



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

DPI Roundtable Meeting  
Van, Turkey  
28th September 2013

Democratic  
Progress  
Institute



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**[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)**  
**[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)**  
+44 (0)203 206 9939

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## Foreword

This report details the discussion that took place during the Democratic Progress Institute's roundtable meeting in Van, Turkey on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013, regarding the role that women can play in conflict resolution. The importance of the role of women and their contribution to peace processes is increasingly being recognised by the international community. We hope that this record of the discussions that took place during this roundtable, and the lessons learned from the past, will provide a step towards helping to mobilise women of all backgrounds and to facilitate their involvement in conflict resolution processes. This roundtable discussion is one of a series of the Institute's Turkey seminars on gender and conflict resolution. 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 Amandine de Rosnay.

Kerim Yildiz

**Director**

Democratic Progress Institute

September 2013

**DPI REPORT:**  
**Roundtable: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution**  
**Van, Turkey**  
**28<sup>th</sup> September 2013**



*Hüseyin Hatemi, Fatma Bostan Unsal, Dilara Gerfer, Esra Elmas, Can Ozan Tuncer, Eleanor Johnson, Ayşe Akıncı Candoğan, Nazan Oskay, Münteha Bildirici, Aslı Tunç, Kezban Hatemi, Bejan Matur, Tuba Çandar, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Işın Eliçin, Esra Nurel, Peter Spoor, Neşe Akkerman, Jane Connors, Nurcan Baysal, Nazmi Gür, David Gorman, Kadri Salaz, Penny Green, Catriona Vine, Kate Fearon, Aşiren Piroz, Nil Mutluer, Vedat Aydın, Gülseren Onanc, Melda Onur, Hüseyin Akkaş, Ayşen Baylak, Yılmaz Ensaroğlu*



## Welcome and Introduction

### Opening Remarks – Catriona Vine,<sup>1</sup> DPI Deputy Director and Director of Programmes



*Catriona Vine*

Welcome to this roundtable meeting on the role of women in conflict resolution, which DPI is very pleased to be hosting in partnership with Yüzüncü Yıl University. We are very grateful to the Rector, the Vice Rector and their staff for their kind assistance. We are also grateful to the Governor of Van Mr Aydın Nezi̇h Doĝan who will host a reception and dinner this evening at seven pm. DPI works in a number of countries including Syria, the Caucuses, and parts of the Middle East. One of the key aims of our

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<sup>1</sup> Catriona Vine is DPI's Deputy Director and Director of programmes. She has practiced in criminal, public and human rights law in the UK and internationally and has extensive teaching experience in criminal and international human rights law. She has worked in non-governmental, inter-governmental and government organisations including the Louisiana Crisis Assistance Centre, the Irish Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and has prepared numerous international human rights applications to the European Court of Human Rights, the European Court of First Instance and UN charter bodies and special procedures. Catriona has authored or contributed to numerous manual, reports, and briefing papers on the implementation of international human rights standards in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

programmes wherever they are based is to broaden the bases of support within society for democracy. While no two conflicts are the same and the solutions for each conflict have to be tailored to the particular circumstances of that conflict and that country; we are firmly committed to the principle that we should learn from the experiences of others – ensuring not to make the same mistakes that they have made but also adopting aspects of their model which were particularly successful if appropriate.

Our series of roundtable meetings which form part of our Turkey Programme complement our international comparative study visits, which provide key stakeholders with an opportunity to take a closer and more in depth look at particular examples from around the world and mechanisms which may be of relevance to the Turkish situation. We have already carried out comparative study visits in South Africa, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales. Future comparative studies we are planning include North America, Asia and other parts of Europe. We are also currently discussing possible comparative study visits to Ireland and elsewhere to look more closely at the experience of inclusion of women in that process.

We have witnessed over the years that Turkey has taken extremely important steps towards resolving the ongoing conflict. Very important taboos have been broken, providing political space for a discussion about the means and methods of conflict resolution in Turkey. The Kurdish conflict is important and complicated,

and finding a solution is not an easy, straightforward task. As I have already said we firmly believe that no two conflicts are the same and that it is not appropriate to simply adopt a solution from elsewhere and fit it to the Turkish context. The solution one way or another has to come from within Turkey with the involvement of all sectors of society. The efforts to solve this conflict deserve international support. While DPI is not a political body or engaged in everyday politics, our goal of sharing other international experiences, broadening the bases and preparing society for their role in the resolution of the conflict is of upmost importance and will ultimately assist Turkey to move forward.

Throughout the world women have played an important role in peace-building and reconciliation, facilitating community dialogues, delivering humanitarian aid and support, managing evacuation centres, supporting displaced persons and delivering peace education programmes. Despite the unique impact of conflict on women, and their significant contribution to restoring peace, they have traditionally played a limited role in official peace processes. This is the second roundtable meeting that we have organised on the subject of the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution. The first took place last autumn in Istanbul. By organising these meetings we aim to ensure that you have an opportunity to learn from the experiences of experts who have direct and indirect first-hand experience in other international contexts, providing you an opportunity to discuss with them, the successes and failures of those models ultimately ensuring that

women in Turkey are afforded the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the resolution of the conflict.

This morning we have three notable speakers from Turkey: Bejan Matur, who is a member of DPI and needs little introduction from me, has among other things carried out important work in ensuring the stories of women taking part in and being affected by the conflict are told. While working for the United Nations Development Programme Nurcan Baysal focused on strengthening women's organisations in Diyarbakir. She is a journalist. Nil Mutluer is a communications expert, journalist and academic who is widely published on a range of issues including gender, nationalism and citizenship in Turkey. The questions which they seek to address in this first session entitled 'Women as peacemakers' are firstly, how to mobilise women of all backgrounds and, secondly, how to facilitate women's involvement in peace building and conflict resolution. These speakers, who I know are well known to you all, will set the scene for our discussions and summarise their experiences of women's role in peace building and conflict resolution here in Turkey. The morning session will be moderated by Yildiz Ramazanoglu who is an author and renowned figure in Turkey as a human rights activist and women's rights advocate.

In the second session we will hear from our international speakers who have direct and indirect experience of other situations and how women were incorporated, or were not incorporated, into democratic processes. They will look at lessons that have been

learned in relation to women's role in conflict resolution processes and the obstacles preventing women from being included in democratic processes.

Kate Fearon, who is the founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition; a political party which was founded by women in Northern Ireland across religious divides and became one of the parties at the negotiations leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The Coalition, which is very much a success story, and was formed by a group of Northern Irish women became a channel for cross-community cooperation and gained a voice in the peace negotiations. The coalition gained two seats at the negotiating table, where they put forward an all-woman, cross-community team and promoted an inclusive, cooperative process, put women's participation on the political map and brought a civil society voice to the negotiations. They influenced the political culture and in promoting peace and reconciliation, eventually becoming a permanent political party. Kate herself was the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition Chief of Staff during the negotiations and has a wealth of personal experience relating to those negotiations to share with you. Since then Kate has gone on to work in a number of high level positions dealing with the rule of law and governance in Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo and Sudan.

Jane Connors is the Chief of the United Nations Special Procedures Branch at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. Special Procedures are independent human rights

experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. The system of Special Procedures is a central element of the United Nations human rights machinery and covers all human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, and social. There are about 36 thematic and 13 country mandates. Thematic mandates include many aspects which are relevant to women and peace building with working groups and special rapporteurs for example on violence against women, terrorism, trafficking in persons, torture, and human rights defenders. She will discuss how these human rights mechanisms can be used to empower women leading to greater inclusion in democratic processes.

Finally you will hear from David Gorman who is the Regional Director for Eurasia at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue based in Geneva. He has first-hand experience of the process which is currently underway in the Philippines. In 2009 the Philippines was the first country in Asia to launch a National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council (SC) Resolution 1325 and is currently engaged in peace negotiations between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). With stated government objectives in the guise of the National Action Plan the inclusion of women in these negotiations and peace building efforts is very interesting and there are many lessons which can be drawn from that experience. The afternoon's session will be moderated by Professor Aslı Tunç Professor and Head of Istanbul Bilgi University's School of Media. The concluding observations and closing speech

will be by Yilmaz Ensaroglu, DPI member and Director of law and human rights studies from the foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA).

As with all of DPI's roundtable meetings, we place a high importance on ensuring active participation of everyone, with speakers' presentations being kept short so as to ensure sufficient time for questions and discussion. I must also apologise to you however as normally we aim to keep our meetings quite small but due to the high level of interest from women all over the country we were required to expand the size of this roundtable. I hope that the large size of the group does not impede a fruitful discussion.

Now I will hand over to Ahmet Kazankaya Vice Rector of Yüzüncü Yil University who will say a few words before we commence the first session.

## **Vice Rector of Yüzüncü Yil University, Van: Ahmet Kazankaya**

Dear Members of Parliament, Governor, ladies and gentlemen. We are very happy to see you and host you here. You all welcome in Van. We very much care about the role of women in society and their active participation in democratic processes. We are also conducting some activities in this area. We also think that it is important for women to stand on their own two feet in economic life. Our university works with the business sector to ensure that women are able to participate in the economy, with fewer difficulties. We hope that these matters are discussed at length, all around the

world as well as in our country. Once again, we welcome you here today in Van, and wish you a successful roundtable discussion.

## **Session One:**

### **Moderator: Yıldız Ramazanoğlu<sup>2</sup>**



*Yıldız Ramazanoğlu*

Globalisation is an aggressive phenomenon, people from the very bottom are part of globalisation and it is an honour for me to be part of it. The focus of today's roundtable is Turkey, women and their contribution up until now, and in the future. Our speakers are all very competent in these matters, and will first tackle the issue of the role of women in peace processes. Before we begin, I would like to refer to a couple of books, which can serve as examples and as a basis for discussion. For example there is a book written by Pınar Ögünç; 'Those who were not born as soldiers',<sup>3</sup> and another

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2 Yıldız Ramazanoğlu is an Author and renowned figure in Turkey as a human rights activist and women rights advocate. Her latest book is entitled 'The cities that went through me'.

3 In Turkish, 'Asker Doğmayanlar'



book; ‘People Migrated’<sup>4</sup> written by group of women who visited the south east of Turkey and met with Kurds, Assyrians and many other ethnic and religious societies. Last but not least, there is ‘We Could not make Peace’,<sup>5</sup> written by Pinar Selek,<sup>6</sup> who paid a heavy price for her writings. She also writes about minority community rights, and anti-military resistance in Turkey. Her latest study looks at the ‘growing-up’ of men in Turkish society. The breaking point for me in my life was the Kurdish women I met in 1992 during a conference at the Boğaziçi University. Many of them were illiterate but they were as good political scientists when they were talking or commenting. They were so aware of the issues we were facing and they made incredible speeches during the conference.

Now, I would like to leave the floor to Bejan Matur.

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4 In Turkish ‘Malan Barkir’

5 In Turkish ‘Barışamadık’

6 Author and founder of the women’s rights cooperative Amargi.

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## Speaker: Bejan Matur<sup>7</sup>



*Speaker Bejan Matur*

Welcome – deepest love and respect. I will not be ‘wrapping things up’ nicely today; in fact this is going to be a bitter speech. I will talk about the realities, because we have aggravated this conflict by avoiding bitterness and realities. We have to test the facts and the positions of parties, and we must position women correctly. This is what is necessary for a good start. I will talk about my experiences to some extent, and I believe I will be saying things that should be said without deviating from the matter.

To give the correct definition of conflict, the geo-political situation of a conflict must be understood and clarified. In Turkey, conflict has not taken place in an equal society. There are cliché numbers that are quoted: the numbers of evacuated people, internally displaced peoples (IDP), executions, surface area covered by villages, and

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<sup>7</sup> Bejan Matur is a renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was previously a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Bejan Matur has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. She is the Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

so on. These numbers must be confronted by other realities. I am currently living in the west of Turkey, but I was born in the east – I can look at the issue from two perspectives, and I have a comprehension of the problem and of the almost ‘schizophrenic’ west and east.

There are big differences between western and eastern Turkey, in my book ‘Look behind the Mountain’,<sup>8</sup> I experienced this, and I translated and interpreted it. The issues discussed in the book, rightly, have caused a big emotional outburst and blast among people from the west of the country. I have received many messages from people who were emotional and ashamed that they had to listen to these stories and had to be made to understand things. It is saddening for all of us, as Turkish society is motivated by selected information, and much of it is disinformation, because of television channels that distort information. According to the west of Turkey for example, the people from the east are ‘terrorists’, and their revolts are not based on justifiable grounds. Looking at it from a Kurdish perspective paints a very different picture, homes were burned down, people were exiled and imprisoned, children were sent to hide in the mountains. Men and women from the east experienced this process personally. The Kurdish perception matters.

