therefore they will have different ideas and requirements about how the best future for a whole society can be achieved; we, by which I mean those members of that community, such as myself and DPI as well, think that both sides should be heard equally.

I want to point out at this moment that there is no armed conflict that I know of, that is fundamentally about gender issues; but every single issue that armed conflict is about, has gendered connotations, including issues of ethnic and religious identity, issues of ownership and access to resources like water, land, minerals or even political power itself.

Conflict has the effect of shaking societies up – both for bad and good, and one common element is that it often takes women from traditionally conservative or private roles into different spheres – as combatants or those who support them, as single heads of household and economic actors, and sometimes into the political sphere itself. The end of war does not have to mean a return to the

*status quo ante*; if women are interested to pursue roles in the wider society in a new post conflict era, how is that a threat to peace? I would suggest it is rather the opposite.

## **International norms**

In addition to these observations, there is now a strong body of international laws and norms which relate generally to women's equality and empowerment (like the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, or the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, or Millennium Development Goal 3) and specifically to their rights and needs for participation and protection in peace and security issues we have what to some of us, is a very famous UN SC RES, which is called Res 1325 (UNSCR 1325 et al, from 2000).

This resolution is really the keystone norm on these issues, so I will take just a few minutes to explain it for those who are not already familiar with it. UNSCR 1325 is primarily concerned with international peace and security, and recognises the following long-neglected facts: that women and men (and girls and boys) have a different experience of war, both as combatants and non-combatants, and thus different roles, views and needs regarding arrangements to stop violent conflict, recover from it and prevent its recurrence. It recognizes that women have an equal right to participate as agents in the resolution and prevention of conflict; that gender relations (the relationship between the sexes within a specific culture) within conflict-affected societies may shift during,

and after, conflict; that the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war (or side/after-effect of its ravages) is a neglected reality which must be responded to, stopped, prevented and prosecuted; that peace processes and their implementation present a special opportunity to promote gender equality in societies and should, in principle, be gender mainstreamed. It was an unusual resolution as its drafting was very much driven by the advocacy of women's civil society organisations, and because it was unanimously voted by the Security Council. I think you know looking across the border at Syria, how very challenging it can be to get the SC to be unanimous on anything. But on this resolution I am happy to tell you that they were. But it has no formal accountability mechanism for Member States, although the Secretary General does report on it yearly to the Council and has developed a set of indicators. At Member State level the key piece of policy machinery designed for the implementation of the resolution is the National Action Plan, or NAP, which is supposed to define a governments objectives, priorities, resources, partners, timelines and means of evaluation for carrying out the resolution both in its own back yard, and in third countries where it may be active on peace and security issues. So far there are 37 such plans, the large majority (22) of which are from European countries. So far there is not one for this country.

I hope we will have a chance to talk at a later point about your views of how any or all of these laws and norms have changed both the discourse and the reality here in Turkey, and how you see them helping to resolve the current peace and security issues on Turkeys agenda. After all, the country is a signatory to CEDAW

(1985) and the BFPA, so perhaps one day there will be an increased representation of women in its parliament ((Turkey is joint 91 with Chile on IPU listing with 14.2 per cent ; Rwanda tops the list with 56 per cent) , and a National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security.



*Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, Kibriye Evren, Ayla Akat, Filiz Bedirhanoğlu,  
Nebahat Akkoç, Emel Kurma, Gülseren Onanç,  
Melek Ulugay Taylan, Yeter Akın*

## **Why women and gender in peacebuilding?**

For today, however, I just want to take you through some of the key reasons why it matters to take seriously the issues of women's



participation, and using approaches which take gender into account. Then I hope to share a few ideas about what the challenges have been elsewhere, which might be relevant to the context in Turkey and the region, and some suggestions on how to resolve them.

So, why does women's participation and representation in peace and security issues matter? The first answer is *a priori* that of equality: women are half the population, thus they should have a proportionate role in deciding and implementing any plans that affect them. Just as trenchant is the fact that they are disproportionately victims in war and its aftermath, and disproportionately under-represented in public life – quite as much in developed and peaceful countries as those emerging from decades of war. Even here in Turkey there is representation of 14 per cent of women in parliament but the best representation of women in the world is in post-conflict Rwanda, with a representation of 56 per cent which might be interesting for some of you to know.

Next comes the point that 50 per cent of peace agreements fail within their first decade and that research shows that inclusive processes are more credible to the public and have a higher success rate. Given the evident absence of women, this provides a significant avenue for addressing the inclusiveness issue. Finally there is the empirical evidence of women's contributions in peace and security. There has been an enormous amount of work done since UNSCR 1325 was passed in 2000 to document the value that women's participation adds (although notably no corresponding work on the specific added value of male participation *qua male* for which

arguments are not demanded by the international community as the basis for their inclusion or exclusion from peace processes).

The kind of substantive value added which has been documented includes:

1. The communication of different perspectives either as combatants or non-combatants on peace process issues (for example, the involvement of female El Salvadorian ex-combatants in revising the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration (DDR) programme from 1992-1993 to better meet their and their community's needs; Sri Lanka's subcommittee on gender which was created in 2002; and the current (as of 2011) involvement of women in the Mindanao Think Tank Project process);
2. The potential to increase the inclusivity of a process (for example, women's participation in the 2003 Loya Jirga in Afghanistan underpinned the inclusion of minority groups such as Uzbeks and in this case if women had not argued for them, then they may not have been included);
3. The potential to increase the legitimacy of a process by making it more representative, reflective of the broader affected and future society, and more accountable (for example, in talks leading to the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement; and the 1994-1996 part of the Guatemala talks mediated by the UN and the Group of Friends which incorporated a Civil Society Assembly with a specific women's platform);

4. The ability to organise effectively for peace across party and ethnic lines (this, in fact, is a standard feature of women's peace organising of which perhaps the classic examples are the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition founded in 1996 and fielding two delegates to the talks leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998; and Somalia's Sixth Clan officially founded in 2002);
5. The ability to prioritize peacemaking over power-sharing which is linked to women's ability to organise across party lines (for example, women's activism in the Arab Spring countries in 2011 in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya). This is of course a generalisation, but one that has been proven to be true;
6. The ability to communicate and network with segments of the community which may be off-limits to others especially in culturally conservative settings (for example, in Afghanistan and Iraq throughout the ongoing conflicts);
7. The ability to conduct internal or regional or other track (1.5, 2, 3 etc.) mediation to support and sustain processes going through difficulties (for example, informal contacts between representatives of the Mano River Women's Peace Network and conflict parties in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011);
8. The ability to mobilize and organise effectively at the community, grassroots and national level through existing networks (for example, in Kenya in 2008);

**9.** The ability to put effective pressure on negotiators/community/family members to, for example, keep peace talks going to a conclusion (for example, in Liberia in 2003 and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2002) or maintain a ceasefire, lay down arms and participate in peacebuilding activities (for example, in northeast India/Nagaland in 2009);

**10.** The ability to use identity roles such as mother/daughter/wife to influence events, both through personal relationships and identity-based organising (for example, the Meira Paibis/Manipuri mothers group monitoring ceasefire arrangements in northeast India/Manipur from 2004 and the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo, calling for redress to human rights abuses in Argentina from 1997 onwards);

**11.** The provision of language and ideas for gender-sensitive peace agreement text or constitutional text (for example, in Cyprus in 2009; in Darfur for the Abuja Agreement of 2006; and the effect of women's activism on the Juba peace talks in Uganda in 2006).

These abilities and capacities, and the important fact that groups of women are rarely characterised as spoilers (while this is, of course, possible), all suggest that women's involvement would broaden the peace builders range of tools and tactics to reach a positive outcome, depending on the space and leverage that they truly have with the conflict parties and other stakeholders. The SC Resolution

has improved international bureaucracies but it has not changed or altered the situation on the ground as much.

## **Blockages and Challenges**

Involving women and gender considerations in peace processes is, however, clearly easier said than done. The international normative frameworks have led to a radical sea change in language and bureaucratic arrangements amongst the international community but little effect has yet been seen on the ground: we simply don't know what many governments, armed groups, or even civil society organisations in many countries think about the role of women in the processes they are engaged in. Culture and religion inevitably create complicated cross currents.

Women's presence as negotiators, mediators and peace agreement signatories in formal peace processes remains negligible (less than 10 per cent, none, and less than 3 per cent respectively) and their place in important post-conflict institutions such as commissions on truth and reconciliation, reparations, electoral and constitutional reform is only guaranteed where activism and quotas are in effective operation. In Egypt, where women's important role in the uprising of the Arab Spring is generally acknowledged, there were no women on the interim constitutional drafting committee formed in 2011. At the recent second Bonn Conference on Afghanistan in December 2011 there was a single female on the civil society delegation and an impressive 33 per cent of the government delegation were women.

However, the women still expressed concern that they may not be able to meaningfully influence discussions and that, in particular, they feared that a potential re-opening of closed door talks with the Taliban could pose a threat to the fragile and uneven gains made for women's rights in Afghanistan in the last decade. However if we look at peacebuilding and reconciliation work at the community level (the so-called second and third tracks of peacebuilding) women are extraordinarily active.

It seems that there are still pockets of resistance to high-level female participation in the peacemaking world, both internationally and at national level, and difficulty in connecting grass roots level peace work with the higher or more formal levels of peace dialogue. Culture is always a popular argument, but given the nature of women's constructive activism in such places as Afghanistan or Yemen (now underlined by the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize awards to Yemeni Tawakkol Karman and the two Liberians, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee), this seems less and less powerful. The issue now is not that culture should be accepted as a barrier, but more precisely how to ensure that the women of any given culture have reasonable access to key decision making processes in their context. There is a real concern that the imposition of perceived Western agendas may serve to further harden existing hardline positions (Afghanistan being the most obvious case in point, although this is equally true in Arab Spring countries), and also that it puts women in a difficult position when they wish to be both patriotic, or true to a particular grouping, but also pursue a women's empowerment agenda. Again, the key issue here is to

listen to what a range of women in that country have to say, and to heed their advice about how to approach the issue effectively (which may not be head-on, but is also unlikely to be completely hands-off).

At the national level, there is rarely an absence of women's networks and organisations (even if they are not working directly on peace and security issues), which are ready to support and push senior women into relevant positions. However, those supporting and facilitating peacebuilding efforts need to link with local women actors and support them to develop appropriate tactics to advocate locally and nationally about the value of including and listening to them.



*Verda Ozer, Sibel Eraslan and Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak*

## Ideas to move forwards

Here are just a few tactics and strategies, which could be useful to discuss in terms of improving women's representation and the use of gendered perspectives in peace and security issues.

**Role modeling:** for those that wish to preach women's inclusion to others, practice it yourself. Salim did this in the talks leading to the Darfur Peace Agreement in 2006. This shows what is possible, that commitment to international norms is real, and gives confidence and fodder to women on the ground to make their own arguments.

When the Secretary-General visited Libya in November 2011, he and his delegation met with the National Transitional Council which at that time had one woman member. He gently chided the NTCs Head, Mustafa Abdul Jalil, for the lack of women on his council. In an equally good humoured manner, Jalil agreed that Libya could and would do better, but, to amusement on all sides, he turned the argument back to the Secretary-General, pointing out that he himself had no senior women on his delegation... Ian Martin, SRSG UNSMIL

## Use opportunities like international donor or reconstruction conferences or needs assessments to bring in women and women's groups in specific roles

This can also help connect them with outside support that will bolster their work and influence inside their context. However, be sensitive that the outside support does not endanger their security



or block off their agenda internally. As an example of good practice in this regard, the Institute for Inclusive Security and UN Women co-organised a Gender Symposium on the margins of the South Sudan International Engagement Conference in Washington D.C. in December 2011 where recommendations were developed to feed directly into the conference.

### **Recruit and empower a gender adviser/team to any peace mechanism, who has peace process expertise and relevant country expertise**

The gender adviser (or, ideally a pair of local and international advisers) is now a common feature on the staff of peacemaking and peacekeeping missions. They need to be knowledgeable on issues particularly relevant to the given context, such as DDR or election monitoring, and should be in a position to provide gender analysis and actor/issue mapping for the missions conflict and power analysis; to facilitate contacts with local women and civil society to solicit their views and develop options on the issues in question; and to help monitor ongoing processes. They should be located as close as possible to the head of mission and speak the main local language.

### **Make gender analysis a part of the mediation teams conflict analysis**

This analysis gives depth and dimension to existing mapping of the conflict and may reveal further options, possible interlocutors and a deeper understanding of the political and cultural context.

## **Apply diplomatic and advocacy pressure**

Pressure should be placed on institutions of government and specific conflict-related bodies such as truth and justice commissions to hire, promote and support more women to enter and rise up in their ranks (for example, this was successful in promoting the involvement of women in all levels and activities of the Timor L'este Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Advocacy through regional organisations or local civil society may be more effective and acceptable than direct pressure from the mediator or their team.

## **Identify and support a local champion or champions**

They need to be people who can avoid the arguments of cultural imperialism and who have the convening power to bring heterogeneous groups into a single, constructive platform (the role of Graça Machel in Kenya in 2008 is a case in point).

## **Be sensitive to the fact that all women are not the same as each other**

In consultations and seeking contacts, be aware of the usual potential differences (including rural/urban, class, religion and ethnicity) between people. While women may organise politically as women their views may vary depending on their background, relationships and interests; they may also choose to privilege different identities of their multiple identities at different times (at times their religious identity, or party political identity may be more important to them

than their gender identity; but they are likely to be more sensitive to their gender identity than men because of their experience of marginalisation on the basis of that identity).

### **Use peer to peer exchange with women's organisations from similar or related cultures/religions**

Do this in order to build capacity and experience and to find effective strategies to work towards women's participation and gendered perspectives in ways which will not cause problematic backlash or accusations of Westernized agendas. For example, the HD Centre brought Karen Tanada of the Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute in the Philippines, who had been closely involved in developing the Philippines NAP, to advise the Indonesian group who were drafting the 1325 NAP in 2010, which the Indonesians described as very fruitful.

### **Institutionalize consultation with CSOs including women's organisations**

In addition, encourage national interlocutors to do the same. The UN Secretary-General is now requiring his senior officials to report regularly to him on this, a practice which could also be replicated in missions. This can be done in parallel to specific mediation processes or talks if there are no openings there.

### **Ensure consultation with women's organisations involves all the issues they think are relevant to the peace process**

Do not only focus on issues that are traditionally seen as relevant to

women – allow the women to set the agenda.

## **Increase training at different levels in the relevant skills**

There is a growing choice of in-house and non-institutional training providers with courses aimed at third party mediators/their teams and women from conflict-affected countries. UN Women has recently run such training sessions in West Africa and Kyrgyzstan, and the HD Centre's humanitarian negotiation work in Darfur has shown that awareness of the resolution on the ground is good through intense inputs by UN Women amongst others. The Institute for Inclusive Security and Kvinna Till Kvinna are just two of several international non-governmental organisations offering tailored training, and ideally such training in the future could be led by local/national organisations. A focus on developing and implementing internal institutional training on aspects of WPS has been one of the successful features of UN and EU WPS policy implementation in the last decade but this needs to be extended to the country level. However, training for other conflict parties including governments and non-state armed groups is still an area which needs to be developed.

