



The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution Comparative Study Visit Report: Ireland

28th November – 2nd December 2013

Democratic
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Institute

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Foreword

This report details the activities and roundtable discussions experienced during DPI's Comparative Study visit to Dublin, Dundalk and Belfast, from 30th November to 1st December 2013. The study focuses on the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution in Ireland in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. During this visit key actors from Ireland's peace process were met with, along with government representatives, politicians, civil society representatives, journalists and experts in the area of gender and conflict resolution. We hope that this report will be valuable for participants, and that it will contribute to ongoing discussion in Turkey.

DPI aims to create and 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. DPI focuses on providing expertise, research 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.. DPI's 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.

This report was prepared with the kind assistance of Jade Correa.



Kerim Yildiz

Director, Democratic Progress Institute

Thursday 28th November 2013

Session 1:

Welcome Reception at Clarion Hotel, Dublin

Bejan Matur:¹ Welcome to all of you. It is a pleasure to meet with you all here in Dublin, Ireland for the Democratic Progress Institute's comparative study visit, which will focus on the role of women in conflict resolution.

You have all attended the Institute's activities in the past, and as you know, DPI has held numerous roundtable meetings in Turkey, as well as other comparative study visits in various locations across the world over the last two years. Participants have included Members of Parliament, policy makers, journalists, academics and civil society representatives. DPI's model of examining models of conflict resolution in a comparative way enables us to learn from examples that have worked in other places. While there is no 'blueprint' for peace, we can learn from the experiences of others. We have a closed society in Turkey so we explain our own problem as 'unsolvable' or 'intractable'. When I first came to Dublin, however, I realised that the 'Troubles' that had existed between Catholics and Protestants were clearly something that proved much harder to solve than our problem in Turkey. I came to the same realisation in South Africa, and even in Scotland: seeing what the Scots had to overcome, to position their own nationalism and make demands,

¹ Bejan Matur is a poet, author and journalist who joined DPI in 2011 as a Council of Experts member. She has written for newspapers such as *Today's Zaman* in Turkey, focusing on topics such as Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, minority politics, prison literature and women's issues. Her poetry has received much acclaim and has been translated in 17 languages.

even though they are a democratic society.

We are going to talk about women's role in conflict resolution and I believe we will learn a lot from this visit. During the visit, we will meet with numerous important ministers, politicians and experts in our area of focus. The Wise Persons Committee² in Turkey has created some very interesting debate, but our discussions are intellectual and academic. This visit will expand our horizons. I look forward to spending the coming days with you here in Dublin and in Belfast.

Catriona Vine:³ Thank you very much Bejan. I would like to welcome you all to Ireland as well. We will also hear from Ian White of the Glencree Centre in a moment. Glencree's work is very interesting and complements our work at DPI. This particular visit complements the work DPI has been doing on women and their role in conflict resolution since our establishment in 2011. As you know, we have been conducting a number of roundtable meetings on this topic in Turkey; a number of you attended the last meeting we held in Van, Turkey and also our previous roundtable meeting on women's role in conflict resolution, which took place in Istanbul in 2012.

The aim of the comparative study experience that we have created at DPI is to not only learn from mistakes made in other, relevant

2 The Wise Persons Committee refers to a group of 63 members, established by Turkey's Prime Minister Erdoğan to inform the public of peace process developments. Members include academics, public, political and business figures from across Turkey's geographical spectrum.

3 Catriona Vine is the Deputy Director and Director of Programmes at the Democratic Progress Institute. She has practiced criminal, public and human rights law in the UK and internationally, and has extensive experience working with governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organisations.

contexts, but also to learn from the positive aspects of others' experiences. Another hope is that you as participants will share what you have learned with the wider society in Turkey, whether through your writing, or other activities. The purpose of the visit is not to discuss internal politics within Turkey; we are here to look at the experiences of Ireland itself. I would also like to take this opportunity to express the apologies of our Council of Experts member Yılmaz Ensaroğlu and our Director, both of whom wanted to be here with you. I believe Yılmaz is currently in Egypt and Kerim is also traveling. I hope that between us, you will have enough resources to understand the Institute's role and Bejan, Esra, Eleanor and I, as well as Ian White of the Glencree Centre, are all on hand to answer any questions you may have during the visit.



Bejan Matur, DPI Council of Experts and Author

As I am sure you are aware, we publish full reports on each of our activities, each can be found on the Institute's website. The report

of this visit will be translated into Turkish and also produced in English. During our activities, including this one, we operate from a moderated Chatham House rule: we name all speakers in our activities and reports but we do not attribute names to any specific questions asked. We do record discussions as we feel it is useful for the wider public in Turkey and elsewhere, to be able to share the experiences, even if people are unable to attend the visits, that way they can also benefit from them.

Ian White will go through the programme with you in more detail now. This morning we will hear from Liz O'Donnell, a former Minister from the Republic of Ireland, then this afternoon we will meet with Dermot Ahern in his constituency, Dundalk. He is also a former Minister from the Republic of Ireland, and he will share with us his own experiences. I will moderate most sessions and they will follow the format of a presentation and questions and answers. We hope this will give you as much opportunity as possible to hear from those with firsthand experience here in Ireland. I now hand the floor to Ian.

Ian White:⁴ Hello everyone, and a warm welcome to you all. I am a British man living in Ireland today, but I originate from the British controlled part of Ireland in the North. I came here to the South as I married a Catholic, and was asked to leave the North; I moved here to the Republic of Ireland in 1981.

4 Ian White is the International and Political Programme Director with the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. Ian has been involved in practical peace building in the Irish context since 1978 and since the late 1990s, has been involved in peace building internationally. He has been responsible for the delivery of short and long term peace building initiatives in Israel/Palestine, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Afghanistan, Nepal, Thailand and Colombia.



*Speaker Ian White from the Glencree Centre for
Peace and Reconciliation*

The work I have been doing at the Glencree Centre is complementary to the work of DPI. Now, I will tell you a little about the programme we have in store this week. The people we will meet over the coming days have been part of the peacebuilding that has taken place in Ireland. Glencree works at three different levels, as we believe it is futile to work at one level alone. We work at the local level, with the people who have least influence, but you also need to work with people at an *institutional* level, otherwise change will not be sustainable. The third level we work at is *intergovernmental* and *inter-political*. So many participants have been instrumental in peacebuilding here. Many people have an appetite for peace, so the people we invited to speak with you were all very keen to engage.

We will try to keep the programme as informal as possible. I believe that we learn more through genuine exchange and informal interaction. We will nevertheless have some formalities,

for example, in the Parliament buildings in Belfast, but I hope that we can also make that as informal and as genuine an experience as possible.

We have created the programme in collaboration with DPI, but remember it is *your* programme, if there is anything else you would like to include, we can try to accommodate your needs, if there is anything you are not satisfied with please let us know.

As Catriona said, we will meet with two former Ministers here in the Republic of Ireland today, both of whom have been critical to the peace process. For many years, we tried to solve the problem by only focusing on Northern Ireland, but we could not, as in order to fix it, we needed to involve *everyone*. The Irish government has not been involved, they were part of the problem but not the solution until the 1990s, and it was the same with the British government. The two speakers you will meet today were some of the architects and engineers behind the process itself and behind making it work.

Liz O'Donnell, our first speaker, had an interesting partner in Mo Mowlam,⁵ Former Secretary of State in the UK, with responsibility for Northern Ireland. Liz and Mo made a powerful combination, both moved the process forward in a positive way and they had a human motivation. This afternoon you will meet with Dermot Ahern, who was the Minister for Justice and also for Foreign Affairs in Ireland, in both roles he made a major contribution.

5 Mo Mowlam was a Member of Parliament for the British Labour Party from 1999 until 2001. During this time she became the first woman to hold the post of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and was serving in this role when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998.

Tonight we will be joined by two guests over dinner: they are women from the grassroots communities and are former prisoners. They will talk informally with you around the table and we will meet them formally in their headquarters tomorrow afternoon.

Tomorrow morning we will meet with a key civil society actor, who has been prominent in working with prisoners' groups and was a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Avila Kilmurray. Avila also played a vital role in the process. She is also a distinguished member of DPI's Council of Experts.

Tomorrow you will meet with Sinn Féin MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) in the Northern Ireland Parliament at Stormont. During the afternoon we will go to the Republican prisoners' museum and will meet with two or three women ex-prisoners there.

You will also meet with Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) representatives. We will talk a lot about 'power sharing' in the next few days, and will have many meetings, which we hope will be useful. We also hope to show you some of the Irish culture.

End of Session

Session 1: Roundtable Discussion: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution

With:

Liz O'Donnell,⁶ Former Minister of State

Venue: Clarion Hotel, Dublin, Ireland

Moderated by Catriona Vine



Guest speaker Liz O'Donnell

Liz O'Donnell:

Good morning ladies and welcome to Ireland. I am not sure how much you know about our peace process, but the main thing to know is that it took a long time and was not an overnight success. It started in the 1980s with very informal contacts made by trusted

⁶ Liz O'Donnell was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland in 1997, with responsibility for Overseas Development Assistance and Human Rights. She was among the representatives of the Irish Government at the multi-party talks at Stormont, which culminated in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

intermediaries such as Catholic priests, Protestant clergymen, and with members of paramilitary organisations.

At the time, the IRA (Irish Republican Army) was the main paramilitary organisation on the Nationalist side, fighting the British to rid Ireland of the British presence.

The main party at the time was the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP),⁷ which was led by John Hume,⁸ who argued that there were civil rights and justice inequalities in the present system, such as unequal distribution of money and power. The SDLP thought this could be resolved through civil rights movements and non-violent approaches. The IRA felt that the only way for progress was through a war with the British Army.

The Republic of Ireland was also dealing with terrorism (as well as the North) at the time. Murders, maiming and the blowing up of people were all taking place there. It made Ireland famous for all the wrong reasons. Eventually the Irish and British governments came together and saw they were in fact of the same mind. We in Ireland were not at war with the British government. Not everyone agreed with the violence and many saw politics as the way forward. The peace process was started by informal contacts. The British realised sometime in the 1980s that they could not solve things by military means, this thinking started with then Prime Minister

⁷ *The Social Democratic and Labour Party (known as Páirtí Sóisialta Daonlathach an Lucht Oibre in Irish) is a political party in Northern Ireland. The SDLP is ideologically Nationalist and was the most popular Irish Nationalist party during the Troubles strongly advocating nonviolence.*

⁸ *John Hume is a founding member of the SDLP.*

of the UK, John Major.⁹ There was a view that the human cost and the cost to the economy were so great that they could not continue to try to defeat it with a *security* process. A *political* process was needed too. Albert Reynolds¹⁰ and John Major started the political process and it was the working together of the British and Irish governments that led to success; they worked together through their best diplomats on both sides, all were very skilled and experienced negotiators. It took 10 to 15 years of investment and political commitment on both sides to work out where an acceptable settlement could be reached. On the one side they were trying to find a political settlement to replace the earlier Anglo Irish Agreement¹¹ and deal with constitutional issues and North and South issues and the UK. In parallel, there was a war going on, so there was a *conflict resolution process* going on as well as a *political* process. The conflict slowed down the political process as there was not sufficient trust there; each time there was violence, the process became threatened.

When I became involved in 1997, the groundwork had been set, but the process had been knocked off course by a breach of the ceasefire, as a result of the Canary Wharf bombing¹² (by the IRA in London). This caused the British government to say ‘enough is enough’, and the loss of life and effect on the financial district

9 John Major served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1990 until 1997.

10 Albert Reynolds is a former Irish politician who twice served as the Taoiseach (Head of Government) of Ireland, firstly in the Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrat coalition secondly in the Fianna Fáil-Labour Party coalition.

11 The Anglo Irish Agreement refers to an agreement signed by Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1985 in an effort to bring an end to the Troubles.

12 The Canary Wharf bombing, also known as the Docklands bombing, refers to the 1996 bombing by the IRA in the Docklands area, one of the financial districts of London, in which two people died and damages cost £100 million. It signalled the end of a 17 month ceasefire

created by the bomb were important. Also there was a new government in the UK, under Tony Blair,¹³ which was determined to engage wholeheartedly with the process. There was also a new government in Ireland, so this newness brought fresh determination and a new attitude. For the first time, the government was not reliant on votes by the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) in Northern Ireland in the House of Commons, so they had more 'wiggle room' to be more progressive regarding negotiations. Once the process was reinstated, the IRA also reinstated the ceasefire; we could not have continued the process without that. Senator George Mitchell (US Special Envoy)¹⁴ came back to Northern Ireland in September 1997 and we picked up a lot of the work that had previously been done; preparatory documents and so on had all been done already. The negotiations restarted and Sinn Féin joined. The whole point was that the process was representative of everyone.

This is where the Women's Coalition of Northern Ireland (NIWC)¹⁵ came in. They were elected specifically to represent women in Ireland. Women had been excluded from many of the preparatory discussions and politics. The coalition was formed by Monica McWilliams¹⁶ and others, and was made up of academics, teachers, and homemakers, many with a role in civil society. The

13 *Tony Blair served as British Prime Minister from 1997 until 2007.*

14 *Senator George Mitchell was a Democrat Senator for the State of Maine from 1980 until 1995. After leaving the Senate, he was appointed to the role of United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland by President Bill Clinton.*

15 *The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was a cross community political party in Northern Ireland which ran on a platform of anti-sectarianism.*

16 *Monica McWilliams was an MLA from 1998 until 2003 for the NIWC. She also served as the Chairperson of the Human Rights Sub-Committee until 2003. She has worked in academia with a focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes and is a Member of DPI's Council of Experts*

women involved had not been particularly involved politically but came together with a credo that women had to be part of peace and negotiations. A unique form of elections was held to involve civil society. This was an all-women party and it reached the required threshold of one per cent. As a result, they were able to secure two seats at the negotiating table. Bigger parties had three seats. The Women's Coalition had a genuine voice and part in changing the political role and culture of the negotiations.

The Coalition was nonsectarian, which was hugely important while trying to heal sectarian divides. No other party had that mindset, all others came from a particular 'tribe', a particular legacy. The Women's Coalition was formed of Unionists,¹⁷ Nationalists¹⁸ and so on. Members of the Women's Coalition were interested in solving a problem regardless of politics, like all of you at this table, I assume. They came from civil society, from the outside. In politics, people were harsh, but these women came in and brought a new language with them. They were great at solving procedural issues. I happened to be one of the ministers representing the Irish government at the negotiating table, along with a male representative.

On the British side, there was Marjorie 'Mo' Mowlam. In that sense, it was good for the women that we were there, as Mo and I had a very respectful relationship with the women and valued their contribution; I am not sure how it would have been if there had only been men present at the table. The Women's Coalition was a good conduit, as it brought different backgrounds and abilities to the table, from other professions for example, offering a different kind

¹⁷ *The term Unionist refers to those who wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK.*

¹⁸ *The term Nationalist refers to those who have traditionally favoured a union between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.*

of intelligence to the discussions. One of the main contributions of the Coalition in terms of the process was helping to sort out disagreements about the agenda. Even *this* was hard, even *having* items on the agenda, such as decommissioning caused fear, because if something is *on* an agenda, it means it is being *discussed*. Women are helpful with that.



Guest speakers Councillor Kamble, Alderman Rice and Ian White

During the negotiations, the Women's Coalition worked hard to keep things going and to overcome disputes with headstrong and volatile men who would walk out serially, and who behaved like children. The women were good at sorting out tempers behind the scenes, for example, men who would not even shake hands. I saw this clearly and so did the Chairman of the talks, who valued their competencies as professional women who had no wider electoral or political agenda. In the discussions, it has always been my view that

when women are excluded from major policy areas, those decisions are lacking. There is not a long tradition of women's involvement in politics: 22 out of 166 in Parliament in Ireland were women at the time, but even now it is very similar. We only have 25 women in Parliament today, so only three more in 20 years! A change now is that the government, after lots of reluctance, has introduced a quota system for the next elections, whereby a third of the candidates on the ticket *must* be women, and if parties do not follow this, they will lose state funding. This is the first use of quotas we have seen in Ireland. We had hoped it would happen naturally through progressive politics, but it has not. The most difficult thing is for women to get a nomination, once they have it, they usually do very well. The hard thing is to get on the ticket in the first place. The only way to be offered a chance is by making sure that 30 per cent or more are women. The next election will be a game changer. Women still have to win and be attractive to the electorate, but once they are in the door they tend to do well and be reelected.

Going back to the peace process, it was very *male dominated*. Despite being very important in the peace process, the Women's Coalition was treated with disrespect by many. What passed for 'politics' in Northern Ireland was the trading of sectarian insults and abuse. It was small wonder women avoided politics as it was seen as a distasteful way of earning a living. The Chairman of the talks always made time for the Coalition to speak, but their colleagues did not treat them with respect, especially Unionist men, who took to calling them 'silly women'. That is the male culture in Unionism, where women stay at home and make cakes. Hopefully that will change. The DUP have some women MLAs today, but by and large

the party is a women free zone.

The Women's Coalition was very hard working. They succeeded in getting two women elected after the peace process. They were extremely important in persuading people to vote for the referendum as well. Once it had been agreed that it had to be passed in both the Republic and in Northern Ireland (we were never worried in the Republic that it would not pass, but it was less sure in Northern Ireland) a good deal of work needed to be done there to persuade people that it was a good deal. It *is* a good deal; Northern Ireland still remains a part of the UK, that was a huge concession on behalf of the Nationalists, and that will be the case until people decide differently. What could be fairer? It should have been sold as a very positive step for Unionists but because of the changes, such as the release of prisoners, the raft of equality legislation, a new police force, and so on, it was not 'sold' in that way.

The release of prisoners was very controversial as many released prisoners included those responsible for bombings and other violent acts. It was difficult for people to accept this, as most people knew victims. Also, Unionists felt that the IRA still had weapons and did not trust that they would permanently give up violence. It took a long time for decommissioning to be achieved; it took over eight years after the process, for things to be implemented.

While we achieved a lot reaching the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, we knew it was only a start, a framework for a total transformation of Northern Ireland's society: cross community government, the release of prisoners, new policing, an overhaul in

terms of human rights and so on, a huge change.

The UUP¹⁹ and SDLP²⁰ both did badly in the elections after the Agreement, and ironically the ‘hard line’ political parties benefitted from it the most. Now the DUP are reaping the benefits of peace even though they were not part of the process! That is the strange irony of peace; Sinn Féin and the DUP who were at the time the most extreme parties, ended up being those who enjoy power and the spoils of office today.

While ‘selling’ the process to the public, the Women’s Coalition was a driving force, as its members never lost touch with their public activism and civil society roots and could reach parts of the electorate that political parties could not. They even produced an ‘easy to read’ version of the Agreement in plain English so that people could understand it fully. They were cross reaching. By 2006 though, the Women’s Coalition did not do well. It seemed they had served their purpose well but never had the political roots to sustain a political party in the competitive world afterwards. Many thought they had artificial roots as they came to be represented under exceptional circumstances (during the peace process) We were concerned that small parties such as the Women’s Coalition were very small, with weak roots, but their representation was a very important part of the process. There was the argument that they were artificially allowed to participate in the process because of the changing of the threshold at the time. In the competitive

19 The UUP or Ulster Unionist Party is one of the main Unionist parties in Northern Ireland. It governed Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1972.