The difference in the west is that women are not stakeholders, or defenders of this issue, and they cannot do this without coming to an understanding of the issue; this is the big difference between

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8 The Turkish title of the book is ‘Dağın Ardına Bakmak’

west and east. Kurdish women's involvement in society has not been easy; after 1990 it became a mass conflict that penetrated society. Traditionally, Kurdish families live very closely together, and listen to their fathers and elders. Sons and grandsons were told to go out in the streets, but they could not put a sentence together – this became a part of the problem. Mothers had their children on top of the mountains, their relatives were not at home, and so they also took to the streets and became very active. I have female friends in the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) who became so active that they became more important than some men, which I am sure they would acknowledge. The legal and illegal presence of Kurdish women is widening day by day. Kurdish groups and movements have become part of the terminology: the co-presidency of the BDP came into being due to the efforts of Kurdish women.



*Participants during the roundtable*

I would like to tell you an anecdote from the Qandil Mountain: there is one person that said what it is that we have to tolerate about women; ‘women have a loud voice, it is strong, natural and spontaneous’. Women have become autonomous in the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), it may seem that parties come from the top, but it comes naturally, from the bottom. A Kurdish matriarchic culture has emerged, and has become a tendency; why can women in the west not be as active? It is important to take initiative and be heard; in order for that to happen, equal involvement from the west and the east is important. There are examples from history, such as in Vietnam and Northern Ireland; families of victims somehow find a way to meet with perpetrators. This has often been the case in history. However we have not been able to do this in Turkey, there have been obstacles. We only saw women on the television during the 1990s after the killing of their sons during the conflict, saying ‘God save the Homeland’. Many of them were women from poor families. At the end of the 1990s, when Öcalan<sup>9</sup> was captured, we saw these women, the mothers of killed soldiers, as part of this kind of staged theatre during Öcalan’s trial on İmralı Island. They were holding Turkish flags and screaming ‘hang him’. It was sad because those women who were suffering for their loss should have raised their voices against the state, but unfortunately they were part of the theatre staged by the military. We did not hear any strong voice from the Turkish women.

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9 One of the founding members and leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)

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I would like to emphasise the following anecdote of a Turkish woman, Birgül Ayman Güler's speech in parliament. She said Turks and Kurds can never be equal, what kind of equality will they have? When you look at this woman she is the perfect image of the 'modern woman' in contemporary Turkey. She is an academic; she is a Member of Parliament and an important figure. After this speech, she received many invitations and spoke at many conferences, especially in the Aegean and the Mediterranean regions; she was met with much appreciation. The approval of someone like that is to support the opposition of the phenomenon of equality. Is this natural? We must go back to history, to the last century and see how people lived as Turks and Kurds; we must re-think the concept of equality.

The peaceful nature of women can emerge, but I do not completely agree with that Member of Parliament. It is not the right argument to present, that women are peaceful by birth, that it is innate. We think this way because women, want to defend their children intuitively, and then we transpose that to other parts of life. But this position is wrong. Western women are forced to be passive, this is one of the reasons that this conflict has gone on for a long time. Traditionally in Kurdish society, when there is a fight between individuals or communities, if a woman drops her scarf to the floor, then the fight has to end, in honour of the woman. Does this still hold true? No. A woman dropping the scarf would have once been enough, but it is now not the case. There is an unequal, schizophrenic understanding of history. What is the way out? It

will require a consciousness and the ability to get rid of vanity. Member of Parliament, Birgül Ayman Güler, has to ask herself how we become equal. Conflicts are not only fought with weapons.

We must go back to the beginning and ask ourselves when and how it all started. It was first the prohibition of language, followed by the suppression of society, and the weapons came last. The weapons should be buried; in order to get out of this vicious cycle, we need to overcome our limitations and adopt an approach that can help us get rid of our current position. For instance, with regards to Kurdish language rights, mass contribution from Turkish women could have taken place, but their voices were weak. We have to start again and make sure we establish sincere relationships with the east again. I saw the potential for this to happen when I was researching for my book 'look Behind the Mountain'. I saw this from the messages I received from the west, conservatives wrote letters making sincere confessions and admitting things. This gave me fresh hope for our society. Power can be transferred so that we go back to a 'natural order'. I still believe in this, but the government is continuing with its propaganda methods and alienating communities. It is too weak to change and has not changed position; this is why we must strive even further.

Thank you

## **Moderator: Yıldız Ramazanoğlu**

Many thanks Bejan; your speech impressed me very much. There is a Turkish song that says ‘we have created a new nation in 15 years’; but this is a primitive claim, and ignores the differences in our society. This is not a single dimensional issue. There are a number of important female Kurdish poets, whose articles were rejected by a magazine that published in Kurdish. The Kurds have same the reaction to the state sometimes when people claim ‘I did not know’, they say ‘oh, we did not this was happening in this region’. During the war in Iraq, many were furious that Americans did not react to their governments’ actions there. A well-known American female intellectual that I value very much wrote an article to say ‘please do not hate the people because they don’t now’. Now we know what is happening, there have been documentaries made, books have been written and so on. People in the west do not know what is going on in the east; now we know it, but knowing does not mean we all have an equal approach towards the matter.

I would now like to leave the floor to our next speaker Nurcan Baysal. Nurcan has worked for numerous civil society organisations in Turkey, as well as for the United Nations where she also worked to empower women in Diyarbakır and the south east. She also worked on issues related to internally displaced people. She is also a journalist and writes for the daily newspaper Birgün.



## Speaker: Nurcan Baysal<sup>10</sup>



Today I will be talking about my experiences and the lifestyles in villages of rural Anatolia in the east of Turkey. From 2009 to 2013, for five years, I worked with the Özyeğin Foundation and set up the Özyeğin Rural Livelihood Programme. From 2012 to 2013 I wrote a book about Kavar<sup>11</sup> and I talked to many people, the majority of which were women. The story of Kavar is similar to the Kurdish one; as pressure on Kurds was increasing a village sent 35 of its young men to the mountains. Three villages were

10 Nurcan Baysal has worked for numerous civil society organisations in Turkey, as well as for the United Nations. She now writes for daily newspaper *Birgün*. While working for the UN Development Programme, Baysal focused on strengthening women's organisations in Diyarbakır. She also played a role in founding the South-eastern Anatolian Women's Entrepreneurship Advisory Council. In 2005, she co-established a Development Centre to focus on issues of forced migration, rural development and urban poverty in the region. Nurcan is also one of the founding members of the Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research, which was established in 2009.

11 The Kavar River Basin, located in the Tatvan district of the province of Bitlis, has the lowest socio-economic indicators in Turkey.

evacuated, 93 homes were burnt down, civilians were killed by unknown perpetrators, and another village just five kilometres from Van accepted the Village Guard.<sup>12</sup> It became a ghost area, in total only 4,000 people were living there. Some of the villages were completely empty, in others only the elderly were left to take care of the land.

Kavar experienced three to four waves of migration. Many had to live in big cities, and Kurdish women faced many difficulties. They were often alone, their husbands dead, imprisoned or fugitives. They did not speak Turkish and could not send their children to school; doors did not open to them as many in the cities are against Kurdish people. They had no homes to rent, young girls were sent to work in the textile industry. The women of Kavar were lost in life.

Since 2000, they have started coming back to their villages in Kavar. However this has taken a long time and the majority still live in Istanbul. There is little written on the return of Kurdish people to their homes, we do not know what is happening there. I can say that, when the Kavar people returned home, they had hit rock bottom; they did not own anything or earn any money, they had nothing. Many still felt that it was not safe for them to return

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12 In Turkey, referred to as *Geçici ve Gönüllü Köy Korucuları*: 'temporary and voluntary village guards' are paramilitaries, set up and funded by the Turkish state in the mid-1980s under the direction of Turgut Özal. Their stated purpose was to act as a local militia in towns and villages, protecting against attacks from the insurgents of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Most Village Guards are themselves Kurds, armed by the state to police other Kurds.

and did not have any homes left to return to, but they did not want to live in the cities either, as they were continuously insulted. It was a struggle for them to come back. They did it step by step, village by village. Working in the fields of one village and sleeping in another. Soldiers would forbid them to stay in villages at night and so many had to hide in the fields, they had to hide the fact that they were not sleeping at home during the night. Once they reached Kavar, they were forced out of their homes, insulted and subjected to violence by soldiers. The majority of people could not even find homes, as most had been exploded with dynamite. There are so many horror stories; some slept in tents, others in mosques from which even the carpets had been stolen by the guards. There were no schools, no water or electricity.

By 2013, some homes had four to five families living together in them. One said to me 'we do not feel comfortable here; soldiers keep coming to raid our homes. When I got back here I did not recognise it, I asked my mother, is this home where I played hide and seek?' For one year we lived without a door, or glass in our windows; everything had been exploded with dynamite. Everything had been demolished; we lived like orphans; even now the state can shoot us.' This was in 2013. This is what I witnessed when I went to the villages, they were humiliated. We are now talking about compensation, this is very important of course, but there is another more important thing: officials need to start treating them with respect.

There are three topics that need to be addressed: justice, reality and confrontation. With regards to women, we have only seen the tip of the iceberg. During times of conflict, we never hear about women being raped and harassed. Five years later, we still hear nothing. Women are scared for their families. The transition period has more impact on women in our country, due to patriarchy. For justice to be achieved, we also need to listen to women, it is not only about materialism and houses, it goes beyond that. Women who are confronted with their past in a conservative society like ours, need different methods.

I have a story I would like to tell you about. In one village, women had to get milk from the animals twice a day. In the mornings, they would walk one and a half hours to go and get the milk, milking the animals for half an hour, and then taking another hour and a half to come back. Then they would do it again in the evening. This has been the way for hundreds of years. I could not do it! I got tired, there were many stones and it was difficult. The women there asked me 'You talk about rural development. I don't quite get what it means, but it would be good for us women if you could fix the *beri* road.' But I could not construct it, I could not do it. This was in 2009. The officials asked me; 'women have been doing this for hundreds of years, so what is the problem?' But we negotiated with them to give us petrol for cars, and to build a road. I made a bad decision back then; in 2012 there was the Constitutional referendum. Officials told us, we are busy; let us do this on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. I said yes. Then I heard the road was not being

constructed because the village was boycotting the referendum. The reason was; the intelligence services. If the government were allowed to build the road, they would use it to access remote areas and gather information.

In conflict resolution men think about macroeconomics, the Grand National Assembly and institutions. But the reality of everyday life, the ongoing humiliation of Kurdish women is not considered. Political parties are not dealing with it. If we cannot solve the problems of today's reality, then we cannot solve tomorrow's. I am Kurdish, as long as you live in this reality it is hard to think of a solution. When designing policies, these realities must be considered, today's reality must be just; without it we cannot foresee a better future. Kurdish women want justice from the state.



*Participants and panel speakers*

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 the wise people visited the village. Women came to meet them with pictures of their dead children;

the villagers explained how the village was burnt. They were being videotaped while telling their stories to the wise people. One woman said ‘On the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1993, a soldier took my husband and he was killed. He was a contractor. They beat me and I fainted. They broke my husbands’ legs; they massacred him, they drove over him a couple of times. I could not find an answer, why they were doing this? I had six children; we could not take care of ourselves. I collected the parts of my husband, and then there was an article saying that one tourist was killed. My 20 year old son, without a father, they asked him; ‘what do you want?’ He said ‘freedom’. But what does it have to do with this?’ Then the woman started screaming and shouting, ‘Why? Why was this done?’ Then there was silence. She said ‘I know there is no answer, I try to convince myself that he died for the struggle. I showed my son to the wise people, but they insulted and insulted us.’ Please, wise people, some of you are present here today, do not be offended. Those wise people that visited were messengers and were insensitive to this woman, but when you are there, you *have* to listen, justice starts with *listening*.

I wrote a book about the village. Looking back at the interviews they all had a common sentence that said that day. ‘On that day, they killed...’, ‘on that day we waited...’, ‘that day we begged the soldiers.’ Kurdish people have *That Day*. *That Day* has to be taken care of, 20 years have passed, but they are still talking about *That Day*. They cannot reconcile and are still living in *That Day*. The grief is still there, and to start this peace process we need to take

care of this. Another common word was *insult*. ‘The soldiers *insulted* me,’ ‘they burnt my baby’s cradle; when I looked, the skin was no longer on his face, they *insulted* me.’ This is a matter of honour for Kurdish people. In the last three months, no one said ‘I forgive.’ If one cannot forgive, then this conflict cannot be resolved. They expect acknowledgement of their reality.

Some people still think that it is not safe to go back. I do not think that way, ten years ago yes, but the villagers lack confidence. Articles in the press say 25 million returned home, but they do not speak of the struggle of going back. This is why they do not trust the state. There is potential for peace, they are talking about peace and do not want to be victims. I talked to a woman who said seven of her relatives had died, but she still talked about peace. ‘I say *peace* although they have died, when I hear a mother in the west say I have a son, he can go and die for his country, I do not understand how they could say that.’