## **Ensure that women's security and practical needs are provided for**

Practical needs ought not to hinder their presence at important peace-related events (such as arranging/ensuring funding for

transportation, appropriate accommodation and facilities, and care for children or elderly dependents). One example of this is Canadian financial support to women's participation in the Darfur talks culminating in 2006.

### **Provide incentives where they are in your power for parties to include women in negotiating or other key bodies**

These can include extra seats at the table as well as the opportunity to improve international image and legitimacy. In implementation, encourage donors to apply conditions to their funding in appropriate ways.

### **Suggest the implementation of time-limited conditions (like quotas)**

These can apply to long and short lists for relevant posts or for elections in parliamentary settings based on successful post-conflict quotas elsewhere (for example, Rwanda tops the list as 56 per cent of parliamentarians are women, with South Africa not far behind in 5th place with 44%; whereas the US is in 69th place with 17 per cent and Brazil is in 109<sup>th</sup> place with 8.6 per cent). These figures suggest that a phalanx of future potential mediators and negotiators exists in the female ranks of post-conflict parliamentarians.

### **Ensure temporary measures for women's inclusion are backed up with meaningful support**

It is not enough to push women through the door; it is important to be able to support them effectively when they are on the other

side. The moral argument about whether quotas are right or wrong will never be won either way; however, they have been shown to be effective in getting women into places that they were not before, and for which non-binding measures have proven to be ineffective. Where quotas are in place, they need to be accompanied by the appropriate training or other support so that when women make it into, for example, the Nepali Constituent Assembly or the Afghan parliament, they are able to participate meaningfully. This means that they can understand the rules of the game, have the intellectual resources (information, contacts) to join in and that their security is not threatened as a result of their role.

### **Support and contribute to the publication and dissemination of data and analysis**

This analysis will be about the effects of the involvement of women and their views in peacemaking and peacebuilding at all levels. These efforts should not only be focused on subjects deemed to be of interest to, or about, women but all subjects relevant to peacemaking. It should also be done in ways which are relevant and useful at the national level, not only the international level (thus, ensuring documents are translated into relevant languages is important). Anecdotes shared between senior figures can have a powerful effect as a means of sharing data and experiences.

### **Bring in women's voices and views using different mechanisms where getting women into a negotiation room is difficult**

This can be done through the solicitation of their views in

consultations, or the production of position papers. In many conflicts women have set up their own peace tables (this is currently the case in Mindanao, Philippines) or developed memoranda/agendas/recommendations outlining their peace process priorities (as in Burundi, the Solomon Islands, Uganda and the December 2011 Libya One Voice conference).

## Conclusion

Having thrown a multitude of ideas at you, I am going to stop here to make sure we have enough time to listen to Monica's experiences, and then to what I hope will be a lively and challenging discussion based on your own context and experiences. Thank you for your kind attention.

**Feray Salman:** Thanks very much indeed Antonia for that insightful talk. We now move onto our second speaker of the day, Professor Monica McWilliams, who is going to talk on the subject of: Women at the Table: lessons learned during the multi-party peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. Monica McWilliams is from Ulster University and she works in the Transitional Justice Institute as well as in the Women's Rights Commission. She worked as a consultant for the Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, and she has first-hand experience of conflict resolution issues.

## **Prof. Monica McWilliams,<sup>8</sup> Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster: Women at the Table: lessons learned during the multi-party peace negotiations in Northern Ireland**



*Prof. Monica McWilliams*

Thank you very much. I am very pleased to be here and I thank DPI for inviting me to visit Istanbul – it is my first time here.

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*8 Monica McWilliams is Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Monica was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. She was the co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. She served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Her published work focuses on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.*



Many years ago, whilst at university in the United States, I fell in love with a man from Turkey, and he fell in love with me. He lives in Ankara now, and someday I hope to meet him again. He came to Ireland to visit my parents, but I never made it to Turkey, so this is my first time here. I am now married to an Irish man! And he is now married to a Turkish woman. But I say this because I learnt a great deal from him, as you do when you talk and exchange stories of your conflict and your history when you are young. I had left Northern Ireland because my boyfriend had been murdered in 1974 when I was at university, and I had decided that it was time for me to take a scholarship to go to the US and take some time out to decide on my future. This young man was at the same university; reflecting on Turkey, as I was reflecting on Ireland. He taught me a lot about Turkey, Turkish history, and about the conflict of the Kurdish and Turkish people. I tell you this because I think that we have a lot to learn from each other.

I was 15 years of age when the conflict really started in Northern Ireland, and I was privileged, at 44 years of age, to sign the peace agreement as one of the negotiators at the peace table. So, how did I get from being the daughter of farmers in the countryside of Northern Ireland, to becoming a signatory to the peace agreement? How did I go from trying to manage a terrible and bloody conflict of over 35 years, to trying to resolve that conflict and today, living through a transformation of the conflict?

I think we can learn a great deal from other conflicts. I learned this particularly from South Africa, when President Mandela

was kind enough to invite us from the peace table in Northern Ireland, to listen to their story in South Africa. His words were very powerful, he said: you are here simply to listen to what we have experienced, we cannot teach you or tell you what to do in Northern Ireland, but perhaps you will go home reflecting on what we have learned from our conflict and from our negotiations. This was in 1997 and it was the most powerful three days of our lives. Our delegation hated each other so much that they refused to sit in the same room as each other. We had two rooms, so President Mandela had to give his speech twice! We had two sets of men's toilets because of an incident that happened when we only had one toilet for men. President Mandela told us, you have brought apartheid back to South Africa, and I was ashamed. A year later we signed the peace agreement and I believe that all of us who heard what South Africa had to tell us came home and thought: do we want to go on living like this with two of everything? Where people refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the rights of each other and of the other side? Where we remain strangers to each other's pain, hurt and damage? Or, do we want to truly start drawing up a compromise, an agreement, on how we live together? And we finally did that.

But where do women come into this?



*Emine Eroğlu, Ayşe Böhürler, Zeynep Tanbay, Rakel Dink,  
Sıdıka Çetin, Şerife Gül Arıman, Gülten Kaya, Kezban Hatemi,  
Can Zeynep Sungur, Tuba Çandar, British Ambassador  
David Reddaway*

In the early 1990s we knew that finally we were going to have peace talks in Northern Ireland, and there are three things that I think are needed when you are beginning to talk about peace, and about reaching a peace agreement:

1. You must construct a process that is inclusive. And most people think of inclusion in relation to enemies, in relation to combatants, para-militaries or the army, the warlords and the political elites. But they do not think of inclusion as also being men and women. And I remember President Mandela telling us, that it was so important for them to have an equal delegation of men and women; for every man at the table, there would be a woman at the table. And he insisted on that principle. We did not have that. And when I saw the British and Irish government declaring after our ceasefires in 1994 that there would be peace

talks, a number of women realised that we had been at the frontline, that we had worked for over twenty years crossing into each other's territories, talking to each other, fighting domestic violence, setting up centres against rape and sexual abuse, raising the issues of all kinds of violations that were occurring in our communities and against our young people. And we just said; we also have something to bring to this table. If there is going to be conflict resolution and transformation, it will need all of us to change our attitudes; attitudes between enemies and attitudes between men and women. Our society was very conservative and religious and I was often told, your place is in the home, your place is not at this table. I was told often to go home and have babies and I often said, I have had my babies - I have a brain as well as other parts of my body that I want to use to make a contribution at this time, to this table. We were accustomed to being marginalised and we were accustomed to being insulted. We were accustomed that our customary role was not as negotiators. But we got organised, and we stood for election as a women's coalition, incorporating women from both sides of the conflict and we got to the table. So that is stage one. Stage one is perhaps for you to discuss here amongst civic society, what are your links with each other? Have you got influence? If there was to be peace negotiations or talks about the future of this country, constitutional talks, talks about governance, talks about identity, talks about language, would you be at the

table? Would you have representatives at the table? Have you a link to the table? So we discussed all that and we decided to do both, that we would link with those parties that were at the table, but that we would also become a party ourselves. Stage one in conflict resolution - getting to the table.

2. Stage two: What do you do when you get to the table? We had an agenda, a very simple agenda based on equality, human rights and inclusion. They were principles rather than proposals, but we decided that on those three principles we could unite the very diverse group of women from all kinds of backgrounds; women who had been in politics, women who wanted nothing to do with political parties, women from rural areas, academics, trade unionists, women in the home. You can imagine how difficult that is, to create a sense of belonging among such different women, and we were Protestant and Catholic, as well as some women who disagreed with both of those titles. So we came to the table with an agenda that we would work for peace; we would speak to the warlords, and we called them warlords long before anyone had heard about the Taliban. We decided that we would speak to those in government, we would go into the prisons, we would talk to prisoners, we would go wherever we were needed and indeed we put ourselves in the dangerous positions in order to do so. But that was what we wanted in terms of inclusion. In terms of equality, we asked that a number of proposals in the

final agreement would recognise the role and the rights of women. And I can specifically tell you later how we drafted those. But you need to build capacity and we needed to be trained. It is different to be a facilitator, compared to being a mediator, which is mostly what women do. And then you are a negotiator and it was important for me as the leader of my party, not to always fall into the role of mediation and facilitation but to remember that I was also entitled to be there as a full negotiator. And so I trained as a negotiator, and I learned how to negotiate and what I discovered was that all the other party leaders, most of them anyway, had not one single notion about how to negotiate. The two governments, the Irish and the British, knew how to negotiate as I am sure the British Ambassador today would acknowledge, because they are governments and they have resources and expertise. But mostly, political actors do not, and in a conflict they are more used to talking about their own demands than they are about negotiating around someone else's demands. So, we spent two years negotiating, day and night, and I was a mother with small children at this point. I had to do what all of you do, I had a day job, and I had to juggle and risk and decide on priorities. We met every night at each other's houses and what we have since discovered, as the chairperson of the negotiations told us, we were more prepared, and more effective, and more efficient than most of the others at the table because we were spending time every night working

through the different issues that were creating such problems. But we also shared our resolutions and what we thought to be some solutions with the other parties, so they were our two tactics. One was, what do we want? And what do we insist on being in the final agreement? And we got that, and some of that is something that you have heard earlier from Antonia, and it is about what women bring to the table. There would have been very little in the peace agreement, if the women's coalition had not been at the table. For example there would have been nothing on victims, very little on reconciliation - we wrote most of the chapter on reconciliation in relation to the need for an integrated society and a shared society about education. With regards to the future we wrote about mixed housing and about resources for young people. We proposed a civic forum to sit alongside the new government's arrangements of a shared assembly and a shared coalition government, and that civic forum was very much like this room; made up of people from civic society who were not politically elected members, but who had much to offer in terms of their expertise. And we also took part in the discussions on the decommissioning of weapons and guns, and it was then said at the table that we women had an interest in guns being taken out of politics but we were also aware that not all arms were imported, and I used to raise my arm at the table, to show that this arm can cause a lot of damage to a person and mostly a woman's body, as much as

a gun. We had to think of attitudes and changing attitudes towards violence and towards how we would reorient and transform our society from one that had accepted violence and conflict, to one that accepted a transformation in attitudes.

3. And then, stage three. Finally we signed the agreement, we left the table, and the hard work started, and that was the implementation.



*Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Özlem Gürses,  
Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen, Şirin Payzın*

So firstly, get organised. Secondly, decide what you want and what you need to give to other parties if you cannot get it through your own party so that your issues get to the table. And thirdly, ensure that it is enforced, ensure that it is implemented. A peace agreement should not be a wish list, a peace agreement should not be or a



dream, a peace agreement has to be put into action. And strangely, the things in Northern Ireland that I thought would be the most difficult turned out to be the easiest to implement. We have now reformed policing, and our system is now considered to be a model for conflict resolution and transformation. We have reformed the criminal justice system; as well as take on new government arrangements and political assembly sharing arrangements that are working. But the pieces that have been the most difficult were things that we should not have had such a hard time implementing. For example the two rights that are in the agreement concerning women have still not been implemented. The Bill of Rights, for which I drafted (I was the Chief Commissioner of Human Rights), also contained some rights in relation to gender specific clauses that have not been accepted. I know this because I am constantly asked: what have these (rights for women) got to do with conflict? The conflict, they say, was between Catholics and Protestants, and not between men and women, as if Catholics and Protestants were not also men and women, as if Kurdish people and Turkish people are not also men and women! And so we have had a hard time convincing those who promised to implement the agreement, that the transformation of our society also includes transformation with regards to how we treat women in our society.

So I will conclude there. There are many other things that I could tell you, but Antonia has already mentioned some of these things, such as, the fact that women sometimes cannot do this alone; we need strong champions. In our case there was a champion in the British government in the form of a woman called Mo Mowlam.

There were champions in the Irish government and in the US government; Hilary Clinton was a strong supporter of myself and often spoke about the role of our coalition in Northern Ireland. But local champions can be men as well as women, and you have to find those champions.

There are other techniques and tools that I learned, that I now use and promote in terms of how to get women to the table. These involve women needing to stay with those who have remained in government and are now the political leaders, to keep impressing upon them, that if we are to truly make a change in society, women should not be allowed to go backwards. After the conflict and war is over you often find that this happens to women, and this should not be the case. In Northern Ireland we remain very active, we remain committed to our peace process but we also remain strong advocates for the rights of women to be accepted as human rights. Thank you.

**Feray Salman:** I now open the floor for questions to our first speakers.

**Participant:** Professor McWilliams, that was a very interesting story, and very enjoyable for me to listen to. I have a very short question regarding the sharing of political power or power sharing arrangements. You said that this could easily be put into practice. But this was tested in Lebanon before the civil war and it did not work, also before the separation of Cyprus, I mean before 1973. So these political sharing arrangements, what are they exactly? You

also said that some aspects were put into practice better than you expected, how so? What kind of political sharing arrangement did you make? Thank you.

**Feray Salman:** Let me take another question and then our speakers can reply.

**Participant:** Thank you very much for this comprehensive and influential speech Monica. My question is, in Turkey, with our current situation; how do we establish such a coalition of women? I mean, after you establish this coalition and after it starts to develop, is it a very strong force at the table? Women from both sides of the conflict have their own agendas and they can talk about this at the table - this contributed to the Northern Ireland process. However, there is a challenge before us, the challenge of how to establish and gather women from *both* sides. For example in front of us, as far as I can observe, how can everybody come to such a negotiating table, without betraying their own parties?

I have a comment for the previous speaker as well, Antonia. You mentioned Kenya as an example, and you said that there are fragmented structures there. Not only is there a separation between Turkish and Kurdish people but there are also various fragments *within* the Turkish and Kurdish groups of people. It might also be interesting if you to look at this subject up further.

**Feray Salman:** Speakers, the floor is yours.

**Prof. Monica McWilliams:** Our political arrangement is very

complicated, and it will take much more than five minutes to explain it but I will try to work with that time. So what our political arrangement *does* allow is that it no longer accepts a majority or a minority rule. It is like a quota, in that each party nominates according to its success at the elections and the number of seats for ministers. They are entitled to take up those posts, and until a few years ago, one of the spoilers - one of the anti-agreement parties, refused to take up their seats and would not participate in the arrangement. This was because they believed that another party that was made up of warlords had not really given up all of their weapons among other things.