20 The SDLP or Social Democratic and Labour Party is a social democratic party in Northern Ireland. It is also a nationalist party and advocates for Irish unification.

world of politics they were seen as a threat as they had cross party appeal, Sinn Féin would see them as a threat as they shared the human rights and equality agenda that they did, for example. The Women's Coalition talked about victims of violence constantly, they were the ones to do this. Today we are still looking at how to resolve questions of justice; these are the issues now coming to the fore. When political frameworks, policing reforms, prisoners' release and so on are all done, still, there is a legacy of the past. Issues, such as how victims feel; things that did not previously take much importance in the Agreement, all remain, mostly around allegiance and victimhood.

Richard Haass²¹ is another American who has now been sent to deal with these issues. If the Women's Coalition had been allowed to stay, they would have helped with the resolution of these issues, as they are complex ones. The Executive is unable to deal with issues such as when to fly a flag, what kind of flag to fly, and so on. Last year, the Union Jack flag²² came down in Belfast and there were riots. It is the small things that can unravel a process. We still have dissident threats: real security threats by people who do not sign up to the process. It is *imperfect* peace. In time, consultations will help but there is a lack of women in the negotiation and in the discussions on outstanding issues.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

21 Richard Haass was the United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland from 2001 until 2003. He returned to Northern Ireland in 2013 to chair the intern-party talks which aimed to resolve outstanding issues from the peace process. The Haass talks were conducted over several months and covered such issues as flags, parades and the legacy of the Troubles. Although a final agreement was not made during the Haass talks, several draft agreements were worked on.

22 The Union Jack is the name for the British flag.

Participant: You already talked about this, but I want to understand more. Firstly, the language of the negotiations was masculine. Considering the North-South Protestant-Catholic division, what are the cultural origins of the conflict and the process and how did women become more active?

Liz O'Donnell: There was a specific process decided on by the government, to allow new parties and small parties to be represented in the process. Otherwise it would have only been big groups that were represented. Small groups like women, small labour groups and so on, would not have had sufficient numbers in any *status quo* so it was a good idea to have this process, so that new people could come in to offer their perspectives. That broke up the culture and introduced new discussions. Women came from both sides of the community and did not bring 'tribal baggage' with them but rather their professional knowledge and an intelligence that was lacking from Irish politics, from their educational and business backgrounds, and so on.

Participant: Was it only during that period that proportionate representation took place?

Liz O'Donnell: Yes, but it was even more than that, it was *enhanced* political representation; it was artificially *skewed* to allow for the representation of small parties.

Participant: Is it still ongoing?

Liz O'Donnell: No.

Participant: I want to ask when the negotiations started. Is it possible for us to see the document of the Good Friday Agreement? Secondly, you said that some men in Ireland belong to a culture that says women should stay at home and not work. Is this particularly strong within Irish culture?



Guest Speaker Liz O'Donnell, Former Minister and Irish Government representative during Good Friday Agreement talks, with participants at Clarion Hotel, Dublin, during a roundtable discussion on the role of women in conflict resolution. Participants: Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Bejan Matur, Fatma Bostan Ünsal and Nurcan Baysal

Liz O'Donnell: In the Republic of Ireland, there is a normalisation of women working outside the home today. Women in the Republic

are powerful and well represented, almost equally in law, teaching, medicine and other fields. But things are retarded in the area of politics, as politics are about *power* and men are less willing to allow women in. That is why there is a quota being introduced now, as it is not rational that there are only 25 women in Parliament. They are being kept out by the system, but if the system allows them to get on the ticket, that will be a big change. Unionists are particularly conservative; this is shown by the fact that very few women were involved on that side. That is now changing as a less harsh type of politics exists since peace. But few women would have had the appetite to get involved in politics during the existence of such a harsh environment; fewer women came forward to be involved in politics. I trust more women will get involved today.

Catriona Vine: DPI would be happy to provide you with a copy of the Good Friday Agreement.

Liz O'Donnell: The Good Friday Agreement was a masterpiece of drafting, it had to satisfy very diverse communities, people with very different allegiances, and you will enjoy reading it as it was crafted for maximum acceptance across groups.

There are three strands to the Agreement:

- 1) East - West: Irish and British government relations
- 2) North - South: Northern and Southern Ireland
- 3) Internal: Northern Ireland

I was Chair of the second strand: dealing with future relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic. We were going to have executive bodies that operated across the border. The border is

perforated by bodies that operate on shared key areas, for example water, culture, tourism and so on. There is better cooperation now and an acceptance that Ireland has a role in Northern Ireland, and that people have a right to an Irish passport, to feel Irish identity and allegiance if they chose. Before, the Republic had an aggressive territorial claim over Northern Ireland that has been softened now, that is to say that there is a dual identity that can be recognised.

Participant: Could you give us some striking examples of women helping behind the scenes in the peace process?

Liz O'Donnell: They were talking to prisoners, talking to communities, to people jailed. Prisoners were very important in ending things, as there were thousands of them. Their agreement was important. The women were good at keeping close to prisoners and their relatives, which is a nuanced way of influencing the outcome of the negotiations. Women acted as trusted conduits of the two governments. They were not disloyal to those they spoke to but were rather trusted intermediaries who gave both governments the intelligence they would not have had otherwise, as the women had roots on the ground. Women were not politically active but were always involved in community development, for example in women's groups, with kids who had fallen into crime, advocacy groups for people with disabilities and so forth. Women had huge access to groups that the governments did not have access to. The Coalition is an example of how women can cross the bridge from community activism into hard politics. There is only so much you can do at community level. Unless you are at the table, you cannot have the same clout. But they still kept their links and fed their

almost diplomatic intelligence into the governments and to senior diplomats.

Participant: So them being nonpolitical, actually, paradoxically helped them solve the political problem?

Liz O'Donnell: Yes, whereas others had become detached from the ground, women had a network.

Participant: How significant was the contribution of the Women's Coalition?

Liz O'Donnell: Very significant. They always sent cross community representatives to the table, one from the Republican community and one from the Loyalist community. They were good at producing great papers (women are good at this), they were 'best in class' among everyone at the negotiating table! Because they were academics, lawyers and so on, they produced fantastic proposals on decommissioning of weapons and other topics. They had an academic approach to producing papers, which was far better than that of other parties. Also they were good at setting agendas, designing the format of meetings and working out how to deal with difficult issues no one would touch. Women are good at problem solving. Other parties were either too distracted or did not have the competencies to deal with those issues in an intelligent manner.

Catriona Vine: Monica McWilliams, a founding member of the Women's Coalition joined DPI as a speaker in a roundtable on the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution in Istanbul last year,

and told us that the women could almost carry messages between parties to the negotiations, where this could not be done by the other groups.

Liz O'Donnell: Yes, and in a non-threatening, non-combative way. They were not competing electorally and were nonsectarian, which made them unique and gave them an independent way of thinking.

Participant: Thank you for this historical outline. I see very clear connections with Turkey's problem. But they are not the same. We do not have a religious divide but we have a sectarian problem sometimes that happens locally, so there are similarities. It is not like the Women's Coalition, but we have had (first in 2009), a democratic initiative process in Turkey. In a speech I said 'let's start with Imralı'. Everyone reacted very strongly to that. But in 2011, with the Oslo process and negotiations with Öcalan on Imralı Island,²³ the Wise Persons Commission was also established. I worked in their South East division. Another friend of ours worked in the Eastern Anatolia section. She will join us in Belfast, her name is Sibel Eraslan. There were women in our groups, but not many, a fact that was criticised by women. 'Why are there so few women?' they asked. I agree. Women empathise much more than men, we have to empathise with victims in these situations. The Turkish government has seen that the language of violence does not solve anything. Our Kurdish brothers say that there will not be a division in the country. The Wise Men serve an important function; there should be more Wise Women though. The PKK

23 Abdullah Öcalan is a founding member and leader of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). Following his arrest in 1999, he has been held in prison on Imralı Island, Turkey. In 2012 discussions between Öcalan and the State became public.

(Kurdistan Worker's Party) - the State calls them 'terrorists' - the freeing of prisoners in Ireland is similar to our case, where people are coming down from the mountains and giving up the guerilla approach now. We have silenced the weapons in Turkey now, we are starting a process. Our language is horrible though, and we expect no good from politicians. Women are important in creating a language of peace. I think the sharing of your experiences will be useful for all of us. I can assure you we will talk more when we get home. We want to hear from you. I myself am a lawyer. It is hard to sustain peace but a woman's hand is crucial.

Liz O'Donnell: I cannot stress enough, the importance of the independent Chairman we had during the negotiations. He was sent by the US, and was a leader of the US senate for many years; his name is Senator George Mitchell; a judge and a lawyer with political expertise. He allowed everyone to speak without interruption. That meant for very long meetings! He was patient; I said at the time that he had *saintly* qualities. He let people speak for even one hour on a single topic, as he said that talking is better than killing. Men can speak for an hour on one point of order! Mitchell had immense patience and skill. He brought people together from very different perspectives, who had no way of seeing other people's views, they were all so fixed in their views and spoke only about their own perspectives. Eventually, they got tired of talking. In any process you *have* to have an independent Chairperson.

Participant: I would like to share an important experience of mine from South East Anatolia. This is the first time I have talked about it. It is an example of when people were buried under concrete

overnight by Hezbollah. I never imagined I would meet them but I did face it there. They were very nice to us but uncomfortable as they said, ‘the State is only negotiating with the PKK, why is it not addressing us too?’ They questioned their own position in the process. They said *they* do not even have agreement with the PKK. This is a new transformation with Hezbollah, it marks a change from the old violent ways. The man I was talking to was a lawyer. When he asked my view, I said, I think you are a lawyer as well. You are not a State, therefore a peace process cannot take place between you and the State. My friends warned me about this remark. I told them that the State and the PKK can negotiate, as the PKK has representatives in the Assembly, it is a political party. The same will happen to you, you will go through elections and if you can make it into the Assembly, you can make your demands. On hearing that, he became calmer. I said that this is a democracy: people who hate each other, sitting at a table and talking to each other. The State cannot talk to you yet as you do not have representation yet. The Wise Persons Committee serves a good function, as we can meet everyone.

Participant: Two things: firstly, about appreciating the role of grassroots in peace. I understand that the Women’s Coalition was very important in that sense. Apart from that, the ordinary people, how can we persuade the ‘man on the street’ to believe in peace? Secondly, you said that if women had remained in the process, some problems could be taken care of, for example, the subject of *trauma*. I think this will be an important part of the process, as facing the past will be painful. I felt this difference. We talked about this and we see it as something that cannot be left out, even

at this early stage. You say you are only getting so far with this, after 15 years. I would like to hear more about these issues of mourning and peace.

Participant: You talk about the profiles of the women in the coalition, I would like to hear about their personal stories and backgrounds, Are they related to the conflict?

They were women at home, academics and so on, but which aspect of their identity as *women* did they contribute most to the process?

Liz O'Donnell: They were formed deliberately as a non-sectarian organisation, and therefore included people with no views, Catholics, Protestants and others. Their whole credo was to be non-combative and non-sectarian. Their party center was equal, human rights. They tended not to come to deal with big constitutional issues, reform of the police and so on. They tried to find a neutral ground or middle way, where most could agree. There were issues of human rights and equality issues across the divide. They did not get drawn into the traditional stomping ground of the war. They moved in a space where accommodating could be voiced: education, community and so on. They were very vocal on the need to integrate education, other parties were not, and they were fixed. Most people today are educated separately, which means children today are still growing up in a divided society. It is a great setback.



*Ian White (Glencree) and participant Cansu Çamlıbel at
Roundtable discussion on the role of women in conflict resolution
with Liz O'Donnell*

The whole issue of trauma, the rights of victims and dealing with hurt; governments cannot legislate these issues. Change has to happen in a certain time as time allows people to grieve. Relevant to this are the Haass talks. Richard Haass was sent over to deal with these issues. It is a tall order, as this is such a huge issue and not straightforward. These issues divide families. Even with a political settlement, there is still the hurt associated with the murder of a loved one or a disability. These kinds of wounds are all still fresh. A bomb was set off after the Good Friday Agreement, so atrocities are still recent; people still remember them and are nursing wounds and caring for people affected by the Troubles. The more women are involved in the process the better; they are mothers of men killed in the Troubles, they have been picking up the pieces, and generally have a greater capacity to let go of the past.

Catriona Vine: What is the discussion at the table regarding memory at the moment? The case of Ireland has been very different to the case of South Africa in this sense, why wasn't anything agreed on during the Good Friday Agreement regarding memory?

Liz O'Donnell: It was one of the issues that was 'parked'. Some issues were so difficult to reach agreement on, for example, policing. We had to park it. Policing reform took a number of years as there had to be huge structural change. Quotas are needed for religious reform of the police. In fact, many Polish people entered the police force under the Catholic quota. Now Catholics are represented in the police force, police reform has gone well. It is the same with the decommissioning of weapons, some things are so volatile, and highly politicized. With so little trust, we had no choice but to park certain issues. It took several years of independent commission and verification for this to happen. The process of demilitarisation took years, to pull back the security apparatus, to unravel all of the military frameworks, and so on. It was a militarised society and all of this had to be changed, this is why it took so long to change. We have very little discussion on Denis Bradley²⁴ and Robyn Eames,²⁵ who are much respected members from both sides of community. They produced a report saying there should be remembrance, amnesty and monetary compensations in order to have closure.

²⁴ Denis Bradley is a former Vice President of the Police Board for the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

²⁵ The Most Revd Robyn Eames is the former Primate of All Ireland, signifying that he held the highest role among the Clergy in Ireland

The Truth and Reconciliation method was not acceptable to the parties as it was felt there was not an agreed *narrative* of the conflict; there is no agreed version of the injustice caused. The whole notion of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was never acceptable. It is not like the agreed narrative in South Africa, which was agreed by the Black community, which had been discriminated against. Here, Nationalists feel justice on their side; Unionists feel they have done nothing wrong. People still have their own perspectives and have agreed to differ, but their sense of history is fundamentally different.

Participants: What is the sense of history, especially in education? Which version is taught in schools?

Liz O'Donnell: If you are a student in a Protestant school, you will get a British version of history, in a Catholic school, you will get a Republican version. Most people's identity is very tied up in religion in Northern Ireland. In the Republic, there is much more secularism. Children go to whatever school is in the area, whereas people in Northern Ireland are still divided by religious identity.

Participant: What are the statistics of women involved in the IRA?

Liz O'Donnell: In the talks in Northern Ireland they did have women who were very involved at high levels within the movement. Sinn Féin is pro women and progressive on women's rights and equality issues, unlike the Unionist side, which is conservative.

Ian White: We spent time talking about the Women's Coalition. I have a question about leadership; can you say anything about leadership within the process? David Trimble,²⁶ for example, never 'bought' into the process himself and thus could not 'sell' it. The women's relationship was important but so was your relationship with Mo Mowlam. You were representing the Irish, and Mo was representing the British. Could you talk about the dynamics of that relationship, which is another key aspect that women brought to the process?

Liz O'Donnell: I had a very good relationship with Mo. Even though I was a junior member of the team, my senior was quite an elderly, retiring character, and was male. He allowed me to do much of the drafting and attend most of the meetings, which suited me. Mo was naturally a reforming, progressive woman, far more unorthodox than I am. I am progressive but not eccentric like she was. She shocked the Unionist politicians with bad language, feistiness. She was like a trade union, Labour woman. They had never met anyone like her, and she was a jolt, a *woman* representing the British government. They always tried to go behind her to speak to the Prime Minister, as he was a man! The Unionists were ok with me, as I was married to a Protestant! I think Mo Mowlam was the first British Secretary of State that actually got the perspective of the Nationalist community and saw the real injustice the British government had committed.

26 David Trimble is a politician who has served as both an MP and an MLA for the UUP. He was also the first person to hold the post of First Minister for Northern Ireland. Following his role in the Peace Process, he was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998 along with John Hume.

She was *essential* in forging trust; she was a completely unadorned person who you *had* to trust, she was fair, which was very important in the confidence building period of early negotiations. The IRA and Sinn Féin hated the British government and Mo was a different sort of representative of the British government, as was Tony Blair. The new Labour party had decided it was time to bury the hatchet and knew they would not win the war militarily or by throwing more security at it. There was also fatigue on the side of the IRA and they saw a window of opportunity to get a just settlement. There was an expression Senator George Mitchell used: there had to be *parity of pain and parity of gain* for both sides, for a settlement to work. You have to have a situation that is causing everyone pain but also presents an outcome with gain.

Mo went to visit the Loyalist prisoners, which was unprecedented. She was willing to do what no other Secretary of State had done before, she was completely unorthodox. She was receiving chemotherapy at the time, and her hair fell out. She wore a wig and if it got hot in the negotiations, she would take it off. She walked barefoot, she got tired. She was highly unorthodox and was one in a million, and was there at the right time. Unionists felt she was too unorthodox and too friendly with the Nationalist side, but she was friendly with everyone and just wanted to make peace. She died soon after the Agreement because of the cancer. She made a huge contribution to the process.

Ian White: Meeting with inmates in the prison was something that men could not have done, for example.

Liz O'Donnell: Mo always regretted that the process was not a *people's* process; she would have preferred it to be from the grassroots up. In reality it was two governments putting it together. But wherever she went she was loved in Northern Ireland. There has never been a more loved Secretary of State in Northern Ireland; people loved her, she was ordinary, she was not afraid of security. Previous people in her position had to be guarded by police but she was a kind of 'modern saint'. People, including the Prime Minister, were jealous of her in polls. She would get standing ovations in the Labour Party conferences where the leader of the party would not.

Participant: When you first sat down with all of those people, what was your personal feeling, and did your feelings change?

Liz O'Donnell: I had only been in office for five years when I came in. When I did, the process was not active because of the Canary Wharf bombings. I did not have any understanding or particular expertise about Northern Ireland. I had been dealing with health when I was appointed. The IRA reinstated a ceasefire on my birthday, the 20th July. I was dealing with Ireland's aid programme in Africa at the time. My colleague called me to say I would be dealing with Northern Ireland. I was terrified of the responsibility. I set about reading all the papers and 'swotting', like for an exam. I took the previous Agreements, for example, the Downing Street Declaration.²⁷

27 *The Downing Street Declaration was a joint declaration issued on 15 December 1993 by the Prime Minister of the UK, John Major, and the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, Albert Reynolds. The Declaration allowed for the possibility of Northern Ireland being transferred to the Republic of Ireland from the UK if and only if a majority of its population supported the move.*

learned the 'language of the process'. People would walk out if you used the wrong word. If you said something not temperate with conditionality then people would walk out. Because I am a lawyer I am used to being careful with language. Senator George Michell was there, we got to know the parties.

Personally, I was anti violence. I did not have any bias. I would have been horrified by IRA violence and had no sympathy for it at all, whereas many *did* in Ireland. I was an unusual person to end up there as I was not hung up about a united Ireland, constitutional issues were secondary to peace for me, peace came first. I did not have a fixed position even though I represented the Irish government; I did not have a problem talking to paramilitaries and could also understand the horror experienced because of the violence. It was a hugely rewarding experience. By the end, I felt like an expert. There was a spate of violence around January 1998, so it was ongoing. We were negotiating with terrorists, and it was not a comfortable position, both IRA and Loyalist terrorists. It was not a very principled process and at many times we had to suspend our critical faculties and keep going for the sake of the overall process. It is quite corrupting as it is a fundamental principal that sovereign governments do not negotiate with terrorists, but we had inside intelligence that they were up for a settlement, so we did. It was high risk, as they could have gone back to war and we would have looked like idiots, the two sovereign governments. But we had trusted intermediaries such as Father Alec Reid²⁸ who died last week. It was not a smooth process by any means.