### **Moderator Yıldız Ramazanoğlu:**

Many thanks indeed Nurcan. We will now take a break before our next speaker.

## Coffee break



*Participants discussing the morning's presentations*





## **Moderator: Yıldız Ramazanoğlu**

Nurcan Baysal explained to us about the burden of memory. There is a peace process currently happening, and we have to talk about this process. There was a study which showed that previously, people would not go out of their homes in order to avoid seeing Kurds or women with headscarves. This happened in Turkey and other regions; the common consciousness was exposed. In the last decade however people have been acting jointly and there are now different tendencies in parliament too. In the south east of Turkey we are seeing fewer and fewer soldiers wandering around. This is a good sign. However, the organs of government need to stop talking about giving rights; you submit rights. Doing so at such a late stage is not so good, and it does not give us much joy, and it slowly depletes what you have within you. I now hand over to our next speaker, Nil Mutluer, thank you.

## Speaker: Nil Mutluer<sup>13</sup>



*Speaker Nil Mutluer*

Thank you very much. Today I will actually not be ‘wrapping things up nicely’; in fact I may deviate from the subject. My perspective is from Turkey, my own studies, and my own activities in the city. I would like to quote a 25 year old man working in the textile industry, who was forced to migrate to the city. He was just a boy; when he was ten years old someone close to him passed away, before then he did not know people were mortal and could have a normal death, such as dying out of sickness. He was unfamiliar with the concept of dying, but killing with an objective was natural. For him, martyrs could be understood, that was the norm. This was the impression left on us by the government.

The martyr families live in isolation, as a mass reaction cannot be

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<sup>13</sup> Nil Mutluer is currently a lecturer in Fatih University’s Department of Sociology. She also hosts a television programme, *Oteberi* on IMC Television, and is a columnist for *Milliyet* Daily Newspaper. In addition to her numerous publications, she is the editor of the books ‘*States of gender: The Intersectional borders of gender in Turkey*’ (2008) and ‘*States of national: citizenship and nationalism, are we aware?*’ (2008).

made against the military. This is the Turkish identity: all Turks are born soldiers. This is the way of thinking in Turkey. All mothers of martyrs say that they could sacrifice their son; some parties such as the national movement are not being welcomed by the mothers and families of martyrs. Today, some families are saying 'No, I am not going to sacrifice my other son'. The mentality is changing. I cannot foresee a mass uprising; there is no specific hostility toward Kurds even though children have died in the strife. The voices that say, 'I did not educate my son to become a soldier, I will not sacrifice him for the government', are being subdued by the media. Earlier I had a discussion with Nurcan about how our experiences and our pain are felt collectively.

The Turkish community is divided, there is a lack of homogeneity, and there are new identities emerging all the time. It is very difficult for the Kurds living in the cities in the west; and I do not like to use the east and west distinction, but there are organisational problems in the west. Many did not take part and support the Gezi park protests. For Kurds living in the cities, there are established barriers. They cannot get jobs, or promotions. I try to be in solidarity with our friends wearing headscarves, as for example they cannot work at universities while wearing a headscarf, this is very sad. The government rationale has divided and separated us. For example in the press, if one media owns a subject, it tells another media that it cannot talk about it. Freedom is not without *buts*. We differentiate ourselves from one another. For instance we now have important problems with the acceptance of the gay community;

the Kurds have pushed the issue of freedom, but we are now newly acquainted with gay people.

Let us talk about numbers. The ratio of women Members of Parliament is 14 per cent. The BDP has increased its number of women, but we do not see any progress with the CHP. The number of women in the justice system, 0.8 per cent, is also very symbolic. Women are being murdered, and women are being sexually harassed, of whom 75 per cent of cases happen within their own relative circle.

The Turkish identity has become a vacuum. This is because Turkish women during the Republic were told that their rights would not exist without the Republic, that it is the Republic that gave them their rights. But this is forgetting the Ottoman Empire, during which women had their own parties. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century women were participants in strikes. But it is presented to us as if women had no rights before that, as if there was nothing dating back before the Republic. But, what kind of rights do we have today in Turkey? Now women are free, but they have to represent the 'ideal modern woman'.

I have carried out studies on civil law. I found that women and men were not equal in 2002. Honour killings were almost seen as legitimate, as a right. The modern Turkish woman has to represent the ideal; you are told that you have been given a huge future. However, Turkish women cannot ask for their rights, they are not

allowed to look for their rights, they are not allowed to carry out identity politics, and they are prevented from acting. Headscarves are made into a big issue. In our national anthem there is a line that says 'do not be afraid'; but there is always fear in us. The marginalisation of our identities, the violence, they all actually give us messages about this government. We are confronted with government practice and law: the legitimisation of killings, the symbolic violence and marginalisation of women. How shall we explain this to the state? How can we change this situation?

About the report of the wise people on the eastern parts of the country. Firstly, thank you for being here, for the report and for being transparent, we appreciate it, as before we could not even see the contents of previous reports. However, I was expecting to hear what the other side was thinking about; the questionnaires were insufficient; what did the wise people have to say? I saw some amazing things, but I was expecting more. People are not against peace. By criticising that perspective, I am criticising myself. Years ago, I forgot to look at my own community. I grew up in a place where people were Atatürk fans. I forgot that they could see the situation from a different perspective. I did not understand that change could happen; I was late in grasping that people could think differently.

This modern Turkish identity is giving us small boxes of fear, these boxes invalidate our identity. We must ask ourselves what the wife of a politician, or a teacher, a woman working in a hospital, a

religious woman; what do they have to sacrifice? Not so long ago the wives of bureaucrats were forced to take off their headscarves, now they are forced to *wear* them; the political polarisation is important. The small practices of life contribute to marginalisation. I believe that the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has the ownership of the Kurdish issue, but maybe others should own the issue; we regret this sometimes. Through my field studies, I have seen that people are not resentful. In the west women from both communities are making efforts to meet with each other, but they do not know how to set up the bridge.

We are all complicit in marginalisation. Although we say that local knowledge and information is enough we tend to be too politically correct. Sometimes we change the way we express ourselves in front of Kurdish women. We rearrange our language. But these issues; the Kurdish issue, the democratisation of Turkey, forcible migration, women's issues, urban conditions, imposed identities, we must talk about them. Political correctness is used as a political weapon.

What can we do? Resistance to democratisation is coming from this problem. It is no longer a problem of identities of Turks versus Kurds, we can see that people are dying; things have changed; sometimes like an elephant breaking a shop. Our male friends are sharing women's issues as much as women are, joint education can be carried out. It is not identities; it is issues such as infrastructure and language that matter. For example, we have big language

problems; in schoolchildren's textbooks there is a reference that praises war. This is wrong, there is war around us, in Syria, and we must transform mentalities. Children who believe that killing is a normal daily practice; this is not ok, we must stop the aggression that is inside them. There is more media differentiating gender, today and they are trying hard, but they give themselves away when talking about the Kurdish issue. So let us not criticise the wise people too much, it is better than not discussing the issue at all. It is censorship in the end; different subjects are not being discussed. We are not asking enough questions; in politics we do not have the language of peace, but that of marginalisation. Politics are stuck in this position.

We must defend these issues together. The social state is very weak, and rights which can be given socially are only granted by foundations. It is a luxury to think about the future of our children, it is hard to give children an education. We must speak about the problems of urbanisation and how women and kids should live in urban areas, about the peace in the east and the south east. As they say in English, a woman cannot be 'half pregnant'. We want democracy and peace, and we need to shift from identities to the issues.

## **Discussion:**

### **Participant:**

Many thanks to DPI for organising such a valuable meeting. Van is such a beautiful place to hold such a meeting; we see the lake and its blue water from our window here today. Thank you to the organisers, and to the University of Van for supporting such an organisation. It is encouraging to see academia being involved in this process. I have learned a lot this morning; I myself have two women who have radically changed my life.

The first is Koçeri Kurt. She was standing in front of the European Court of Human Rights. She was 80 years old at the time, illiterate, and could not speak Turkish. She was a very conscious person and had a good knowledge and grasp of history. She had lost seven family members. She was speaking in front of the judges in Ankara, she stood proud, and was wearing plain clothes and a headscarf. Then a colonel or major came in and stopped her from speaking, because she was poor and uneducated. However, she was speaking in a wholehearted manner, from her own perspective. At the end of the court session, many people approached her and told her they believed that what the colonel did was not nice, and criminal. He had to confess what he did. He could not even find the exit door afterwards. Her attitude changed my life, and influenced me as a human rights activist.

The second woman was a Kurdish lady who had been raped, who was a victim, and who took a very strong stance against



sexual violence. Her female and human position against rape was impressive. She went to Strasbourg to defend the cause in court. She had no money, not even to buy socks! She was promoted by the Turkish government as a plain villager; but she was there for women of the entire world. That court case was historical. The Turkish government paid the lady compensation, and the soldier – he was promoted! This is the message that the government is sending; ‘my soldiers can rape, I pay them and promote them’. We have to punish this attitude.

With regards to the Kavar events. I remember those events. I wrote a report on that, on the human right abuses and it was even more disastrous than what has been said today. Some of these villagers are still living here in Van city and trying to go back to their villages. This drama not only affected them, but it also struck us. After a while the result of conflict; the killings, including killings by Hezbollah became just numbers to us. We as human rights defenders were going through trauma, and had to undergo long term rehabilitation therapy. Many activists at Human Rights organisations went through rehabilitation for a long time.

We are now contemplating reaching peace. One of the things that needs to be discussed is which process is best to construct such peace. Meetings like these are important to construct peace, and are hard to do in Turkey, due to many reasons, such as the authorities. This is a self-criticism; as I am a politician. Once I saw a sergeant who told me he was in charge of ‘completing numbers’. I asked

him what he meant by that. He was counting the number of people killed on both sides, and if there was a discrepancy they would compensate by killing more people from the other side. Another time, I saw a Turkish mother trying to get hold of the bones of her deceased child. We live in a traumatised society, and we will not get over these stories easily. But meetings such as this one are important in helping us understand each other, in trying to find ways to approach the issue. So congratulations to the panelists and many thanks as this will bring change to women in the near future. I believe that.

### **Participant:**

I have been working on women's issues here in Van for the past 20 to 25 years. I have lived through the earthquake and the containment period. The last participant struck the heart of matter. I have been dealing with this for many years, and I have been involved in making recommendations to law makers and so on. But I have a criticism to the panel speakers. The stories explained to us here today, are well-known stories. I could be telling you stories for a whole month. A woman is a woman, in all parts of the world. There has been mistreatment of women everywhere; Turkish women have also been subjected to it. These stories are known, and we know even more painful ones. We should be talking about the democratisation and the peace process, scratching old wounds is not going to help us find solutions. I was expecting something else, I was expecting more than a 'this and that study', we know the problem, but what we expect is a solution! If we talk about past experiences, we could

talk forever. Looking back at the past 20 years, I can tell you many stories. Yes, women face many problems, such as low school rates for girls, lack of involvement in the process; only about 24 per cent of women are involved in this peace process. It should not be 24 per cent only. The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) may have taken a few leaps forward, many women have been employed, and I hope that all parties could do this. Parents say that they cannot send their girls to school, because the high schools for girls are far away and they cannot let their young girls stay with relatives. We need a solution for that. I have provided recommendations for this in eastern parts of Turkey; we should have boarding schools for girls only, so that all the girls from different villages can attend high school. We have to provide solutions and make recommendations. If we scratch old wounds, we will reap no benefits.

### **Nurcan Baysal:**

I do not actually feel the need to respond to this, but I will say a couple of words. The notion of forgetting the past and looking to the future is a common cliché, and it is wrong. The past still lives within us, we are still bleeding and we have to keep confronting our past! Talking about it is important for building our future, because if we cannot confront the past we will not be able to build a future. That is my recommendation: in order to bury the past we first have to confront it. You talked about boarding schools, but my solution is confrontation.

## **Bejan Matur:**

It is meaningless to talk like this; we must explore the grassroots causes. This is what I meant when I said I will be talking about the 'bitter things'. We must first talk about the causes and human rights issues; otherwise we will be stuck in this vicious cycle.