I say this because these things take time. It took us 13 years after the agreement to reach stability whilst using this arrangement and one asks today; will this be the arrangement forever? And the answer may be that it will not last forever, that it will one day change again. But for now it is a compromise and it is the only arrangement out of the conflict that people have managed to agree upon. I always find it very amusing that it is a form of affirmative action, in that each party affirms the quotas and the seats. But when I speak about affirmative action for women, in terms of their under representation in society, the same people say: oh no, we cannot have that kind of affirmative action, that would be discrimination. So the same parties that take up these seats under a quota system refuse to acknowledge the need for quotas for women.

And I know about Lebanon, because I have studied the country and it is these consociational arrangements that are very difficult

to put in place but that work. One of the good things is that, we now have some women in those senior positions because of the formation of the women's coalition. I am certain, and the women in those positions have told me, that they would not have been put into their senior positions had there not been a group of women putting pressure on the parties to put women forward into these senior roles.

On the second question, very briefly, how do you form a women's coalition? That is for you to resolve or to think through. I cannot possibly begin to say how you would do this within Turkey.

In our situation, we had very strong networks of women just like this, around the table, and we decided to write to the parties and ask how many women they were putting at the table, and the parties did not answer our letters. So then we said to them; well we think we will form a coalition ourselves and become a political party. And we allowed some of the women to remain in their political parties and *also* come into our coalition as well as including women who never belonged to a political party. Many of the women did not ever tell anybody that they were in the women's coalition so we were the strangest political party. We were also strange in that we did not want to get elected! I think we were the only political party that ever stood for election that were hoping not to be elected. We were doing it because we wanted the other parties to see the significance and the importance of inclusion. And when we got elected, I nearly died because I then realised that I was going to be in a political party. And of course many women, may feminists all

said; you are risking everything that we have been so successful in doing, you are going to join this corrupt group at this table, you are going to be in the pockets of the British government, and the pockets of the Irish government, you are going to end up with blood on your hands talking to those terrible para-militaries. All of that was said and we said; we can live with that, there are many things that you can keep throwing at us but we believe in what we are doing.

The hardest part was keeping ourselves together at times, but this was also the best part because if we could work out the disagreements amongst ourselves then we were working out the future. We were trying to work out, when we were being challenged every day and every night by someone from this side and someone from that side, how to begin to reach an agreement with these two sets of differences. But we kept drafting and drafting until we figured something out that we could propose, and we brought that to the table. Sometimes our ideas were taken seriously and sometimes people said, well wait on that until later. It required imagination, creativity, and curiosity because everyone at the table was not speaking to anyone else at the table and they thought this was great: I will never speak to you as long as I live. Well, how do I negotiate with you if I am never going to speak to you as long as I live? I asked. So I said, we have no problem speaking to this person and we will find out exactly what that person is thinking, and then we will bring that back into *our* thinking and we will work from that. And I think, I hope, that both the British and the Irish Government would acknowledge our role, they did at the

time but we may get written out of history very quickly. They were very grateful however, for the information that we were bringing to them, not just from the streets and the communities where we belonged, but also from the different parties around the table who we were constantly talking to and challenging. So we were sharing information with the governments, we were sharing information with the parties and we were sharing and debating every night and every week amongst ourselves.

**Feray Salman:** You may remember that a woman's platform for peace was established in Turkey, but unfortunately it was not possible to continue with. Hopefully we will find the opportunity to renew this initiative. Now, I would like to pass to the next speaker, the third speaker, who will be talking about gender, violence and conflict resolution. Ayşe Betül Çelik is an expert in political science and conflict resolution at Sabancı University, she mostly works on inter-ethnic conflict resolution and forced migration, she wrote the restructuring of the citizenship in the face of forced migration, she is working on reconciliation and dialogue. I would like to leave the floor to her now. Thank you very much.

## **Ayşe Betül Çelik,<sup>9</sup> Associate Professor, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey: Gender, Violence and conflict resolution**



*Speaker Ayşe Betül Çelik*

*<sup>9</sup> Ayşe Betül Çelik received her Ph.D. in political science from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 2002 and is an Associate Professor at Sabancı University in Istanbul, Turkey. Ayşe teaches political science and conflict resolution. She is an expert on inter-ethnic conflict resolution, reconciliation and dialogue. Her research areas include ethnicity, culture and conflict, forced migration, civil society and post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. She has written several published articles and a book on Turkey's Kurdish Question, forced Kurdish migration and role of NGOs in the conflict. She also teaches gender awareness to high school teachers in several cities in Turkey.*



To begin with, I have to say that I am very happy to see so many people and I thank the Democratic Progress Institute for kindly inviting me to speak here today. I am here today to talk about Turkey. At the beginning of my talk it may seem as though I am saying something contradictory, but please listen until the end.

Why should women be involved in a peace process? It is a very important issue but it has created a contradictory argument in the area of political science. On the one hand some people believe that women possess reconciliatory qualities, and that they are peaceful, especially in the 1990s, a new trend was introduced which discussed and questioned this categorisation. However, this new trend showed that this is not an in-built feature of women, and in actual fact not all women in the peace processes are peaceful all the time. I am in favour of this second notion. But it is important to consider what kind of values, and what kind of spiritual structures might force women to undertake these roles? I will discuss this and I will also talk about the contributions of these different perspectives in the area and context of conflict resolution.

I can remember singing a song in my childhood that contained the following words; what are you doing? I am taking care of my baby. And the young boys would sing; Small soldiers small soldiers, what are you doing? I am cleaning my gun and I am going to work. This is our culture. The militarist roles are attributed to the males and the more tender roles are attributed to the females, they should be the mothers.

We live in a militarist society and one example of this is football, which has been shown through many studies by Tunnel Bora to play a very important role in nation building. It also has been shown to reproduce discrimination. Ideological reflections on militarist society can be seen at football matches through the numbers of policeman present. In such a patriarchal system the males are taught to be dominant over women but also over other males as seen in the example of football. This is relevant to this discussion because in the conflict resolution process we need to consider what the women can do to combat these male-orientated attitudes. The mere participation of women cannot guarantee a divergence away from this abusive and violent environment. For example in a football match last year, where women were in the audience as well as men, this did nothing to quell the verbal abuse. The audience swore at the footballers several times and this is because in the context of football matches, violence is normalised. Nationalism, militarism and war itself, are all gendered situations. In order to eliminate all causes of this violence and war, it is very important to have a gender perspective.

The second example regards violence against women and ethnic discrimination, because as you know violence against women is on the rise in our country, according to Ministry of the Interior. In the last seven years, violence against women has increased fourteen fold. In such a situation where violence is normalised, how can we talk about the peaceful woman? Another problematic field is honour murders. Previously, this has only been attributed to a certain section of society but it is clearly shown, in a study conducted

in 2008 that after considering the justifications given for beating women, there is no significant change in the answers depending on the regions or the nationalities. Similarly, the rate of women who have been violated by their husbands at least once, is 35 per cent in Western regions and 40 per cent in the Eastern regions, so there is no significant change in numbers according to region. So what these findings shows are that yes, the war is strengthening the violence but it cannot be attributed to a single ethnic group. Before passing to the next issue, I have a final comment to make. We are living in a conflict-ridden environment and it is important to consider whether there are any differences between male and female perspectives regarding this conflict, especially given the reflections in the media regarding violence against women. We carried out a study with KONDA (research organisation) in 2008, where we investigated the male and female perspectives regarding ideas on how to solve the Kurdish issue. What we found however is that there is no significant difference in the male and female perspectives, they all think the same. This should be compared to a study that was conducted in Norway in 2003 which looked into the male and female perspectives regarding their support for the war in Iraq. They found a huge difference between the views of men and women, with the women being found to be mainly anti-war, considerably more so than the men. Therefore our study shows that in Western democracies there is a huge statistical difference between men and women, in terms of the whether they support the war or not.

With regards to the normalisation of violence, that is to say, the fact

that males are becoming more violent, what kind of institutional support do they have? Ümit Cizre carried out a study for TESEV (organisation analysing social, political and economic policy issues facing Turkey), which looked into the security sector. This, along with international studies over the last 25 years, shows that females cannot find their seats on conflict resolution commissions; they are under-represented. This is shown by the fact that you rarely see women as Chair persons, reporters or general secretaries on these conflict resolution commissions.



*Kezban Hatemi, Can Zeynep Sungur, Tuba Çandar,  
British Ambassador David Reddaway, Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Ayşe  
Betül Çelik, Prof. Monica McWilliams, Antonia Potter Prentice,  
Ferah Salman, Isabelle Dumont, Bejan Matur, Catriona Vine,  
Yilmaz Ensaroğlu, Belkıs Kılıçkaya, Ayla Akat, Kibriye Evren, Filiz  
Bedirhanoglu, Nebahat Akkoç*

Another study regarding members of parliament looks at the rate of men and women on the expertise commissions. So for example, in the constitutional reconciliation commission there are six women, which is 23 per cent of the commission; and this is a good number. In the constitution reconciliation council there is only one woman but in the constitution expertise commission there are six women. In the European Union Commission there are six women; the transportation and tourism commission has five women; the youth and sports commission has five women; the health, family and social work commission has six women. So you will notice that these figures are directly related to entrenched gender roles. There are 26 women in total in these positions and this is about 23 per cent. For there to be an equal rate of men and women, there would need to be 85 women in positions, although this year we have three women on the national defence council, which increases our percentage slightly.

Another problem in Turkey is that males dominate the decision making bodies and mechanisms; there continues to be a glass ceiling. I have already mentioned some of the structural, cultural and traditional values that constitute the glass ceiling. But how can we change the rate of women present in these decision making bodies? For example, some studies that have been conducted in Europe show that, contrary to conventional ideas, female Chief Executive Officers have better skill when it comes to risk management. They think more independently as well as being more open to change, compared to their male counterparts. Therefore the representation

of females on boards for example is a very important indicator of progress in Western democracies.

Another topic is related to war and conflict and how they are framed in the male perspective. I will not go into detail too much because Antonia has already mentioned this. So all around the world, when we talk about war and conflict, women are victimised; they are only shown as the victims of war even though they can be combatants, peace activists and victims at the same time. There is also another issue that centres on the problems women suffer created by forced migration. Because the majority of Kurdish women cannot speak Turkish, they experience problems because of the separation between the street language and the house language. This creates negative consequences, such as a dependency on the males in the household, which directly strengthens the patriarchy in households. A study was carried out a study in 2010, which found that war and forced migration, are experienced by women in different manners, and that the oppression and discrimination against Kurdish people, is strengthened by the system, by the war crimes against women. The experience of women and thousands of males in prison is that they go through trauma because of the war in the Eastern region. To what extent they are these experiences reflected in gender roles? We do not have very much data on this, and we cannot ensure reparative justice without the support of the state - we cannot ensure justice.

Another problem area that I have observed within peace processes is the discourse of; do not let the mother cry. I think this is the

correct approach but what does this implicate? Findings have shown that when Turkish and Kurdish people fight together, they also strengthen and reproduce patriarchal values. They are imprisoning the women in their mothership roles, and although no violence is directed towards them, it still indicates that only the mothers are crying and that only the women are sad as a result of the violence.

I would like to talk about another topic – women’s initiatives, and I think that some of these initiatives should be included in the peace making process. Since UN Security Council Resolution 1325, there has been a shift in perspective, from formerly only considering women as victims of the conflict, to now viewing them as equals in the peace making fields. Being a woman is only *one* identity of women, and whilst the values attributed to this identity have something to do with peacefulness, it is also important to consider that women have *multiple* identities. So gender norms are more important when it comes to talking about them being *biologically* women.

Why are women important in terms of peace building?

There are three reasons: Firstly, women experience war in a different way to men and all peace processes should consider these differences in order to produce some solutions. In the former example regarding forced migration, women were negatively affected due to a lack of language skills, so one has to research this, so as to implement projects in line with these particular needs. The feminisation of poverty is another issue.

Further, you cannot automatically produce peaceful solutions by simply making some women the senior administrators of peace making processes. They are a critical mass, and in order to make their voices heard there needs to be some institutional process or institutional construction. All those in charge of the decision making processes should be in contact with women's organisations.

What kind of changes could this bring to the feminist approach? Feminism and transformative mediation both emphasise common values, and most importantly, transformative mediation involves learning the act of listening and the questioning of the hierarchy, from the feminist perspective. Examinations of the case studies of Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Bosnia and Palestine have shown that women's movements have a unifying role; they allow for a unified peace processes. This is especially true if the women are coming from different parts of the conflict, if they can become active, it is very important to include these different perspectives. For example the wise-people dialogue group, and groups like it, are very important. But to begin with, instead of wise-*people*, the group was called the wise-*man* discussion group. Thanks to pressure from civil society the name was changed to the wise-*people* initiative.

What could be the contribution of women in such kinds of processes? Some theorists have discussed what differences there are between males and females in the conflict resolution process. It has been suggested that women are mostly focused on the relational aspects of the problems, on perceptions, and that males are mostly focused on the concrete data. Both aspects are important



for the inter-mediations and negotiations and apart from the women platforms; I think that mixed or hybrid platforms are very important because these two experiences may enrich the process. Studies have been conducted, asking women: how do you define peace?. Women generally defined peace as a *long* process, in which the main demands of women and the population are met. This is called structural peace and women often dream of this kind of world. Another important point is the relationship between men and women after the conflict process - peace is also defined in these terms. Further, the elimination of domestic violence is also very important in order to ensure a long-lasting peace process. Finally, there should be a holistic approach towards each peace process. Thank you.

**Feray Salman:** The next speaker is Dr. Esra Çuhadar, from Bilkent University. Esra is an Associate Professor from Ankara, and an expert in conflict resolution and in matters of the mediation process. She is widely published in the areas of mediation and diplomacy and is currently working in the area of gender violence and women's place in society. So I give the floor to Esra. Many thanks.

## Dr. Esra Çuhadar,<sup>10</sup> Bilkent University, Ankara:



*Speaker Dr. Esra Çuhadar*

I have been working in the field for many years as an expert in conflict resolution methods. Recently I worked with some male groups in Palestine and Israel, and last July I took part in a pilot project which looked at conflict resolution methods with a group composed solely of women. Therefore, I will talk about the project,

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<sup>10</sup> Dr. Esra Çuhadar teaches in the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. She obtained her Ph.D from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, New York, USA in 2004. She is an expert in the areas of conflict resolution methods and processes of mediation. Dr. Çuhadar is widely published in the areas of mediation and diplomacy.

how we designed it, why it only included women, the outcomes, and the pros and cons of our approach.

I was the facilitator of this project in July so bear in mind that my ideas will be from this perspective. Our project was not focused on Turkish or Kurdish problems, but rather it involved working with groups of Muslims and Christians to address the problems within these communities in Denver, USA. We worked with the official representatives of those communities, the spokespeople for the religious segments and they happened to all be women. I started working with this project because I was a Muslim woman and I was invited to be the facilitator, and then became the co-researcher. This initiative was done with the aim of increasing mutual understanding of religions. Our goal was to have a workshop that could address the current conflict at the grassroots level and have an impact at policy level rather than just having theological discussions.