28 *Father Alec Reid was an Irish priest who took on the role of a facilitator during the ongoing Peace Process.*

Participant: Did you change your approach over time?

Liz O'Donnell: Everyone got to know each other over time through negotiations. You can be resistant to a person if you know they have been responsible for bombings and so on, you will not be warm. But after a time, you cannot be rude to people as you will be in small rooms such as this one. You would meet people in the corridor and get to know them over cups of coffee. Even if people came from the IRA, or were Unionists, you would get to know them and build a relationship with them. The whole point is that you have to see the perspective of the other side and give them the benefit of the doubt and trust that there is good faith. That sustains you to keep going with negotiations with terrorists. Gradually it is a benign dynamic that builds up, because you are thrown together all the time. Over nine months, I was in Northern Ireland three or four days a week. The world outside was watching too and there was so much good will across the world that this pressure to transcend obstacles and find agreement was there.

We did it. People put their doubts to one side, even if they were not convinced. Loyalist paramilitaries were not as organised as the IRA but they were ruthless in killing Catholics and colluded with British security forces; it was a dirty war on all sides. David Ervine,²⁹ leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, a Loyalist paramilitary group, had a capacity for peace making; he died in the last decade but made a huge contribution to the process. He had spent a long time

²⁹ *David Ervine was an Irish politician and leader of the Progressive Unionist Party. In 1974 he was arrested and imprisoned for the possession of a bomb. During his time in prison, he moved away from a violent ideology and following his release, he became more involved in politics.*

in prison and educated himself there to become a peace maker. He was more progressive than the main line Ulster Unionist representatives at the table, who were so difficult to deal with. He was creative, open to compromise, willing to forgive and forget. He and Gerry Adams³⁰ in the same vein, were military leaders who had a capacity for leadership. The process gained a lot from people who had been wedded to violence but also had great political skills such as Adams, who has taken Sinn Féin to government and they are growing in strength. They have brought all the stamina which sustained a war, into politics, they are ferocious politicians. If politics works for them, they will not go back to violence. If they do well in politics, it is food for sustaining the peace.

End of Session

³⁰ Gerry Adams is the President of the Sinn Féin party and has served as both an MP and MLA.

Thursday 28th November 2013

**Session 2: Roundtable Discussion:
The Role of the Irish Government in the Peace Process**

With:

Dermot Ahern,³¹ Former Irish Member of Parliament

Venue: Ballymascanlon Hotel, Dundalk

Moderated by Catriona Vine



Guest Speaker Dermot Ahern

³¹ Dermot Ahern is a member of the DPI Council of Experts as well as 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.

Dermot Ahern: Welcome to all of you, and I hope you had a good journey here. Many thanks to DPI for inviting me to meet with you here today. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Ireland. I was an MP for this constituency for 24 years. I was born and bred in this area, which has been at the forefront of the Troubles on the island of Ireland during the 35 most recent years. This area suffered badly *economically*. While it did not suffer as badly as across the border in terms of *violence*, it suffered in other ways. As a teenager I remember when families of Catholic and Nationalist areas came across the border, mainly into this town, and had to be housed in halls and housing from the government, which left a legacy in this constituency.

Maggie Thatcher³² once referred to this town as ‘*El Paso*’, which was unfair. It was also called ‘bandit country’ as it was used during the Troubles by the IRA as a bolt-hole. A lot of people from the North who were sought after by the Police and the British Army came across the border to this area. We had extradition laws at the time. We had a constitutional claim under the 1937 Constitution that we could not pass a law in the Republic that would recognise Northern Ireland, so extradition was extremely difficult if anyone was arrested down here. It made it hard. I was a lawyer with a State solicitors at the time and remember during high profile cases, for example those of Martin Neehan³³ and other high profile IRA members, how difficult extradition was. I became a politician in

32 Margaret ‘Maggie’ Thatcher was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 until 1990. She was the first and only woman to have held this post. She was a member of the Conservative Party and led the party for many years.

33 Martin Neehan was a former Sinn Féin politician and Provisional IRA member. He spent 18 years in prison during the Troubles for his membership of the IRA.

1979 and was elected to Parliament in 1987. From 1997 to 2011, I was a Cabinet Minister in different ministries, for example, those of social security, communications, marine and national resources. I was then Foreign Minister for four years and Justice Minister for a number of years. I was present in the main negotiations in Ireland, apart from the St Andrews Agreement,³⁴ and was involved in the run up to the Good Friday Agreement, but was not involved in the final talks. Because I was the Cabinet Minister in the border area, I was always regarded as the person most expert in the difficulties of the Republic.

I gave a speech to a group of mediators in London last week from the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). They wanted me to speak about the process. I explained I was in the first talks with the IRA in 1988. I was delegated by the Prime Minister and his adviser, Martin Mansergh.³⁵ My party was the biggest in the Republic, with the same ideas as Sinn Féin, the members of which were proponents of a united Ireland. The main difference, until recently, was always that we saw peaceful, constitutional means, as the only solution, *not* violence.

I always made the point that those people bombing and maiming people in the North, in the name of a united Ireland were the *antithesis* of a united Ireland, in fact they were pushing people

³⁴ *The St Andrews Agreement refers to an agreement between the British and Irish governments about the devolution of power in Northern Ireland and the political parties involved. The talks were held in St Andrews, Scotland in 2006.*

³⁵ *Martin Mansergh is a former Irish politician and member of the Fianna Fáil party, and was adviser to Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern.*

further away from that. John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, the other constitutional party with the aspiration of a United Ireland, often said, instead of uniting the *territory* of Ireland, it is more important to unite the *people* on the island.



Participants at the Ballymascanlon Hotel, Dundalk, Ireland following roundtable meeting with Dermot Abern: DPI Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, DPI Council of Experts Member Bejan Matur, Kezban Hatemi, Cansu Çamlıbel, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Nurcan Baysal and İpek Kotan

The 1988 talks were brokered by Father Alec Reid who was buried yesterday. That was at the behest of a number of clergymen. The years of 1987 and 1988 were very dark times, with terrible atrocities taking place, quite literally, every day. The talks that took place here in Dundalk were secret for ten days. A lot of talks took place secretly

and the Good Friday Agreement was a *culmination* of those talks. Much was done by intermediaries and most was done in secret, it could not have happened otherwise. I spoke with both Loyalists and Nationalist paramilitaries during my time. The Good Friday Agreement and St Andrews Agreement involved people being ‘hot housed’ in a location. In the St Andrews Agreement, we were holed up in a beautiful golf hotel in St Andrews, Scotland looking over the sea. It was a process of shuttle diplomacy, each delegation of seven or eight. We were in separate parts of the hotel because some parties would not talk to others. It all had to be done in a shuttle way. That is, the DUP, now the main Unionist party, would not talk to the Irish government or Sinn Féin. Then the UUP, who were also representing Unionists, would only talk to Irish government if the British government was present. Sinn Féin would only talk to the British government if the Irish government was present and so on. The Women’s Coalition was also present. The Coalition did work for a while, but by and large it has to be said that the involvement of women at a political level was not as strong as it should have been. The DUP had no female representatives until recently and would have been regarded as an anti-women party. The UUP were not far behind and then came my own and others.

I met with a group of participants from Turkey recently (Kurdish and Turkish) during a previous DPI visit, and was struck by the number of women in the delegation. This is not the case, even today, in Irish politics despite the desire for greater inclusion.

The St Andrews Agreement was where everyone was ‘hot housed’ for four days. It was always felt that a number of issues were not

dealt with adequately in the Good Friday Agreement, though many *were* dealt with. There is often much media attention around these things; the media comprised 30 journalists and they all wanted to know what had happened during the talks. Everyone gave them a different version of events!

I was a member of the cabinet and we were constantly briefed on how the negotiations were unfolding. Quite a number of issues were left out and glossed over. These included the division of the 'spoils': who would be Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and so on. Issues such as these were more in focus than the issue of policing, for example, which was left for a long time as it was such a toxic issue. There had been a police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which had been regarded by most independent observers as being a sectarian force, comprised largely of Unionist community members. This was the perception *and* the reality. As a result, the force lost the faith of the people. This issue was not adequately addressed in the St Andrews Agreement, which left a number of issues to be looked at in future. At the time, some of these issues were not considered important or significant. I was proven wrong this year.

One such issue was that of flags and emblems. There was an attempt during the St Andrews Agreement to come to an agreement on issues such as the flying of flags and other emblems. The issue of the flag came to a head earlier this year when the Belfast City Council decided to restrict the flying of the Union Flag over Belfast City Hall. This decision caused thousands of people to come out to the streets to protest. Just because Belfast City Council decided

they were not going to fly the flag over Belfast City Hall, the whole issue blew up and social media was used to bring thousands out and to bring Belfast to a halt.³⁶ It illustrated to me that during peace talks, there is a mad rush to deal with major issues, but you cannot take your eye off other issues. Another issue was that of the Irish language, as the Nationalist community wanted recognition of the Irish language. Then the Unionists said they wanted there to be recognition of the Scots Irish³⁷ and their language Ulster-Scots, which survives as a legacy of their Scottish heritage. Another issue that was not dealt with during the St Andrews Agreement was that of how to handle the past. In the last week, the Attorney General John Larkin³⁸ came out and said that we should draw a line under the past and look to future, and that the possibility of prosecuting people for crimes committed over 20 years ago should not exist. His proposal to end all prosecutions and public inquiries related to the Troubles precipitated a reaction from all sides.

So the following issues were not addressed in the St Andrews Agreement:

1. Flags and emblems
2. Language
3. Dealing with the past

36 *The Belfast City Council made a decision to restrict the flying of the Union Flag from City Hall in Belfast, which led to major protests in November 2013. The protests were some of the largest seen in the area in recent years, with around 10,000 Loyalists taking part.*

37 *The Scots-Irish or Ulster Scots people are an ethnic group in Ulster, Ireland who trace their roots to settlers from Scotland and northern England.*

38 *In November 2013, Northern Ireland's Attorney General John Larkin proposed an end to all prosecutions for Troubles-related killings, sparking outrage from victims and raising concerns around the implications of full amnesty. Further information may be found here: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/20/northern-ireland-troubles-prosecutions>*

The victims of crimes committed during the Troubles have come out and protested the suggestion of abolishing prosecutions. They insist that they want the people responsible to be brought to justice. Even when you think the last piece of the puzzle has been resolved, for example the policing issue, another issue arises. Now the issue we are faced with is how best to deal with the past.

When making peace agreements it is vital that 'loose ends' are tied up, otherwise they will come back to haunt you.

You are going to Belfast next. This is now a relatively safe place. But unfortunately last week there was a bomb, which may be viewed as an attempt to renew violence. The people responsible are referred to as dissident Republicans. I hate when the term 'Republican' is used incorrectly. I am a Republican, but I am a Constitutional Republican. I believe in this Republic and also in a united Ireland, creating 32 counties of people with equal rights. But I do not agree with the division caused by groups such as the IRA.

In the 18th century, Wolfe Tone³⁹ called for Catholics, Protestants and Dissenters to be treated as equals. The campaign of violence has only sullied the name of Republicanism, and equally that of Unionism and so on. There are still a number of people on the Republican side, people who will never accept the Northern Irish state, and are still hell bent (around 200 people only) on changing

39 *Theobald Wolfe Tone was an 18th century revolutionary who is regarded by many as the father of Irish Republicanism. He was one of the founding members of the Society of United Irishmen, which started as a political organisation before becoming increasingly revolutionary and starting a revolution in Ireland in 1798. Wolfe Tone was eventually captured and imprisoned for being a traitor to the British Crown.*

things. The IRA had support across the community and could, to a certain extent, justify their campaign of violence, as any objective observer could see Northern Ireland was a sectarian state. Catholics did not have the same rights as Protestants to vote, for example. Today Northern Ireland is not regarded as a sectarian state. But if you scratch the surface, as it is a small society with only 1.5 million people, you find that things blow up in your face. The British government made it clear to the Irish government - and I was there with Gordon Brown⁴⁰ when I was Foreign Minister, and with Bertie Ahern, then the Irish Prime Minister. Brown told us that now that there was peace, the focus of his government would move away from Ireland. He said his focus would be more on Al-Qaida, following the London bombings.⁴¹ That shift in focus has happened. The British government has not put much effort into Northern Ireland, nor has the Irish government, particularly has things have been relatively quiet. But there will be a governmental reaction following last week's bomb. The idea that Ireland is 'solved' is not correct. We have come a long way from where we were in the 1960s, 1970s or 1980s but it is still a difficult place and a lot of work needs to be done in trying to unite people.

Catriona Vine opens up the floor for questions

Participant: In our last visit to Ireland with DPI, we learned that it is not possible to solve a conflict '100 per cent'. If there is a root

40 Gordon Brown served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2007 to 2010. He is a member of the British Labour Party.

41 The London bombings refer to a terrorist attack on London on the 7th of July 2005. The public transport networks were targeted in several coordinated suicide attacks. The bombers were four Islamist terrorists, three of which were British born. Around 700 people were injured and 52 civilians died (as well as the four bombers).

cause of the conflict in our society, it will inevitably come to the fore. In Belfast, it seems the working class' penchant for alcohol, football and alcohol related violence created a political front of sorts for them to establish themselves. You talked about a recent bombing. What do you think the 'loose ends' are in the conflict toady?

Dermot Ahern: The remaining issues are flags and emblems, identity and dealing with the past - the last of which is the biggest. In South Africa they had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which seems to have worked. In Northern Ireland I do not think such a commission would work; we are too small a society, everyone knows everyone. There are other lose ends too. Agreements such as the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement are only as good as the paper they are written on. It is the *working out* of those Agreements and the practical implementation of the principles they outline that counts. That can only happen through civil society organisations, community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the media; all of these entities need to work constantly and to be given the space and resources by the government to bring people together. The US government has been very good at funding things. In 1988 they set up the US Fund for Ireland to bring communities together in Northern Ireland, and to bring people from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland together, in order to facilitate exchanges. That has proven successful, but more is needed. The European Union (EU) also helped a lot, by putting money into the six counties of Northern Ireland and the border counties, all of which have benefited from these special EU funds, which were used not only

to bring communities together but also to rebalance economic inequalities and so on. This is not a process that will solve itself. In my view it will take many generations before we can say that we now have a *normal* democratic system in a *normal* atmosphere in our country. A downside of what has happened in Northern Ireland is that the two parties, the UUP (the mainstream Unionist party representing the majority of Unionists in Northern Ireland) and the SDLP (a Nationalist party in Northern Ireland) they did all of the groundwork, but are now virtually nonexistent. Sinn Féin and the DUP, who are now in government, are in fact the most extreme parties. I said when this happened that we wanted Sinn Féin to take the gun out of Irish politics, and they have, and so have the DUP. I used the phrase ‘Balkanisation’ to describe what took place in Northern Ireland, and there was a fear that Sinn Féin and the DUP would only take care of their own communities. The Parliament in Northern Ireland can be seen as a glorified County Council. They are not really authors, because they cannot be.

Participant: I have a question on the role of third parties in a process. Currently in Turkey, the government is not open to any formal third party involvement. Is it feasible to think of a successful peace process without a mediator from outside? Do you need that?



Dermot Ahern speaking to participants

Dermot Ahern: Yes you do. The international community plays a vital role. If you look at Ireland, you had the Republic of Ireland, which has a small population. It is only thanks to the Americans that we are where we are today. The Unionists originally refused to accept any money from the international fund that was established. Ten years later, they themselves are applying for funds! The media is also *vital*ly important. An independent media is important to put pressure on people. We had a ban on representations of paramilitaries on national radio and television due to Section 31,⁴² under which people were put in jail for saying things on national airwaves. However, since then we have got rid of Section 31.

⁴² Section 31 refers to Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act (1960) through which the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs could order certain censorship of radio and television. In 1976, this legislation was tightened by the then Minister for Posts and Telegraphs to stop certain groups or spokespeople from being interviewed – among those groups banned were Sinn Féin

Participant: I have a question regarding the EU and what has happened under its auspices. How does the EU affect the Republic of Ireland's approach to Northern Ireland? After the Good Friday Agreement, was the national feeling of 'Irishness' on the rise?

Dermot Ahern: No, people rejoiced over the fact we were not killing each other or dominating the headlines every day. The EU effect has only been positive. It has helped financially and also made us equal partners with the British. It was said whatever the British do, we do. For example, we *would* be part of Schengen, which the UK is not. We *would not* have checkpoints on our border, as the UK does.

I was worried when we joined the European Union; there were massive queues of cars going to the North to do business. We had had the Irish pound previously, so petrol and most things were cheaper in the North. Things have equalised more because of the EU. People predicted that the area would suffer badly if the North stayed with the British pound and the South with the Euro. People thought border towns would suffer, however, they initially boomed. The economists seem to have got it wrong. Now the situation has balanced out.

Participant: You said women could not affect the peace process much. Could you talk about this comment more? Why were women not as effective as they could have been?

Dermot Ahern: It is more an historical point and partly because of

the makeup of the political system. By and large political parties on the Unionist side had very few women. This continues today. The Ulster Unionists are by and large the same. Sinn Féin and the SDLP (both Nationalist parties) have more women. In the Republic we have a very small proportion of women in Parliament. Even less than in previous years; we are going backwards instead of forwards! We are instituting quotas, which I disagree with. Women generally did not get involved in negotiations. It was only because of vocal women such as Monica McWilliams and Mairead Corrigan,⁴³ both Nobel Peace Prize winners. But they faded out. I say it with due respect, but some representatives of the DUP could be very harsh. I grew up listening to the ‘rabble rouser’⁴⁴ Ian Paisley.⁴⁵ I remember him as a teenager calling us all ‘Pope ridden people’. He rabble roused a lot of Unionist people against having any connection with us in the Republic, and yet I sat beside him, and we are now the best of friends. He is now in his 80s. Don’t ask me what changed. He was a great speaker. The Sunningdale Agreement⁴⁶ was brought down almost singlehandedly by Ian Paisley due to his use of the phrase ‘Ulster says No!’ and yet today he is sitting next to Gerry Adams!

43 *Mairead Corrigan, now Mairead Maguire, is a peace activist from Northern Ireland who was a recipient the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976. She was one of the co-founders of Women for Peace, a peace movement which gathered support from both Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.*

44 *A ‘rabble rouser’ is defined by Merriam Webster as ‘a person who makes a group of people angry, excited, or violent (such as by giving speeches) especially in order to achieve a political or social goal’.*

45 *Reverend Ian Paisley is a member of the DUP and held the title of First Minister of Northern Ireland from 2007 until 2008. In 2010, he was made a life peer by Gordon Brown.*

46 *The Sunningdale Agreement refers to an attempted power sharing agreement in 1973 which failed due to violence, Unionist opposition and a Loyalist general strike in 1974*

Participant: It seems there is a paradox. You said there are still ‘loose ends’, but you also said it is not feasible for people to be prosecuted for crimes committed 20 years ago. How can we face our past without spending thousands of pounds? What is the alternative? We are going through the same experience in Turkey. Unidentified murders are ongoing.