## **Participant:**

Thank you. We have talked about the wise people, and I would like to clarify certain points for our foreign guests. These discussions have been disturbing for me. In this country the perpetrators have often gained benefits. The rule of law dictates that actions and crimes against humanity have to be taken to court. As the moderator was saying this morning, globalisation happens from the top. If this is true, the state should interact with other states and International Organisations, and take action against violence and Human Right abuses. Turkey has signed many treaties; are we going to follow the rule of law? I have a criticism for Nurcan Baysal about the wise people. If there is a correct action I always support it. I participated as a wise people, and in the restructuring of the state. Everyone should have a say, whether it is about reconstructing the future, or eliminating the dirt of the past, and steps have been taken. In the past month, no blood has been shed. This is very important, but not a magic wand. I am a lawyer and a person who defends Human Rights and minorities. These types of meetings are important indicators of the fact that a peace process cannot happen from a selfish western perspective. We must continue to have meetings to progress toward a solution.

## Participant:

I have worked as a lawyer for ten years. I cannot see such a crystal clear cut difference between the past and future, at least from a court house perspective. Peace cannot be rhetorical, and advocating peace is positive and builds on itself. Just two months ago my client was investigated and prosecuted for participating in the funeral of a 13 year old boy, Uğur Kaymaz, who was shot dead by the police. The judge referred to my clients as ‘people who participated in the funeral of the 13 years old *terrorist* Uğur Kaymaz’. People protested because of the courts’ decision, and the authorities took a step back. The kids that participated in the protest are on trial; if they are convicted it will be ten0 years of prison for them. The court is still there, I do not want to bore you, but there is not that much of a difference between *That Day* and today. But at least there is no blood shed. That is very important for me. These stories about the past are known to us, but as long as we cannot have an agreement, it is still going to hurt us. We all have a different perception of reality, and if we cannot, in a meeting such as this one, agree on that reality, then we need more of a holistic approach to both Turkish and Kurdish realities.

I am irritated, and hurt by such an approach, I bleed inside when you say we should not scratch past wounds. This makes me angry and mad, because my story is still continuing, it is not in the past, it is continuing. I am not old but I have lived a lot, I still feel the pain of my experiences. Without understanding each other’s stories, we cannot talk about a healthy peace process.

## **Participant:**

Greetings to all here today. I have never received an education. I cannot read or speak Turkish very well. I could talk for hours and hours in Kurdish. My Kurdish name is Arishe, but on my identity card my name is different. To forget the past, I need to have my Kurdish name officially recognised, and my stolen childhood and adolescence should be given back to me. I am not used to discussing my problems in such a room. I was beaten on the streets. You are making decisions for my mother and for me without listening to us. To understand what a person is going through, you have to understand their language. In 1986 my father was killed, he was taken away from me. I did not know what dying was, I thought only the old could die. This is what you would call a story.

I am sorry, I want to talk a lot, and it is my first time on such a platform. People are taking decisions on my behalf, but no one was with me when I was beaten. You may criticise me, but as long as Kurdish women are not free, no one can be free. There is no benchmark for levels of suffering; but my mother, she was left with six children; that is no story that is the reality. We are not begging for anything, we do not want anything served to us; maybe these are political decisions. My childhood and teenage years did not leave me with many choices. We would like to live like western women and have everything, but we are forced to live a certain way. To confront the past, we must first look into the mirror. Are we conscious enough? I did not receive any education! This gave me determination. I would have liked to express myself in English

today, but I have not had the opportunity to learn. I taught myself to speak Turkish, but my notes are in Kurdish. This is a shame on the state. I am a woman and managing an institution, for the past three years I have been able to write in my own language, I taught myself. Why can I not speak the Turkish language? Why do people see me as a stranger? Why are they forcing me to speak Turkish in education; I am Kurdish speaking. I am very sorry, I cannot find sophisticated words. I am not optimistic about this latest democratic package. I am not expecting positive things. But I am fighting for my language, I am not going to the mountains, I am operating in the free area for my language. Until Kurdish becomes a language for education, I will not give up. My people could not do it for me, but I will do it for the younger generation. To understand Kurdish women, you must go beyond this room.

### **Participant:**

Five or six months ago I attended a meeting during which I was blamed for scratching the wound. Talking about the past is not like that, it is not the right approach. Bejan Matur talked about east and west. I am a Kurdish person and was educated in the east, but I now live in Istanbul. I am everywhere, in other words. Peace is important, the lack of bloodshed lately is also very important. However, this is not the only approach. In Van survivors of the earthquake have complained that there are still electricity cuts, they are cold and their kids are not going to school. We do not hear of this in the press. It should be easy to provide a solution, but it will only happen when politics shift its focal point.

With regards to the issue of forced migration; it is only now that we are talking about the trauma and costs of the first migration. This is not 'scratching the wound'. My grandmother was part of it. The grief of Kurdish people has been politicised, we have not been allowed to feel our grief. One time a woman hugged me and cried but this was seen as a mistake, as she was the mother of a martyr. Grief should not be politicised, crying is human and not being political is not something to be ashamed of. Kurdish women have lost a lot and it is still ongoing, I would be lying if I denied it. However, when we talk about these issues, we must let go of the pessimism of the 1990s or we will close the channels for discussion.

### **Participant:**

This is my second time participating at a DPI event. I am Bosnian. I was born in Istanbul and had a very happy childhood, up until I was 24. Years ago my husband was killed then, and my life became a nightmare. There are themes that affect all women alike. I was disturbed by a fact; I have enjoyed listening to all the stories told here today, but I have to respond to some of the things that have been said. It has been said that people in the west do not know of the lives of the people in the east. However, people from the east should not think that people from the west have not suffered. I have realised that I had the wrong information about the lives of women living in the east; I am not a journalist or author, I am a Bosnian woman speaking from the heart, I am a person of action not words. Are Kurdish women aware of what Bosnian women went through? We have lived through 12 massacres, our neighbours raped us, our



husbands were killed; our stories are very similar. What is disturbing to me, is that conflict sites are very similar everywhere, women suffer the same fates. For 15 years after my husband died, my life was a nightmare. My son is now 20 years old, I took care of him. For one year I was selling Kurdish coffee, a lot of Kurdish people came to me asking why I was selling Kurdish coffee. I said 'I do not care; I like it and I sell it, that is all!' I am a woman employing women. I do not think we are 'scratching the wounds', I think we need to hear these stories all the time.

## **Participant:**

I would like to make a comment from a legal perspective. When talking about the role of women in conflict resolution, we must think about the context. Victims' rights have been sacrificed because of the rule of law in Turkey, there are people fighting to reclaim their human dignity, this is a legitimate fight. We should all join in this fight. However, if all parties do not recognise that this must be based on equality, there will be a tendency to misuse the other side and dominate the other, this begets fighting which is meaningless. Women's participation in conflict resolution is very valuable. Women are different from men, they are full of love and their intuition is to bring up the next generation with love and therefore this process needs their involvement. Women are less inclined to fight and more prone to love, and so their input is very different to men's. The rule of law should be based on equality and dignity, there should be no difference between Turks and Kurds, and we are all equal in the eyes of humanity. Bad and sad things have happened in the past; as the Turkish say 'washing away things with blood' is wrong, but the rule of law should not stay away from these issues. If parties tend to be chauvinistic, we will make mistakes. Men and women should work hand in hand with one another. The basis for everything is love. Thank you.

## **Participant:**

Firstly, thank you to DPI for organising today's roundtable. This war has been worst on women; they have been the most significant victims. As a person from Van, I have witnessed this process; 5,000

police officials and 45,000 people have died in this war; 45,000 mothers have cried. I suggest empathy; everyone should have empathy to understand this. I define myself as a western woman, I am the daughter of a leftist family raised in Izmir, and we were victims of Turkish violence. When I was three years old my father was imprisoned. In the 1980s as a woman, I lived in the privileged side of the country, however there was no equality for women in Turkey and I dedicated myself to that cause. At the end of the day, I realised that my freedom was pointless as long as all the other women would not be free. There is a system of marginalisation in this country. Although my father was imprisoned I was privileged, and trying to understand Kurdish victimisation is a small step I have taken. It is hard to give up ones privileges.

I have been learning Kurdish, I try to write in Kurdish on Twitter as I want to shake up my friends, and my Kurdish friends are trying to shake up their language, so maybe it can make them ambitious to see me write in Kurdish. With regards to the concept of 'settling accounts'. This is a religious country, and we should remember what that means; it has to be fair, and legitimate, and the use of the concept should be sustainable. 'Settling accounts' must fulfil our rights. Giving us rights requires the fulfilment of three conditions. Firstly, the acknowledgment of violations, secondly compensating these violations and thirdly, the ones whose rights have been violated should consent to that compensation; it should be satisfactory. In order for this to happen there is a lot of work to be done, we must negotiate and the media needs to put in much

effort so that a certain level is reached, before being able to ‘settle accounts’. This requires all parties to act in good faith and commit to a better future.

### **Participant:**

I am a member of CHP. Forgetting is not possible; memories will live on not just for Kurdish people but everyone who has had something happen to them. This discourse on peace is important, and we should not say that people from the west are selfish.

### **Nil Mutluer**

We fight with one another based on identities. Everyone wants to speak their own language and practice their own religion. We must tackle the issue with a pluralistic perspective.

## Lunch break



*Participants and speakers continued the discussion over lunch at the Merit Sahmaran Hotel, Van.*



## Session Two:

### ***Moderator: Asli Tunç***<sup>14</sup>

Good afternoon and welcome back to the table. Many thanks to you for being here today and for DPI for inviting me to moderate this session. I hand the floor to Kate Fearon, our first speaker of the afternoon is a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

### **Speaker: Kate Fearon**<sup>15</sup>



*Speaker Kate Fearon*

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14 Professor and Head of İstanbul Bilgi University's Media and Communication Systems Department and Author of numerous publications and country reports on issues of democracy and media, social impacts of new media technologies, and media ownership structures in Turkey. Her most recent publication is on the impact of political news blogs on the future of journalism.

15 Kate Fearon is a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. She was the NIWC's Chief of Staff in the negotiations for the Belfast Agreement and in the inaugural Northern Ireland Assembly. She went on to become Deputy Head of the Political Department of the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2009 and 2010 she was the Governance Advisor on rule of law issues to the UK-led Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. Until 2012 she was the Head of the Mitrovica Office for the International Civilian Representative in Kosovo. Most recently she has been working for the UK Department for International Development in Sudan.

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Firstly I would like to thank you for your attendance and to DPI for inviting me here today. Some of what I will say may have resonance for you, and help reach a united consensus position. This morning's discussion reminded me of when we started in Ireland, as the Women's Coalition for Northern Ireland.

Let me give you some context. Northern Ireland is a small place, very far away from Turkey, and there is no reason that you should know much about it! Ireland was colonised by another island: the United Kingdom. Earlier you were speaking of the issue of language, and in Ireland we also had the issue of language being politicised. The Irish language is now going through a revival due to renewed political confidence.



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In Northern Ireland, there was a divided community, between the Unionists and the Irish Nationalists. Those who wanted a unified Ireland and those who define themselves as British respectively. There was also a religious overlay, as the Nationalists were Catholics and the Unionists were Protestants. These communities lived in separate areas. This is generalised and oversimplified, but these are the basics.

The population in Northern Ireland is 1.2 million, so it is very small! And there are 3.5 million people on the rest of the Island, also relatively small, especially when compared with Turkey! We are small, but we caused a lot of problems for a very long time. The relationships between countries: (North and South) between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and then with the UK, were very tense for a long time.

Between 1960 and 1990, was a period we call 'The Troubles'. This was a fresh outbreak of conflict; not the kind we see a lot of in contemporary world. It was a guerrilla war. One level of society lived normally (this was part of the problem and why the conflict lasted for such a long time), while another level of society were fighting. There was something very wrong with society, it was much fractured and many were affected. Since Northern Ireland is such a small place, it does not take a lot of people to lose a life, for it to be somebody's relative or friend, and therefore to have an impact on wider society.



There had already been efforts towards negotiations in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. The latest peace agreement did not differ that much from the previous ones, but there was one important difference: In 1996, the UK and Northern Ireland got together and decided for the first time that not only politicians, but also members of the armed groups should be part of the negotiations. These were inclusive negotiations from the start, or at least included men with guns (not women so much). With the proposed electoral system, we realised that creating a women's party could work in our favour as we did not need a lot of votes for representation. So we took the concept of inclusion to heart, and we proposed ourselves. Our worry was that the design and the content of the accords would be much like previous attempts, and would be about containment but would not be transformative.

We wanted transformation and felt that women were needed for that to be achieved. If negotiations were to happen with only men, it was clear from the previous electoral results that this would not happen. So we got together; we were a group of women of all ages, we had all been vocal about the conflict and had been directly exposed to it, we came from both communities and there were many differences between us. We needed to transform ourselves and get very practical in order to get ourselves in front of the electorate. We formed our party six weeks before the elections, and in order to get elected, we needed to be treated as one constituency for the first time. If we could connect women from all parts of the country, we calculated that we could get two delegates to the negotiating table.