While we were doing this a mosque had been constructed in Tennessee that fully met the requirements of state legislation. However that week, some radical Christian groups wanted to prevent the opening of the mosque, and there was also some unrest in Texas with similar radical groups. So as a result of these conflicts there was a lot of news in the national press and some declarations from the different groups were published. One of the groups stated that they did not want the rules of Sharia law to be implemented in their region, and argued that mosques cannot be a constitutional free zone. The same weekend that those declarations were published, our workshops took place.

Firstly, I would like to say a few things about the methodology that we used in this process. It is actually very similar to what Monica mentioned, in that it is a little bit like forming a women's alliance. But we used a specific conflict intervention technique called interactive conflict resolution (ICR) or interactive problem solving. This method is normally used for conflicts with deep rooted issues that are often identity and value-based. Such conflicts are very difficult to resolve and it is hard to use typical negotiation techniques. Therefore it requires one to go deeper into the issues and one must first assess the psychological, cultural and social needs of the parties. This requires looking at their needs, fears and concerns and after that, one moves to the problem solving stage. This method has been specifically developed by scholars in social and political psychology and to some extent, in anthropology.

ICR is often used as a complementary method to negotiations and it is interactive, meaning that it brings together representatives from conflicting sides in a very safe environment for at least a few days, usually two or three. The agenda for these workshops is structured and they are facilitated by an expert, who is trained in the psychological dynamics of conflicts. The purpose of the workshops is to jointly analyse and understand the dynamics of the conflict and then to seek a mutually acceptable solution. These workshops are different from typical negotiation efforts because the purpose of the analysis section is to go deeper into the needs, concerns, and fears of the parties and try to make sure that the other party acknowledges and understands these. So the purpose is not only for one party to express their needs, but also for the facilitators

to make sure that the other parties acknowledge and understand these needs, fears and concerns. Once these deep rooted needs, concerns, and fears have been identified the parties then move on to the problem-solving stage where they try to develop proposals that address these issues.

A typical ICR workshop follows several stages:

1. Pre-workshop sessions are held separately with each party with the goal of explaining: what the participants should expect from the process, what is expected from them, trying to understand their past experience with dialogue, asking about the specific concerns that they want to talk about individually or that they do not want to voice, as well as special themes and topics that should be addressed during the workshop. There were many different types of women present; one was a priest who was from a more mainstream denomination, there was a Catholic nun, a Mormon woman, a Sunni woman from Saudi Arabia, and an Iranian woman from an ex-patriot community. After this we designed the agenda of the meeting, and then we held the joint sessions.
2. Joint sessions usually proceed with the following format in sequence, although can go back and forth between the different stages:
  - Introductions, everybody hears from each other what brings the parties to the process, understanding their expectations, hopes and so on.

- Ground rules are usually set by the facilitator and everyone has to abide by these communication rules.
- Each side starts talking about the current situation on their side. They also discuss the range of views in their community in order to fulfill their role as a representative of that community. They switch between these two roles; what they would say as a representative of that community regardless of their individual perspective and then move on to their individual perspective.
- After hearing about the current situation and updating everyone, the next stage of the workshop goes deeper into the concerns, needs, and fears in each community. The purpose is to identify the issues clearly, and also to make sure that the participants from the other parties understand them. The facilitators try really hard to make sure that this is not a debate or a forum for criticizing others. If anyone opens one of these concerns then we reframe that conversation and use the ground rules.
- This workshop was different from a typical ICR because we were doing it with women only. We inserted a small twist into the agenda and we also wanted them to talk about how being a woman in their community affects these concerns, needs, and fears differently. We introduced this gender aspect into the traditional ICR methodology.
- Once these points are identified clearly and understood by everyone, then the workshop moves to the problem-solving

stage, with a question asking the parties about their vision such as; what would an alternative relationship look like, that would be responsive to the needs and fears?

- What are the ways to address these concerns and get us to this desired relationship?
- What keeps us from getting there? What are the constraints? How can you help each other to overcome them?
- What future activities would the group like to initiate or participate in that would address these constraints? This is the action plan stage.

3. Evaluation phase: evaluation of ideas and if necessary prioritising them for an action plan.



*Melek Ulagay Taylan, Yeter Akın, Kerim Yıldız, Canadian Ambassador John T Holmes, Neslihan Özgünes, Işın Eliçin, Deniz Cenk Demir, Verda Ozer, Cansu Çamlıbel, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Özlem Gürses, Şirin Payzın, Prof. Dr. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Nur Kırmızıdag*

I would also like to mention the benefits of doing this type of workshop with only women:

- Why women? Most of these conflicts at the local level and national level around religion occur on issues related to women, but there is hardly any process that includes women and that represents their voice in policymaking circles. Contraception, abortion, schooling of children, women's participation in the workforce, children and so on are issues to be addressed by women. It is usually men that decide for women on issues that are critical to them.
- We also wanted to bring women community leaders together to discuss community issues as opposed to this being an inter-faith dialogue; we wanted them to talk about what it feels like being a religious majority and minority and how they experience it as women. We would say; this is not a conversation about your religious faiths, but a conversation about your experience in the community as a woman practicing your faith. Because we framed it as such, emphasising being a woman and a minority/majority, different needs and fears surfaced throughout the semester that cut across religious boundaries.
- Being women of faith in their communities, they found similar challenges across all denominations and religions. Similar concerns were raised by all about their children, schooling, safety, employment, day care problems. Or how



as women their participation in religion is restricted by men or patriarchal religious authorities in all faiths. These served as superordinate goals and helped the women to bond around common goals. They quickly moved to the problem-solving stage, leaving their religious differences aside and bringing their gender identity and shared community to the front. This was useful for them to redefine their identities, not only in terms of their religion, which is something that divides them, but through gender identity, which is something that unites them. A common in-group identity was therefore found.

- Introducing the theme of being a minority/majority in the community also was interesting for forming cross-religion alliances. For instance, the Muslims see themselves as a minority in the community but they never realised that the Mormons were treated exactly the same way by the Christian mainstream sects and had very similar perceptions on most of the issues. Prejudices in the community about the Mormons were similar in content to prejudices about Muslims.
- Each person talked in detail about their fears, needs, and concerns in their community, emanating from the others.
- A common action plan to fight against prejudice was formed. This addressed a problem caused by some DVDs that were distributed by a local newspaper in the

community, which contained derogatory information towards Islam. This ended up in all of the households in that community, which incidentally shows why including women in conflict resolution is necessary, because without doing so, access to these households would not have been possible by the local level politicians. They all decided to hold information sessions jointly, to fight against hate speech and disinformation.

- They dealt with issues of power. One thing that was particularly fascinating was that all of the women defined power in the same way; they all wanted to have power to be treated equally and discussed how not having any power at all as women affected their community.
- Finally they came up with a list of actions that they want to take jointly. Don't get caught being sympathetic – this is the pressure from outside towards other faiths, and they broke that taboo. One of the women said at the end, that they came up with a list of actions that they wanted to do jointly in their communities at the end of the two days, but the Mormon woman said; what I actually overcame this weekend is, we have been bombarded with images and ideas and prejudices about Muslims, saying don't get caught being sympathetic, but this really helped me to overcome those perspectives.

One final comment or observation from this workshop relates

to what Ayşe Betül Çelik mentioned, the fact that these women focused mostly on process and relationship issues as opposed to men who often focus on facts and outcomes, this was very apparent, and it brought a very strong bonding element to the workshop. I would be happy to talk further with you about the details of the process and what we did, and how it also contributed in various ways to identity building, during the discussion session later.

**Feray Salman:** Thank you very much for your participation and after lunch we will go into more detail on all of these issues.



*Bejan Matur, Isabelle Dumont, Filiz Bedirhanoğlu, Tuba Çandar,  
Kezban Hetami, Belkıs Kılıçkaya, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Can  
Zeynep Sungur, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Ayla Akat*



*Antonia Potter Prentice, Prof. Monica McWilliams,  
Can Zeynep Sungur, Ayla Akat, Eleanor Johnson,  
Deniz Cenk Demir, Belkıs Kılıçkaya*



*Gülten Kaya, Neslihan Özguines, Emel Kurma, Rakel Dink,  
Zeynep Tanbay*



*Nebahat Akkoç, Melek Ulagay Taylan*



*Sıdıka Çetin and Sibel Eraslan*





*Yeter Akın, Antonia Potter Prentice, Ayla Akat, Kezban Hetami,  
Deniz Cenk Demir, Kerim Yıldız, Verda Ozer, Nur Kırmızıdag,  
Isabelle Dumont, Belkıs Kılıçkaya, Kibriye Evren*



*Antonia Potter Prentice, Prof. Monica McWilliams,  
Işın Eliçin, British Ambassador David Reddaway,  
Eleanor Johnson, Tuba Çandar*



*Zeynep Tanbay, Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen, Kezban Hetami, Belkıs Kılıçkaya, Melek Ulagay Taylan, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Ayla Akat, Catriona Vine, Can Zeynep Sungur*



*Sibel Eraslan, Bejan Matur, Kerim Yildiz*

## Session Two: Discussion and Questions



*Prof. Monica McWilliams, Antonia Potter Prentice, Moderator  
Yilmaz Ensaroğlu, Bejan Matur, Catriona Vine*

**Moderator – Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:**<sup>11</sup> Welcome back. I am sure you are all eager to engage with our speakers on the topics discussed. This morning's session provided some very valuable insight into

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<sup>11</sup> Yilmaz Ensaroğlu is the Director, Law and Human Rights Studies, SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.



the various roles that women can play in conflict resolution both on an international as well as regional and local scale.

We are witnessing a period in time where it is very difficult to speak freely, but if we consider the history of these lands and the world as a whole, we will find that there has never been a period in time in which speaking freely was very easy. These difficult periods in time may drive us to hopelessness, but we must remember that it is in these difficult times that we *must* talk and exchange with each other; discussions become very significant. Whilst organising this meeting it was not our intention to hold it during this problematic time, but nonetheless I believe that the discussions and analysis that take place during such times will help contribute to peace.

We always have the Kurdish Question at the back of our minds; it plays a role in many questions that are asked about the future of Turkey as a whole. However we must remember that these lands contain several ethnic minorities and in turn, we have various ethnic, religious, cultural and gendered problems. We mainly think of the armed conflict when we discuss conflict resolution in Turkey, but we must go beyond this; we must think about all forms of conflict in order to have lasting peace.

In history, there has not been a conflict that was unresolved, and so sooner or later, the conflict in Turkey *will* also come to an end. What we need to discuss at this meeting is how to form this resolution by paying the smallest price. The best moderators are those that speak

the least and who know least about the topics under discussion, which is why I will leave the floor to you and your distinguished assembly. Now, if everyone could kindly introduce themselves, and afterwards I will leave the floor to our participants, to voice their opinions.

I would like to start with myself, my name is Yilmaz Ensaroğlu, and I mainly work in the area of civil society and human rights. I currently work as the Director of Human Rights and Law at the SETA foundation. I am also on the Council of Experts of the Democratic Progress Institute. We have already been introduced to our panellists, so now, I open the floor to you.

**Participant:** Thank you very much. We have been talking a lot about the importance of speaking and of discussions but I would like to emphasise the importance of *understanding*. We may have talked enough but we have certainly not *understood* enough. We need to stand in the shoes of the others, the opposition and really, we should lend an ear to what the other people would like to say. If we can do this, if we can try to understand, if we can look for the real reasons for the problem, then we can start to look for some solutions.

I have been a politician for only a year and a half (in the Republican Peoples Party) but I believe that the solution to this conflict must come from the political arena. Currently in this setting there is not enough understanding of how the other side feels. I think that each political party's stance in terms of ideology should be forgotten

about temporarily, so that we can seek to understand what it is like to be on the other side. We need to become the others; we need to become the women. We should focus on the pain of the others as well as their expectations and this is where the resolution to this conflict should start.

Our party has formed a research group which will negotiate with other parties regarding the Kurdish Question. We have been looking into possible solutions as well as whether we can start a process of dialogue together with civil society. We will have to wait and see if this can make a difference.

Today's meeting has been very important for me, to see the examples of successful conflict resolution. There are three parties, the AKP, CHP and BDP, and if they can come together, if they can start the process of understanding, maybe we can start to look for solutions. Hopefully we will do this. Thank you very much.



*Mehveş Evin, Isabelle Dumont, Ayşe Böhürler Zeynep Tanbay,  
Rakel Dink*

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Yes, next participant.

**Participant:** Thank you. I would like to acknowledge the esteemed participants and academics, for this thought provoking discussion. I especially enjoyed listening to Professor McWilliams when she was talking about her specific experiences. And as a lawyer, who has following been following this Kurdish Question for a long time, I can say that the reconciliations in the Good Friday agreement actually influenced me greatly. The solution to Turkey's problem has something to do with the question we are discussing today. The experiences of Northern Ireland are useful to remember, however, our wounds have deep, deep roots in the past and in the history of this conflict. We do however need a very strict analysis of former conflict resolution methods. While I was listening to the previous speaker, she questioned whether it was possible to do something. I disagree; I think we need to *ensure* that something is done, we *should* do something.

I wrote an article in 1996 to a journal called New Turkey, which argued that we should establish a Kurdish institute in Turkey whatever the repercussions of that may be. Why is there is a Kurdish institute in the USA yet there is no Kurdish institute in Turkey? And the editor of this journal, who believed in democracy asked, is this your subject title? What kind of foreign language are you speaking?. Our problem is the independence of Turks and Kurds, under these existing conditions. Neither Turkey nor the existing

government is independent and therefore, neither the Turks nor the Kurds are independent. The problem is not the rights of the Kurds; some cultural rights have been given to the Kurds through the Kurdish initiatives, but the Kurds still want to establish a state, regardless of these cultural rights. One issue is that the Turks are very insistent on using the old state machinery, that of imperialism. It is impossible for imperialists to leave the idea of divide and rule behind. Imperialism has been using this method for a long time, if we look back to 1915, to the Armenian forced migration, you can see this technique being used.

Hrant Dink<sup>12</sup> said, let us come together and let us talk. I do not want anything else. He said, let us identify the problems. What was the price? We killed him. We could not tolerate ideas like this. And we still continue to kill. We should remember that the Kurdish people were once used against the Armenian people - in 1915 we forced them to migrate. The Armenian people now fear that they will be massacred in Syria, are we aware of this? And the Muslims, who are they? How do they fit into this? We also need to distinguish between the Kurdish people and the PKK. Some people are related to those within the PKK but this does not mean that they are pro-PKK. How many of us around this table, including the lawyers, do not have a friend or relative in prison? I would say many of our relatives, friends and colleagues are now in prison for simply taking part in a demonstration. Now, while talking with Ayla Akat, I learned that some people in prison have declared a hunger

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*12 Turkish citizen of Armenian descent, editor, journalist, columnist and activist, assassinated in 2007 by a Turkish nationalist.*

strike, are we aware of this? It has been going on for eight days.