Dermot Ahern: Ireland is full of paradoxes. Anyone in prison at the time of the Good Friday Agreement was let out. That caused huge differences among people of both the North and South. If these people committed atrocities, they should bear the consequences. But that was the agreement. Some offenders are now democratic politicians. My party would have been at the forefront of those trying to convince these people that the political route was the way to go. There was a famous Sinn Féin member who said ‘the ballot box in the one hand and the Armalite⁴⁷ in the other’. That was a clear indication that they would still involve themselves in violence and manipulate the process using less than democratic means. We, democratic politicians, were saying: you cannot have it both ways, it is *all* or *nothing*. That is why we insisted on an independently verified decommissioning of weapons process. Ken Maginnis,⁴⁸ a former Unionist politician, initially said that all we want is one symbolic bullet to be decommissioned. He quickly changed his tune and said it has to be *everything*. Republican paramilitaries had a political outlet, Sinn Féin, whereas the Loyalist paramilitaries did

⁴⁷ Armalite refers to the AR-18 assault rifle, which was manufactured by Armalite. This weapon was smuggled in large quantities by the IRA and became a symbol of Republican armed struggle. The reference to the ballot box indicates that violence was still seen as a viable way to achieve their goals.

⁴⁸ Ken Maginnis is a former Ulster Unionist politician who served as an MP from 1983 until 2001. He has since been made a Life Peer.

not have a political outlet, which was always a problem. That is why the Irish government opened up channels with them secretly. Mary McAleese⁴⁹ is one of the main exceptions to the lack of female involvement. She became President of Ireland 17 years ago and was President for 14 years. I was one of her main proponents, and a canvasser in her initial election. The theme of her presidency, or at least of her first campaign, was ‘building a bridge’. That was her slogan. That is what has happened to a large extent. Bridges have been built between the two communities. Physically, the British blew up a number of bridges.

Catriona Vine: On the subject of secret talks that were taking place in the 1980s, could you describe in a bit more detail the atmosphere at the time and how you became involved?

Dermot Ahern: I was first elected in 1987. At the time, John Hume, leader of the SDLP, began talks with Gerry Adams in Northern Ireland. News of these talks got out and he was roundly abused in the media and said to be ‘talking with the devil’. Some of the clergy, including Father Alec Reid, facilitated these talks, which were taking place at a terrible time. They asked Charlie Haughey⁵⁰ if he would meet with Gerry Adams. Haughey wisely declined. He had a checkered past. In the 1960s there was a famous arms trial, in which Haughey and another member of cabinet were prosecuted for allegedly financing guns to go into the North to arm Catholics. He was careful. He was exonerated. It was at a heightened time.

49 Mary McAleese was elected as President of Ireland from 1997 until 2011.

50 Charles ‘Charlie’ Haughey was a member of the Fianna Fáil party and served as Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland for three terms. He also held various other ministerial positions during his time in politics.

My mother would not let me into town as a teenager because of protests. A former Prime Minister in the Republic was said to be thinking of sending the Irish army into the North to protect the Catholics. Eventually the British sent their army into Northern Ireland, which at first seemed like a good idea but then did not. They rounded up Catholics and imprisoned them without trial. They made a complete mess of the situation. Haughey was in a minority government at the time. A year into that government, he said he was asked by Cardinal **Ó Fiaich**⁵¹ and Father Alec Reid to set up talks. They took place here in Dundalk at the Redemptress Order.⁵² Father Reid came in to the Church and said a prayer. The talks were interesting in that we discussed the historical route that Nationalists had taken. We had a civil war here in the 1920s and secured ourselves independence from the British government. While we never accepted the Northern Ireland state (until the Good Friday Agreement) from a legal or constitutional point of view, we had to from a *de facto* point of view, as it was there. Sinn Féin never accepted it and tried to bomb people into a United Ireland. We were trying to say to Sinn Féin that their actions were counterproductive. We were saying that the only way was by *peaceful means*. People like Gerry Adams would say, 'you can say that, as you have your own government, no British establishment, army, discrimination and so on'. Those talks stopped fairly quickly. They were private for ten years and then the Hume and Adams talks started, which were more public.

51 *Tomás Séamus Ó Fiaich was a Roman Catholic who held various positions in the Catholic Church in Ireland including Archbishop.*

52 *The Redemptress Order refers to Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, which is a Roman Catholic missionary order, members of which are known as Redemptorists.*

It is likely that I would have had to resign if it had become public that I was involved in talks. We were due to meet Sinn Féin on a Monday morning and on Friday night there was a bomb. I felt I could not do it. We *did* meet though. These are things you have to do. We have a phrase in my party: 'you have to take risks for peace'. When there is a major atrocity, instead of the normal human reaction of drawing in on yourselves, you have to redouble your efforts.

Father Alec Reid got involved after an incident involving two British soldiers who were undercover in a car. There is an iconic photo of Father Alec Reid leaning over one of the soldiers. The previous week, there had been a funeral. Three IRA people were in Gibraltar; they were caught there and were executed by British undercover agents. The IRA members had been planning to blow up British military installations in Gibraltar. Their bodies came back to Ireland to be buried. Mairead Farrell⁵³ was involved. They were executed by British secret servants after being caught in the act of creating bombs. The bodies were brought to Dublin. The entire town turned out and they were regarded as heroes. I did not attend. They were being buried in Belfast. During the burial, a man armed himself and shot three people dead at the funeral. During the funeral for these people, undercover British soldiers drove their car accidentally into the funeral cortege and they were mobbed and taken out of the car and executed.⁵⁴ Father Alec Reid was captured

53 Mairead Farrell was an IRA volunteer who was killed in Gibraltar in 1988 by British soldiers.

54 During the funeral service for the IRA members who were killed in Gibraltar, Michael Stone attacked the mourners with pistols and grenades; this was known as the Milltown Cemetery attack. Several days later, a funeral service was held for some of the victims of Michael Stone's attack. Two non-uniformed police officers drove their car into the funeral procession.

in a photograph looking up in shock and there was a British soldier with only his underpants on. Alec Reid felt things could not get any worse at the time.

End of Session

Bystanders, who apparently thought it was possibly an attack similar to that of the Loyalist Michael Stone, dragged the policemen from their car and they were beaten and executed by the IRA.

Thursday 28th November 2013

Private Tour of Belfast City Centre and Stormont Buildings

With:

Ian White, Director of International Programmes, Glencree Centre
for Peace and Reconciliation.



*Participants enjoyed a political tour of Belfast city, including
the City Hall (pictured above), the Stormont buildings
and the interface areas of Belfast.⁵⁵*

⁵⁵ The term 'interface areas' refers to the areas in which segregated Nationalist and Unionist residential areas meet in Belfast. They are divided by what are referred to as 'peace walls'.

Thursday 28th November 2013

Dinner with representatives of Ballybeen Women's Centre at Deane's Restaurant, Belfast

With:

Tanya Hughes,⁵⁶ Director of Ballybeen Women's Centre

Amanda Marshall,⁵⁷ Education and Training Coordinator for Ballybeen Women's Centre⁵⁸



Cansu Çamlıbel, Director of Ballybeen Women's Centre, Tanya Hughes, Nurcan Baysal, Amanda Marshall, Education and Training Coordinator at Ballybeen Women's Centre, and Esra Elmas.

⁵⁶ Tanya Hughes is the Director of Ballybeen Women's Centre, Dundonald.

⁵⁷ Amanda Marshall is the education and training coordinator for Ballybeen Women's Centre, Dundonald.

⁵⁸ Over the course of dinner, Tanya Hughes and Amanda Marshall discussed the services provided by the Ballybeen Women's Centre, which include young people's projects, women's health projects and childcare services. The Centre also facilitated a small scale peacebuilding process during the Troubles by allowing women to meet others from different political backgrounds and communities. For more information, please see: <http://www.ballybeenwomenscentre.org/>

Friday 29th November 2013

Session 1: Roundtable Discussion at the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

With:

Avila Kilmurray,⁵⁹ a founding member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

Moderated by Catriona Vine



Participant Fatma Bostan Ünsal; Founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Director of The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and a Member of DPI's Council of Experts Avila Kilmurray; and participant Yıldız Ramazanoğlu

⁵⁹ Avila Kilmurray was a founding 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. Avila is also a member of the Democratic Progress Institute's Council of Experts, and is Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

Catriona Vine: Welcome everybody, and thank you Avila for inviting us here to the Community Foundation today. Avila Kilmurray played a significant role in the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). She was a founding member of the Coalition and therefore prominent in the Good Friday Agreement negotiations. She is joining us today to explain her role in the Women's Coalition and her current role in the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

Avila Kilmurray: I was born in Dublin, but have been working in Northern Ireland since 1975. As some of you know, in relation to the Troubles, the violence is often described in religious terms, but it runs much deeper than religion and has more to do with national identity. As you know, generally the Catholics consider themselves Irish and aspire for a United Ireland; the Protestants consider themselves British and want to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Northern Ireland was established in 1921 and is currently under British jurisdiction. The two communities are divided in many ways. One of the challenges has been to work with women on both sides of the divide and to help them, regardless of ethnic and religious issues. In 1978, the major political groups accused us (the Women's Coalition) of breaking up families, as women were meeting others from different political backgrounds. However, the women in these groups did not stop meeting, and over the years of the conflict, women became the backbone of keeping communities together.

The issue of political prisoners was highly prevalent at this time. In a population of 1.6 million people, 40,000 were political prisoners. The concentration of the impact was much worse in poorer areas. This led to the creation of five paramilitary groups, two Loyalist and three Republican paramilitary groups.

Women had to keep their families and communities together through these troubled times. In 1980, there was an increase in community-based women's groups to generate mutual support and information. However, there remained a divide between local groups because of the divided community.

In 1981, the Women's Information Group⁶⁰ movement was established. It organised women from local groups to meet each other every last Friday of the month. In the beginning, the group met in the city centre, due to the neutrality of the region, and then they began to rotate from Catholic to Protestant areas, mostly because they were curious about each other's areas. They also realised that there were a lot of similarities between their lives. However, it should be noted that they never discussed political issues, but rather social issues such as the schooling of children, the price of clothes and so on. There were other developments; several women's centres were set up to provide advice and support for women. This was done to raise awareness of issues such as domestic violence and rape, which were not usually discussed. They also provided educational courses and health courses. An important point should

60 *Women's Information Northern Ireland was established by local women across the interface area of West Belfast. Its objective was to retain and build contact between women on both sides of the sectarian divide as well as to provide those women with informed choices in respect of health, family, housing, and finance. <http://www.womensinformationnorthernireland.com/>*

be raised regarding women's health; when women were under pressure, perhaps their children were involved in paramilitary groups or they were suffering from severe depression, they were prescribed tranquilisers like valium, which would damage these women emotionally and physically, but the problem was never seriously addressed.

The women's movement developed into community based initiatives. In 1975, a formal establishment was set up, but there were still tensions, particularly in terms of national identity, and people were divided on what they thought. People realised that even if they supported the Republican movement, and a United Ireland *was* created, they would still not be walking into a 'utopia'. They recognised that it was necessary to bring women's issues to the table as none of the political parties addressed women's issues and rather men controlled these issues. It was recognised that there needed to be a discussion on what was to be done and how to do it. That is what kick-started the political movement.

It is important to note that Sinn Féin was a key party that was open about having female members, and it ensured that there were always women present in pictures. However, men still controlled the decision making of this party.



*Participant Fatma Bostan Ünsal, with Founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Director of The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and a Member of DPI's Council of Experts
Avila Kilmurray*

During the ceasefire in 1994, it was decided that there would be an election to start the peace process. The British Government introduced this electoral system to ensure smaller political parties got elected. The reason behind this introduction was for the Loyalist paramilitaries to be represented in the elections. The NIWC recognised this 'loophole' and saw this introduction as a platform. They explained this to the women in local centres and got a mixed reaction, some said 'no', others said 'yes'. How the system worked was, the ten parties to receive the highest number of votes were each allowed to select two people to represent them at the negotiation table. We were the ninth party to get a majority of votes.

The NIWC tried to reframe their strategy, basing it on three key principles; human rights, equality and inclusion. We modelled ourselves to be equally represented at the negotiation table, one Unionist and one Republican. The NIWC put an advert in the paper to see who would be prepared to sign up to represent the Coalition. This was done to annoy the larger political parties as the common assumption was that women were not equally represented because none were interested in signing up! 100 women said yes in six weeks, which disproved the theory. We formed negotiation teams to discuss curbing violence and women's issues and tried to involve a broad range of people. As Gandhi said:

“First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they attack you. Then you win”.

We worked hard in the 1996 elections for the Agreement that followed in 1998.⁶¹ One of the things we found was that because we were looking with new eyes and hearing with new ears, we could pick up the shift between the views of the parties quite unlike men, who had a preconceived view of the parties and assumed they knew what each party stood for.

One of the difficult things was that we got *no* support from the universities in Northern Ireland, though we got *international* support and recognition, which came in the form of donations and women from overseas who were willing to come forward and lend their expertise to the NIWC. We even tried to get media attention through organising picnics, which was different from

61 Referring to the Good Friday Agreement or Belfast Agreement.

other major political parties. The NIWC got re-elected a second time, but soon after they were disbanded. It is important to note that they were called a 'Coalition' because members were allowed dual membership. What we found out after the Good Friday Agreement and the release of the political prisoners was that men were more likely to take all the available jobs and women had less funding and resources. Even organisations that were initially set up by women were taken over by men, but women were definitely more represented in the political parties from there on out.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: The women from the different backgrounds had not worked with each other before, how did you deal with disagreements between them?

Avila Kilmurray: We had worked with each other previously, actually. We had three key principles which we had agreed were central if any difficult questions arose. For example, with the case of the early release of prisoners, we would view this issue through a human rights lens because of the abuses that these prisoners faced in jail. We also made sure that there was cross community interaction. For example, when we received a plea from a pregnant woman in jail who was being strip searched and was from a Sinn Féin background, we asked a member from a Unionist background to visit her in the prison. These issues were larger than just political issues.

Participant: Did you have any male members in the group? What was the background of these members?

Avila Kilmurray: The NIWC was registered as a political party with a small number of men who were members, but they were never represented at the negotiation table. There were also male supporters. During the conflict, there were some developing programmes where the people who were fighting were from poorer areas, and therefore the struggle was more class based. On the other hand, in rural areas the question revolved around territory and on which area of the city you lived. Local people in the area were involved in self-help and there were nearly 5,000 voluntary members trying to make a difference. The government stepped in in Belfast to provide aid.

The Community Foundation of Northern Ireland was established in 1979, to raise funds for self-help. We brought groups together to look at practical issues such as employment generation, cooperative development and to eliminate sectarian divisions.



DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine and Founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, Director of The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and a Member of DPI's Council of Experts Avila Kilmurray

Even during times of peace-building, political parties tried hard to ensure that violence should not go too far, and in the case it did, they protested it. These included human bombs, which were cars that would blow up with people in them, which were prevalent during the Troubles.

Republican supporters also started discussions, revolving around economic arguments, to create conditions for the paramilitaries to start moving.

An initiative that worked in the Protestant community was to build a 'peace wall' that was under joint management, with ex political prisoners from both the Unionist and Republican sides. This created dialogue and some degree of openness on both sides.

Participant: What is the spirit of women in politics? And how can we protect ourselves without following in the footsteps of men in these political parties? What has been your experience, being a woman in the political sector?

Avila Kilmurray: It is unfortunate to say that the women who were elected were still treated badly by our male peers. Even women from different political parties have stated that they are treated poorly within their own parties. Women have set up the Women's Political Association,⁶² which has allowed them to meet with other women. We also make connections between women in the community to meet others from different backgrounds. This allows them to be answerable not just to their political parties but even to each other, which builds up alliances. You can see that certain women are good with certain issues and allow for the mapping of certain tasks.

Participant: Did men understand your role in politics?

Avila Kilmurray: Men at a higher level understood, such as Tony Blair and George Mitchell. Unfortunately, men at the *local level* did not understand the role of women or what we were fighting for. The elections set up in 1996 were a unique system to try and bring in smaller parties. In order to bring in small parties, they allowed parties to aggregate all the votes in Northern Ireland. But that system was only for *one* election. Looking back, one of the mistakes we made was that we spent a lot of time lobbying for the Civic Forum when instead, we should have lobbied for a different

62 *The Women's Political Association (WPA) was founded in 1971 to encourage women into political life and party politics, regardless of which party.*

electoral system, such as in Scandinavia, where there is a quota to have a certain number of women at the top of the list. This type of system ensures that women are selected and represented on a political platform.

Participant: Do you think women will have a role in changing the political party scene in Northern Ireland?

Avila Kilmurray: I was the campaign manager for the NIWC and not elected. Unfortunately, the Coalition did not contest local elections, where it is easier for women to get elected at a municipal level. In terms of the system working, there was mandatory power sharing where all the parties had the right to get someone to represent them. But unfortunately, it made it difficult for them to reach a consensus on complex issues. It is also important to note that there is not one *main* reason or exact cause of the conflict. The British believed it was a strong ‘crime wave’, a viewpoint which the Unionists are in favour of. The Republicans saw the Troubles as a war. This highlights a large division on how to define the past. Additionally, all political prisoners have a criminal record and are unable to find employment, and are restricted in several ways. Also there is the issue of victims, with respect to *who* exactly they are. Are they the bystanders? Wives of policemen shot? Who are the bereaved? One of the main mistakes we made was that we did not start to work with the victims early on, which created a lot of anger.

End of Session

Friday 29th November 2013

Session 2: Roundtable Discussion: The Role of the Media in Conflict Resolution

With:

Kevin Cooper,⁶³ Press photographer

Moderated by Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, Democratic Progress Institute



Former National Union of Journalists (NUJ) activist and press photographer, Kevin Cooper discussing the role of media in conflict resolution

⁶³ Kevin Cooper is a press photographer with over 25 years' experience. He is an NUJ member and a freelance photographer working with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), professional bodies, PR Consultants and Trade Unions. During the Northern Ireland conflict, Kevin covered Unionist, Loyalist and Nationalist, Republican events as well as local political party conferences. His pictures have been published in British/Irish National and Provincial newspapers and magazines, in-house publications, annual reports and websites.

Eleanor Johnson: Many thanks indeed for joining us today Kevin Cooper, to discuss the role of the media in conflict resolution.

Kevin Cooper: I will start with an introduction of myself, as I always find it useful to discuss my background. First of all, I am a photographer. A family that was strongly Unionist raised me in East Belfast. From that background, it was easy to be an activist and a journalist of the National Union of Journalists. I freelanced throughout the area at both a local and national level

How did I get into journalism?

I was first *loaned* to an Irish language newspaper as a photographer. At the time it was a monthly paper, now it is a daily paper. The Irish government provided us with money to cover all central issues to do with the conflict. I covered the hard news of the day and was with this newspaper for four years. I travelled throughout Northern Ireland. Pictures are amazing because you can look back at pictures and see things that you did not notice previously. I think it would be the most helpful to respond to your questions so that my focus is as relevant as possible.

Eleanor Johnson opens the floor for questions.

Participant: One of the biggest topics in Turkey currently is that of the Kurdish conflict. The media has played a vital role in the coverage of this topic and has used very politically loaded language. For example, any members of the PKK are referred to as ‘terrorists’, which is prejudiced and full of hate. When the government began peace talks with the PKK, the Turkish people were concerned

because the media had referred to them with this language. How is this issue dealt with in the Northern Irish experience?

Kevin Cooper: The Good Friday Agreement began the peace process and one of the key reports used in relation to the media was the Opsahl Report.⁶⁴ Journalists set this up to bring international people to Belfast and provide a neutral solution. The report used certain language to frame the conflict and ultimately changed the way people were labelled, for example, ‘aggressor’ was changed to ‘ex-combatant’. Sinn Féin used this language, and people thought it was ‘Republican language’ but it was actually the Opsahl Report being put into practice. It is important to note that it was John Major,⁶⁵ the British Prime Minister who started the peace process. The report facilitated people to converse with each other.