We had all had experience running for elections and been involved in university politics, but this was the first time with the ‘grown-ups’; we were in the adult world of campaigning now. When the Election Day came, we were all very excited, we had put a lot of hard work in and we all got a little carried away with the thought that we might get elected. And then we *did* get elected! At first we were a little panicked; what do we do now? Now we were responsible for a peace process on behalf of electors. We had to sit down and deliberate, and we came up with three guiding principles for policy to manage our own diversity. These were (1) equality; (2) Human Rights; (3) inclusion.

We had a number of challenges and difficulties; we had to tackle issues such as abortion and contraception. For instance, there was one IRA lady who was pregnant; the question was whether we should go and visit her? The Irish Nationalists thought this was a no brainer and that we should go and meet with her. The other side, the Unionists were not as comfortable. In the end, we focused on the human rights component and not the political one, and in the end went to visit her. We stuck to those three principles, and managed to get coherent policies. With regards to inclusion, we also decided to include the different positions of others. For instance we tested our policies and ideas on each other, but also with members of academia, the local communities and so on, and we amended our ideas to reflect the views of people while at the same time sticking to the three principles. It was time consuming, but in the end it was worth it as we achieved equality.



*Jane Connors of the United Nations, DPI Director Kerim Yildiz, Nese Akkerman of the FCO, Peter Spoor of the FCO and participant Esra Nurell*

The negotiations lasted two years. There were many ups and downs, but they were also fun and stimulating. We had a disproportionate influence on the talks and we changed the parameters of the agreement: we were able to stretch out the parameters and widen the agenda of what was in the agreement; otherwise it would have been similar to the earlier attempts.

The peace agreement, which became known as the ‘Good Friday Agreement’ included and recognised the need for reconciliation, public money for education and so on. It regulated the power relations within Northern Ireland, between the north and the south, and between Northern Ireland and Britain. In Turkey you speak of the west and east; in Ireland we talked of north, south, east and west. Political parties are often interested in structures and politics, but we were also interested in social and economic issues. The question for reconciliation in our negotiations did come up.

Nobody was keen to go for the South African model of a Truth and Reconciliation Committee, but there were some commissions such as a victim's commission which was led by a civil servant.

There were also some institutional attempts at salvaging things from history; the police looked into disappearances for instance. It became clear that people wanted to tell their stories, but this happened almost by accident. In Ireland everybody listened to the 08.00 o'clock BBC News on the radio; there is a small section called 'Thought for the Day'. For one year after the peace agreement, this section was filled by people who had been affected by the conflict; they often spoke eloquently and were able to articulate feelings about someone they had lost 30 years ago. It became compulsive listening, these were voices that had never been heard, and our agreement did not give them a platform, but it was clear that there was a need for that to happen. For us, the BBC did that; everybody does reconciliation and remembrance in their own way.

To sum up and reflect on this morning's presentations. We knew our initial meetings would be raucous and chaotic. In order to get order imposed upon us we decided that we needed 'impolite politics'; instead of leaving our baggage at the door, we brought it in, we put it on the tables and we opened it in front of all present. We would always return to our three guiding principles. The party lasted six years, and after that other politics started squeezing us out again. You must think about how to bring diversity in, using it and pushing forward if you have the chance to do it.

## ***Moderator: Asli Tunç***

Many thanks for such a valuable insight. We will now hear from Jane Connors of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I hand the floor to you Jane.

## **Speaker: Jane Connors<sup>17</sup>**



*Speaker Jane Connors*

Thank you.

I came to Van once before, in 1988, I was very interested in the idea of Van. It is a pleasure to be here again today.

Today I want to give you a few figures on women in decision making in peace building, and some interesting information. I will talk a little bit about the UN response, then sadly how it has

<sup>17</sup> Jane Connors is the Chief of the Special Procedures Branch at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva. She joined the United Nations as the Chief of the Women's Rights Division in the Department of Economic Affairs in 1996, and transferred to OHCHR in 2002. Prior to joining the United Nations she taught law at various tertiary institutions, spending 15 years at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. She has written widely on the human rights of women and the treaty body system.

not necessarily resulted in much. Then I want to talk about a few areas where we think, in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), that we can address women's capacity in the context of conflict resolution. There are a number of things to think about, and opportunities that are open to you.

Looking at the world generally, power and decision making are largely closed to women; most of you in this room are very lucky to be able to influence the process and have moved up higher than many. In June 2013 the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) produced a report looking at where women are in terms of head of state and politics. As of June 2013, eight women served as Heads of State and 13 served as Head of Government; most of them were related to some important men. Only 20.9 per cent of national parliamentarians were female; there are 35 States which have achieved the 30 per cent mark at which women reach a 'critical mass' for women's representation. It is thought that if you get 30 per cent women, it is more likely that issues related to women in politics will be included. In the European Union (EU), less than one in four women is in the Union, and within parliament itself only three out of ten are women. Women are absent from economic decision making, 22 women were CEOs out of the 500 largest corporations; and that is where power is – in money. In the EU only three per cent of cooperate board members are women.

In 2012 the UN report on women's participation in peace and security showed that of the 14 peace negotiations that the UN led

in 2011, only four of those party delegations included a woman: Cyprus, Georgia, Guyana and Yemen. Women were represented in the mediation of the support teams of 12 of these negotiations, while gender experts were deployed to five of the negotiations with consultations with civil society on a regular basis. As of 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2011, women headed six of the 28 peace keeping teams and were deputy heads of five. In 2012 out of approximately 125,000 peacekeepers, women formed three per cent of military and ten per cent of the police personnel in UN Peacekeeping missions. It was only this year that the Secretary General appointed the first woman Peace Envoy; Mary Robinson who is the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region. Maybe or maybe not, the absence of women explains the fact that of the nine peace agreements reached in 2011, only those in Somalia and Yemen included provisions for women.

The question is why does this matter? It matters because I believe in human rights principles. The UN charter requires equality of men and women, the declarations of human rights also do so and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to which Turkey is a state party, also, requires this. Secondly, it is a matter of sustainability; women are crucial partners in shoring up the three pillars of lasting peace: economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy. Several of the world's fastest growing economies following a conflict in the past half a century owe their success to women's increasing role in production, trade and as entrepreneurs. This has increased girl's

access to education and agricultural production. Women play a key role in establishing the social fabric of society and I think from Kate Fearon's presentation, you heard that they devote more of their salary than men to expenditures that benefit their family, children and extended families. They encourage more inclusive politics in government. When women are underrepresented in public office, political legitimacy suffers, often resulting in the decline of trust in government and the rule of law. Beyond these factors, without women's critical perspective on conflict resolution, including the impact it has had on them and their post conflict needs, processes are more likely to ignore women and the conditions for lasting peace will not be in place.

I do not believe in the stereotype that women are *naturally* peaceful, but they can make significant contributions to peace processes, particularly at the community level. For example, with regards to disabilities; in Geneva you have trams and you have gutters; and many of the trams you have a space between the tram and the gutter. In Geneva now many of the trams are flush with the gutter, what they have not thought about is that where there are gaps some people might not be able to see, and others might be in a wheelchair. One must take disabilities into account in the design, and the same is true in the context of gender. The Security Council took many years to include gender aspects in conflict resolution. Since 2000, it has recognised women and girls as the most vulnerable victims of conflict, in resolution 1325; (it is very famous and is entitled women peace and security). This is the very first international



mechanism explicitly recognising that when you have conflict you have gender aspects to it, and when you have a peace process you have gender aspects to it. It recognised the victimisation of women and girls in conflict, as we became aware of it Yugoslavia and Rwanda, that sexual violence is a tactic of war. It was ground breaking as it emphasised the role of women in conflict resolution, structuring peace, and the post conflict reconstruction; it changed the discourse on security issues, and is the most important lobbying tool to promote gender rights in this context.

In 2004, human rights and the topic of the role of women was usually seen as a little bit ‘out there’ by the Security Council; they were more interested in ‘hard politics’, and things like this were not considered as being the remit of the Security Council. In 2004, the Security Council requested states to develop national action plans to ensure implementation of that resolution; we now have 43. Unfortunately Turkey does not have such a national action plan; it might be an interesting idea for you to think about and to develop such a thing as a tool to bring yourselves together to discuss such issues. There is a huge implementation gap, we have got all of these resolutions and policies and programmes at all levels but the gap remains. Last year, UN Women produced a report on women’s participation in peace keeping and negotiations, and the connection between presence and influence. When I read it, I felt almost suicidal. In 2010, ten years after the adoption of resolution 1325, the ambassador of Bangladesh who had been key in pushing the resolutions forward, said it was an enormously

valuable resolutions as an international policy mechanism but that it was undercut by the disappointing record of its implementation. He blamed the Security Council, as he considers it complicit in international practices that make women insecure as a result of its support of existing militarised states, and it is yet to internalise gender in its operational behaviour. He also blamed the Secretariat and the Secretary General.

I read Antonia Potter's piece on women's role in conflict resolution in DPI's last report<sup>18</sup>, on making resolution 1325 a reality. In order to have women's participation, they need the capacity to do so. It is not usual for women to be given tools on how to engage. Men are often given these tools in conflict resolution processes; money is thrown at them. We recognise this problem in our office; over 60 countries have brought the issue to the fore. We can focus on what we own, such as human right mechanisms and periodic reviews, whereby all states review their peers every four and a half years.

Turkey's review will be in 2015. You can all work together, looking at the recommendations from the first reviews, and make sure that your inputs are sent, and you can follow and track their implementations. You cannot have implementation without civil society. You must bring the differing perspectives together, have a discussion, you may have different opinions, but you can talk.

Other mechanisms include the treaty body mechanism. In late

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18 DPI, The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution: Roundtable Meeting, Istanbul, 19th September 2012. Accessed 05 November 2013, <http://www.democraticprogress.org/the-role-of-women-in-conflict-resolution-roundtable-meeting-istanbul-19th-september-2012/>

2012 the Human Rights Committee made recommendations, cross-interest groups should have a look and see if there has been a follow-up to the recommendations.

Finally, within my area of special procedures, where individual experts work on thematic areas such as culture, torture, disappearances, detention, violation of women, food, water and so on, these individuals work full time on their themes and they are entitled to visit countries to look at that particular right. The Special Rapporteur on Torture in Turkey (this is an excellent rallying tool) has experience with transitional justice and conflict resolution and it would be useful for him to come and meet with NGOs and authorities here. Turkey has a standing invitation, which means that any rapporteur is welcome at any time. Visits are limited to five days, and Turkey is huge, so a discussion on working around that would be useful. There is another rapporteur on cultural rights, who wants to come to Turkey, and you could discuss the issues of school textbooks, send a communications letter regarding individual cases; these can be very effective and are taken seriously by governments.

I originally wanted to speak about the lack of women in decision making in conflict resolution; but there *are* tools available to bring discussions and differences together. It all sounds theoretical, but when we work with groups, it can be empowering and you can target recommendations, and that gives you a framework to follow up on.

## Speaker: David Gorman<sup>19</sup>



*Speaker David Gorman*

Over the last several years, I have been part of a team, called the International Contact Group, facilitating peace talks in the Southern Philippines with the Malaysian Government. The team included representatives from the Governments of Japan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Kingdom along with the international NGOs, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (with whom I work) and Conciliation Resources, Muhammidayah and The Asia Foundation. During this period I was fortunate to

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<sup>19</sup> David Gorman has up to 20 years' experience in the field of peace-making and peace building. He began his career in 1993 in the Middle East. Since then, David has worked for several international non-for-profit organisations on many conflicts around the world. He has been based in the West Bank and Gaza, Liberia, Bosnia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. He holds a Master's degree in Social Policy in Developing Countries from the London School of Economics as well as a Master's degree in International Relations from Florida State University. He currently resides in Cyprus.

observe significant growth in the number, role, importance and recognition of the value women bring to a process. Now 40 per cent of the Government's delegation is comprised of women and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has made significant strides in expanding both the number and importance of women at the negotiating table.

However, this has not often been the case elsewhere. UN Women conducted a study in 2008 which revealed that of 32 peace processes surveyed between 1992 and 2011, woman comprised only four per cent of the signatories, 2.4 per cent of the Chief Mediators, 3.7 per cent of the witnesses, and nine per cent of the negotiators. I would further add that in the Philippines the facilitation team had no more than two women present at any given time in the talks.

Nonetheless, I think while the numbers may not show it yet, there has been greater understanding of why women should be at the table. 11 years ago, when I was helping facilitate the talks in Aceh, Indonesia, I was asked by a friend from Oxfam GB what I could do to include more women in the Aceh talks. I scoffed at the thought. While I naturally thought the two parties should have more women at the table (or any women at the table for that matter) I felt it was up to the parties to decide who to include at the talks. After all, they will be the best to determine who represents them and we do not want to foist people on them who cannot represent their side adequately, negotiate the issues properly or deliver on the results. I did not think it was our job to advocate for the inclusion of

women. However, at that time, I think I understood the principle of including women at the peace table but not the necessity of including women at the table. I now believe that if we want talks to succeed sustainably, comprehensively and inclusively then we should work even as facilitators to encourage the two parties to include more women.