Do we have any idea about what sort of stance we should be taking on this issue?

Coming to another issue, both Turkish and Kurdish groups have in some ways acted as though they are the allies of imperialism, but they are actually pitted against each other. Uğur Mumcu<sup>13</sup> was assassinated because he showed this fact very clearly. We should remember this. Since 1992, including the today's government, they have carried out some massacres in Diyarbakir and now the state has turned into a torture machine. We have kept our silence in the face of all this.

There are also very serious separations between the Muslims and the Sunni Turks who have created some Hezbollah organisations. We should be identifying all of these problems if we want to stay at this table as a women's initiative. There are not only problems for women; there are problems for humanity as a whole, both men and women. Starting from 1992, the torture of people discouraged the rest of the population from the state.

Mr Erdoğan was given to the Turkish state by the imperialists. Then, a more pro-imperialist government made up of the AK Party took over, in order to allow Western nations more access to the oil supplies in Iraq. However, this did not happen immediately. In 2006 Republican demonstrations began in Turkey and both

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*13 Investigative journalist for the leading Kemalist broadsheet in Turkey, Cumhuriyet, assassinated by a bomb placed in his car in 1993.*

the Turkish and Kurdish people decided that the AK Party should stay in power, this was a very serious decision given its imperialist stance. In 2008 another attack was launched against the AK Party by the public but by conceding to some demands the AK Party managed to stay in power. After the Mavi Marmara incident<sup>14</sup> it was clear that the Kurdish problem would re-emerge. Unfortunately the Turkish government chose to become dependent on the US in order to remain the ruling power. And as you already know, they gave in and initiated the great Middle East project.



*Belkıs Kılıçkaya, Ayla Akat, Filiz Bedirhanoglu, Nebahat Akkoç,  
Emel Kurma, Gülseren Onanç, Yeter Akın*

Without grasping these issues, without having a female perspective

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<sup>14</sup> Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara aid ship off Gaza in 2010

on these issues, we cannot solve this problem, even if we can get rid of our headscarves. We should be identifying these issues by paying attention to the connections between them. We have the Arab Spring, in particular the Syrian crisis, which Turkey has been more involved with than any of the others. We should be very careful. These are my opinions; of course you may think differently. This will either be the end of the Turkish Republic or we will be forced to solve these issues by becoming dependent on some other power(s). Thank you very much.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Yes, next participant.

**Participant:** Hello, I will talk about women's role in conflict resolution and I will try not to repeat what has already been said; instead I will give my observations. While listening to me, please forget about my identity because sometimes identities create prejudice; coming from a conservative or other type of particular party may also encourage prejudice. So please just forget about my religious identity and try to remember what I am saying from another point of view, because we have to find a response beyond that of identity. We all have to respond, we have individual histories and we also know each other's pasts. We all have our pains and traumas, so when we talk about our identities, this sometimes prevents us from listening to one another.

Listening to the speeches of the morning session on the role of women in conflict resolution, we have talked mainly about feminism. I do not think that this is important and I do not think it is sufficient simply to stress the importance of the feminist



woman. I'm not sure if you would agree with me or not, but as far as I understand it, we have only considered feminist literature. But the fact is, a woman might be from the Kurdish side or the Turkish side, or from the Armenian side or other sides. I do not care, but I think that no positive effect comes from simply using feminist literature. We have to leave that literature because it is not helping anymore.

A previous speaker mentioned that women might be used as a tool. I might agree with that, but sometimes it sounds like it is not realistic. We say that a woman does not cry. On the other hand, we have specific initiatives such as peace mothers. Let us not forget that their contribution to peace is very dense. We have to convince our societies; we have to convince, for example, Kurdish society and Turkish society because these are the societies that we belong to. All of them, all of these societies, have their own traumas and that is why I have not said that we have to use a common language, and that maybe using the tools and referring to the language of women in that manner would probably not be very helpful. I believe that the pain of men is equal to the pain of women.

When we talk about organisations, it might be the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), or the Republican Peoples Party (CHP), or other parties. We also have to refer to the disciplines of those parties, because our solutions, and defending our solutions - would not be helpful, as *all* parties are defending their own solutions. By the way, when I say party, it might be a political party, an organisation or institution, or an independent body. We all need to find a common

ground and a common language. I think this will contribute; it will be more meaningful as we all have our baggage and, above all, I believe that we have to leave our baggage behind. Then we should look for the solution. By the way, logic is important but logical solutions sometimes cannot function and work only for very stubborn societies. Societies in the past that have had a lot of deep pain, how have they found answers and solutions to their problems? I do not know. I think that social psychologists should work on that. They can also contribute to the peace process, because if you just keep on living in a trauma, those logical solutions will not mean anything.

On the other hand, we have the imperialist powers and we have some analysis on Syria but for the purposes of conflict resolution, I believe that this type of discourse affects us negatively. We all say that there are some external powers that do not want a solution for our country, but I think that this is just a way of showing that we are not really focusing on our own problems. We simply trust the imperial and external powers. By the way, let me tell you that the external powers are everywhere - Asia, Middle East - they are everywhere and they will always be there, so we would have to fight against them all the time. But, the important question is: what do we do for our own, internal solution? Since the external powers cannot create something that is not there, this should be the core problem of this society. Then the external powers can just encourage it or support it a little bit. Thank you.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you, next participant please.



*Moderator Yilmaz Ensaroğlu*

**Participant:** Thank you. I was very interested in all those who spoke, but especially in what Prof. Monica McWilliams said. Prof. McWilliams, you described three phases of the peace agreement. I would like to ask if you could zoom in on those phases? I imagine that the situation Turkey is now in, is the first phase - or not even the first phase - so maybe if we could zoom in even earlier than the first phase, maybe to phase 0.5, you could give us some ideas about how to deal with the issues of this first phase. You talked a lot about an inclusive process and I think this is very important here in Turkey. How do you make the process inclusive? In your

case, in the case of Northern Ireland, were there core conditions? How did you determine who could participate in the process? This is the case in all peace processes in Africa and elsewhere. Should we start negotiating? Should we start the peace process at any price, any time? Or should we first put in place a precondition, to leave weapons out? Could you tell us a little bit more about these aspects? Then you talked about the third phase and you said, partly jokingly, that the hard work was only just starting in that phase. But again, from your experience of the Northern Ireland issue, are there things that should be done in the first phase to make the third phase work? To avoid having problems in that first or third phase. Thank you very much.



*Işın Eliçin, Can Zeynep Sungur, Tuba Çandar, British Ambassador  
David Reddaway, Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Ayşe Betül Çelik,  
Prof. Monica McWilliams*

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Professor McWilliams?

**Prof. Monica McWilliams:** On the issue of inclusion, I think this is really important and I tell you, it almost broke our situation in Northern Ireland, because we had paramilitaries and legal organisations affiliated to political parties who had weapons, and some people were refusing to allow them to participate until they had declared a decommissioning of all their weapons. It is always the case in conflict situations that one party wants the other party to look like they are surrendering. No party entering negotiations wants to look like they have surrendered before the negotiations start. So we had a separate commission. An American, Senator George Mitchell, chaired a commission on the decommissioning of weapons, so we took that issue out of the main negotiations and said that it would remain separate and ongoing.

Six principles were designed, and as part of the women's coalition, we had to declare that my party would adhere to them. One of these principles was to seek a political resolution by non-violent means. The others more or less said the same thing, only in different words; that we would all work together to see an end to violence; that we would all work on the decommissioning of weapons, which meant that those who said they had no weapons had to work with others who had weapons. So there were six principles (the Mitchell Principles) and you could not enter the negotiations unless you had agreed to sign them.

There was one party who had been successful in the elections, the very famous party Sinn Féin, who were affiliated to the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and they were left outside the gates (excluded) on the day that the peace talks started, because they could not declare a ceasefire. Their ceasefire had broken down and they were not permitted to enter negotiations until they reinstated that ceasefire. That is where the South Africans became very important, and sometimes in a situation like this it is very important to take people outside the country and expose them to other countries. It was there that Mandela said you must make peace with your enemies, you are not expected to make peace with your friends. He said you talk to your friends but you make peace with your enemies, and he said something similar to what one of the members of parliament said, which was, learn to stand in each other's shoes, which is very difficult if you are not speaking to them! He said that was the message he was sending to one group, the constitutional politicians. The message he was sending to the *other* group was: you cannot expect people to negotiate if you are still shooting them, if there are still bombs going off, so you should have ceasefires or at least a proclamation of non-violence. All parties should come to the negotiations in good faith, not threatening, not declaring that they are going to make sure that someone leaves the table or that they are going to shoot somebody. So, there were six principles and eventually all of the parties declared in favour of them, and the negotiations got started.

That took almost a year and during that time my party met with the IRA, we met in all kinds of strange places, in the back of cars, in parish halls and villages. We met secretly, we told them what was happening at the negotiations and we showed them the papers. But, we told them that there was a ghost that was rattling around the room. We could hear this ghost and we said it would be better if the ghost came into the room, rather than be excluded, because we were spending all our time talking about the ghost and the ghost was not at the table! So eventually they did declare a ceasefire after we had come home from South Africa, and we entered the talks. So that was important, but those are the principles for the political leaders and the parties.

But what does inclusion mean for civil society? That is also important. We had to set up lots of lines of communication between the negotiating table and the people outside of those doors. The most suspicious people are those who are not in the room. Once you have entered the room, people think that you are a traitor or that you are going to do something that they do not agree with. Or, if it is in secret, how can they trust you? So journalists become very important in this situation.



*Sıdıka Çetin, Rakel Dink, Zeynep Tanbay, Cansu Çamlıbel,  
Verda Ozer, Işın Eliçin*

Journalists can be spoilers or they can be peacekeepers. They are independent and objective, but it is very important to get the story out to journalists in a way that they can also get it out to the people. And for me, my most difficult moment was deciding between the issue of confidentiality and the issue of transparency. What can I tell you that has gone on today in this room, that is so precious and that is so difficult for people to talk about outside, and what do I tell the people in civic society? That yes, we are making progress and yes there are signs that we will finally reach an agreement, but how do I explain to them that we are going to get there if I do not tell them every single detail of what we have just agreed inside the room? So inclusion is something that you have to work very hard



at and for me, civic society was crucial. We constantly asked all the different groups of civic society, particularly the human rights organisations, to rewrite and redraft what we were doing in human rights language so that what we were saying was not going to be a threat to anyone, and I was nervous that we were going to get shot, that we were going to get killed during this process. Because when you are inside the room your own side will kill you very quickly if they think that you are selling them down the river.

Should we have done something during stage one that we learned would have helped us in stage three? Definitely. You always look back and say, I wish we had done this. I think we should have had more mediation. The parties were still not speaking or talking to each other when we signed an agreement. We were supposed to be partners in implementing it, but people had still not learned how to stand in each other's shoes, how to mediate, how to exchange, how to find the humanity in the other person. Because they had never eaten dinner with them, they had never sat down with them; they had never exchanged a word with them. So going back to phase one, we should have had more mediation and facilitation and maybe more exchanges between other countries. Sometimes in our own country we felt very unsafe talking to the media or being seen to be together, and it was only when we went outside of the country that we felt that we could sit down with each other as human beings.

I do not know if that is the situation here. There are many other

things that I could say but I do not have time to explain them all. I have written some papers on this, about what we would do differently now, because every country, after they finish their process sees that mistakes have been made and lessons learned. Sometimes our mistakes were very costly. We made weapons too big a price and it almost destroyed our process. Whereas in fact the words we spoke, the language we used, how we thought that were far more important than the gun. I learned that from domestic violence, sometimes a woman is far more frightened of a man's mind than of what he is doing with his fist. So, we learned a lot, we made mistakes but there were certainly things that we should have done earlier that would have made the agreement move much more quickly. We got there in the end and I believe what our moderator said: the most important thing here is to believe in ourselves.

I think you said that Turkey must get there, that Turkey has to achieve a solution, and you have to believe in that possibility. If you give up that hope, then you just live with fear and frustration and failure and friction. And those are things that just burn you out and make you tired, whereas if you keep believing that this is possible and taking little, confidence-building measures; showing signs to the other side that you are serious, whether or not it is through the initiative that you spoke about earlier, for example - which I think is a very interesting idea. What you have spoken of is almost like a searching committee, when you look to employ a new person: you set up a search committee to find out everything about this person. It is very similar and I think it is a good idea. If that is the stage you

are at, I think all those ideas are creative. They are one step, they are about building trust, and they are about building confidence. But believe me; it takes years to build trust. If you have been at this as long as we have been, 400 years of conflict, you will not build trust in four or even fourteen years. My children still do not trust people on the other side. My children have now emigrated and you do not want that for your country. I hope that one day they will come back but I actually believe that we must show them. We the elders must show them the possibility of stability and that we are serious; that we will now try and make a difference to their lives; that it will be a country that they *want* to come back and live in and it will one day be a country that we will be proud of.

I do not know, but I think building on these steps, piece by piece, not looking for everything, but being pragmatic and negotiating is the best way. In searching for peace, no side will get everything. You have to lose, you will lose and you have to stand up and say yes, I was prepared to give that away. And to challenge your own side. The biggest sign of leadership is challenging one's own side every single day. And I saw the dinosaurs at the table that were constantly challenging other people on the other side but our leader paid the price. But, he was courageous and brave and he led his people in the direction that he and they wanted to go. To me that's a sign of leadership, but not every country has those leaders and someday I hope that you will find them here. We eventually found them, a long time after we came from South Africa we found them, so it is a number of things that are important: leaders, personalities,

chemistry, historical circumstances, patience, persistence, pragmatism but also your principles. Many of these things have to go together, and there is a window that opens when they do come together at the same moment - and they did for us. I'm sorry my answer is so long to such a short question!

**Yılmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you very much for the distinguished information you have provided. I think Ayşe Betül Çelik would now like to speak.

**Ayşe Betül Çelik:** From the comments so far, I think I may need to express more clearly what I intended to say. I am not saying that the expressions of mothers, or that crying is *right*, or that crying is *wrong*. If a mother lost her daughter or son in a war, of course she would cry and say something. But I am saying that those are the words of men and not the words of women. I teach some courses regarding these issues and I have always said that the mothers words are very important, but let me tell you that the important thing here is not whether one is a mother, but rather the creation of a basic understanding, and the sharing of pain altogether. It is not only the mother who feels the pain, but all of us: men, young people and children too. Even children feel pain. That was what I was trying to say.



*Şerife Gül Arıman, Gülten Kaya, Kezban Hatemi, Can Zeynep Sungur, Tuba Çandar, British Ambassador David Reddaway, Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Prof. Monica McWilliams, Antonia Potter Prentice, Feray Salman, Bejan Matur, Catriona Vine, Kerim Yildiz*

**Participant:** Let me start with a story, it happened a while ago. I had just read an article by a psychologist. He was an academic and was writing a story about his patient. The story is about a man who is afraid of his own urine. They put some urine in a bottle and the psychologist places the bottle in front of the man. When he sees the bottle the man goes crazy. Every day the psychologist pushes the bottle in front of the sick person and at the end of the process he is cured. He is no longer afraid of his own urine because he can touch the bottle. This is very similar to our own story. If we cannot get close to the problem because we are afraid, then

we cannot solve it. In parliament there are all sorts of discussions, just like here today. Everybody is just talking about the past, the 1930s, and the 1950s. Let us stop talking about the 1930s or the 1920s, whatever happened in the past stays in the past. This is the tendency of Turkey, just as in academic life.

