



DPI Roundtable Meeting

Incorporating and Integrating Women in Peace processes and Conflict Resolution

15-17 July 2016, Ankara

Summary Report

Foreword

The following is a summary of the DPI's roundtable meeting that took place in Kızılcahamam, Ankara, on the weekend of the 15-17 July 2016, addressing the topic of women's incorporation and integration in peace processes and conflict resolution. This meeting took place during extraordinary circumstances in Turkey, with the attempted military coup occurring on the first night of the activity (15 July) and related events unfolding in the days that followed. Despite this context, participants were unanimous in their desire to continue with the meeting, which proceeded as planned. Those present expressed the need for increased opportunities to broaden bases for constructive national dialogue at every level of society, and reiterated the unique position of DPI in terms of the open channels of communication it has with all groups and actors on the ground. In response to this, the Institute shall endeavour to continue to carry out relevant activities over the coming months.

As always with DPI's activities, this meeting was held under Chatham House Rule. In the interest of transparency, a full transcript and audio recording of the July Ankara Roundtable Meeting is available to the public. Please contact info@democraticprogress.org for further information.

Links to DPI working papers relating the topic of this roundtable can be found at the end of this report. Other research papers on the subject of conflict resolution and democratic transition processes, and all previous DPI activity reports, can be found on the Institute's website: www.democraticprogress.org

Context: Attempted military coup and an increased need for national dialogue at a time of crisis

DPI's Roundtable Meeting on the topic of Incorporating and Integrating Women in Peace Processes and Conflict Resolution was held in Ankara on the weekend of 15-17 July 2016, at an historic time for Turkey, which was faced with an attempted military coup on the evening of DPI's opening dinner reception on 15 July. The activity continued despite the extraordinary events which unfolded, at the request of all present, who were eager to engage in dialogue with regard to the situation on the ground and to hear from the international speakers present.

The backdrop to the roundtable was a stark reminder of the ever increasing need for fully inclusive national dialogue in Turkey at present, and pointed to the increased levels of polarisation throughout society. All those present emphasised the need for accessible platforms for constructive discussion on the themes and challenges currently being faced in the country, in order to decrease the risk of further deterioration of the present situation and to encourage the widest possible engagement with democratic progress at every level, and in particular the resolution of the Kurdish conflict.

In response to the continued need for broadened basis for dialogue in Turkey in the context of ongoing conflict and increased polarisation, the roundtable aimed to bring together participants representing the many diverse views and perspectives from across Turkey's political and cultural spectra, to consider relevant topics to the current context there and to focus in particular on the issue of incorporating and integrating women into peace processes and conflict resolution, a subject which is vital if longstanding peace and democratic advancement is to be achieved.

The roundtable provided experience and knowledge-sharing from international keynote speakers, drawing specifically on the case of Northern Ireland and allowing for in-depth review and exchange between the participants and expert speakers present. This activity followed on from the women's delegation Comparative Study Visit to Ireland which took place in March 2016, and which addressed the topic of "getting a process back on track" from a gendered perspective. Speakers shared on their personal experiences of the challenges faced in relation to gender and conflict and on the means by which these were overcome. They spoke on their first hand experiences including in relation to the establishment of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and its role in facilitating the inclusion of women at the negotiating table, and their incorporation into the process which led to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

The roundtable provided the opportunity for the issues currently relevant to Turkey to be addressed, most notably the attempted military coup which unfolded at the time of the meeting. The activity therefore allowed for a much needed space for dialogue on related topics, and united participants from very different political perspectives, at an extraordinary time in Turkey's history.

Participants

The Roundtable was attended by Members of Parliament; prominent members and chairs of Turkey's wise persons' commission; human rights lawyers; influential business leaders; civil society representatives; renowned academics, and policy makers and advisors to the parties to the process.

Women and gender inclusion at every level of conflict resolution as a key to change

Two pivotal members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Avila Kilmurray and Jane Morrice attended the roundtable as keynote speakers. Both spoke of their direct experience of conflict as women, and on the roles they played in the process of conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. Both speakers shared on the specific challenges faced by women in terms of their full participation in a peace process, as well as on the difficulties commonly experienced in incorporating gender perspectives at the negotiation table, and the steps that were taken to overcome such difficulties in the case of Northern Ireland.

Speakers

Avila Kilmurray is Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and a founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, which played a key role in the talks leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Avila has written extensively on Community Development, Women's Issues and Conflict Transformation.

Jane Morrice is Vice President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), a former politician in Northern Ireland and prominent member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Jane was a member of the Standing Orders Committee which set the initial rules governing Assembly procedures post-devolution and was appointed Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2000.

Speakers discussed their work in relation to women and conflict transformation and shared on the specific day-to-day challenges faced by women in conflict scenarios, including community expectations, perceptions of women as the foundation of family solidarity, the silencing of women in times of conflict, and at the political level, the obstacles often faced by women in terms of their participation in peace processes and the incorporation of gender considerations into conflict resolution processes more generally. Discussion focused on women's role in the politics and political compromise, and in terms of community and intergenerational memory (in the context of transitional justice).

The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was discussed in terms of the significant part it played in incorporating women into the political process surrounding conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. The technicalities of establishing and mobilising such a coalition, and its valuable function in terms of ensuring the concerns and experiences of women were brought to the fore despite their political differences was covered in detail. The ability of the Women's Coalition to bridge the political divide in Northern Ireland was also discussed, including the ways in which it challenged the simplicity of the "them" and "us" mentality often at play in polarised and divided societies, and the ability of the Coalition to offer creative approaches and to challenge accepted notions within a traditionally male environment, including with regard to questions asked during peace talks, drafting of peace agreements, communication lines and overcoming party political interests. Women's role as a trusted backchannel and as a line of communication with local communities throughout the Northern Ireland peace talks was also analysed as was the practical input women had in encouraging empathy through engagement across different political backgrounds in the context of Northern Ireland.