So why has there been this shift in at least attitudinal thinking? Well, I believe part of it is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and various National Action Plans that have strengthened the legal and normative case. However, more importantly I think the arguments are much better made and understood as to why it helps to include women. The case is being made that is not just a right ‘morally’ or ‘legally’ to include women but rather not including more women is a great opportunity to advance the peace process more effectively and inclusively. This does not mean that I necessarily believe all women are more peace loving or better mediators. What I believe is that based on my observations in the Philippines peace talks, I think the dynamic women bring to the process helps to advance the process, better ensures some of issues that may not have been on the table before are there now, and opens up the table more inclusively to other stakeholders.

What I thought would be helpful now is to run through some of the issues we dealt with when it came to advancing women’s participation in the peace talks.

**Numbers:** The case for including more women at the table has often fallen to numbers and their striking disproportionate representation at decision making levels. This has been backed up by statistics and with groundbreaking UN Security Council resolutions such as 1325 and country specific National Action Plans which call for more women to be involved in all aspects of the peace processes. In the Philippines the aim was 40 per cent and they met it. Despite the appalling lack of women in peace process, I still think we need to be careful of centring the argument for women's inclusion too much on numbers. Otherwise, I do fear that the point of why including women is important gets lost. It can revert to tokenism by the parties and it can also be used by one party against the other to argue that they are more representative and inclusive than the other.



*Participants on a boat trip to Akdamar Island, Lake Van*

Moreover, I find that while the argument for 40 per cent inclusion may work well for governments it does not necessarily work well for insurgent groups. Governments are more obliged to follow legal and normative rules such as SC Resolutions and National Action Plans but, non-state actors fighting against the state often have a different set of challenges in putting women into their negotiating team. They may feel the pressure to meet a Government's NAP is another tool the state is using to impose its own legal codes or customs on a movement that may be fighting precisely against the state and all it represents. Furthermore, they may find it harder to include representatives who have not necessarily been leading the insurgency politically or militarily. For example, someone who has fought for the movement would need to get bumped from the team in order to meet this quota. So with non-state actors we need to make the case a bit better and more creatively, for why it is beneficial to include women, and better understand the context from which they are coming. Certainly having a government try to foist the numbers on the other side is not the way to go and this is where the facilitator or others may need to come in.

**Role:** Another critical issue in the debate on expanding the inclusion of women is the role they play both inside and outside the room. One of the main arguments against including women at the actual table was that women already had a place in the peace process, but it is just not at the table, negotiating. They have a place within our culture that affords them an opportunity to provide input. However as we know there is quite a big difference between being



in the room when decisions need to be made, often on the spot, and participating in that decision making process, as opposed to being informed after the decision has been made or being consulted prior to the decision making. However, even when women delegates are appointed to a negotiating team they are often tracked into gender or humanitarian issues. This tracking limits their input on decision making on other key issues, reinforces the perception that women can only contribute in these areas and limits their movement into other areas of negotiation such as security. Some women delegates have fought against this and have insisted on being on other tracks to avoid this.

To ensure the impact of women at the table is made on advancing particular issues, it is just as important that women are included at all levels of decision making, not just at the negotiating table. In the case of the Philippines, women were present at the Executive level of government where the Minister of the department in charge of the peace processes was a woman and where the Legislative branch also included several powerful women engaged on the peace process. It is the Executive and Legislative branches that will be largely responsible for determining the positions of the negotiating team at the table.

**Importance:** In the negotiations in Mindanao in 2010, the Philippines Government and the MILF became embroiled in a bitter debate over whether to add the word ‘meaningful’ when referring to women’s participation. The talks in fact broke down as

the issue came to take on symbolic importance. The government felt it was essential to add the word ‘meaningful’ to ensure women’s participation was not just symbolic. The MILF thought that predicating women’s involvement took something away from it and they may have also perceived it as another attempt by the Government to impose its way. They also found it insulting that the government insinuated women would not already be included meaningfully by them. Later the MILF asked me privately for my views on the subject. I realized they really did not understand why it was such a charged issue internationally and for the government, and for the first time, I found myself explaining why in fact it would be important to have women, beyond their disproportionate representation in the peace process. Later they easily agreed to include ‘meaningful’ and as the peace process progressed, the MILF began to include women, first as two advisors and then eventually as full members of the negotiating team.

Over the course of the talks, as women became not just more present but more active, I observed some noticeable differences in the way the talks preceded with the addition of more women. Firstly, including women opened up a bit more creativity might have been there before. Many of the women who came into the talks from both sides of the table, came from civil society backgrounds, had known each other before, had at least one issue in common, gender, and could therefore communicate with each other both inside the room and perhaps more importantly outside the room, just as they had done before they were in the formal talks. At the very least

they were able to explore some issues and understand each side a bit better than the men, who had few personal relationships with the other side beyond that of being at the table.

Secondly, I believe the dynamics of how we all engaged with each other did change with the addition of women. I am not entirely sure it always improved in every case, but I do believe we were all able to have different relationships with each other, communicate in some cases more effectively with each other and engage on issues we might not have always engaged in when there was not a mix of both women and men at the table. At the very least it added more dynamism and, I think, openings for communicating issues that might have been harder to get across.

Thirdly, women may be able to better understand the concerns of the 51 per cent of the population that is often excluded from the table. While men will be more knowledgeable with issues such as security, and better able to predict and understand their effects on fighters. Women will be able to better understand the effects on communities. Men will naturally have a much harder time accessing women in communities and directly understanding their concerns, than a woman who can speak directly of the experience. However, I would add that men may sometimes be better able to *communicate* these issues to a male counterpart across the table. Indeed this was probably the case in the Philippine talks when they were led by their Chief Negotiator Marvic Leonen.



*The Armenian Church of the Holy Cross on Akdamar Island built by the architect-monk Manuel during the years 915-921, visited by participants following the DPI roundtable meeting*

Fourthly, I think including women often opens up the door to including other minorities as well, therefore generally making the process more inclusive. In the Philippines, once the parties realised that including more women did not upset the *status quo* and in fact improved the dynamics in the talks and within their party, they may have felt more comfortable opening up their delegations more broadly, both inside the room and outside. The women delegates to the talks were able to engage with a whole new sector of the population, both men and women, that the men were not able to properly access.

Fifthly, I found that while new women delegates in peace talks may at first encounter obstacles in playing a meaningful role at least in the

case of the Philippines talks), women may find themselves adding significant value later; often adding a new and fresh perspective in the talks, compared to the members of a delegation, particularly on the non-state side, who for decades have been working, sometimes competing with each other and have entrenched and even stale views.

Lastly, as cliché as it may be, the public image of a women representing the delegation may in certain occasions give the impression that the movement is putting aside the military struggle for a political, democratic and inclusive struggle.

While obviously the Philippines may be an exception to the rule right now, in regards to the inclusion of women, it will hopefully serve as a harbinger of changes to come. We, as those in the peace making community, will need to better understand, observe, learn and communicate not only the principle but the necessity of including women and the opportunity that women bring to the table. Hopefully, now as both state and non-state actors feel at least morally and legally driven to include more women, we will see processes that become more inclusive and representative, better advance gender analysis in talks, and most importantly provide more creativity into peace processes that at the very least can make them more likely to succeed.

Thank you.

## **Moderator: Aslı Tunç**

Many thanks to David for an excellent insight into the Philippines peace process and women's' role. I now open the floor for questions and comments.

## **Participant:**

David, could you give some context with regards to the Philippines? As far as I know, women have been involved in politics there for many years. Their involvement in the peace process, the quoted 30 per cent threshold was seen as a pressure, which I can understand. Did the MILF pick the women? Did the women want to join? What could they do? Kate, what forced the women from both sides, Nationalist and Unionist, to come together? What was the connection?

## **Participant:**

Kate, as activists in Turkey, we are all in this conflict and are party to this conflict, not only Kurdish women. And there is also fighting among Kurdish women! In Northern Ireland, I am sure that also happened, what was the process then? How did you solve internal conflicts, for instance when one party wanted to become dominant over the other? Could you give some concrete examples, as this is a very important problem here?

## **Participant:**

Kate, could we have some more concrete examples of the things you described?

## **Participant:**

David, what is the difference between the MILF and MNLF? It seems the MILF found it difficult to include women; did women want to be there?

## **Kate Fearon:**

You raise a very good point; the de facto presence of women does not necessarily produce benefits. For us we were, number one, concerned that the other parties representing British nationalism and Irish nationalism would not include women in their delegations, and even if they did put women in their delegations and negotiating teams, they would not be saying very much on women's issues. What we wanted to do was not to be embarrassed about being a women's platform, and that was what we did. We used the three principles that I talked about earlier, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion to navigate our own diversity and our own very different positions and we came up with policies on a power relationship within Northern Ireland. Before this agreement the power relationship had always been that it was those people associated with British nationalism who were always in power. Actually they did not have a lot of power it was not like they were the government in London; in fact they depended on the

government in London to give them a lot of money every year, so that they were able to maintain the illusion of some power. But in real terms they were not actually in power, so there was a real stalemate in our conflict for a very long time. So what we wanted to do was say 'yes you have to include representation from both communities in government' and it was controversial at the time to have a government in Northern Ireland.

Our colleagues who were Irish nationalists from Sinn Féin were saying 'we want to have a united Ireland'; 'we want no UK government, nothing to do with the UK whatsoever. I am from an Irish nationalist background, but pragmatically we could see that was just not going to happen. When we got together in the room with other women, some of whom were British nationalists but who had empathy for women such as myself; that was where we met halfway. I did not necessarily want to throw off the old language, it sounds funny now, but people used it for example 'we will throw off the yoke of British oppression', that was the kind of language that we used at the time. And so our language was moderated and their language was moderated when we got together and discussed things. That was the other thing, actually providing a platform for each other to discuss these things in a mature way, without any ramifications or anybody pointing fingers.





*Melda Onur, Member of Parliament CHP, during the discussion*

Previously our public discourse had been very tense and polarised, it was as George Bush said once: ‘if you are not with us then you are against us’. Our political discourse was very much like that. What we were able to do as women was to say ‘as women we have political baggage, we have political backgrounds and views, but we want a future’. And we were very clear that we wanted a future, and we knew that if things kept going the way they were, if there was no break in the cycle, then there would be no future. We worked backwards from that, and we knew there would have to be compromises, and in a way we became more pragmatic and quicker than other political parties. They were bound up in ideological boxes and could not move outside the boxes, whereas from the very start we were not in an ideological box, we were principled and flexible but we maintained our integrity. Our integrity was not based around the ideologies of the past; it was about ensuring a future for ourselves and our families. In fact, when we came into the negotiations, all the political parties did start putting women forward. And to be fair, I should say that the one political party

that in general promoted women was Sinn Féin from the very start. But other political parties that would not usually put women forward started to represent women, and those women began to have more of a voice within those political parties. This would not have happened had we not said 'yes we are feminist and we want to see women's agenda as part of this peace settlement'.

Someone asked about how we came together. What actually happened was that a lot of the women had been involved in the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland, from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s when the civil rights movement really came to the fore in Northern Ireland. At the time (and this now sounds insane), there were no votes for Northern Ireland Nationalists, there were no votes for the Catholics on a number of property issues, and there was a power differential within Northern Ireland that was very great between Catholics and Protestants or Nationalist and Unionist. A lot of the women who were part of the Women's Coalition had been part of those movements, they had been activists and involved in civil society. We had a weird situation where political parties in Northern Ireland were very stagnant and civil society was very active. At the time had better links to the British government in terms of policy than the political parties, because the civil society and the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) were thinking about the situation which they were living in all the time and putting forward policy. Because there was no government in Northern Ireland, it went directly to the government in Westminster and so there was a relationship between many

strong women. It was one of those strong women who, when she saw this election opportunity, said ‘look we have to do this’.



*Sunset in the city of Van*

The first thing that we did was write an invitation letter to come to the Ulster People's College letter, signed by about 16 of us. The Ulster College was an adult education centre in Northern Ireland, and the Director was the first woman Director of Queens University in 1974, and I was the fourth woman president of Queens in 1989. In these 20 years only two other women were presidents at that university, one of whom had tragically died in a car crash while the other woman moved countries. There were two of us, and lots of other women who had been involved at a grassroots community level, and had been holding these communities together for 30 years. The governments in both Britain and Ireland recognised that there was a contribution to be made. When we drafted the letter, we invited people to explore what it would be like. The women that we

invited were women like you today, they were activists, some were activists on contraception issues, some on abortions issues, some were activists in general feminist terms, there were religious women and nuns, there were journalists or women in private business. In the first meeting we had about 40 people. We had a professor there from the university, Sydney Elliot, he was a great guy and a sophologist interested in voting, and in patterns and predictions. Sydney came and said, 'ok here is how many votes you need to get two seats', and he predicted we needed 10,000 votes. We thought, yes, with ten of us we can get 1,000 votes each, of course!