You take an article, if you cannot describe it then you just think about how it was considered in its old form, in old Greek. Until today, you just do not have the time to write about modern times because too much time is spent in the past. Let us focus on today. The world is very small, we have globalisation, we are all affected by each other, but in Turkey there is a tendency to believe that we have already put a lot of effort into solving our problems. People think this is the case. In reality, no, we did not really put a lot of effort in. We have a tendency to think in that way but it is not true. Sometimes the people that claim that we did everything to get into the EU say that the EU does not want us or does not accept us but this is not true. We are constantly trying to point out the bad person, we are trying to make the external powers out to be bad characters but no, this is not true. *We* are responsible. *We* are the source of the problem. Let us just stop blaming each other and let us talk about the solution.

In the process of the solution there is something more important to consider. It is not speaking, it is *understanding*. This is true: we have to understand. In the media especially, we look like we are all open but everybody is just defending their own party and

it is not a dialogue, it is a monologue – everyone is just talking for themselves. I am talking to my friendship circle and you are speaking to your friendship circle – which has the same ideas as you – this makes no sense, so I think that we should just stop. As for the Kurdish problem, we think about it all the time, we know the source of the terror, we know everything, but the point today, regarding the PKK or regarding the BDP party or regarding the Kurdish citizens, is that we know what they want. They want their citizenship to be changed. For example, in Turkey all of the citizens who live there are referred to officially as Turkish. So they want this article to be changed. This is a small but poignant point. Instead of saying that everyone in Turkey is Turkish, we should say that everyone living in Turkey is a Turkish citizen. This is just a little change but because of it there would be no further discussion of it in the debates. We know that it is likely the AK Party would not agree with that though, but it is so simple and just one sentence.

In the constitutions of other countries there is probably no definition of citizens and there are probably laws of citizenship, but no definitions. In Turkey, the constitution declares that we have a definition of the Turkish people and if you say anything to the contrary you can be seen as the betrayer of the country. As for cultural rights, some say that those rights were given, but this is not true. They were given partially, but not all of them, and too late. It is too late right now.

We talked about Turkish education, but let me say that this is not

satisfactory, so we have a problem and a debate, but nobody is looking for a solution and there are large segments that even *oppose* a solution. Also, people are talking about general forgiveness, they are talking about a general amnesty or they are talking of the release of Öcalan? Or autonomy? How would this work? Would there be a federal structure? Would we change the country wholly or would there be some regions in the country with local governments? We know this, we discuss this, but I do not know why. I do not know why, but we do not have any concrete steps. We understand, we see, but these are unsolvable because in society right now, within the nation, we have two strong parties that oppose each other.

We have the BDP Party, which is in the Turkish Parliament, and they represent the Kurdish people, so they also have some unjust restrictions regarding the parliament, and the ruling AK Party. Promises have been given in the past but now they have changed their minds. I am not specifically referring to the ruling party. If it were another party they would do the same, because when you are in opposition you just say something, but when you are the ruling party you change your ideas. It is the same for all the political parties. Another point regarding citizenship and the right to hold meetings and freedom of speech; we do not have these for Kurdish or Turkish people. We do not have freedom of speech for anyone in Turkey and, furthermore, if you struggle against treason, you will find yourself in prison if you criticise anything. There are a lot of cases. Former mayors are in prison, major journalists are in prison. In a nutshell, we are aware of these rights but at the end of the day,



how can we really solve this problem? And day-by-day it gets worse and worse, either way I do not think that women can solve this problem. It is not in the hands of the initiative, unfortunately. So I am very pessimistic about the initiative because women also take sides in society. And they are also in parliament on each side.

I also attend the human rights meetings and they claim that if there were more women in parliament then things might change. People think so, but this is not the case because if you are in parliament, you have to follow the principles of the party you are in. You cannot *make* the other women hear you. For example, if a woman from the AK Party wants to suggest something, another woman from a different party may not agree with that because they are from different parties. What is the solution? I do not know. In Turkey, we are in a very bad situation. In the BDP Party, a very democratic Member of Parliament, Sirri Sakik, a very distinguished politician, recently experienced the unfortunate death of his son. It was traumatising, because he committed suicide in front of his father. He jumped off the balcony and his father could not help him. It is probably the most horrible thing that could happen to a father. We would not wish it on our worst enemies. But in the papers, on the television, on Facebook, people were saying oh, such good news - I wish all the people in his family could die. I read some comments like this in some newspapers. Turkish society or the society of Turkey is now that. It does not function anymore. That was so horrible.

I had a friend and I learned the problems of the Turkish and

Kurdish people from him, because together we experienced over many years that there is no problem between the parties. Maybe there was not before but there is now. Maybe it was a political problem in the past, but now people hate each other, we see it as an experience of this situation. Ask everyone in this room, no one knows how to stop it, how do we start the communication? We do not know, we have to talk about it. And Professor McWilliams very correctly gives the example of Mandela - saying that you find your way yourself - those examples cannot enlighten our roads. In Turkey, we know it does not really work, because we tried it. But we are now hopeless and we are without a solution. I am very pessimistic and upset about it. Thank you.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you. I turn to our next participant.

**Participant:** We have the following problem: everybody has talked about something that I could deny or reject. The problem here is that on my right side there is a simple citizen, she is the wife of Ahmet Kaya, a famous singer. Ten years ago they threw knives at Kaya by saying that there are no Kurdish people in Turkey. This is the official ideology. If we do not follow the Freudian thesis, if we do not analyse our past, if we do not identify and talk about our mistakes, then we will fail.

As for the attitudes of the Republican Peoples Party (CHP), on the one hand we have motives, on the other hand Kurdish children are dying. The CHP are saying that the AK Party carried out

negotiations. We have documentation of this. Yes, the government may negotiate with everybody in order to achieve peace. In order to make peace, I say, because you represent the CHP, please do not come in with such a Freudian thesis. We should discuss everything, we should identify the PKK, we should sit down and appropriately talk about the Armenian issue, and we should talk about the Kurdish Question. I am not saying that if the cultural rights of Kurdish people start to be given to them then the problem will be over. But I *am* saying that there is a different tendency; a different vein in Kurdish politics that is asking for something else. CHP parliamentarians, you cannot say let us close the file on the 1930s. We cannot close the file because we became a schizophrenic society. We are not like Northern Ireland or Mandela's country.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** We have been dreaming of organising a meeting such as this one, in which people come together, and women discuss calmly, one by one, without speaking loudly. Our friend has drawn such a negative picture, that we must think about things for a second time.



*Şerife Gül Arıman, Filiz Bedirhanoğlu, Kibriye Evren,  
Feray Salman, Nur Kırmızıdag, Nebahat Akkoç*



*Eleanor Johnson, Catriona Vine, Neslihan Özgünes,  
Kerim Yıldız, Sibel Eraslan*



*Zeynep Tanbay, Yeter Akın, Işın Eliçin, Bejan Matur*



*Rakel Dink, Sıdıka Çetin, Şerife Gül Arıman*

**Participant:** I am not saying that we should forget. We should analyse the past, but we should also talk about *today*. That was what I was trying to say, because we think we should not hang onto the past.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Many thanks. Next participant, the floor is yours.

**Participant:** Today I am very happy to be here. I would like to thank Bejan Matur, because she invited me personally. I would like to make a suggestion: perhaps we can form an email group? We can pass some papers around, on which we will write down our emails, so that we can be in contact from time to time. Monica McWilliams, thank you for being here, it was a pleasure, and it was a luxury for us to listen to you in the midst of such bad days. You were 15 years old when the problem started, and when you were 45 you made a peace agreement. Now I am 45 years old and I am as pessimistic as the previous participant shared. Of those of you around this table, I do not know whether you can envisage such a peace agreement being signed, but I have a son, who is 11 years old, and I do not want him to live in such a conjuncture, such an environment. If we were to reach such a point when he is in his forties, it would be good news for us. That is why we have to do everything that we can now.

I somewhat felt like a man today. One of the speakers said that women are mostly interested in processes. I do not know who

said this, but at this point I am somewhat more interested in the results, the conclusions. When I was listening to the previous participant speak, I was somewhat pessimistic *and* somewhat hopeful. How could this be? This is the essence of the Kurdish Question. One can be a kind of manic-depressive: sometimes we are very hopeful and sometimes we are suicidal. And I believe that our Western friends are very confused. But it was very good for me to hear the following: she said that actually the problems we *thought* we had solved have not *actually* been solved. If we start to say that we have already solved these issues they will continue to be problematic if we cannot actually solve them in practice. It *is* problematic because as a society we can start to say, what more do you want? The problem is already solved, which means it will bring pessimism to us. We should understand that if there are such kinds of questions, the problem has not yet been solved. If we can achieve this understanding then we can start a new page for the solution. There are good days, but, we are still hearing the news of funerals. It is therefore with great audacity that we talk about the peace.

Monica McWilliams said something very good: when you are talking about the leaders, he or she should be challenging his or her own neighbourhoods. He or she should be directing their own neighbourhood to the new. This is what we lack. We are always starting with the will of our own neighbourhoods and we are always accusing the others, the third parties. There has also been the problem of *similarity*. It was a big problem: everyone was saying that we were all the same and there was a horrific election song

about this. This discourse of similarity makes me angry, and now we are trapped in a cage. We do not have many common points; we are always at complete opposites with each other. Claiming absolute similarity was horrific but absolute difference is also very horrific. How are we going to find a solution to this nonsensical situation? Hopefully we have Monica's support as well as that of Adalet Ağaoğlu, because they still believe, and this is very encouraging for us. I wish the people in Ankara and everybody else could be that full of courage. Maybe Monica, you might consider my question? At what point does the solution come? Who should ask for the solution in order to bring it about? Is it society that should be asking? Is it the politicians who should ask for the solution? Or should it be the parties, both parties who ask for the solution? When will it come? This environment of blood and violence has brought me closer to looking at other alternatives for solutions. I do not want any of our sons to die in the future. Do you make soldiers by just giving coats to civilians? Does a very young person become a terrorist just because he wears a uniform?





*Mehveş Evi and Emine Eroğlu*

Everybody here is very close to women's issues. Take domestic violence victims for example; they are always being beaten but they always stay in the same house. What is the difference between these situations? When will one learn about the solution? When one dies? If we cannot find some alternative places that will provide shelter for such women, they will be imprisoned in their households. They will be beaten morning and night and will still sleep in the same bed as their husbands.

I think the people in Ankara should be doing more, for example, on the question of headscarves. Do you think that the headscarf issue has been solved? We are talking about social consensus, which

is somewhat limiting us. Are we obliged to see the people who wrote down bad words regarding the son of Sirri Sakik? Maybe they will never be convinced? These are the kind of questions I have in my head. Thank you very much.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you very much for sharing your emotions with us so sincerely. I now turn to the next participant who wishes to speak.

**Participant:** I also want to talk about my emotions as a starting point. But also I was taught by feminism to find the truth through my emotions; that is what I have learned through feminism as well. There was a point in my life when I said to myself it won't go like this, enough is enough, and after this point I translated the negative emotions of violence into something good. And we have opened KAMER, now we are made up of thousands of women. In the past I felt for a long time that I was multiplied. We are all saddened by this conflict, but recently, in the one month since I started to feel like this, I spent a certain amount of time in Bingöl, where a bus exploded. I visited one of the villages but I never learned what really happened. I left one night before something exploded, and I thought, something will explode in this city, and it did. And I have that feeling wherever we go, wherever there is a problem, we are there.

My heart is filled with emotions and I cannot express them clearly. We should do something, we should understand and hear each

other. That is why I ask of the floor. Women's initiatives and women's words are very important. Now I would like to say why this is so. As a result of gender roles, violence and discrimination occurs. People think that to understand this, to grasp this, the answer will come from male and female relations in daily life. Yes that is right. We learn gender roles in daily life, we become aware of our gender roles by passing through daily life. But we also recognise many other things. We have started to analyse behaviours in social life as a whole. Which language is sexist? Which behaviour is sexist? Which behaviour produces and reproduces violence day by day? We become aware of this. The small world in your hands, the small politics within small households has something to do with the big policy all around the world, and we slowly acquire this information to establish a connection between the two. As I said before, for example, assume that, if I am feeling the pain of my friends who wear head scarves or if I can feel the pain and experiences of my Roman brothers and sisters, which I do, and if I analyse the official ideology of the state, which I think I have done, I can identify what kind of uniform identity we are locked in.

In 1994 I started to become interested in these things. There were many questions in my mind and I started to look for new answers. I have many old friends here. And do you know what I was doing 22 years ago? I was not born a feminist; I was the chair of a union in Diyarbakir. It was the year when the teachers were being killed. They came to me and they said that they want to carry out a ceremony for International Women's Day, the 8th

of March, and I said ‘are you joking?’. But when I started to feel their sorrow personally, and when I started to become aware of the relation between conflict and women I started to think I should do something. I could not even breathe, everything came to a halt. I think we should understand each other, it is necessary to do this. Should we wait until a fire starts to burn in our houses?

We have become aware of gender roles and the violence and discrimination created by them, we are aware of this and we can look towards our family, towards ourselves. For example, I condemn the manner of the politics in Turkey, and if it continues to go on like this, then we will not achieve a solution. But since it is not possible to change this overnight, I am observing the political parties every day and trying to analyse the mistakes in their discourses. Which political parties might create peace and progress? We discuss this daily. Let me give an example about the recent discussion, of Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the Chair of the CHP party, who visited the grave of Adnan Menderes. This was a positive point, but he also mentioned the Oslo documents, which was a negative point for him. The Prime Minister, for example, tries to engage in politics by using the number of dead people in this conflict. We were shocked, but he said that the operations might stop if there was a ceasefire. It was a hopeful discourse for me. To be a feminist is not to talk only about domestic violence. We know the language of peace because we have come from the bottom of the swamp. We experienced the worst cases. What kind of language might bring peace? What kind of language might bring destruction? Peace cannot be made at the

tables without us.

I am following all the groups and the parties, there are many dialogue groups and I am watching them. And then, at their third sentence we say that they are sexist, at their fourth sentence we say that they are militaristic. This is why the women's participation is important; we are disturbing all the memorised discourses. For example, we do not identify the Kurdish problem by way of templates written by other people. We have made asked the following question: what is *my* Kurdish Question? Yes, the Kurdish problem of the PKK is something different, but in *my* Kurdish problem there are many questions, domestic violence problems, prostitution problems. Everyone has his or her own Kurdish Question. All women have their own Kurdish Question depending on their own roots and lives. It is very important for feminism to be oneself.