Participant: What are the main characteristics of the ‘language in the media’ in Northern Ireland?

64 The Opsahl report on Northern Ireland, published in June 1993, was based on the views of many ordinary citizens of Northern Ireland rather than on those of politicians.

65 *John Major is a British Conservative politician who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1990 to 1997.*



Guest speaker Kevin Cooper with Esra Elmas

Kevin Cooper: No one should be stopped or interfered with when gathering information. This is ensured through presenting the National Union of Journalists press card. In the old days, it was a piece of cardboard with your picture stapled on it. It allows journalists to gather news in the way they want to, regardless of the ownership of the newsrooms and what the policies in the newsroom are. In Northern Ireland, we have diversity of media. There are indigenous, Scottish, Irish and London media in the field. My view was that we need to defend the diversity of these media. If people did not like one type of reporting, I would tell them to read more (a wider variety of sources), and to find the newspaper that suits them. My job is to represent journalists and allow them to do their job.

Both Britain and Ireland were interested in censorship when they were dissatisfied with the media. The Irish Government was the first to introduce censorship through Section 31, which affected the way journalists could gather their information. They were interested in the Republican views, which included Sinn Féin and the paramilitaries. The British then boosted *their* censorship in a similar way to that of the Irish Government. This included threats, and the arrest of journalists and their placement in the Criminal Justice System.

The National Union of Journalists is very collective, but it is less clear when you move away from Northern Ireland. In Dublin, they are concerned with ‘on the ground issues’, which are central to the Republican side. They view the Northern Irish situation as problematic and just do not want to deal with it. They would rather not discuss it than solve the issue.

However, if you are a journalist under threat, journalists act collectively.

I became a member of the National Union of Journalists because of my background, which allowed me to say things others could not. I was regularly on the phone with the press office and because they knew who I was, I could be referred to the higher members if there were concerns with any journalists. In ten per cent of the cases, we did not always come up with a happy conclusion. In these cases, we made a formal complaint to ensure our concerns were documented, and then it would be on public record that an issue had surfaced.

Newsrooms were attacked, there were bombs, and journalists were beaten up during the Troubles. The IRA bombed the *Belfast Telegraph* and the Loyalists bombed the *Sunday World* post agreement. Martin Hayman from the Sunday World was shot and killed. Journalists were still under threat and though attacks were reduced, there were still death threats and other physical threats to life.

In Gibraltar, three people were killed by British intelligence, though they did not possess any arms. They made a film about it but Thatcher made a statement and tried to stop Thames television from airing the programme.⁶⁶ They went ahead and aired the programme and they are now no longer a broadcaster. I am not saying it is necessarily a cause and effect situation but it seemed strange. BBC Northern Ireland also stated that they would air it and they came under pressure not to, but they still managed to air the film.

I attended the funeral to take photos of the event. Three coffins were brought into the plot of land. Unfortunately my view was obstructed and there were no policemen surrounding the plot. Three hand grenades were thrown at the funeral and signals were shot from a handgun. This event led to the death of three mourners at the funeral. The man who did it was Michael Stone and he retreated to the West, where young Republicans caught up with him. This later led to the Republicans' concerns over security. I called my colleagues in London regarding reporting and they told

⁶⁶ *The film made by BBC Northern Ireland on the death of the Gibraltar three was called 'Death on the Rock' The film may be viewed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7MBqTw2vl0>*

me that I had to deal with the situation myself. This meant calling Sinn Féin and telling them I had to be able to do my work. I phoned a Sinn Féin National Union of Journalists member and warned him that I was going to call the press office and that they had to accept the press card. I then phoned the Republican office and told them to accept the press card, when they raised issues over security; I maintained that the card was only given to legitimate journalists. Journalists are central to political issues as they acknowledge what happens and gather information from it. Peace journalism is when pieces are ethical, brave and published.

End of Session

Friday 29th November 2013

Session 3:

Roundtable Discussion with Sinn Féin MLAs Chrissie McCauley and Louise Crane at Stormont Buildings

With:

Chrissie McCauley, ⁶⁷ Sinn Féin MLA

Louise Crane, ⁶⁸ Sinn Féin MLA

Moderated by Catriona Vine



*Nurcan Baysal, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, DPI's Deputy Director
Catriona Vine, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Bejan Matur, Kezban Hatemi,
Sibel Eraslan in front of Stormont Buildings*

⁶⁷ Chrissie McCauley has held senior positions within key Sinn Féin departments such as Publicity, Education and Women's departments and has been on the Ard Chomhairle (National Executive) of Sinn Féin twice.

⁶⁸ Louise Crane is a British citizen currently involved in policy making in Sinn Féin.

Catriona Vine: We are joined today by two representatives of Sinn Féin, Chrissie McCauley and Louise Crane. Many thanks indeed for joining us today here in Stormont.

Chrissie McCauley: Thank you for the invitation, and welcome to Stormont. The IRA emerged as people were coming out to defend their areas from attack. In 1969, when I was 13, we had to leave our home because our houses were going to be burned down. My father is a Protestant and my mother is a Catholic, so I grew up in a household where I knew both sides. My father was a socialist and worked in a shipyard in Belfast. It was one of the main employers at the time and employed mostly Protestants. When my father became Catholic, he was asked to leave the shipyard and that is the way sectarianism was manifested here. So I was involved in the Republican movement and I defended the rights of people on the streets against the British Army and the Loyalist forces. I was arrested in 1975 and I was imprisoned in the South of Ireland. I was the only female political prisoner in that prison for four years. While in the prison, I campaigned on behalf of the other prisoners for education and basic rights, and for that I was regularly punished. Then, on my release in 1979, I returned to the Republican movement in Belfast and became involved in Sinn Féin. At the time, Maggie Thatcher was removing the political status of our prisoners. Sinn Féin launched a campaign in response, which led to the hunger strikes of 1980-1981. Some of the women in prison at the time participated in the hunger strikes. There was a lot of turmoil in the jails, which ultimately led to the brutality and torture of our prisoners, but Maggie Thatcher would not relent and

we lost ten of our comrades during the hunger strike.⁶⁹ It was a very traumatic time for the community because there was a feeling that the community itself was under attack. The British army targeted children and women during the hunger strike period because it was mostly women and children who were out on the streets protesting for the political status of our prisoners. So there were lots of people who were killed, especially young children who were fired at by the British Army and by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which was the police force at the time. So from protests, we learned that we had to stand up for our rights, though a lot of people could die or be injured. But we were determined to realise our democratic rights on the streets and within our institutions, so we kept campaigning and the realisation really came to the political stalemate between the IRA and the British Army, where it was a question of 'who is going to blink first'? We started to have talks with the SDLP and the British Army, but these were all covert talks. But it opened up a line of communication and of trying to look at a way forward in terms of trying to create a resolution for the conflict. This is because three and half thousand people had already been injured during our conflict. I do realise that in terms of other conflicts, it does not seem like much. But for us, we had to look at the way forward and see how to create a proper settlement and resolution and a peace

69 *The Hunger Strikes began in 1980 following prisoners' demands to be treated as political prisoners rather than ordinary criminals. This first strike lasted 53 days until it was called off. The second Hunger Strike began in 1981 and was more strategic. Each week, one new prisoner would join the strike. The hope was that as more and more prisoners died from starvation, the government would have no choice but to accept their demands. The leader of the second Hunger Strike was Bobby Sands who began fasting on March 1st 1981. He died after 66 days of striking. The Hunger Strike was formally ended after 217 day on October 3rd 1981, following the deaths of several other strikers. Although prisoners were granted the right to wear their own clothes, there was no formal acknowledgment by the government that they were political prisoners.*

agreement that would achieve our rights in a democratic way. So a lot of talks went on with John Hume and others in the British Army, where the British and Irish governments represented themselves and we also went, myself and Gerry Adams and Rita O'Hare⁷⁰ who is our current secretary general. We went to South Africa in 1995 to look at the way in which the African National Congress (ANC) had developed there, and how they were developing their peace talks. So we were out there looking at justice, the rights of women, constitutional issues and how you could manage a peace process. It was a learning process for us and highly important in terms of our peace process. We realised that we should not put ourselves in a corner and you do not demand things that have not been delivered, you also need to make sure that you have 'wriggle room' so that you are able to compromise without the diversion of your rights. It is really difficult to explain it all. The IRA had ceasefires from its hostilities with the British Army and this was followed by discussions around the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 was, for us Republicans, a roadmap.

It was not the definitive agreement that we wanted to reach; our definitive agreement is to ensure that we have a united country through democratic means. But the Unionists here want to remain part of the union, despite all the evidence showing that we can be a stronger economic and political entity as a united country. That is really what we believe in Sinn Féin. We believe that we need to achieve that and persuade Unionists that they would be in a better, stronger position as an autonomous nation, and that we would be

⁷⁰ Rita O'Hare is the current General Secretary for Sinn Féin as well as the party representative to the United States.

able to make our own roots, as opposed to hanging onto Britain's economic purse strings, which are actually persecuting some of us here. You can ask me anything about the organisations and the things we went through.

Louise Crane: My name is Louise Crane, and as you can probably guess from my accent, I am English. My time here is different from Chrissie's, though it is almost as long. I grew up in a very poor area in England. I was involved in trade unions and other socialist movements and it was an obvious thing to want to understand and come to terms with the nature of the conflict here, which eventually led to my path here. I have been involved in Sinn Féin for almost 30 years mostly as a writer around controversial killings, and more recently, in terms of helping with policy and legislation. I look forward to discussing further with you here today.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions

Participant: Your situation is similar to ours in Turkey, and we would like to hear some examples with regard to the negotiation process; comparisons need to be made. What needs to be done for sustainable peace? And also, what exactly was learned in South Africa?

Chrissie McCauley: If we can start by going backwards, we learned a lot from the South African experience when we looked at the issue of policing. This is because policing here has always very controversial. Most of the police were from Protestant backgrounds

and they always had special powers, a fact which led to our repression. This was similar to the power that South Africans had at the time. One of the issues we had to look at was compensation and representation. Additionally, policing and the judicial process had to be more closely examined so we could find out what would be a realistic representation and time scale for Catholics to enter into the police. If we set the bar too high, we realised, probably from the South African experience, that it would be too difficult. For example, we could not demand that 80 per cent of the police force was Catholic and so we had to aim for 50-50, which actually turned out to be closer to 30 per cent in terms of the actual shift, but there were several shifts even around gender, disability and ethnic minority too. So we had to look at our *whole* community as well as Catholic-Protestant representation.

While in South Africa they had to look at the balance between Whites and Blacks, which did have similarities with our struggle, they were not dealing with a *constitutional* issue like we were dealing with because of the partition issue. So if we could hope for a very high demand in terms of the representation, we had to strive for 50-50 representation (half Catholics and half Protestants) within the police force. Before that, you have to understand that less than five per cent of Catholics were within the Police and we had to sell that very hard to our constituency, because they looked at the police like they were the enemy, and feared them because they were brutal to our community. So we had to sell that out on the streets and go into every area across Ireland, particularly here in the six counties, which were occupied by the British Army. We had to sell that very hard to our people. Quite a large number of

issues had to be ‘sold’ particularly around justice. It took the British government a while to ‘bite the bullet’ and devolve the power of justice to Northern Ireland, because Unionists were against it as well, but we knew that if we pushed the Unionists or the British too hard it would not have been acceptable. So here, *timing* within the peace process is very important as well; if we had demanded that very early on before the Good Friday Agreement, it would not have happened. So we learned that timing and context are very important and that you need to bring your political enemies along with you even though sometimes you have to compromise very slightly on some issues. For instance, we have in the Good Friday Agreement a bill of rights, and again from the South African experience, we learned that you are not going to get *all* of your rights stacked up and implemented tomorrow.

It is of course an ongoing negotiation process to bring your enemy across the line slightly. It is not that you dilute your demands but you have to remember the political context, and keep working with them to build relationships. What we learned from South Africa was that the need to *build relationships* is very important. We have our White-Black equivalent here as well; we have the Unionists that we need to work with because they discriminated so much against us. So we actually had to tell them that they were being discriminatory and that that is the cause of conflict. For years they did not believe that they discriminated against us. They had moved here for 50 years and to some degree still have that mindset here.

Participant: What kind of change was created in society with you being female IRA members, and from having women in prison?

Chrissie McCauley: You need to understand that I did not wake up one morning and decide that I was going to go into the IRA. It was the political situation that forced me and several other women to go into armed struggle and at that time in 1968, the IRA was not in existence, and it was the women on the street whose families were being brutalised by the Army. They demanded that the IRA started to defend the area again. So a lot of women did not go into the IRA in 1968, they started to join in the early 1970s. In my community, it was a hard decision, because you knew that you could end up in prison or you could end up dead. It was a secret army and it was difficult to integrate yourself because it is contrary to nature. I am a very caring person; a very emotional person who wanted justice, and that is what motivates women. It is justice that motivates women, for themselves and their families. Being discriminated against because of your family and being put out of employment, you think to yourself, ‘what am I going to do about this?’ I could not sit back and not do anything about it. When you are in jail, it just makes you stronger because you face so much injustice and brutality. It is actually worse for people on the outside because within jail you can continue to struggle. I did not have too much political ideology before jail, but when I was there, I really learned my history. For me, when I was on the street it was an emotional response to fight for people’s rights.

Louise Crane: A lot of women did not join the IRA but they were the backbone for the mass political struggles that took place, and they were targeted because they were bringing the struggle out on the streets by breaking curfews, organising raids, and supporting the

political status in the prison. So in terms of making an impact on the community, women came together and did things collectively.

Participant: The population of Northern Ireland is 1.6 million, we were told. We do not know the percentage breakdown between Catholics and Protestants.

Louise Crane: 48 per cent Protestant, 45 per cent Catholics were in the last census and the remaining are classified as ‘others’.

Participant: I wanted to ask about the language issue and the role of Gaelic in schools.

Chrissie McCauley: Of course, *Irish* is our national language. I was not brought up with access to the Irish language and script but my children went to an Irish language school, which the people had to fund, because the British Government would not fund the development of the Irish language here. It is more active in the South, but now even in the North, it is starting to take over. We still have a battle ahead in terms of recognition of the rights of language and to ensure that it becomes a national language. They are trying to equate it with Ulster-Scots, which is a dialect, not an actual language. That is one of the battles we have here in the Assembly today.

Participant: What is the definition of ‘citizenship’ in the constitution?

Chrissie McCauley: Under the Good Friday Agreement, we have ‘joint citizenship’, where we can claim British citizenship, Irish citizenship or both. That was one of the compromises made in the Good Friday Agreement

End of Session

Friday 29th November 2013

Roundtable Discussion with Breige Brownlee and Anne Marie McWilliams at Coiste,⁷¹ Belfast

With:

Breige Brownlee,⁷² Former Republican Prisoner and Member of Tar Anall **Anne Marie McWilliams,⁷³** Former Republican Prisoner and Member of Tar Anall

Moderated by Catriona Vine



Participants with guest speakers at Coiste, Belfast: Cansu Çamlıbel, Sibel Eraslan, Kezban Hatemi, Breige Brownlee, Bejan Matur, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Anne Marie McWilliams, DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, İpek Kotan, Nurcan Baysal, Esra Elmas, Jade Correa and DPI Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson.

71 Coiste is a tour company in Belfast, which organizes unique walking tours delivered by former political prisoners. During these tours, ex-prisoners are able to share their personal experiences of the Troubles.

72 Breige Brownlee is a Sinn Féin councillor and former Republican prisoner. She served an eight year sentence in 1977 for possession of an incendiary device. Following her release, she became involved in the campaign against female POW's. She is a member of Tar Anall.

73 Anne Marie McWilliams is a former Republican prisoner. She was arrested in 1973 and served her sentence at Armagh prison, an all-female prison. She is a member of Tar Anall.

Shauna Walsh: Good afternoon to you all. While I will leave you to discuss with Breige and Anne Marie of Tar Anall, I wanted to welcome you all to Coiste and hope that you have a very fruitful visit here. The two women here today are former IRA prisoners, and they are happy to share their stories with you. We find that better conversation arises out of questions so please do not hesitate to ask anything.

Catriona Vine: Thank you for having us here, we are currently focusing on the role of women in conflict resolution and we would like to hear about your experiences and how the Troubles in Northern Ireland have affected you. Many thanks.

Breige Brownlee: At Tar Anall,⁷⁴ we represent a constituency of 20,000 to 30,000 former prisoners on both sides of the border, in Europe and in the United States. I come from West Belfast and I was introduced to politics when British soldiers marched into my home and arrested my brother and father. I was a teenager when I began my role in the Republican community. I went to prison as well. I was different from the other prisoners. I came off the streets of Belfast and I was angry at what was happening in Belfast. Within the prison, women were strip searched and beaten. Then the hunger strike began in the prisons, which was effective. I was also involved in the strip-search campaign, I was a Sinn Féin activist and in the Coiste groups. Women have had a fighter role in the conflict and have been actively involved in the conflict *resolution movement*.

⁷⁴ *Tar Anall is a support group for Republican ex-prisoners located in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It offers the more than 3,000 ex-prisoners in the community a wide variety of classes and activities aimed at building confidence and personal development. <http://taranall.ie/cms/>*

Anne Marie McWilliams: I was born in Ballymurphy and five of us were interned from my family. We were fighting for political status. But we did not understand the situation when my mother was first in jail. We dedicated ourselves to the movement. My family was harassed 24 hours a day by the police. I was involved as an activist. I helped Republican prisoners and was involved in election work. It is important for women to take a stand, even while being held as prisoners, as we saw with the hunger strike. My brother was shot dead at age 16 during the Troubles. My husband was also involved in a feud and was killed in 1987. However, we are still strong believers in justice, peace and reconciliation.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: You were more politically motivated when you were in prison. Did you meet any violent prisoners while you were interned?

Breige Brownlee: I became involved in the struggle in 1969. The British did try to *criminalise* the Irish struggle, but we insisted that we were *political* prisoners and needed to be treated as such. I was an IRA member but after the ceasefire in 1996 came to an end; the Irish struggle became a more political one.

Participant: When were you both released from prison?

Breige Brownlee: 1984 or 1985

Anne Marie McWilliams: 1985

Participant: From what we understand, your criminal record has not been erased. Does this affect your employability?

Breige Brownlee: There are several members in Coiste who still hold criminal records. Under the Good Friday Agreement, the record makes you unemployable. However, you can be employed in politics. Therefore, you can run the country but you cannot drive a taxi! You are also not able to pursue your previous career or use any of the skills that you had previously ascertained. There are several highly qualified people here but they cannot get the job they are after. Also, the stigma of being interned holds you back. Some 25,000 people would never have been imprisoned if Northern Ireland was not occupied.

Catriona Vine: What does the women's organisation do? What are their activities?

Breige Brownlee: There are very strong women in the Republican movement, but there are still fewer women than men. There are 34 women to 300 men. More people were talking to the men in the movement. The women's organisation was set up to eliminate the gender imbalance and to give women recognition in the movement. There were several Republican women who were locked up in cells during the conflict, so the organisation has created a database to develop a network for the women. This allows all the women to get together and retell stories and allows for 'loose talk'. Many of the

Republican women do not usually talk about their experiences. But in this network, women are encouraged to communicate and learn about what others did.

International Women's Day is also celebrated to observe the strength of women. We have created a piece of artwork that represents how women were involved in so many day to day struggles, and this has also helped to draw out women who are stuck in their traditional roles.