We took it from there. We did not have any fancy advertising agency, or financial help but we spoke from the heart. Our first campaigning line was 'we bid goodbye to the dinosaurs', because we were sick and tired of being dictated to by men who had been around since pre-historic times in political terms. When women came to the first meeting, many did not want to be tainted with mainstream politics, which is fine when you are in the NGO sector because this is what it is needed is to be strong but when you are in the political sector you have to compromise. You need to be principled, but also recognise that pragmatic efforts are needed to create quality consensus, and not go for the lowest common denominator.

Everybody takes of the conflict, and you need to recognise that; if you try to say 'I am going to solve this conflict because I can stand above the conflict', it is not going to work. We were very conscious

of our own internal prejudices towards our neighbours and also towards other people, and we had to constantly have checks and balances within our own organisation to make sure that when we had policy everybody agreed, or could live with it. It was a process, and included lots of working groups to discuss things like a bill of rights, housing policy, electoral systems within our local parliament, and the kind of issues the north and south should be responsible for, as well as the east west relationship.

In terms of negotiation, we were systemic and conscious about getting high quality policy positions, and while other parties relied on their constituencies, and we knew that numerically we did not have a lot of people supporting us. But this comes back to David Gorman's point about 'meaningful participation', we were small in number but I would like to think that our participation was meaningful. We made sure that we developed good relationships with people, which is a key thing for both facilitators and negotiators. Negotiations are all about relationships and if you can build good relationships with the people who are chairing and with the people who are sitting opposite you, and you can demonstrate empathy with them then you are more effective as a negotiator. Another point is to be prepared, the more prepared you are and the more you have thought about what your position is, and where your 'red line is'; what you absolutely do not cross, thinking about it in advance is very important. Our negotiations were carried out in room not unlike this one, and we had an American Chair Senator George Mitchell for two years, I would say we really

benefited from the American influence. At times we got frustrated with him as he allowed parties to talk for a very long time, up to three hours sometimes! But he was so patient and I learnt about being patient. In plenary session there were talking groups, but the corridor talk was also important, and we did a lot of that because we had representatives from both Unionists and Nationalists and we had people who would go into every single other party office. The others, they never crossed over, but for us we made sure that we had a representative who people would recognise as 'one of their own' going in all offices.

### **David Gorman:**

Just a few points, every context is different. It is true that in the Philippines they have a disproportionate number of women in government. This is just the way the Philippines is; it is not because of gender so much as because of the leading roles that families and clans play, and also because they have term limits. If you are a patriarch and it is a patriarchal society mostly, and you serve two terms in congress then you cannot serve anymore, then you give it to your wife. And then she runs for two terms and you take it back, and then give it to your cousin or sister-it does not matter if you are male or female as long as it stays in the family. The point I am making is that it is not just about having women at the peace table, the question that struck me, is having women at all levels of decision making. Because the negotiators were negotiating for the government, you needed to have people in the government that the panel was going to negotiate for, and so I think the Philippines

were fortunate in that the head of the ministry was a woman. In the Philippines there are many female members of congress and all of them had an input from the executive to the legislative branches, and judicial branches; there were many women. I think having women in all those various layers of decision making ensured that the governments' negotiating position would also reflect gender aspirations-so it is a very important distinction there in the Philippines.

Secondly, the greatest proponent, the most successful person who made an argument for women's rights, was a male lawyer. He could reach across to his male counterparts in a much more successful way than I think his successor who was a female negotiator could. He was a very good lawyer and he felt very strongly about the issue of meaningful participation, and he insisted that 40 per cent of delegates on the panel should be women. As a man, I think he could present this case to another man a little bit more convincingly in some ways. Certainly it was a little embarrassing for the other men not to acknowledge the importance of meaningful participation. I think that says a lot about the way the efforts need to go to get women participation to become more meaningful, and we need to work a lot more with men to help them understand better why women should be at the table.

On the MILF side, you saw through my presentation, you are right, the women struggled enormously. The one lady who was a juror became the delegate member and for four months she was

out in the cold, she sat in the back, she was very quiet and was never included in the corner discussions which are so critical it is very hard for women to be involved in those corner discussions-it was an 'all-male bastion'. Eventually she was called on by the MILF delegates and she spoke lucidly on legal issues and they began to trust her as her input was valuable. Because she was an outsider, in a way she ended up having a special role and she could contribute more effectively than an insider who had all their competitions and vested interests. We as facilitators also encouraged that, I do not think the MILF would have included women had we not pushed as hard. The MILF was also struggling as a movement to convince people that they were representative of all people and were legitimate; they were vulnerable and there was a lot of pressure from civil society, the internal community and by the facilitators that they needed to include women in some way shape or form. I think you have to have all those different things working coherently to be successful.

The MILF and the MNLF that is a long issue there-to say briefly, the MILF is an Islamic movement essentially fighting for independence. The MNLF is the national liberation front and leftist (that used to be communist) secular movement. It is important in this picture, because the MNLF was traditionally more inclusive of women and other minorities, Christians in fact were part of the National Liberation Front, whereas the Islamic Liberation Front, because of their history as an Islamic force representing a certain interest and a certain group, had a more difficult time representing Christian



interests, and other minorities; they were a much more insular movement. So it comes back to the earlier point; much of this is context driven, there is not only one answer on how you would include women meaningfully in conflicts resolution. There is a lot that we can learn from various places, but I think each approach in dealing with either a government or insurgent groups needs to be tailored for that specific conflict.



*Participants Nazvan Mızrak, Fatma Bostan Ünsal and DPI Director Kerim Yildiz  
in the Church of the Holy Cross on Akdamar Island*

## **Participant:**

My comment relates to the point that David Gorman made, that it is not simply good enough to be at the negotiating table, it is what happens afterwards. I was in Belfast not so long ago, and it seems that two of the central platforms that you included in the settlement, mixed housing and integrated education, have not been achieved. In fact the lack of integrated education is really quite shocking to me; I was very surprised to see that Catholic children

were still educated separately from Protestant children.

I was given the example of a Catholic teenage girl who was friend with a Protestant girl. If the Catholic girl was eventually to go to the Protestant girl's house, the following day the paramilitary would go to the Protestant's home and would threaten the family.

My question is: what happens after the negotiations is terribly important; we have heard a lot about how important is for women to be at the negotiating table but is it really carrying it through and making sure that these reforms happen?

### **Kate Fearon:**

I think you have answered your own question. But, you are absolutely right. What we did was exploit an opportunity that came our way for a period of about five to six years, but there needs to be a way in which women's inclusion in political life and public life is maintained but also has a capacity to develop. One of the things which we put forward and we lost sight of (precisely because we had been successful in changing the agenda) was an electoral system that would have allowed for an additional seat in each of the Westminster constituencies and we would have probably got the last seat in about six constituencies. That was one thing which the bigger political parties were very united about on keeping us out. That was something that we lost. Electoral systems are very important, especially to women, and that is something to always look out for, if you have an opportunity to craft a new electoral system then you have to absolutely be at the negotiating table but you also have to be operating in the system afterwards.

## **Participant:**

The afternoon and morning sessions have been quite different in a unique sense. To the international afternoon speakers, thank you very much. However, we in Turkey have not come to that level yet. What we are currently doing is talking about a peace process, we are looking for a ceasefire, and civil society is not open to others. The experience of the wise people here has perhaps been different to other countries, as here in Turkey they are abstracted from the context that they are attempting to explain. So you are much more advanced, and we in Turkey are not at that level yet.

## **Participant:**

The peace process in Turkey is not taking place at a time of democratic progress and enlargement, but when the state has become more authoritarian and dominant. This is one of the reasons why, what we have been discussing today, has not corresponded with our daily realities. We need to make sure that everyone, Turks, Kurds, men, women, have access to administrative mechanisms.

## **Kate Fearon:**

I know nothing about Turkish politics so I am not going to try to address you at that level. However what I see is an incredible dynamism here, and I feel a little bit jealous of your energy. But, in our peace process we learnt things from other places and when we thought we were not ready, that kept us ready for the day in which our context altered so that we knew what to do in that

particular context, or when the context caught up with our ideas. Because sometimes our ideas were a little bit ahead of where the context was. I think we should always generate ideas and have them ready because either you will change the context or the context will change and you will be there to greet it. I would say that if someone had come to us not in 1996 when the talks were starting, to tell us about the international instruments through which we could try to come together on a platform and try and get some of our ideas lined up, I would have really welcomed that opportunity. What we had was an external catalyst for us; if we had not had the opportunity for elections we would have sat in rooms talking for other 20 years. I would suggest you to look for an external catalyst, to look for platforms and the instruments that Jane Connors was talking about, if this is what you want to do. We were 30 to 40 people sitting in a room and we changed a lot; it did not work out so much in the long term, but we are still optimistic that it might.

There is just one more thing to talk about, which is the issue of the ceasefire, which is a very difficult issue about whether to have preconditions for talks or not. For us there were two preconditions; one was that the IRA should have a ceasefire and all the paramilitary groups should have a ceasefire and the second is that the IRA should decommission, get rid of and burn all of their weapons. I do not know the answer but I think sometimes we cannot afford to wait for a ceasefire. And that is very difficult and changes in every environment, and I would think about whether you have the luxury of waiting for ceasefire on every occasion. What political

talks do is remove the rationale for the use of violence and weapons and that is what you want to get to. For us that was also why decommissioning was very difficult for the women's coalition to discuss because so many people had been affected very negatively and very painfully by IRA violence. But we said what we needed to do was to decommission the mind-set that made people want to use the weapons. I do not know what the right answer is, but I would say that you do not always have the luxury for the right conditions to happen before taking action.

### **Moderator:**

There seems to be a disconnection. We should listen to these experiences, and we have to process, analyse and adapt them to Turkey. There are scientists who do this work and maybe listening to them and their thoughts on these discussions might be a better approach, such as those carrying out comparative studies. Perhaps it would be useful to try in another meeting to adopt certain things, and to analyse and synthesise things.

### **Participant:**

Last year I participated in a DPI meeting in Istanbul. Back then, we had higher hopes and expectations. As Kate said this is a process, it is changing and we need to look at the different perspectives. One thing we in Turkey are good at and to which we owe our survival, is our flexibility.

## **Participant:**

I am grateful to all the panel speakers here today, and I think we have benefited from these discussions and will continue to do so in the future. I wanted to make a comment and share it with you. Tomorrow we will receive a new democratic package; we do not know what it includes, for instance about language and education. The state is becoming more authoritarian, at the same time there is a peace process. This is a unique and interesting period of time.

## **David Gorman:**

I would like to make two quick points. Firstly, I would say that you can either wait for the time to be ripe, you can wait for that opportunity to come, or you can do a lot so that when that opportunity comes you are ready to go. I am a firm believer in *ripening* the moment, you make the moment ripe, so that when that window opens-at every peace process that I have been part of and that I have seen, one small window emerges for a peace process to start in a meaningful way. When that happens you have to be ready or that window will close very closely, it is open for a very short time. There is an enormous amount that can be done. In the Philippines process, most of the women who are now engaging in the talks on the two parties were also part of a 'track two' approach of women that were engaging on these issues in a creative way prior to their involvement in the talks themselves. So the parties selected them mostly because they knew that these women knew the other side, knew the issues, and could work through these

issues effectively. There is a lot that women can do jointly outside of the talks to get themselves inside the room, and to advance the peace process so that when the 'stars align' correctly everybody is ready to go.

On the topic of preconditions, often there is confusion between preconditions versus outcomes. In every peace process parties will often advance outcomes as preconditions and you have to be careful about mixing up the two. When you look at what a precondition is and how you are going to get to that precondition you need to have some talks on this, there is a lot of work that you can do quietly behind the scenes-this has been done in every peace process around the world, every single one and I am not sure about the situation here in Turkey but I am sure that is the same. You have a lot of little tracks going on at the same time to try to deal with these preconditions but you want to avoid getting to preconditions before you even get to the table.

### **Participant:**

I work as a diplomat in the British Embassy in Ankara. I would just like to make an observation on the window of opportunity in Northern Ireland. I was watching this as a civilian from England. I grew up with a strong woman in my house, my mother, who I would categorise as having the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) views' in the Turkish context. One thing that strikes me on the military side for both the British army and the Irish Republican army is that I think there was a collective sense of stalemate. The IRA was

not going to get the army out of Northern Ireland and equally the British army was not going to defeat the Irish Republican army. That created the space for negotiations that was a hugely important factor.