I do not know if we have any people who can be like that but maybe I was not one of those (a feminist) in the beginning. If there are millions of feminists in this world, there are also millions of definitions. Everybody is responsible for his or her feminism; I am not interested in this. Feminism allowed me to recognise the big policy. Since women became aware of the hierarchy inside the family, they started to identify the greater hierarchies at play. Since they have experienced discrimination they become aware of discrimination going on in the entire world and they dream about a world without it. This is a hidden and confidential thing – there are some discussions about who has the right to learn what. Against

all of this background we begin to learn what it is to be open, because inside the family you sometimes keep secrets. So becoming a feminist has something to do with the system. Take conflict resolution as an example; if you are only talking about political violence, if you are not talking about individual violence, and if you are resisting seeing the violence that I am experiencing in my house, then you are a liar, you are hypocritical because; you have to see my violence as well.

Because our lives passed like this, we were shouting the same slogans on the streets but we were being beaten by our husbands at home. To overcome this is only possible by discussing the issue of masculinity, the issue of gender, it is only possible through this. My final remarks: if a woman does not experience awareness in terms of gender issues while she is sitting at the negotiating table, then she is not on the side of the women. She would use patriarchal language. I am not talking about biological femininity. And another issue I would like to emphasise, which has been referred to today, is how are we to form women's coalitions in Turkey? I was very offended, when this question was asked, because there are very strong women's coalitions in Turkey already, and I am a member of one. We have hosted both Cynthia Cockburn and Cynthia Enloe in Diyarbakir. We discussed studies, we talked about many things - how and what to do. But we agreed on a single, common point. Everybody has to create his or her own model. The only thing that does not change is being aware of gender roles. The issue of gender is our common discourse, without this, it is not possible to move forward. This will

be the starting point and everybody will describe their own matters. This is what it is to be a feminist - everybody can have their own definitions of feminism, but the biggest handicap in Turkey is that the violence created by gender roles, the administration created by gender roles, cannot be related to with militarism in Turkey. This was the biggest mistake of women. Women fail to understand that the big violence of the state has something to do with domestic violence. There are some reasons to be hopeless, Irish experiences are very long and ours are very new; we will walk a long road. They might not call us at the negotiation table, ok let them not call us, but we will start our own movement and soon you will hear our footsteps. This is the actual situation. To the previous speaker – why did you say that only women could not solve this issue? I would like to talk to you about my violence, but I would say that your bossy attitude is somewhat wrong. Your ego is somewhat offending for me. Just break yourself down; just recreate yourself because we need a new human model. We are dreaming of a new world, if we can do this, we can achieve a new world. Yes, we will disturb our charisma; it is only after this we can achieve something. Thank you.



*Sibel Eraslan, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak Özlem Gürses, Emel Kurma*

**Yılmaz Ensaroğlu:** To our next speaker please.

**Participant:** I know the history of feminism very well. I could not learn something different but your belief, your faith is always influential for us. I believe that it is very important for the solution to the women's problem is very important. But to what extent it is effective in terms of the solution to the Kurdish problem? I have some doubts. For example, the BDP has a women's quota, but can they end violence? That is open to discussion. The Kurdish Question is a field of conflicts, a woman's perspective is very important but it might be a second field of conflict between women and women.

**Participant:** When I am talking about the existence of women,



I am talking about the gender perspective; I am not talking about biological women.

**Participant:** I am looking to be unidentified at the negotiating table. At the negotiating table you should leave all kinds of baggage, all kinds of identity baggage and I think that it will make the negotiations difficult if you try to underline the identity of women. Because males have a guard up at such kinds of negotiation tables, so these kinds of guards might disturb the people who make the decisions. If they put up such a guard, you cannot take a further step. Sometimes we should abandon the language of feminism in order to avoid extra conflicts. And instead of using feminist language we should use emotional language. If you are there as a representative of the feminist movement, you can easily defend your ideas and opinions. Are you talking about a different women's language, an emotional language? When I talk about women's language it is constructive, it is open to understanding, it is empathetic.

Masculinity has something to do with putting up guards; this thesis is one of the problems that we should be dealing with. Let me mention a couple of things before I finish. I have witnessed two examples; in Sudan, there were 70 women's associations combining Christian and Muslim associations. I witnessed one of the meetings. There was a women's peace initiative force established by women from different religions. I think that these types of peace initiative groups would be very effective in our country, although there are some initiatives already. But such initiatives evolve into a partisan

language and they start a two-sided process. In one of the conflict zones I met with a women's association. They were saying that we attach importance to two things: our resistance against Israel and, secondly, domestic violence against women. So we have two aspects in our struggle: one of them is liberation and the second one is women's liberation. Maybe we can pay attention to such assessments; maybe we can take some benefit from such conflict zones. It is not possible to say that the women's NGOs in Turkey are united.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** I now turn to our next participant who would like to speak.

**Participant:** I would like to salute you all; I would like to thank everybody who dedicated their time towards organising this roundtable meeting.

We are not rediscovering America; there has been a problem in the Middle East both before and after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. The Kurdish population and regions has been divided into four thanks to the many international agreements made, and there are many people who are living without status. The Kurdish population is distributed throughout five regions; all have different demands which cannot be unified just for convenience sake.

We should be aware of historical revolts where some of the leaders of movements were murdered, as were their children. The people have been lied to, it was claimed that these problems had been

solved but instead the Republic was based on these lies. Now in 2012, the Prime Minister, who leads the ruling party, said that the Kurdish problem is his problem in Diyarbakir, and it was an opening meeting for a new Turkish institution. At this meeting he said that there would be an opening and this made the people hopeful. They began to follow the direction of this hope and they now feel as though they have been abandoned halfway. They have now become aware of our demands but they are not acting on them and that is why the current situation is more hopeless.

It is clear that Turkey is not the only country that has multiethnic groups within its borders and has experienced ethnic conflicts. Therefore we should use this opportunity to closely investigate the example in Northern Ireland.

Turkey in 2012 should be discussing the solution, in 2009 there were many worrying matters; Habur<sup>15</sup> for example, who is responsible for this mistake? We still cannot answer this question. The public of Turkey is still unaware; the main opposition is still talking about

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*15 On October 19, 2009, 8 militants crossed into Turkey at the Habur border gate from the PKK's camps in northern Iraq, in what was initially seen as the first stage in a process that would lead to the laying down of the PKK's arms. Under what seemed to have been a prior agreement between the PKK and the AKP, the militants were not arrested. But no legal framework had been put in place to deal with militants who arrived at Habur. The AKP seems to have regarded the incident as the end of the insurgency. The PKK saw it as the beginning of a new process in which it would engage with the Turkish state in addressing Kurdish demands for greater cultural and political rights. The PKK militants were paraded by their supporters through the Kurdish southeast of Turkey as heroes. The result was violent protests and clashes between ethnic Turks and Kurds on the streets of the cities of western Turkey. Amid well-founded fears of even more violence, the government cancelled the return of any more PKK militants; and those who had already arrived were arrested.*

the Kurds established in this region. The ruling party is saying that it was a mistake but nobody has answered the question of Habur. Nobody discussed the 500,000 people who flew onto the streets. People met for peace and disarmament here and we did not contemplate the emotional aspect of this. If we do not pay attention to the emotional aspect, if we adopt a highly politicised approach then it is impossible to discuss this. It is very important for us that everyone gathers together around a table.

But is it the solution? No, we still could not provide completely the fundamental rights and freedoms, we have only arrived at an agreement over five articles, but there are many articles remaining. There are the masses, who have some expectations, but they are not confident. I know that it is the same for the AK Party, the same, the same for the CHP. But people and society have big expectations. Whether or not it is correct to make a new constitution, this society is saying please make a new constitution to ensure peace. But there are various understandings gathering together around this table. The political power, the rulers have a leadership role in the drafting of this new constitution. *Drafting* a new constitution is not the same as making constitutional *amendments*. There is a conflict, there is a war climate in Turkey and if the fundamental rights and freedoms are recognised this war will come to an end, that is all. And to have the four political parties around the table and to have Mr. Ensaroğlu as Chair of this table is very important because he has twenty years of experience and has witnessed all of the conflict and the violence in the region.

If we could agree on all of the four titles that need to be looked at it would be very good. The first one is the definition of citizenship, the second one is religious freedom and freedom of conscience, the third is the relationship between central government and local government, and our demand is democratic autonomy, which we say that we are ready to discuss, and the fourth, the right to use ones mother tongue. We should be able to discuss these four titles. The first issue to address is the issue of mother tongue language.

There are different areas to this language issue: education; the right to defence and schooling. I became literate at four years of age; I went to school at five years of age. When my teacher asked me to sing a song, I sang a song in the Zaza language, and I was slapped on the face, my teacher said 'you will not use your own language anymore; you will sing songs and speak in Turkish.' I was ashamed of my language and I did not speak my language again until I was 11 years of age, with my mother.



*Şerife Gül Arıman and Gülten Kaya*

We should begin by looking at children's rights in this area. How can we overcome this issue of mother tongue language? It is a highly politicised issue, there are multiple dimensions of education and law, how can we overcome this? I think this can be overcome through children's rights. If we can convince the public then this is a good starting point, we should ask the public to vote on this issue, and I personally want to strengthen politics in this area, but we need to take concrete steps. If we said 'let us start the discussions with children's issues', some people would say, 'how can you open these issues to discussion?'. At the commission meeting I was told that if we had enough power, then we could be given the right to speak our own language; they were very clear about this. I do not

want to name names, only that it was one of the parliamentarians at this commission and nobody said a word against this statement.

I was threatened and personally, these threats meant nothing to me, so I responded to them. Some of my friends and the commission members wondered how I was able to discuss such matters, being a woman. For example one of the members asked, ‘are there any women parliamentarians in the BDP?’. They asked this because if you are a woman, you should be tender, you should be bowing your head and so forth. Someday, even tomorrow, we will move into a new peace process, but we know that in Mesopotamian geography, women are much oppressed and, as Kurdish women, we are the most oppressed group. We will continue our struggle because our struggle is inside our houses and inside our society, because our fundamental rights and freedoms are completely connected with these areas. The Kurdish Question may be solved through the recognition of some rights and freedoms but our freedom as women will not be recognised. Our responsibilities are seen to be for our brothers, for our husbands and even for our neighbours, so even if the Kurdish issue were solved tomorrow, the struggles of women would not be over.

Some quotas have been established in the political sphere in order to strengthen the political position of the PKK. Women however cannot be reduced to such political tools. We (the BDP) have a women’s quota, and the benefits of this can be seen from the policies we produce. For example, when making deals with

businessmen, we have some articles in our agreements that say that if you use domestic violence against your wives, our agreement will be cancelled. We are trying to show that democratic autonomy is not something to be feared.

As Professor Monica McWilliams said, the ideas of the state are at the back of our minds. We are not the only party acting on behalf of the Kurdish people although this is the general perception in society. I believe that the Peace and Democracy Party is a party that represents Turkey; it is not only a Kurdish party. Even though our programme is mainly based on the solution of the Kurdish Question, this does not make us an ethnic party, it makes us a party of Turkey. If we eliminate the Kurdish Question we will solve many problems including unemployment rates and economic problems. However if the demands that we have been discussing are negotiated without us, problems will not be solved.

Turning to another issue, how can we establish an alliance under today's conditions? Professor Monica McWilliams provided us with some scientific analysis and has shown that if you can organise decommissioning, you can take further steps with the peace process, as long as decommissioning is in action. However, I feel that there is no sufficient method which will bring about decommissioning in Turkey. So, we can discuss many international examples but they do not correspond to Turkey. Further, within the Kurdish region there are people from many different backgrounds, and so the international examples are not completely appropriate



for Kurdistan. However we can learn something from international experience, just as Northern Ireland learned from South Africa. You cannot say that decommissioning comes first; this is not possible, first we must pave the way for this process to take place.

Women came together in the early 2000s but along the way we failed because we were not able to treat each other with respect, and considering today's discussions I think this is true here as well. However, if we are to truly make a change as women, we need to adopt alternative methods and not let the methods of men contaminate us.

We criticise ourselves and our methods every day in an attempt to constantly improve, but this is a slow process. You need to have faith that we will find a solution and I have such faith. The rest revolves around maintaining a dialogue and the method of negotiating is the only tested and approved method of success. We need to unite the people around a common cause, such as stopping the violence or preventing the deaths of innocent people. If we can start an email group among us then we can move forward and proceed with our efforts. Most of all, we have to believe that this is possible.

**Participant:** As you are a member of the commission, could you not start a women's initiative? Why have you not started an initiative in the past? I believe that a women's initiative might affect members of the commission and in turn help to support the peace process.

**Participant:** There are some sensitive areas within our society, as well as the smaller Kurdish society, and we cannot turn our backs on these realities. Mr Erdoğan proposed a reconciliation commission and wanted it to be a part of the whole constitutional process. However, after the referendum was held in Turkey in 2010 the preferences of the ruling party changed and there was a lack of willingness on these particular issues. So without courage, the reforms that need to take place cannot be followed through.

Some of our meetings have taken place in areas where violence has been going on just outside. There were mixed opinions on this, with some people urging me not to say anything and others believing that the discussions and debates would encourage people to give up their firearms. However, I do not think that we can really know what motivates people, we can sit here and discuss the issues but I am skeptical as to how much we are actually achieving.

As a politician, I follow the explanations that are given by the Prime Minister and we are trying to produce policies that have merit, but unfortunately we are just consuming the policies of others. The PKK asks for an independent Kurdistan but we ask for a common, equal interdependence. Thank you.



*Verda Ozer, Sibel Eraslan, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak,  
Özlem Gürses, Nur Kırmızıdağ, Mehveş Evin*

**Participant:** I would like to make a very short point regarding the commission please. If you want decommissioning, we cannot expect this only from the BDP; we should expect this from the ruling party. We should also expect this from the opposition party and the other political parties. Even the army should do something regarding their military operations, so it is not incumbent upon the BDP to make this happen. This is not just a conflict anymore; this is a war because each day twenty young people are killed. This conflict is two-sided so only relying on one side to bring an end to the conflict is unrealistic. For this reason we should create an initiative for women and use the feminist language as a language of peace.

**Participant:** We need to empower politics. We need to make military operations more meaningful. There are a thousand politicians in prison and this puts pressure on those who are not in prison because they cannot do their jobs properly, for fear that they may end up in prison. However, we cannot have ‘passive politics’; we need to engage more with the situation. Thank you.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Let us give the floor to the people who have not spoken yet, and then we will wrap up with some comments from the panel. Thank you.

**Participant:** I am unique here; my husband was killed and the perpetrators were rewarded. Who is preventing you from realising your authority? As a commission, you have the right to implement changes. Sometimes politicians make decisions that are too abstract and not real. I am not a professor; I do not have this kind of education. Who is to say what the sensitive issues are? Sometimes I do not want good things for my country, we should see our sins and our mistakes and then maybe we can look for the good. By the way, they (the Turkish government) only ever say ‘nation’, they do not say, our ‘citizens’. As a leader, you must sacrifice yourself to bring peace. The phrase – ‘love this country or leave this country’ is today being repeated by the Prime Minister even though this same phrase was said to my husband before he died.