Participant: It sounds like there is a lot of discriminatory violence in the prison cells. Can you explain the psychological and physical violence you were subjected to?

Breige Brownlee: Women were stripped naked in Castlereagh by policemen and were then assaulted. They also regularly strip-searched women in court and always within a circle of British police officers. There were horrific scenes. Cathy Mur, a former Republican prisoner from Derry, experienced such an invasion, which we fought against. She was held down and her eyes were covered with a cloth so she could not see who was doing what to her. Doctors have equated strip searches to rape, which is important to note.

There were also several instances of women being shot. For example, my sister in law was shot three times in the back. In fact, several of my family members have been shot. If you are a Republican, you are not very well respected.

Anne Marie McWilliams: If you were Catholic, you were less likely to get a job. Our neighbours, who were Unionists, tried to say that it was sectarian, but it was not. Most of the IRA members were just people who were trying to defend their own homes. I had a normal childhood. We were just a family of 13 who resisted the occupation.



At Coiste, Republican ex-prisoner tour operator and support group

Participant: Can you tell us about the Tar Anall building?

Breige Brownlee: Tar Anall was housed in a small building and had a drop in centre for ex-prisoners if they needed guidance or advice. It has since developed from a small room to an entire building. It is a training facility for women and men so that they may become more

employable. These employment opportunities include roles such as doormen and construction workers. It still acts as a drop-in centre for female prisoners to come together. In some cases, children were taken away from women when they were put in prison. This has strained the relationship between these women and their children because the children did not understand that their mothers were imprisoned. Tar Anall is a support system for these women who have had to deal with the change in that relationship. We cannot necessarily do anything to change the relationship but we can help these women with the process of healing.

Participant: (Pointing at pictures on the wall) I can see that the names of your friends are written there. Children suffer in conflict almost like prisoners. Does Tar Anall do anything for the family of the prisoners?

Breige Brownlee: Yes, we are doing an archival project. We have two cameras and we take photographs of these women and listen to their stories. Women do not usually take credit for it, but they keep the family together. Whether they served as volunteers or as Sinn Féin members, it is important for these women to tell their stories.

Participant: What mechanism do you use to help women deal with the past? You have said there are 25,000 ex-prisoners. How many centres are there? Are you supported by the State? Do you and all the prisoners forgive all that has happened?

Breige Brownlee: Yes, we have formed a women's group. This was because Republican women are wary of being labelled. The group

was set up to bring women on board. The need for it was evident when we opened our doors and got the word out. In the 1930s, 10,000 women were involved in the struggle, but they disappeared from the public eye soon afterwards. This time, we are not going to let these women disappear into the ether. Many centres work independently. The Prison to Peace⁷⁵ programme was created under the European Union. While their funding has stopped, the Coiste group continues to work without wages. So many people were suffering and that has to be recognised. My husband was in a prison in England for 22.5 years. Since his release, he has taken to alcoholism and is unable to cope with life. This is the issue; some of the ex-prisoners have very specific problems.

With respect to forgiveness, I don't know if people *have* to forgive, because there was a war and there is still conflict here. Terrible things happened and we are getting through it. We have to accept if people want to be British or Irish. Ireland is a melting pot of culture and we have to understand, tolerate and accept but not necessarily forgive. I come from a very IRA family but my brother in law is a Unionist and their child still marches in the Falls Road Parade,⁷⁶ and the whole family is there for support.

75 *The Prison to Peace Partnership consortium was created as a result of the long established working relationship between the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and various ex-prisoner groups. Since 1994, the Foundation has worked in a funding and support role with these groups, acting as an intermediary funding body under the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (1995-1999). <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/From-Prison-to-Peace-Partnership>*

76 *The Falls Road Parade is one of a number of parades held by different group in Northern Ireland, including the Unionists and Nationalists. The parades have historically been used to assert a group's control over an area. A Parade's Commission has been established to deal with the lingering controversies around parades in Northern Ireland.*

Anne Marie McWilliams: The role of women during conflict is vital because children may only be able to see their fathers once or twice a week, and the rest of the time is spent with mothers. When the Good Friday Agreement came into being, there was a lot of emotion for the children and family because of emotional turmoil before and after. Families, whether Republican or Protestant, still have internal disputes over which family members worked in support of the war effort. My mother's sister's child disappeared when he was 17. My husband was also killed in a feud and I am bringing up four sons, which is very difficult. Coiste is the main lifeline for people like me. Now 40 years later, you still have to think about these things. My mother died and she never had justice. My son was murdered and my nephew was also murdered. But we have realised that reconciliation is important and that we needed to build Tar Anall to provide education for ex-prisoners and their families.

Participant: Did the building have another use?

Breige Brownlee: Our local radio station for the local community also uses the building. Initially it was used as a mill, which provided employment to lots of people in West Belfast, including Unionists. Unfortunately, a lot of priests were isolated from the people and remained disjointed from the conflict. Father Des Wilson⁷⁷ was a local priest in the area and was referred to as the 'people's priest'. The Bishop dismissed Father Wilson because he spoke against the

⁷⁷ *Father Des Wilson is a priest who grew up in South Belfast and then moved to West Belfast after joining the clergy of the Catholic Church. He has been a vocal campaigner for human rights and social justice issues in the parish he serves. In 1972, he moved to a poor area in West Belfast and applied to be a 'retired priest' so that he was more able to be among the people and help them with fewer constraints from the Church.*

British military. Father Patrick Neeson⁷⁸ and Father Des Wilson begged, borrowed and stole to build up the establishment. Now the establishment provides education all the way up to A Levels.⁷⁹ They also help set up enterprises in the mill. Even Mother Teresa⁸⁰ visited the building and was taken on a tour of the mill.

Participant: What did you call your grandchild, the one who is a child of a Protestant father and a Catholic mother?

Breige Brownlee: 'Catholic or Protestant'! This is a joke we have as they are half Protestant and half Catholic. The conflict has nothing to do with religion but is more of a territory issue, which is related to the occupation of the British. We were brought up with tolerance and respect. B-Specials⁸¹ set up some pretty horrendous things but we still respect the group because we are taught to understand that people are entitled to choose their own identities, so long as we are also allowed to our Irishness. People have the right to their own nationality.

Participant: What, according to you, is stopping the unification of Ireland?

78 *Father Patrick Neeson is a Catholic priest who has served the diocese of Belfast for many years.*

79 *A Level refers to the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level, which is an academic qualification in the United Kingdom. It is typically studied for two years between the ages of 16 and 18. 'A Levels' are the main method of assessment for school leavers who wish to enter university.*

80 *Mother Teresa, also known as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, was a Catholic nun known internationally for her work with the poor. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.*

81 *B-Specials is another name for the Ulster Special Constabulary, a type of reserve police force set up in Northern Ireland, which was predominantly Protestant*

Breige Brownlee: A lot of the issue has to do with ignorance. Edwin Poots,⁸² the Health Minister, has even promoted Dublin in the Republic as the place to get treatment for children's heart disease, which would have been unheard of previously. The unfortunate thing is that Unionist politicians never had to work; so they take their majority for granted. That is how ignorance comes about. Sectarianism exists even in Loyalist communities. We need Unionists to say that we need a united Ireland. This just makes economic sense. The UK does not care where Belfast is or whether it is British or Irish.

Participant: Could you describe the role of prisoners in the Good Friday Agreement, which transitioned the situation in Northern Ireland from an armed struggle to a ceasefire?

Anne Marie McWilliams: A lot of the struggle happened on the streets and in the prisons. It was within the prison that the peace process was actually set. The prisoners educated themselves. They strategised the case with each other and pushed for the peace process.

Breige Brownlee: When the ceasefire was called, I was angry, but at the same time, I knew it was right. So instead, I got involved in the debates and talks and I had faith in the Republican movement. We had reached a certain point in the war and realized that it was time to end the armed military war and save lives. If we can get a united Ireland non-violently, it would be better. Now, Sinn Féin is the biggest party and the cross border negotiations are working

⁸² *Edwin Poots is a member of the Democratic Unionist Party and is currently an MLA. He is currently serving as Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.*

subtly and powerfully to create a political agenda.

Participant: Could you tell us more about your archiving project at Tar Anall?

Breige Brownlee: We are interviewing people for a day or a week of their lives in front of a camera and compiling the interviews together to produce a film. Mairead Farrell⁸³ wrote a poem, which we want to include in it. The first interview we did was of two women who had been caught carrying bombs when they were 16 year old. We realised that they were political. One of them was from a children's home. The girls were beaten in Castlereagh. They were then taken out of jail by a helicopter and put in a hard-core prison in Scotland. One was put in a Borstal prison.⁸⁴ In the 1970s, all Irish people were treated poorly in these prisons. And they were released in the same way, just dropped off at Belfast International Airport. These are the type of stories we are archiving.

End of Session

83 Mairead Farrell was a member of the IRA and an ex-prisoner. While serving a 14 year sentence in Armagh Women's Prison, she instigated a 'dirty protest' and a hunger strike. She was later killed by British secret service soldiers in Gibraltar for allegedly planning a bomb attack.

84 A Borstal was a type of youth detention centre in the UK, which was abolished in 1982. The Borstals were designed to reform seriously delinquent youth through a combination of education, regular work and discipline.

Friday 29th November 2013 Private Tour of Belfast's 'Peace Wall'

With:

Ian White, International and Political Director, Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation



Peace Wall in an interface area of Belfast

Participants enjoyed a private guided tour of the Falls Road and Shankill Road interface area of Belfast, where a 'peace wall' continues to divide Protestant and Catholic communities⁸⁵.

Ian White, International and Political Director at the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, accompanied the tour, providing valuable information to the group about this renowned area of Belfast.

⁸⁵ *In West Belfast, the interface between the Loyalist Shankill and the Republican Falls Road has been known as one of the more violence interfaces in Belfast, especially during the Troubles.*

Ian White: This is the 'Peace Wall'. You will notice the gates, which close when it gets dark. After we signed the Good Friday Agreement, we built 30 more 'peace walls' because people *want* them to feel more secure. The peace process is about *management* of conflict rather than resolving conflict today. We still have a long way to go.

You will also notice the shop on this road. An IRA member entered this shop (a fish shop at the time) and he was carrying a bomb. It detonated, killing thirteen people. This was when Gerry Adams realised that he needed to bring Sinn Féin into the peace process. The British parties threatened to pull out from the negotiation process as a result of this.

Today, research on education achievements show that fewer Protestant children go on to attend university if they come from this area in relation to Catholic children. This shows that Protestants today have less power and access to education than the Catholics in this economically poor interface area.

Friday 29th November 2013

**Dinner with Councillor Alderman Geraldine Rice and
Councillor Vasundra Kamble at La Mon Country Club, Belfast**

With:

Alderman Geraldine Rice,⁸⁶ MBE, Councillor for the Castlereagh Borough Council and Alliance Party Member⁸⁷

Vasundra Kamble,⁸⁸ Councillor for the Castlereagh Borough Council and Alliance Party Member



Vasundra Kamble, Nurcan Baysal, Kezban Hatemi, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Geraldine Rice, Esra Elmas, DPI Deputy Director and Director of Programmes Catriona Vine, Bejan Matur, Cansu Çamlıbel, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, DPI Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson, İpek Kotan and Jade Correa

⁸⁶ Councillor Rice MBE is a Councillor for the Castlereagh Borough Council and a member of the Alliance Party.

⁸⁷ The Alliance Party is the fifth largest party in Northern Ireland. Originally representing Unionism, it now designates itself as neither Unionist or Nationalist but as 'Other'

⁸⁸ Councillor Kamble is a Councillor for the Castlereagh Borough Council and a member of the Alliance Party.

Ian White: I would like to welcome all of you to this beautiful location. We are at La Mon Country Club in Castlereagh and are kindly joined by our two guests, who are both members of the Alliance Party.

Alderman Geraldine Rice: I am Councillor Geraldine Rice and I am a member of the Alliance Party. My involvement in the peace process began in the 1980s. I was in Dublin and realised that everyone had different views and that I needed to be careful about the language I used.

Councillor Vasundra Kamble: My name is Councillor Vasundra Kamble and I came here to Northern Ireland in 1995 from India. I became friends with Councillor Rice, and joined the Alliance Party. I was elected to be a Councillor in 2011.

Alderman Geraldine Rice: I joined the Alliance Party because of sectarianism. The party was one of the most open parties, as it accepted people regardless of their religion or ethnicity. They also accepted members of the LGBT community and others. I lived in an affluent neighbourhood and the council would not pay out for the area. I lobbied for it. I am a community councillor and work for the people. One of our former members was shot. The Northern Irish officers at the time put my house under surveillance and even bullet proofed the glass on my windows and bomb proofed the doors. A Rottweiler dog was my companion; he would scare away those that tried to hurt me. I joined a probation board to talk to political prisoners and political ex-prisoners. I then joined

the Human Rights Commission and became a Human Rights Commissioner for six years.

I believe in equality and in everyone having the right to live and to promote peace. Before this job, I was a sales director and then worked for food health and safety. Then I became a Councillor and Minister for Health. I have learned an awful lot. It has been a difficult and hard road. But I have had many experiences along the way including getting to meet the Queen! When we first started the Party, there were only a few women in politics. The only way to make it is to have a cause and goals and to pursue those goals non-violently. It was important to let the rest of the community know what we are all about. We now have another women MP, Naomi Long⁸⁹ from the Alliance Party. I brought Vasundra on board because of her interest in the community and the people in it.

Councillors are elected through a co-option process. When an MLA stands down, people have the right to be co-opted on and elected. I would never go back on any of my decisions. I believe in perseverance. If you work hard in your community, it works out in the end, even if it is a slow process. Politics is a male dominated arena with very few women but we kept on. We never flew a flag because we decided to proceed in different ways. None of us objected to the flag that was flown over Belfast City Hall but we did ask to take it down. This subsequently sparked protests and violence.⁹⁰

89 Naomi Long is currently the Deputy Leader of the Alliance Party as well as an MP for her constituency in Belfast East, where she previously served as an MLA.

90 A December 2013 decision to limit the number of days that the Union flag would fly over City Hall in Belfast sparked three months of violent protests.

When we were elected, we stated in the assembly that we were neither Republican nor Unionist. David Ford⁹¹ is an MLA and was elected as the Minister of Justice because we could not trust anyone else to take the post. We have quite a few people in the Assembly. We have come a long way in recent years and now have two members of Parliament and 300 Councillors.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: Why are they called Unionists? We have not heard anything from their side. Why do they want to remain part of the United Kingdom?

Alderman Geraldine Rice: It is very difficult to be between two parties as we are. Things got out of hand when they raised Loyalist flags. I see myself as a Northern Irish citizen and not a subject. People are always disrespecting the flag, even if they are Loyalists. How can you be a Loyalist if you just let your flag lie around, torn and tattered? I had always learned about a shared society but when I first moved to Castlereagh, several people disliked us at the beginning. We were standing on a thin grey line.

My two sons are both police officers, my dad was in the Second World War and my grandad was in the Navy. I did not understand why they hated me when they said they were loyal to the Queen. So I asked them what they did for their country.

91 David Ford is an MLA and current leader of the Alliance Party. He has also served as the Minister for Justice since 2010.

Participant: Everyone has their own version of the story. Do you describe the police as an extension of the Loyalist tradition in spite of the brutality that they use? Why is there a division? What is the sociological question between the two?



*Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Kezban Hatemi, Cansu Çamlıbel,
Bejan Matur, Esra Elmas and İpek Kotan*

Councillor Alderman Rice: It is a very long story. Some people here in Ireland wanted to remain part of the British government. There was an agreement signed to establish the six counties of peace for 50 years. There were people living in Northern Ireland who wanted to be in the Republic because they felt like they were being treated as second-class citizens in the North. They were given indecent and improper housing. There were several attacks, some of you have heard about the civil rights movement, where people were fighting for their rights.⁹²

92 *The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement began in the 1960s as the Catholic com-*

One of the main groups was called B-Special. They were a quasi-military police force, composed primarily of Protestants. They went in with sticks and threats and began the Troubles. The IRA was born in response to them and escalated the shooting.

There was a move away from the security forces and the creation of a provisional IRA, which lasted a while. Several citizens were body searched because there were some bad apples in the police. There was some collision with political parties. There came a stage where it was not violence but murder on the streets. A lot of work was being done by Gerry Adams, John Hume and Father Alex Reid who came together to reconcile the situation.

We even had a peace conference in the United States, where we met President Clinton. There were many things happening to try to stop the killing, including peace talks that were held in Dublin. I was lucky that I went to the Stormont Buildings and even met the Queen. The peace process resulted in several sleepless nights and late drives home but after a lot of hard work, we came up with the Good Friday Agreement. Some people *did* disagree with it in the beginning. I even met Gerry Adams two days later and told him I was his namesake (my first name is Geraldine) and he smiled and kissed me on the cheek. The Alliance Party started off small but has become larger due to perseverance.

munity in Northern Ireland began to borrow many of the campaign techniques already in use in the civil rights movement in the United States. The movement was a response to the various forms of discrimination Catholics in Northern Ireland faced, most notably in the public housing sector.

Participant: Did you want a unified Ireland?

Councillor Alderman Rice: We voted to stay in the United Kingdom. There are people who want to be part of the Republic. But it is still a democratic process and it is dependent on votes.

Participant: Is the Alliance Party an inclusive party? Can you provide examples?

Councillor Alderman Rice: We have people from all walks of life. These include the well off, the not well off, the LGBT community, the young, the old and the middle class.

Participant: If this is not too personal, what is your background?

Councillor Alderman Rice: My mother was Catholic and my father was English. When I was 16, I left the Catholic Church and joined the Church of Ireland. I have four grandchildren, three of them are Catholic and the other one is from the Church of Ireland.

Participant: Does Sinn Féin appreciate you for your middle ground?

Councillor Alderman Rice: There is still conflict in Ireland but it is not so much in the forefront now and is more behind the scenes. We have also managed to affect the curriculum in schools in order to promote reconciliation and the peace process.

End of Session

Saturday 30th November 2013 Roundtable Discussion with Susan McEwen at Stormont Hotel, Belfast

With:

Susan McEwen,⁹³ Development Director, The Corrymeela Community⁹⁴

Moderated by Catriona Vine



Nurcan Baysal, Cansu Çamlıbel, DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine, DPI Programme Director Eleanor Johnson, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Susan McEwen, Esra Elmas, Kezban Hatemi, Bejan Matur, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu and Sibel Eraslan

93 Susan McEwen is the Development Director at The Corrymeela Community. She qualified as a mediator with Mediation Northern Ireland and as a trainer with Dialogue for Peaceful Change. She was awarded a Postgraduate Certificate by UNESCO for her work on 'Developing a Shared Society'.

94 Corrymeela is a community organization which aims to promote peace and reconciliation through the idea of an 'open village'. It runs programmes for youth and educators and provides safe spaces for various community groups.

Catriona Vine: Welcome all of you. I am delighted to introduce our first speaker of the day, Susan McEwen. Susan is the Development Director at Corrymeela Community. At Corrymeela, she is responsible for developing project capacity within Interface areas. In September 2008, she was appointed as a coordinator with Irish Peace Centres. She continues to devote her time and focus to working at a local level in Interface areas. I hand over to you Susan, many thanks.

Susan McEwen: It is lovely to be here, I live about 3 kilometres from here, so this is like my backyard. I hope you have had a great learning experience here. I would like to discuss both my personal and work experiences. I hope to talk about conflict transformation, which I believe entails developing a society where everyone can reach their full potential and flourish, and I will also discuss the role of women at a grassroots level.