Somebody earlier mentioned implementation. We have solved our problem with the Good Friday Agreement, but I think implementation just goes on. 15 years ago the deal was signed, but implementation requires a huge amount of care and love to keep the deal on the road.

The other thing I would say about the role of women from a mainland UK perspective, for me two women stand out. Margaret Thatcher, and her quite uncompromising approach which did not get us where we needed to be, and Mo Mowlam who was the British Minister at the time responsible for Northern Ireland who was very influential and an inspiration for a lot of people although her historical record sometimes is mixed as some people believe that she was not a huge factor.

## **Participant:**

We as DPI have been involved in comparative studies in Northern Ireland and South Africa for example. We have seen that confidential negotiations continue in the beginning of every peace process, which the public is not aware of and this can become quite chaotic. Your criticism is important. As far as I know the experience among Kurds is that there is not trust in the process, and people



do not know the extent to which promises are being kept. David, do you think that the public does not always have to know what is happening, but in order not to lose the covered distance, how do you think the process could be managed in a better way? What are the guarantees and safeguards that we could have? Turkey is in a cycle of violence, today we may have a ceasefire, but how do we make sure this holds?

### **David Gorman:**

This is always an issue. In the Philippines the parties had to have an extra agreement; what they call 'locking in the gains'. Both parties agreed that they would not derogate from the previous agreements made, that was one guarantee. Secondly there was also a third party present, so that whatever had been agreed on could be verified by the third party and any negotiations that happened could be verified. Thirdly, they had what you call international guarantors, which the MILF insisted on and that the government agreed to. They had states; Britain, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Turkey and Malaysia who were part of the peace process. Although they were active in different ways, for example Britain was active in providing expertise on Northern Ireland, what they did was that by their mere presence, they gave the MILF a bit of comfort that the government would not renege on its commitments. While the international community would not have been able to do anything to stop the government if they tried; the Philippines also agreed because they knew that these governments, which were foreign missions in the Philippines, would in fact reinforce the Philippines' government

position to the MILF. So it actually worked for both sides, for the government, they knew that these states agreed with their policy positions and would reinforce that to the MILF, and for the MILF they got the international community to give a sort of a 'principled backing' to the peace process, which would make it difficult to roll back on the gains that had been achieved.

On one occasion we as in the 'international contact group', we did need to make a statement, which we rarely ever did, with regards to the need for both parties to stick to the gains that they had achieved. I think that in every peace process there is this constant effort to try to roll back the gains, even after the signing of the agreement. The spoilers, those against it, will use every legal, political, social tool to try to erode the agreement. That is where the second track comes in, the peace builders, the civil society, those who can reinforce that architecture of the peace process and implementation. Frankly, this is the issue that everybody suffers in a peace process. Lastly, the biggest challenge to continuity is the change of administrations in a government where rebels tend to have the same leadership throughout, whereas governments always change and new governments have new policies and positions. It is good to try and get the agreement within the existing administration as opposed to hope for a better deal with a new administration.

### **Moderator:**

I would like to thank our international speakers David Gorman, Kate Fearon and Jane Connors. Thank you so much.

## Closing observations-Yilmaz Ensaroğlu<sup>20</sup>



*Yilmaz Ensaroğlu addressing roundtable participants*

Thank you to all the panel speakers for joining us here today. Since this morning you have enriched our discussions. As mentioned by DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine in today's opening speech, no conflicts are the same. There is no mechanism that can be copy-pasted; the success of one country cannot be pasted to another. However there are many lessons to be learned from each other's experiences.

This is especially important for Turkey's peace process and reconciliation. For many years we have been trying to solve this conflict by military means, and now, for the first time we are doing

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20 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.

it through a democratic process and through politics. Turkey needs to learn from others as this is new for us. We should not be afraid of this process, as the bigger danger is to go back to clashes, conflict and guns. The current peace process is different; it requires more patience than war and in a way more courage than war. We are trying to compromise and find a consensus between people who have been fighting each other for many years. People from both sides have suffered and have been through a lot thus we must understand their situation and be patient towards them. We also should not only focus on the past, but also on the future and continue to work towards it and have discussions and brainstorming sessions.

This morning's session was tense, as the speakers told us about true stories, drawing our attention to the pain of people. Others have said that instead of revisiting the past, we need to talk about the future and look for solutions. Today we are still having difficulties naming the problem, different people give it different names, and there is no consensus on this. I told my friends in the Southeast province: Kurds do not know how to explain their problem to the Turkish people at large. Everybody can see that there is a problem, however for many years the official explanation for what has been happening, was the only channel for information about this issue. Politically conscious people have been watching the BBC news in order to try and hear something different than what was being said by the government of emergency. There is a problem with getting the right information. When the wise people visited the Southeast, some were surprised by the scary and frightening stories being told.

We have to talk about the past in order to refresh our memories. Some files have been closed in courts due to the statute of limitation. There are victims and perpetrators in this country, and to stop this from happening we must visit the past and talk about the past. The past should not be forgotten, but we must also talk about a formula for the future.

This morning's colleagues emphasised certain points. Firstly, this conflict has deeply affected and traumatised women. We need to listen more to women, when we talk of solutions we must not only talk about microeconomics and high level politics but we must also discuss the truth and reality that has been experienced on the ground. We have heard how 'that day' is very important for this country. I compare my own past with these stories and the permanent memories they have left; we cannot bring back the losses but we can make sure that it does not happen again to our children and grand-children. Once they are secure, then we can start talking about settling accounts and forgiveness. We have been to South Africa as part of DPI's comparative studies. What they did was not very good. They did not want to see more bloodshed, but we should also learn from their mistakes.

Secondly, I would like to emphasise a point made by Bejan Matur; that there is potential for women to have very strong voices in this peace process. However, the notion that women are peaceful by nature is a very important problem. This is a romantic discourse, and we must talk more about this. I have received some very strong

reactions from female MPs; sometimes women can have stronger and harsher voices than men. Thirdly, the peace process should not be managed by a discourse of war, it requires a different discourse and we need to adapt ourselves. This can start from the grassroots level, through the help of women and empathy for each other. The MP's speech in Diyarbakir was heavily criticised here today. You are right, but your style was not very different, you are very harsh in your criticism and you must also soften your own approach. Politics should not be the art of war, and media, civil society and women have an important role to play there. Lastly, we must remember that the participation of women in conflict resolution is a requirement of international law.

We need to facilitate the job of parties. The ruling party in government thinks that holding talks in public will be politically damaging. The reason for the peace package is that the Prime Minister knows that two thirds of constituents support the peace process, and he knows he gets his votes from them. This is the strategy for his re-election. On the other hand, there are two parties getting the Kurdish people's votes. For instance the BDP is based on Kurdish votes and receives demands from the Kurdish side, but it must also take care of the concerns of the non-Kurdish sides. The party is trying to comfort both.

The 'magic word' should be constructing the future together. If Kurdish and Turkish people are to live together on this land, the solution must take into account all the regions of Turkey and civil

society must work to comfort all segments of society. No political party will do this, as they will always care about elections first.

With regards to the role of women, I think we need more data and input from these meetings to provide to other women. As long as we keep hearing these stories we will understand.

I hope that this meeting has opened our horizons. Thank you to DPI for organising this roundtable and for gathering us together. Many thanks to the Yüzüncü Yıl University here in Van for their help and contribution.

Thank you to our foreign colleagues for your contribution.

Thank you.

## Conclusion

The roundtable meeting held by the Democratic Progress Institute in Van on the subject of the role of women in conflict resolution this September (2013) brought attention to numerous issues in the area of gender and conflict, and facilitated valuable and engaged discussion. The day brought together many participants from, both local and national media, as well as those from the worlds of academia, politics, diplomacy, the non-governmental sector both regionally and nationally, policy makers and international experts. Participants came from very diverse provinces within Turkey. The roundtable meeting examined issues surrounding women's role in and contribution to peace processes, including the challenges faced in mobilising and facilitating women's involvement in conflict resolution processes. Among case studies examined were Northern Ireland and the Philippines. UN and other international mechanisms available to women were also examined, with discussion on the means by which women in Turkey can use such international mechanisms to equip themselves and participate in the current process. The large and varied turnout as well as the media coverage that followed this event, demonstrates the positive response it received and the strong engagement of participants. On the whole, this roundtable was very successful and we hope the discussion that was generated provided useful insight into this important issue, and that it will continue to occur.

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



DPI thanks all participants and contributors for their much-appreciated participation in this activity.

## Appendix

### **DPI Roundtable: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution 28<sup>th</sup> September 2013, Van**

#### ***Participants from Turkey***

Abdülkerim Uzağan, Yüzüncü Yıl University

Ahmet Kazankaya, Vice Rector, Yüzüncü Yıl University

Aşiren Piroz, Kurdi Association

Alev Şahar Caniş, Amnesty International, Van

Aslı Tunç, Professor of Media and Communication Systems at  
İstanbul Bilgi University

Ayşen Baylak, Helsinki Citizen Assembly

Bejan Matur, Author and Poet

Betul Güngör, Van Human Association

Burhan Kayatürk, Member of Parliament, Justice and  
Development Party

Can Ozan Tuncer, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University

Cansu Sancak

Ceren Sözeri, Galatasaray University

Dilara Gerger, İstanbul Şehir University

Emine Üçak Erdoğan, Author, İstanbul

Esra Elmas, Democratic Progress Institute

Esra Nursel, TÜRKKAD

Evin Keskin, Mazlumder Van Branch

Fatma Bostan Unsal, Başkent Kadın Platformu

Gülşen Orhan, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development

## Party

Gülseren Onanç, Member of Parliament, Assembly of the  
Republican People's Party

Hüseyin Akkaş, Şehrivan Newspaper

Hüseyin Hatemi, Lawyer

Işın Eliçin, Journalist at Turkish Radio and Television (TRT),  
İstanbul

Kadri Salaz, Chairman of VANGIAD, Solidarity Council  
member for Civil Society Organisations in Van, Member of Van  
Economy Council

Kezban Hatemi, Lawyer and Member of Wise Persons  
Committee

Mehmet Yüzer, Van Deputy Governor

Melda Onur, Member of Parliament, Republican People's Party

Müntena Bildirici, Van AZADI Initiative

Murat Timur, Lawyer, Chairman of Van Bar Association

Nazan Oskay, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Fine Arts Faculty

Nazmi Gür, Member of Parliament, Peace and Democracy Party

Nazvan Mızrak, Van City Council

Necla Beker, Van Councillor

Neşe Akkerman, British Embassy, Ankara

Nigar Canli

Nihari Aşan Mavigöl, Women's Association

Nil Mutluer, Journalist and Lecturer in Fatih University's  
Department of Sociology

Nurcan Baysal, Journalist and founding member of the  
Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research

Peter Spoor, British Embassy, Ankara

Dr. Peyami Battal, Rector Prof., Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van  
Şahin Aldep

Sema Sancak, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Women Issues  
Centre

Tuba Çandar, Author

Vedat Aydın, Former Mayor of Ankara

Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Columnist at daily Zaman Newspaper,  
İstanbul

Yıldız Çetin, Van Councillor

Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, Director, Law and Human Rights Studies,  
SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation, Ankara

Zozan Özgökçe, Founder of Van Women Association (VAKAD)

### ***International Participants***

Catriona Vine, Deputy Director, Democratic Progress Institute

David Gorman, Regional Director, Eurasia, Centre for  
Humanitarian Dialogue

Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, Democratic Progress  
Institute

Jane Connor, Chief of the Special Procedures Branch of the Office  
of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Kate Fearon, Founder of the Northern Ireland Women's  
Coalition, representing women at the negotiating table for the  
Good Friday Agreement

Penny Green, Professor at King's College London

## **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 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. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

### **DPI Board Members:**

#### **Nicholas 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.

#### **Professor Penny Green (Secretary)**

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 Centre 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 organisations.

## **Arild Humlen**

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. 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.

## **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.

## **Professor David Petrasek**

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United

Nations.

### **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, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

## **DPI Council of Experts**

### **Dermot Ahern**

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

## **Dr Mehmet Asutay**

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

## **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 Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

## **Professor 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**

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**

Senior 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.

### **Avila Kilmurray**

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

## **Professor 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. Columnist, 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).

## **Professor Monica McWilliams**

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. 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. 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. 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. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

## **Jonathan Powell**

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

## **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 also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

### **Professor 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.

### **Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar**

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



11 Guilford Street  
London WC1N 1DH  
United Kingdom

+44 (0)203 206 9939

[info@democraticprogress.org](mailto:info@democraticprogress.org)

[www.democraticprogress.org](http://www.democraticprogress.org)

Twitter: @DPI\_UK