*Melek Ulagay Taylan, Yeter Akın, Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Özlem Gürses, Şirin Payzın, Prof. Dr. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Nur Kırmızıdağ, Mehveş Evin, Emine Eroğlu*

**Participant:** When I received an invitation from DPI to this seminar, I was reading three pieces of news, that demonstrate how much violence there is in Turkey. In the minute it took me to read the invite there were at least three reports of violence. People do not want to study in certain areas if they are from other areas of the country as a result of this violence. The press and the media need to find a common language to support a dialogue between all of the parties, and we should create a dialogue for that purpose.

We need a democratic structure that unifies women under the same

umbrella. How can we do that? I will do my best to find a way of achieving this. As you have suggested, we can create an email list but we need to do it as soon as possible, because we are running out of time.

**Participant:** We had hoped to be part of the European Union (EU), but now this is not an issue for the citizens or the government. We have lost the objective that we had been heading towards. We do not know our Prime Minister anymore. The biggest sin of the EU is not taking Turkey into the union. Even Croatia was accepted but we were not, and this has made things worse. Now we are burning in hell. The Prime Minister thinks that we will beat the PKK but the PKK will carry on fighting for as long as it takes. This is the policy of men; this is not the policy of women. As women, we can only be the mother of soldiers; we are voiceless within the country. I am now part of a group which held a recent meeting where the men were very disrespectful towards me. I proposed a topic and they wrapped it up very quickly without giving it a chance to be discussed.

I find myself asking, as an individual, what can I do? I socialise with my Kurdish neighbour as well as my son and this feels like the only thing that I can do. I am part of a group that has an inner discussion platform but many women do not say anything - this is because their husbands may lose their jobs. My son tells me that I am stupid, that you cannot see the hidden intentions of the other people talking with you, so even our children have different ideas and opinions on the matter. We need to distinguish between

the PKK and the Kurdish people and repair relations between the people as a whole.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you.

**Participant:** All of the analysis today has been very good, but this is the case at all of these types of meetings. I think that the suggestions made by all have something to do with Rakel Dink's intervention.

Turkey is still not a democratic and egalitarian state, because such a country would serve their *nation*, but according to Turkey's constitution; it is the nation that should serve the *state*. However, in the speeches I give I never refer to 'Turks' or 'Turkish' when I am talking about the state. Equality is very important but even if we achieve greater rights for women we still have to face the issue of Turkey being undemocratic on the whole. However with regards to women I think that women's rights should not be separated from human rights and that is why I think there needs to be a human rights department within the Ministry of Defence.

We should consider what is happening in Egypt and the Middle East; the uprisings, and bear this in mind, to help us unite and try to find some solutions to our problem.

**Participant:** In 1995 many combatants, soldiers and girls were killed. The river washed away both of the soldiers and the members

of the PKK. This was a striking moment for me at the time because before this, I did not think that members of the PKK should be washed away. So, beyond speaking, we should practice listening. We are all members of civil society but there are some people with no connection to this society who we need to try listening to. We have one mouth to speak, but we have two ears to listen.

When I have previously seen Ayla on the television, as well as other women from the BDP, I thought that they were very masculine. This is why these face-to-face meetings are useful, because it is easier to relate to people when we talk in this way. I think that we should go back to some of the fundamental behaviours. Midwifery is the oldest profession, and this is what we should become. We should spend some time visiting the funerals of people from the opposing side of the conflict because the issues of death and birth are very important. We should update feminist practices, we should sing a lullaby - we should speak less, reduce sentence to words and words to letters. We should look into each other's eyes.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** Thank you all.

**Participant:** I want to say a couple of things. I would like to describe the theory of *zero sum* games; a theory of mathematics. For a hundred years we have been experiencing this *zero sum* game in relation to the Kurdish Question. In social or economic life, as the opponent wins, you can win as well. John Nash clearly calculates this fact through mathematics. John Nash asked, 'is it



possible to have games where everybody loses?’ The answer was, if the opponents play the game in a way that means people can lose, then we always lose. All we can do is pressurise the political powers and it is within the political realm that some formulas should be developed which mean that everyone can win.

**Yılmaz Ensaroğlu:** I now hand back over to the speakers.

**Ayşe Betül Çelik:** The problem is that we are always urging people to abandon their identities. In our attempts to beat each other we should not just be involved with the calculations but we should make some effort to understand each other. In Northern Ireland there were some ‘spoilers’ who wanted to disturb the process, and they were heard. We can start to collect stories if we listen and try to understand one another. Our eyes wept when Rakel Dink was speaking earlier. Yes, without speaking about the past, there will be no future, but we should not speak only in the past.

**Antonia Potter Prentice:** Nothing will be solved without women; they need to be included, but this does not mean that women can do it alone. Turkey is unique, but you will see similarities with other conflicts. I was in Myanmar last week; they are currently engaged in democratic talks. Aung San Suu Kyi is travelling the world promoting democratic peace. That was unthinkable years ago.

**Prof. Monica McWilliams:** Who is at the table? Are there empty seats at the table? Women have certain human rights as well as being

able to negotiate. In Northern Ireland, we could not explain what the exact cause of the problem was; sometimes it is too much to ask what the common explanation is. Once the peace agreement was signed, we decided to deal with the new explanations. If you spend too much time on explanations of the past then you may not have enough time to look at what you want from the future. Finding the humanity in each other; being able to look each other in the eye; standing at the funerals of the people who you would not think of; this allows you to walk in other peoples shoes. Circumstances sometimes all come together at a certain time; this can be a result of analysis. For Northern Ireland, pressure came from inside civil society and the international community in the form of sanctions.

It sometimes takes a huge tragedy to wake people up and I hope in your case, huge tragedies are not needed. It was a combination of all of those things; sadness and despair and political parties. Some women turned to writing, the media, and the streets and began to say that they wanted it to end. I end by saying, I do not know when your moment will come, but start preparing now, you know who needs to be held to account, so make sure you are ready, otherwise the moment will pass, and people will ask: 'well where were the women?'.

**Participant:** If there were one million women in Istanbul holding banners and protesting - would this not be great? Not as part of a political party, just as women.



*Işın Eliçin, Ayşe Böhürler, Zeynep Tanbay, Rakel Dink, Sıdıka Çetin, Serife Gül Arıman, Gülten Kaya, Tuba Çandar, Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Yeter Akın, Eleanor Johnson, Neslihan Özgiines*

**Bejan Matur:** I would like to thank all of the speakers; I always learn many things from DPI's meetings. We started in Ireland and Europe but we are now looking to visit South Africa as well.

The members of the Turkish government need to learn how to communicate with each other, like the British and Irish governments now do. We are just trying to understand each other, and it is not that difficult. All conflicts eventually come to an end, and so the conflict in Turkey will also come to an end. However our duty is to think of ways in which we can save the lives of young people and bring the conflict to an end as soon as possible. We should not look

for the perpetrators anymore; instead the government should make urgent decisions and put these into action. We should also stop the use of weapons and firearms. If the Prime Minister wants his name to be written in history, he needs to implement change. We arrived at an important point today, so I am very happy.

**Yilmaz Ensaroğlu:** In terms of general evaluations: all conflicts are specific and unique; no case is the same as the other and they cannot provide models for each other, therefore we are obliged to produce our own 'model'. We have a common problem; the need to realise the root causes of the problem and identify what the problem is. The Turkish question, the Kurdish Question, the terrorist question - there are different concepts for the same issue.

We should be able to correctly analyse the actors involved in this issue and identify who the parties to this conflict are. The people in charge so far have not done this as well as they should have. In order to stop the conflict, there may need to be some ad hoc elements to the process and we should implement these accordingly. We should abandon the language of conflict; if the opposition parties are not merciful to one another at the end of one meeting instead of giving up, we should rethink how to have a more productive exchange.

This is no longer an issue between the state and the Kurds only, now all of society is involved. This has been one of the most important problems of the conflict; it separated the people even more. So a new constitution may not be possible at this stage. None of the conflicts in history went on forever and this will not go forever

either. Whenever there is a turning point, there will also be a third party who may attack the peace process. But despite this, we should express the peace dialogue, we need to be pro-peace people, and we need to be as forceful as the pro-war people.

There are some rules to remember: we should take what has been said in this meeting and distribute the ideas but respect the anonymity of those who attended. We should also set up the email group we discussed earlier.

We would like to thank the interpreters and the DPI team in London as well as Bejan Matur, for your contributions and efforts. And finally, I would like to thank you for being here, and our guests and speakers for sharing your experiences and thoughts. Hopefully it will not end here, our discussions may not continue under the roof of DPI, but we should acknowledge that we are gathered here today because of their work. I think that we should constantly be uniting in this way in order to influence society and the decision makers.

A full record on today's discussions will be made publicly available on DPI's website (as with all of DPI's activities) in due course, and will also be published in hard copy, in both Turkish and English. I look forward to seeing you at future DPI activities.

Thank you again.

## Conclusion

The roundtable meeting that DPI held in Istanbul on the matter of women's role in conflict resolution highlighted some of the more prominent issues in this subject area and generated a lively and thought-provoking debate. The day brought together many participants from the worlds of academia, politics, the non-governmental sector as well as writers, journalists, diplomats, policy makers and international experts. The role that women can play in conflict resolution was discussed on an international, national and local scale; allowing for an understanding of the general need for women to be involved in peace processes as well as questioning how this can be achieved and the results of such initiatives in specific cases. The large and varied turnout as well as the media coverage that followed this event, demonstrates the positive response it received. On the whole, this roundtable was very successful and we hope the discussion that was generated provided useful insight into this important issue, and will continue to occur.

DPI will continue to organise similar roundtable discussions, both in Turkey and abroad.

Once again, DPI thanks all participants and contributors for their much appreciated participation in this activity.

# Appendix

## **DPI Roundtable: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution 19th September 2012, Istanbul**

### **Participants from Turkey**

- Adalet Ağaoğlu, Writer
- Ayla Akat, Member of Parliament, Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)
- Prof. Dr. Ayşe Betül Çelik, Professor and Speaker, Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey
- Ayşe Böhürler, Kanal 7 Journalist and Presenter, Kanal 7
- Bejan Matur, DPI Council of Experts
- Belkıs Kılıçkaya, TV Journalist at Habertürk
- Prof. Dr. Binnaz Toprak, Member of Parliament, Republican people's Party (CHP)
- Cansu Çamlıbel, Journalist at Hürriyet Daily newspaper
- Can Zeynep Sungur, Sabancı University
- Cengiz Çandar, Journalist and columnist at Radikal news Daily newspaper; DPI Council of Experts
- David Reddaway, Ambassador, British Embassy, Turkey
- Deniz Cenk Demir, Şehir University, Istanbul

- Emel Kurma, Helsinki Citizens Assembly
- Emine Eroğlu, Editor in Chief, TIMAS
- Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Professor, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey
- Feray Salman, General Coordinator of the Human Rights Joint Platform (IHOP)
- Filiz Bedirhanoğlu İşkadinı, Member of Congress, Democratic Society Congress (DTK)
- Gülseren Onanç, Member of Parliament and Executive Board Member, Republican Peoples Party (CHP)
- Gülten Kaya, Head, Ahmet Kaya Music Company
- Prof. Dr. Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Taraf Daily newspaper
- Isabelle Dumont, French Embassy, Turkey
- Işın Eliçin, Journalist and Presenter, TRT Turk
- John T Holmes, Ambassador, Canadian Embassy, Turkey
- Kezban Hatemi, Human Rights Lawyer
- Kibriye Evren, Peace and Democracy Party
- Leyla Susan Barlas-Aslan, head of matra and Human Rights Programme at the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Istanbul
- Mehveş Evin, Columnist, Milliyet Newspaper
- Melek Ulagay Taylan, Documentary Producer at AJANS 21



- Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen: Sehir University
- Prof. Dr. Mithat Sançar, Ankara University, Taraf Daily newspaper
- Nebahat Akkoç, Head of KA-MER (Women's Centre), Diyarbakir
- Neslihan Özgüneş, Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations (TACSO) Advisor
- Nilüfer Bulut, President, Turkish businesswomen association (TIKAD)
- Nur Kırmızıdağ, Researcher for Foundation for Political, Social and Economic Research (SETAV)
- Prof. Dr. Özlem Gürses: Journalist and Director of Press and Public Relations at Bilgi University, Istanbul
- Rakel Dink, Head of Hrant Dink Foundation
- Sekivk Şamiloğlu, Hürriyet news
- Şerife Gül Arıman, Head of Mazlumder
- Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokus, Lecturer at Kocaeli University
- Sibel Eraslan, Columnist, Star Gazete
- Prof. Dr. Sıdıka Çetin, Professor, Suleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Turkey
- Şirin Payzın, Presenter, CNN Turkey
- Tuba Çandar, Writer

- Verda Ozer, Columbia Global Center
- Yeter Akın, V6/NL
- Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, DPI Council of Experts
- Zeynep Tanbay, Sabancı University

## Interpreters

- Eren Buğlalılar
- Esra Öztürk Çevirmen

## UK Contributors

- Antonia Potter Prentice, DPI Board Member and European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO)
- Catriona Vine, Deputy Director and Director of Programmes, DPI
- Eleanor Johnson, Project Officer, DPI
- Monica McWilliams, Professor, University of Ulster
- Stephanie Guthridge, Assistant, DPI

# DPI Board and Council of Experts

## Director:

### Kerim Yildiz

Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in International Human Rights Law and minority rights, and has written extensively on international Human Rights mechanisms and International Humanitarian Law. Kerim is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011.

## DPI Board Members:

### Nick Stewart QC (Chair)

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom. Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

### Prof. Penny Green

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

## **Priscilla Hayner**

Co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organizations.

## **Arild Humlen**

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee, Norway. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

## **Antonia Potter Prentice**

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, MediatEUR, and Terre des Hommes.

## **Jacki Muirhead**

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the

Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

## **David Petrasek**

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Public and International affairs, formerly Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, he has worked extensively on human rights, humanitarian and conflict resolution issues, including for Amnesty International (1990-96), for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-98), for the International Council on Human Rights Policy (1998-02), and as Director of Policy at the HD Centre (2003-07).

## **DPI Council of Experts:**

### **Prof. Christine Bell**

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

### **Cengiz Çandar**

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

## **Yılmaz Ensaroğlu**

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

## **Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres**

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Center for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

## **Prof. Mervyn Frost**

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

## **Martin Griffiths**

Former Deputy Head, Kofi Annan's UN Mission to Syria. Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs,

Geneva and Deputy to the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

### **Dr. Edel Hughes**

Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

### **Prof. Ram Manikkalingam**

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

### **Bejan Matur**

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

## **Jonathan Powell**

Jonathan Powell is founder and CEO of Inter Mediate, an NGO devoted to conflict resolution working in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Jonathan was Chief of Staff to Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and from 1997 was also Chief British Negotiation Northern Ireland. From 1978-79 he was a broadcast journalist with the BBC and Granada TV and from 1979 to 1994 a British Diplomat.

## **Sir Kieran Prendergast**

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

## **Rajesh Rai**

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He is Founding Director of HIC, a Community Centred NGO based in Cameroon, and of Human Energy (Uganda) Ltd, and was previously a Director of



The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Rajesh also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Council and internationally, in India, Africa, Asia, and the USA.

### **Prof. Naomi Roht-Arriaza**

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

### **Prof. Dr. Mithat Sancar**

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on constitutional citizenship and transitional justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



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