I first started working in a faith based organisation within a church in a large housing estate. It was a single community housing estate, but there was still a divide there. The divide existed between the Ulster Defence Union and the Ulster Volunteer Force groups, which separated the community within the Protestant side. However, both represented the housing community. I was meeting several women in the community who did not realise their own potential. They felt they were at the bottom of the hierarchy and that focusing on their own needs would be selfish.

The first role I held was for a very personal project that looked at personal development, which eventually led to community development. What the project did was look to empower young women to make Belfast a place that they wanted to grow up in. At a very simple level, it helped women see that they had a right to take time for themselves. This was done through meeting other women, education and training.

I stayed there for a number of years. But it was still a church, and the structures of the church were dominated by men. In the early 2000s, I began to look for other opportunities that would have an impact and allow me to be a mediator and a leader. I was already involved in the Corrymeela Community in 1998 and I applied for and received a job position there in 2004. The Corrymeela Community was started in 1965 by a priest called Father Ray Davey.⁹⁵ He was a prisoner of war in World War Two. He was in Dresden and witnessed the bombing. Though he was on the side that did the bombing, he was torn up because he knew that those who were being bombed were victims. He was a man of great faith. He and his wife Kathleen became the chaplains at Queen's University Belfast. It was in the mid-60s that Ray inspired a group of students to get involved in social justice and reconciliation.

Their enthusiasm led to the creation of the Corrymeela Community. This was before this wave of Troubles. There have been so many waves but the one that I am referring to is the one that began in 1968. The 1970s was the worst period for deaths. The Corrymeela

⁹⁵ *Father Ray Davey was a Presbyterian minister who created the Corrymeela Community in 1965 as a way to build bridges and reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. His experience in WWII inspired him to establish the community.*

Community promoted outreach for women at a personal level. If we fast-forward, Corrymeela is now a residential centre located by the sea, which welcomes some 6000 visitors a year. We also work a lot in the community with young people and in schools. In 2004, I started working in Corrymeela as an interface worker. Interfaces are like the 'peace walls', they are unseen barriers that people are aware of. They may be a park, a bus stop, a swing or a slide that you could walk past. Often the way I would describe it is when people from different backgrounds live a stone's throw away from each other.

Six years after the Good Friday Agreement, life on the ground was still largely the same. It was still a segregated city where people tended to stay in their own areas. The biggest barrier was in people's minds. In 2004, I worked with several people and I tried to put them on a journey where they would come together. What I experienced was that they viewed each other with a real curiosity. The women tried to understand the other side and move beyond the wall. The thing that motivated them was that they wanted a better future for their children, one without violence, conflict or prejudice. For them, coming together was an opportunity because they felt empowered to reach out to one another. This was further pushed because they saw their children playing together.



Participants during lunch at Stormont Hotel, Belfast: Sibel Eraslan, Fatma Bostan Ünsal and Yıldız Ramazanoğlu

A poet, an artist and a creative team were all brought together to prepare a story-telling project. I passionately believe that the employment of the arts is a highly effective way to break down barriers. The project we developed aimed at bringing women together. Depending on the levels of fear that these women possessed, we brought them together, some immediately and some after a while. Within three or four months of working with these women we discussed rituals, childhood, love lives and several other important areas in their lives. What we recognised was that while there were similarities, they were closer and more energetic when they discussed differences. When you bring 15 to 16 people together, there is sadness and tears when explaining experiences. After they had been together for a couple of weeks, we went on a

retreat where they felt safe to share more intimate experiences. The role of the facilitator is very important in these situations as there is no one 'right' story. So we had story listening, when no one was allowed to interrupt when someone was speaking. I always had an artist or poet who carefully listened to the story. At the end, the women brought in something personal and we took pictures and had exhibitions. The women were allowed to bring their friends and family to see the exhibitions. All the women who participated went home and discussed what was learned. So all the families were also learning and going on the journey with them.

What I spoke about with these women is the idea of spheres of influence, which are concentric circles. As you grow in confidence, the concentric circles get bigger. We also created more opportunities for women. In 2008-2009, I started a project called the 'Leading Ladies'. The name in itself was controversial because the term 'lady' is looked down upon. The question we asked women was 'why be a supporting actress when you can be a leading lady?' It had three strands. In the first strand we had a feminist film festival. We took some women away and watched films for a weekend. As a group we decided what films we should show and then we had a discussion of these films afterwards. One of our target audiences was younger women as we wanted to see who these women saw as role models and whether they were just interested in women who were concerned with men or looks. The second strand was a lunchtime seminar with speakers who were leaders. These included leaders from several different backgrounds, including the community, political and business sectors. We asked them to speak from their hearts and about what exactly they needed to sacrifice

to become leaders. The third strand looked at leadership styles and global awareness. The reason we looked at global awareness was that Northern Ireland was a region of conflict and was therefore very inward looking. We wanted the women to realise that they were in a global movement and that women worldwide were facing the same issues.

Sadly, we were not successful the second time round when we tried to undertake the project. We were unable to obtain the funding and we are still looking for it. One of the biggest challenges is the reduction of funding for women's centres in Northern Ireland. Several projects which were making real change have been stopped. There is also an increase in pressure to be employed, which means that women do not have enough time to participate in peace building activities. Bridges that are being built are very fragile. The number of women involved in political and community engagement is low. This is frustrating because we need to develop a community that can allow women to play an active role. This is not to say that only women are involved in peace-building, but if we take away their opportunity for dialogue, it will affect the community as a whole. Women play a vital role in conflict transformation and it makes me sad that these projects cannot move forward. There is a lack of women engaging in politics and in political parties. They see politics only in sectarian lines and so they take a step back from politics, as they feel it is irrelevant in their daily lives. We have a project with the Department of Foreign Affairs where these women tell them their stories and they take them to the Assembly. I am going to stop now but please ask questions so I can respond.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: We would like to know about the march that is taking place in Belfast today. What is it about?

Susan McEwen: We have had a difficult year of conflict in Belfast where conditions have worsened because of the removal of the Union flag over Belfast City Hall. There was a vote in the Council where it was decided that the flag would fly on designated days. The removal of the flag represents the change in demography, as it is perceived that Belfast is becoming more Catholic. It was also facilitated by the Alliance Party in East Belfast. It was framed as an intentional movement to make people angry and it played a lot into peoples' agendas. We experienced a period of intense rioting every night in East and North Belfast, which was driven by the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). They were playing on the fear that their identity was being chipped away at. It is the assumption that their community has been asked to give up everything. There was anger and injustice was felt. It was also a dark time due to the economic downturn and the closing of several stores. Throughout this year we have had heightened tensions. The tragedy of the riots was that there are hundreds of young people who have criminal records because the police were very tough. This will affect their employability, travel and they will face a lifetime of implications.



*Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Nurcan Baysal and Susan McEwen,
Development Director at The Corrymeela Community, Belfast*

Participant: All the young people were put into jail? What is the legislation behind that?

Susan McEwen: If the CCTV⁹⁶ footage showed you were actively involved in the riots, you would be arrested. This would later affect your ability to receive visas to go to Canada and the US. There has always been a tendency to respond to events such as these in a ridiculous way. Social media was also used to implicate young people in crimes. Several people implicated themselves because they uploaded photos to social media platforms. Unfortunately, even after the Good Friday Agreement was implemented, there was no review of the number of young people with criminal records.

⁹⁶ *Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) is the use of video surveillance for various security purposes.*

Participant: We were previously told that 30 per cent of the police were Catholic. How was this seen by people? Was there Protestant on Protestant violence in this case?

Susan McEwen: The police force was seen as a Protestant force for the Protestant people. The Police Services of Northern Ireland (PSNI) encouraged people to join the force. There was a process of affirmative action that tried to bring Catholics into the police force. This community feels betrayed because they thought the police were on their side, which led to the Protestants being angry with the police.

Participant: You talked about demographic change and Belfast's decision to take down the flag. How does transformation typically come about?

Susan McEwen: The demography in Northern Ireland is changing. There are a number of different factors. Generally speaking, the Protestants have moved to the suburbs so Belfast has become more of a Catholic city. Also, Protestants do not vote as much, so the voting tendencies have changed in Northern Ireland.

Participant: Why the reluctance to vote?

Susan McEwen: The Protestants do not generally feel that any party supports them. Sinn Féin is still very connected to the grassroots. There are too many factions within the Protestant community.

Participant: What does this imply for the future? This question is with reference to Scotland. If Scotland becomes independent, how will this affect matters in Northern Ireland?

Susan McEwen: There are lots of different layers. Peter Robinson,⁹⁷ the leader of the DUP, has mentioned that if Scotland breaks away from the UK, it will weaken links here. At another level, the Good Friday Agreement made the union the safest it has been politically, but this is not often communicated to people who feel threatened. What is quite interesting is that there is a growing sense of the Northern Irish identity but we do not have the economic capability to be independent. So we must either be part of the United Kingdom or Ireland.

Participant: I get the feeling that women had a very difficult role during the peace making process. Do the politicians realise that mothers can make a change? It is disappointing that the role of women has not changed substantially.

Susan McEwen: The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition came together and it was exciting for women to see other women as leaders. We are now in a situation that we have seen throughout history. In the Cardiff talks⁹⁸ there were 32 people out of which only three were women and one of them was the mediator. The difficulty in having women present is that they are just there to

97 Peter Robinson is a founding member and Leader of the Democratic Unionist Party. He has also held the post of First Minister for Ireland since 2008.

98 The Cardiff talks were launched in 2013 as a means of building the relationship between police and communities in Northern Ireland. The timing of the talks was deliberately planned to coincide with the period when lots of marches take place in Northern Ireland.

represent women's issues and nothing more. But we hope that in time the dynamics will change. One of the reasons that I am frustrated is that the British Government has not done enough to consider the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.⁹⁹ This resolution was made to ensure greater involvement of women in the peace process. It is about how they categorise the conflict, and if we do not agree or acknowledge the impact of conflict, there is no way to ensure the representation of women. UN Resolution 1325 can only be applied if the conflict is acknowledged as an armed conflict. Women's voices are reduced and the ones that are given voices are different from the female and male combatants. So at the moment, Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan¹⁰⁰ have been spending a lot of time talking to women's groups and I am hoping it will ripple out.

Participant: I do not completely understand the residential centre you discussed. From what I understand, care services like childcare and elder care are completely underfunded.

Susan McEwen: There are options for private care, and there is also the National Health Service¹⁰¹ (NHS). The NHS is at the core of Britishness. It is part of the welfare system; any UK resident has a

99 *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 was unanimously adopted in October 2000. The resolution acknowledges the inordinate impact of war on women and requires States to support the participation of women in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction.*

100 *Meghan O'Sullivan is a former Deputy National Security Advisor on Iraq and Afghanistan and is currently the Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs and Director of the Geopolitics of Energy Project at Harvard University's Kennedy School. She served as the Vice Chairperson of the Haass talks held in Northern Ireland in 2013.*

101 *The National Health Service (NHS) was established by the British government in 1948 and has since become the world's largest publicly funded health service. The NHS is free for anyone who is resident in the UK.*

right to access the health services provided by the NHS as part of their taxes goes into funding the system.

Participant: You talk about a rise of consciousness and a sense of Irishness. Do you think that it will bring you closer to a United Ireland?

Susan McEwen: It is a sense of *Northern Irishness*, a unique humour and way of understanding that segregates us from Southern Ireland and England. It is more the middle class that generates this sense of Northern Irishness. This is especially realized through sporting events such as Ulster rugby, football and Rory McIlroy¹⁰² in golf.

Participant: Was Seamus Heaney¹⁰³ celebrated when he won the Nobel Prize for Literature?

Susan McEwen: I can't speak too much about this subject I'm afraid, however, people in the Republic see him as a sell-out. He is much more accepted within the Unionist community.

End of Session

102 *Rory McIlroy is a professional golf player from Northern Ireland. He was formerly ranked number one in the world.*

103 *Seamus Heaney is a Nobel Prize winning poet, playwright, translator and lecturer. He is considered one of the most important modern Irish poets.*

Saturday 30th November 2013

Roundtable Discussion with Paula Bradley at Stormont Hotel, Belfast

With:

Paula Bradley,¹⁰⁴ Member of the Legislative Assembly, Democratic Unionist Party Moderated by Ian White, International and Political Programme Director, Glencree



Nurcan Baysal, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, DPIs Deputy Director and Director of Programmes Catriona Vine, Paula Bradley, Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Bejan Matur, Esra Elmas, Cansu Çamlıbel, Sibel Eraslan, DPI Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson and Kezban Hatemi

¹⁰⁴ Paula Bradley is a member of the Democratic Unionist Party. In May 2011, she was successfully elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly to represent the people of North Belfast. Paula is currently a member on the Social Development Committee and the Procedures Committee.

Ian White: Welcome to the last day of our comparative experience here in Belfast. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us on a Saturday morning, Paula. Our discussion over the past few days has been focused on the peace process and the role of women in conflict resolution. I am sure the group will have a number of questions for you.

Paula Bradley: Thank you and good morning. I was delighted to come here today to speak to women who are involved in conflict resolution. I grew up in Belfast. No one had a political background in my family and when I was of voting age, I was taken by my family to the polling station to vote for the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). I then joined the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), where I worked as a policewoman. After the Belfast Agreement, I threw myself into politics as I felt the Troubles were my fault. I looked at the parties and the only one I felt was doing anything for me as a policewoman was the DUP. I joined the DUP and became an activist, secretary of a local branch and also worked with a communications team. I did not think that I would be elected. I left and joined the social sector and did not think I wanted anything more to do with politics. I even left my policewoman position. In 2005, my party approached me and asked me to run for politics. Two others would also be running and I was to be the third person. I really did not think that I would get elected. I wanted to be in the background and do research. The elections came and went and I worked as a Councillor and then became the Mayor of Newtownabbey.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ *Newtownabbey is a town located to the north of Belfast. While it is considered by some to be a suburb of Belfast, it is separate from the rest of the city. The main campus for the University of Ulster can be found in this large town.*

And then again in 2011, the branch had to decide who was to be elected. I got another phone call and the party said they wanted to me to run as a third candidate alongside two men who I knew and liked. My children are quite young, my son is 21 and my daughter is 23, and I wanted to discuss it with them, as I am a single parent. At first they were hesitant because of the media portrayal of politicians, but then they agreed to back me and support me. I got elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly and am one of the five women out of 36. Most people think it is difficult for us to get our viewpoints across, but we are quite capable of being louder than men. We as a party meet every Monday morning, where we discuss party policies. While the men might laugh at some of my points of view, they eventually take my policy suggestions on board. Now, the party puts a real emphasis on the work that I do.

My party is seen as right-wing, strict and stern. I am on the Sexual Health Committee and I am a representative for my party. Our party did not have much input in the sector but now I am trying to build up strategies for issues such as teen pregnancy, AIDS and sexually transmitted illnesses in order to better serve young people in Northern Ireland. Initially I did not realise that I would be driving these discussions, but I am passionate about it. Another committee which I chair is the UN Security Resolution 1325 Committee because Northern Ireland has to address how we deal with our history of armed conflict.¹⁰⁶ None of the members had

106 Paula Bradley is the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Group on UNSCR 1325: Women Peace and Security. The remit of this group is 'to raise awareness of the lack of participation of women in political and public life in areas outlined in UNSCR 1325'. This group and others are working for the recognition of the Troubles as an 'armed conflict' as defined by international law. As it is not officially recognized as an armed conflict, UNSCR 1325 does not technically apply.

given any input on this mandate except for one member of the Alliance Party, and neither did we, until I began to chair it. Without taking part, the DUP would have folded. At present, we are going to have an oral hearing. The women in Northern Ireland hold the country together, unlike the men who are more willing to kill each other. Unfortunately, now men are considered more important. I feel that when I speak to combatants who are not willing to listen to women. The hearing is next Friday and we have been fighting for two years for the 1325 mandate. I did not want to be pigeonholed as only dealing with women's issue and now they know that I have the ability to handle a variety of issues. The women in my party usually have positions of power, though there are only five of us. This is very encouraging and it is still early days. Now, I have been in Stormont for two years and I realise that this is my job and I like to believe I am there for a reason. I am here for the greater good and to help those in need. I have to face elections in two years, but I know that this is my calling.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: Was the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Committee established after the 1325 mandate?

Paula Bradley: It was established by a female five years ago, but there are concerns around pursuing the mandate in Northern Ireland. I do not think Westminster will allow us to pursue it. They will provide recommendations, however, which we will be happy to consider.

Participant: I have a personal question. In the elections in Jordan, a female candidate did not come forward. The situation here seems to be similar. You have discussed your children. What was the nature of your discussions with them?

Paula Bradley: It is similar to the situation in the Middle East to the extent that women are scared to come forward because they feel that the task is too daunting. But I am doing it and it is not too difficult. With respect to my children, they were concerned that the newspapers would write terrible stories and that they would have to be increasingly careful about what they say and do so as not to bring shame to the family and to me. This job is also very time consuming and there is often no time for me to make dinner for my children or iron their clothes, which are things I love to do. However, we still have Sunday dinners at home together. I have a tremendous sense of guilt because I was at work so often. The most important job for mothers is to be with their children.

Participant: Thank you for your input, you seem very optimistic. I would like to know more about the role of women as mothers on both sides of the conflict. My second question is about the peace walls.



DPI Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson, Sibel Eraslan, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu and Kezban Hatemi during a roundtable meeting in Belfast

Paula Bradley: I was under constant threat as a policewoman. I tried to protect my kids from terrorists. I am positive that Northern Ireland is a much safer place today, and I am optimistic that we can build a better future for our children and grandchildren. The role of women in conflict resolution is pivotal. We have a wonderful way of being empathetic because we are able to look at things differently. Some men can do it, but not *all* men. Women are willing to cross barriers and discuss conflict and difficult situations and empathise with one another. Peace walls are sadly necessary in Northern Ireland because some people do not want to move on. Sadly, I think that they will be there for some time. We have to be mindful that people move at their own pace when it comes to dealing with the past.

Participant: Why are they referred to as ‘peace walls’? There is an inherent irony in the word ‘peace wall’ as the walls seem to separate communities rather than provide peace.

Paula Bradley: I do not know why they are called ‘peace walls’. They are there to segregate the community. We talk about ‘shared areas’ and ‘sharing areas’. But even within those communities, the people are separated. They view the wall as protection from other communities. They do not necessarily work well and people throw stuff over the walls. After the Belfast Agreement, many of the walls were taken down and removed but unfortunately they will not be done away with completely for a very long time and this is unfortunate.

Participant: We were informed about a march today. What is the party’s official stance and what is your view on this march?

Paula Bradley: My party’s view is that everyone is entitled to their own peaceful process and my view is the same but with an emphasis on the word *peaceful*. If I was not here speaking to you, I would be out there watching the protest.

Participant: You told us that you are optimistic about the future, but what about the people who cannot come to terms with the past? Can we have reconciliation without looking back at the conflict?

Paula Bradley: Our past is important and has shaped the way we are today. But we have several people that cannot move forward.

My party, including myself, voted 'no' on the Belfast Agreement for a variety of reasons. But seeing where we are now, it is so different. We need to remember that social issues, education and the economy are important to Northern Ireland's growth, and we need to focus on the future. We will always remember. I personally can forgive but of course several members of my party will always remember the way our people suffered in the past.

Participant: Does your party have policy recommendations to help people *reconcile* the Troubles. I understand that it is difficult to forget the past.