The importance of encouraging peace language and positive narratives within the media in order to prepare society for peace and positive change was also encouraged. The experiences of key women actors in the Northern Ireland context were drawn on in this regard, including then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam. This was seen to be of particular importance at times of challenge or at times of deadlock in the progress of a peace process. Also discussed in this regard was the opportunity often presented by crises and impediments to a process, for new ways of thinking, and for women to play a more central role in the progression of dialogue and public engagement. The attempted military coup and related events which continued to unfold at the time of the roundtable led to rich discussion on this topic, with participants from all perspectives sharing the view that the current crisis has the potential to lead to renewed support for a resolution process and democratic advancement in Turkey at this extraordinary moment in time, and that the

opportunity must be taken at this stage, to galvanise the support of local actors in order to broaden bases for dialogue on the topics in question.



Participants and speakers at Kızılcahamam in Ankara during the DPI roundtable meeting



Participants and speakers Jane Morrice and Avila Kilmurray



Avila Kilmurray, founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition with Professor Dr Sevtap Yokuş, an Academic from Istanbul Kemerburgaz University



Jane Morrice, prominent member of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition and former Deputy Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and Deputy Director of Political and Legal Affairs and Member, CDAC, Justice and Development Party (AK Party)

Key points of discussion in relation to women’s integration and incorporation in peace processes include:

- The specific experiences of women in relation to conflict
- Obstacles and challenges often experienced by women in participating in conflict resolution processes
- The role of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions in promoting women’s incorporation into peace processes and in bringing a gendered perspective
- The technicalities and mechanics of establishing and mobilising support for a cross party Women’s Coalition – the experiences of Northern Ireland
- Women’s role as backchannel and cross party communicators, and as links to local communities
- The opportunities that crises can bring about in terms of overcoming obstacles to progress and in allowing greater involvement of women in peace processes
- The importance of the media in encouraging a positive narrative and the adoption of “peace language” in times of crisis
- The gendered approaches of women to conflict in different cases and the role of empathy and symbols brought by women to a peace process

Broadening bases for dialogue across society

The experiences shared by the international speakers present, on their specific experiences of conflict, and in relation to women's inclusion and incorporation into peace processes, drawing specifically on their first hand experience in the case of Northern Ireland, allowed for narrowed down and focused discussion among the group on these topics, and in relation to Turkey.

The context in which the roundtable meeting took place, which witnessed an attempted military coup in Turkey, meant that much of the discussion that took place was understandably focused on the current situation and on analysing the developments that were unfolding within the country.

The roundtable was seen to be extremely timely, and more necessary than ever in light of the ongoing events in Turkey. Participants expressed their eagerness for DPI to continue its work in the area of broadening bases for national dialogue and public engagement, in order to address the challenge of increasing polarisation across society and to provide platforms for inclusive dialogue among all groups.

The case of Northern Ireland was seen by participants to be of continued relevance to Turkey, providing many parallels and offering many learnings with regard to conflict resolution process and in particular, the experiences of women in conflict and in conflict resolution processes. The learnings gained from the experiences of women in Northern Ireland were seen to be of particular value, and the means by which obstacles to women's inclusion and incorporation in the process leading to the Good Friday Agreement were key points of focus.

The roundtable was therefore successful in bringing together diverse groups in Turkey at a times of extraordinary challenge, to focus on their commonalities and shared perspectives and to learn from the experiences of other cases. It also laid the foundations for continued discussion on the topics most relevant to Turkey today and for further activities of this kind to take place in the coming months.

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Annex 1

Participants and speakers

Name	Position	Affiliation
Ayla Akat	Chairwoman, Free Women Congress and Former Member of Parliament, Batman	People's Democratic Party (HDP)
Zeynep Alkış	Deputy Director of Political and Legal Affairs and Member, CDAC, Justice and Development Party (AK Party)	Justice and Development Party (AK Party)
Filiz Bedirhanoğlu	Deputy Chairwoman	DISİAD, Business persons Association, Diyarbakir
Fatma Bostan Ünsal	Founder Member of Justice and Development Party (AK Party), and Academic	Muş Alparslan University
Esra Elmas	Turkey Programme Coordinator at DPI and Co-founder of İstanbul Bilgi University Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies and Research	Democratic Progress Institute and İstanbul Bilgi University Centre for Conflict Resolution Studies and Research
Camille Grujon	Scribe	Democratic Progress Institute
Kezban Hatemi	Lawyer, and Member, Wise Persons Committee	Turkey's Wise Persons Committee
Selma Irmak	Member of Parliament, Şırnak	Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP)
Avila Kilmurray	Founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and Director	Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
Jane Morrice	Former politician in Northern Ireland and prominent member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, and Vice President	European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), a
Şenal Sarıhan	Member of Parliament, Ankara	Republican People's Party (CHP)
Prof. Dr. Sevtap Yokuş	Academic and Professor of Constitutional Law	Istanbul Kemerburgaz University
Özlem Zengin	Chief Advisor to President Erdoğan and Former Head, AK Party Women's Branch, İstanbul	Justice and Development Party (AK Party)

Annex 2

DPI Paper: Good Friday Agreement Overview

<http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/The-Good-Friday-Agreement-An-Overview.pdf>

DPI Paper: A Study into the Ways to Better Incorporate Women into Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Through the Implementation of UNSCR 1325

<http://www.democraticprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/1325-paper-25-nov-20141.pdf>