Paula Bradley: Within my own party, there are several people who find it very difficult to move on. I do not know if we have a specific policy. We believe in truth and justice and ask people to come forward to discuss their personal struggles, especially those who are concerned about missing people. This is because these people were never provided with justice at the time, and our party strongly believes in this.

Participant: Is there a committee to help with this, like a fact finding committee?



DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine with guest speaker at Stormont Hotel: Democratic Unionist Party MLA Paula Bradley

Paula Bradley: There is a historical fact finding equivalent. We have had it for 10 or 20 years, and it is still helping to bring people to justice. With the advancements in technology and forensics, we have been able to provide justice for some families.

Participant: We have learned a lot from this comparative study that we can take back to Turkey. I have observed that some people have rejected the peace process and I find that disappointing, particularly as Northern Ireland has a relatively small population. Also, you have no say where and into which family you are born. You do, however, have a say on which religion you belong to. You say that you are proud of Northern Ireland because you are a product of its history. However, I find this quite problematic. Also, you speak of trust in people, and you should trust the *state* and

not *people*. Why not pursue an egalitarian society? Lastly, you have discussed Unionism as being united with the United Kingdom and not Ireland. Can you explain why?

Paula Bradley: It is worrying the way people are dealing with it. There was a car bomb last week; and two of my peers received threats last night. But this is a very small minority. It is worrying for us because most people do not want to go back. I am not proud of what Northern Ireland did and how people dealt with the Troubles. We in Northern Ireland have the ability to realise that we are all part of the problem. We work together and have mingled together previously. We do not question each other about our religion. I am not proud of what Northern Ireland did but I am glad that we have progressed and are more forward looking now. I am glad that I was born here, where there are lovely people who share a very rich culture.

Unfortunately, with regards to trusting the state, we have a long way to go in Northern Ireland. This is because communities do not trust each other, which affects and pulls down the state. We have seen it happen before and therefore, the first stage is to trust *each other* before we can trust the *state*. This is because the state does not necessarily know what is good for the people. This is particularly true when it comes to minorities. Women, disabled individuals and those discriminated against because of their sexuality are considered less equal in current Northern Irish society. I find that I am penalised more for being a woman than a Protestant in the community today.

I was born into a household of Unionists and feel more Northern Irish than British because I have more in common with Northern Ireland. Would I want to see a United Ireland? Personally no, however, I know it will happen. I'm not sure if it will be in my time, or later, but I know it will happen.

Participant: How do you know that there will be a united Ireland?

Paula Bradley: I know because the demography in Northern Ireland is changing. There was a recent poll on whether people wanted to be Irish or British and people voted that they would rather be British. This is because of the fiscal and health benefits and because right now we are incapable of economically sustaining our own population. The Catholic community has increased slightly and it is continuing to move forward. But still some Catholics are voting to be British; there is a lot of demographic change depending on how people see the economy. However, if they feel it is more favourable to be in the Republic, the demographic will shift again.

Participant: What are your views on the European Union?

Paula Bradley: The EU provides us with funding, but there are so many hoops we have to jump through. The whole economy suffers because many farmers and fisherman have imposed quotas. This is due to directives from the EU telling us that we do not know how to do things. Taxes on our landfill are also going to come from the EU. It really ties our hands, but then again it is not too bad, as we receive a lot of funding from the EU.

End of Session

Saturday 30th November 2013

Roundtable Discussion with Lynn Carvill and Eleanor Jordan at Stormont Hotel, Belfast

With:

Lynn Carvill, ¹⁰⁷ Women's Sector Lobbyist with the Women's Resource and Development Agency

Eleanor Jordan, ¹⁰⁸ Centre Coordinator at the Windsor Women's Centre

Moderated by Catriona Vine

107 Lynn Carvill is a Women's Sector Lobbyist with the Women's Resource and Development Agency, which provides training and support to women's organisations across Northern Ireland and campaigns on key issues affecting women. In this role, Lynn is responsible for forging relationships with local politicians and ensuring that a gender perspective is included in their discussions and decision-making process.

108 Eleanor Jordan is the Centre Coordinator of the Windsor Women's Centre, which is situated in the Village, an area of high social and economic deprivation in Belfast. The centre provides education, childcare, advice and counselling to women and their families from the surrounding communities



*Guest speakers: Women's Sector Lobbyist Lynn Carvill and
Centre Co-ordinator from Windsor's Women Centre Eleanor Jordan*

Catriona Vine: Welcome back everyone. Many thanks indeed to both of our guest speakers for joining us today. I hand the floor over to Eleanor Jordan from the Windsor Women's Centre in Belfast. Thank you.

Eleanor Jordan: Good morning and many thanks to DPI for inviting me to meet with you today. I will tell you a little about the Women's Centre. There are seven more women's centres in Belfast than there are in London. They 'mushroomed' because there was a lot of funding from the European Union. Northern Ireland does not have sustainable infrastructure for the conflict. The centre is located in what used to be a 'working class' area but now is called an area of 'high unemployment'. Our area is referred to as 'The Village', which sounds like a lovely area but which actually faces very

high unemployment rates. We are in an area of Loyalist paramilitaries. The main ones are the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). During the conflict, our area was equally balanced because the two paramilitaries tried to kill many Catholics, regardless of their reasons. The stereotype of Loyalists is that they do not value education; this has had a lasting impact in the area. They do not even have the confidence that education will ever be available to them. The government's idea of 'buying peace' is to work with ex-paramilitaries.

In my opinion, the working class Loyalists do not believe that any party represents them. Women may think about doing things in a different way. Some paramilitaries have paid by local communities to become local workers. Men who caused the problem are now paid to do work. The UVF is still very active. Every Sunday they have Sunday beatings. The latest one in the newspaper was where they took a young man who was 15 years of age and pulled down his trousers and tazered him six times. It was a publically known event but nothing happened to the perpetrators. They continued to be paid to work and no justice was served. This is why young people remain disenfranchised because they believe that the system does not work. My role and job is to empower women. Lynn lobbies and looks for evidence. I am the Director of Windsor Women's Centre and I work with 27 women at the centre, all of whom work part-time. Childcare workers are paid too little and have to do other jobs. Unfortunately, jobs in the centre are precarious and we give the women protective notice that they may not be employed in the next term. This is because the funding in Northern Ireland is very difficult to cover. Funders want to fund innovative programs,

but that is not necessarily a sustainable policy. We do not have a childcare policy in Northern Ireland. We have too many MLAs but we still have no one to take responsibility for childcare. At the centre, we have stress clinics, we work with children at a crèche, and we also work with ethnic minority groups. We have faced constant intimidation at the Windsor Women's Centre from people who spend their lives being bullies.

We also run a local pharmacy scheme that is set up by women and has proved very successful and practical. A little known fact is that most women would not have gone through the conflict without the presence of Valium (a form of diazepam). There were several women who were taking this medication without supervision or along with alcohol during the Troubles. What I find frustrating is that there are a lot of talks and policies, but I feel that our government is paralysed. 66 per cent of the population in Northern Ireland work as civil servants and you can unemploy them. Our local council used to have seven members but now it is 26 members. It is the same with the police investigating *themselves*. Most of our funding goes into the Belfast Council, which has not changed in years, though no one holds these members accountable for their actions with money. We, on the other hand, are accountable for all the money we spend.

We also have a health project at the centre, which provides counselling and helps those with low level suicidal tendencies. We train women in complimentary counselling and therapy. We could train people to work at call centres but at the moment we are taking an ethical stance. We aim to train up to 25 people to be mental

health officers. However, right now, we have 33 people and last year we had 49 people. Every one of the women who participated last year was a survivor of child sex abuse. Most of the women in this intake, however, suffer from alcoholism and/or depression as a result of the Troubles.

Our centre is quite busy and happy. Several reporters interview us but we do not allow the multi-cultural women to be interviewed as several of them do not like to discuss the past; how they came to be here and so on. They come to the centre to study, and we usually do not give statistics on these women to reporters. But I can tell you that we have 50 women from 19 different countries. If you had spoken to women at the centre 10 years ago, you would have thought them racist, but we have taught them to respect everyone and have taken their cultural backgrounds into consideration.

The building we are currently working in is 20 years old.

Our centre has art and embroidery everywhere. We offer a therapeutic art course. Each community tells us a different story. There is a centre called Cultúrlann.¹⁰⁹ They restored an old church and used donations to build and restore it.

Ashley, a worker from Cultúrlann, came to Windsor Women's Centre. It was the first time she had come to the area. She helped us make a stained glass window that incorporated the artwork of the women in our centre. This was all done in the therapeutic art class.

¹⁰⁹ *Cultúrlann is a community centre in Belfast, which contains space for artistic and theatrical expression, a café, a tourist information office, and a book and gift shop. The centre produces a full programme of year round arts events.*

Also, last summer, I took some women to Banbridge Shopping Centre (where I believe you will visit on your return journey). It is close to a sanctuary garden.

The centre was opened with 32 women doing a ‘flashmob’¹¹⁰ on Falls Road. I could not be bothered to ask a Minister to come and open the space because they have visited the centre in the past and nothing has come from their visits. Our building has a history but there are no flags on the premises. Our area is the one where the flag protests started. Racism against the Polish and Italian people also began in The Village.

The art project was supposed to span over 18 months, but unfortunately our funding was cut and the project lasted only six months. We also oversaw the construction of a purple glass building where we moved our mental health services. The place is now considered a ‘trauma centre’, however, the term ‘trauma’ is not generally accepted, as it reminds people of the Troubles. I see it as a word that could refer to non-Troubles related trauma as well.

110 *Flash mob refers to an event in which a group of people suddenly assemble in a public space to perform an act and quickly leave. They are often used to raise awareness of an event or an idea.*



Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, Esra Elmas, Kezban Hatemi, DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine, Lynn Carvill, Eleanor Jordan, İpek Kotan, Nurcan Baysal and Fatma Bostan Ünsal

Art can be very effective and impressive. I am thinking of making a 'thought tree' and for World Stress Day, we are thinking of making a 'happy tree'. Christmas season is quite a busy season because we have to make food parcels, and it can be a very stressful time. The money we receive from donors allows us to provide a hot breakfast for the children in the crèche and for 20 others during the week. At the Windsor Women's Centre, we were able to help women who were transitioning out of prison. In Northern Ireland, there are 50 women who were incarcerated at Ashford,¹¹¹ where they were surrounded by serious criminal offenders.

Catriona Vine: Many thanks indeed for such a detailed account of your work at the Women's Centre. I now hand over to Lynn Carvill.

¹¹¹ *Ashford refers to HMP Bronzefield, an adult and young offenders prison located in Ashford in Surrey, UK.*

Lynn Carvill: Good morning and thank you. I have quite a particular job. My background is in the student union and in women rights. I previously worked for an NGO and was not initially interested in gender work. I am a lobbyist and am working on the devolution process. I strive to bring a gendered perspective into politics. These issues are generally invisible, and there is a need for more people in this field. My main area of interest is childcare and highlighting the role of women outside the household. Since the peace process, I have become interested in poverty, which is also a gendered issue. I do a huge amount of work on these issues and work with MLAs who understand the issues and help me to achieve my goals.

I shall now discuss what has happened on the ground since the peace process. In local communities, women's peace issues have been eroded. The Civic Forum¹¹² was created to allow NGOs and women to be represented, but it collapsed in 2002 and nothing more has become of it. There has been a lot of concentration on religion and public opinion, but gender issues are rarely discussed. If the forum was still around, we could have brought forward several solutions to the issues that are currently being raised.

The other important thing is to raise awareness regarding the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence. For example, in Catholic areas where the police were seen as enemies, women and children felt vulnerable, and we heard about it. But now, Protestant women are concerned and feel vulnerable around the police. Loyalist women claim that the biggest threat they face is coming from within the community towards their children. Issues around women's reproductive health have also been raised.

112 *The Civic Forum for Northern Ireland was a consultative body, which was created as part of the Good Friday Agreement. The Forum initially consisted of 60 representatives from various sectors, including the voluntary sector, unions and trade.*

Therefore, it is important to state that it can be difficult for men to create sustainable peace, and that there is a need for women to play a bigger role in promoting peace. I have to say that it took me going to Sweden to realize that I live in a conflict and disenfranchised region. But women are mentally stronger and driven, and men both in Stormont and Westminster fear us.

Catriona Vine opens the floor for questions.

Participant: You discussed the Civic Forum; can you tell us if it came after the Good Friday Agreement?

Eleanor Jordan: I felt like it was not given an opportunity to develop, because it folded soon after the Good Friday Agreement.

Lynn Carvill: I was a member of the Civic Forum. When I think back, I remember being treated with disdain by the parliamentarians. We did a little work on educational disadvantages and poverty and we worked to promote inclusion, and two reports came from it. The media were horrible towards the Forum and referred to us as ‘do-gooders’ and ‘lapdogs’, but it did allow us to look at difficult questions.

Participant: In my country, I am defined as a feminist, but to be honest, I will share today for the first time that I have never believed that women have made a difference *practically*, though the idea works in theory. My mind has been transformed following this visit, but I am more concerned with establishing connections that do not have to do with power or money. Do you think the spirit of

a woman makes a difference?

Eleanor Jordan: I think women have a lot to contribute; we are used to seeing a lot of men together at political discussions, but not women. The term ‘feminism’ has developed negative connotations, but it is all about *equality* for women. We did a massive march on Women’s Day, but we had to ask the Parades Commission if we could celebrate women in the march, which was ludicrous! But you know you are doing the right thing when the Women’s Centre is full.

Lynn Carvill: I was very fortunate to grow up in a generation where education was free, but it is not like that anymore. All the research shows that diversity works, and women need to be more involved in political decisions now more than ever.

Eleanor Jordan: This also brings debate because people think differently. Another big issue is segregated education, which needs to be done away with. In the end, it all comes down to having money in order to pursue an education.

Participant: From what we have seen during our tour of the interface areas of Belfast, there are designated ‘alcohol areas’. What is the government’s policy on alcohol? Also, Eleanor Jordan said that the government wants to ‘buy peace’ by ‘buying’ paramilitaries. From what I understand, after the peace process, not much money was provided. Would it be different if money were provided to sustain peace?

Lynn Carvill: For me, it is not about the money. There has been a lot of money spent, but it is the *way* in which the money has been spent that is contentious. £80 million pounds has been provided, but the government has not spread it over the community. Women were left out in North Belfast and did not get the chance to build a peace centre or a sports centre, for example. I feel like cultural issues were not even considered in the process.

Eleanor Jordan: The funding was intended to be a social investment fund, and instead it went to paramilitaries. In North Belfast, no women were represented. In South Belfast, there were three strong women. I applied for funding to help children, but we had to keep our application below £250, 000 in order to not need an economic appraisal. After cutting some of the requirements, we reached a figure below 250,000. Now everyone has to do an economic appraisal. We feel that the government is pushing us away, and it is very frustrating.

Lynn Carvill: The ‘alcohol free’ areas are basically areas where people are not allowed to consume alcohol. There is also a hostel called Stella Maris,¹¹³ which allows homeless women to bring alcohol into the centre, provided they hand the alcohol over to a care worker. If they are desperate for the alcohol, they are allowed to have a small, controlled amount. This is called a ‘wet hostel’, and it has been heralded as one successful model for working with alcoholics.

113 *Stella Maris is a hostel in Belfast for homeless “street drinkers”. The hostel operates on a harm reduction model, which encourages residents to reduce their alcohol intake alongside a plan of medical care, healthy eating and activities such as art and gardening. For more information: <http://www.depaulireland.org/our-services/low-threshold-harm-reduction-services/stella-maris/>*

A friend of my daughter's volunteers here and these hostels do fantastic work.



DPI's Deputy Director Catriona Vine, DPI's Programme Manager Eleanor Johnson and participants Bejan Matur, Cansu Çamlıbel, Nurcan Baysal and Kezban Hatemi enjoy lunch at The Crown Saloon in Belfast.

Sunday, 1st December 2013

Roundtable Discussion with Ian White at Stormont Hotel, Belfast

With:

Ian White,¹¹⁴ Director of International Programmes, Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation

Moderated by Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, Democratic Progress Institute



Speaker Ian White from the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation provides an overview of the Good Friday Agreement.

¹¹⁴ Ian White is the International and Political Programme Director with the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. Ian has been involved in practical peace building in the Irish context since 1978 and since the late 1990s, has been involved in peace building internationally. He has been responsible for the delivery of short and long term peace building initiatives in Israel/Palestine, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Afghanistan, Nepal, Thailand and Colombia.

Eleanor Johnson: Many thanks to Ian White of the Glencree Centre for joining us today to discuss ‘lessons learned’ from the Northern Ireland experience.

Ian White: I would like to share with you a few lessons from the Irish peace process, but only you can decide to what sections you relate, if any. I emphasise that the peace process is *Irish* not Turkish or Kurdish, but there may be a few important lessons that can help you. I will take questions after the presentation, but in the meantime, does anyone have any pressing questions that they would like to ask that they are still unclear about? Britain came to Ireland 800 years ago and since then there have been fluctuating levels of conflict. The conflict has continued for 800 years, but of course there is a difference between ‘conflict’ and ‘violence’. Violence is fluctuating but conflict continues to exist. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. I think conflict is a good thing. Difference brings conflict, and this should not be destructive. We do not need to hurt people because of conflict. At the same time, we should not suppress conflict and pretend it does not exist. We should discuss conflict to prevent it from turning into violence. If we do not discuss it, it could turn into waves of violence.

The last wave of violence started in 1969 and ended in the 1990s. During that time, 4,000 people were killed, which is a relatively small number compared to the death tolls from conflicts like Bosnia and Rwanda. However, the death of 4,000 people in a population of 1.6 million is quite a large number. These numbers do not include those who were injured in the course of the conflict,

which if included, would increase the number to 100 000 people. If we include the number of individuals that were mentally or emotionally hurt, as well as those that went missing, then the number of people impacted by the conflict turns out to be a large percentage of the population.

In 1994, it became clear to people that there was a peace process underway. However, the peace process actually began in 1978/1979, but it was a private process. Unfortunately, the conflict we had before our peace process still exists in Ireland. Academics refer to Ireland as a 'post conflict society' but this is far from true. Though we have not stopped our conflict, we are *managing* it. This means that violence is almost non-existent. Sometimes, it is all just about management. It is important to know that the objective of the peace process was to build a *sustainable peace* through community and economic resolution.

The peace process addressed many issues such as the decommissioning of guns and weapons by non-state actors. It also addressed the reintegration of those involved in violence. It also involved addressing the question of human rights, sovereignty and who 'owns' Northern Ireland. We ultimately came up with a formula to help us move forward with sovereignty. It also helped us figure realize that economic issues, poverty and conflict are related. There is a socio-economic profile of a non-state armed actor and making it broader, a state-armed actor.

It was clever, the way in which we dismantled our police service. We have to think of all the lessons we have learned. This was not the

first peace process that Ireland has had, but this one was different because it was an *inclusive* and *non-judgmental* process.

As Mac Maharaj¹¹⁵ said, “*it is easy to build peace with your friends but not with your enemies*”

As stated previously, this was the first peace process in Northern Ireland that was all inclusive and non-judgmental. *Sequencing* and *choreography* are important and we should think of the process as a dance. We cannot think of how people will move or react but we can help each other to do the dance.

The next point is equally important. In Ireland, for 40 years, we said we could not have a peace process because we did not trust each other. I think that if we trusted people earlier, we would have been stupid. How can you trust someone who betrayed you, hurt you or even killed your family and friends? But then we realized something important, we did not need to trust *each other* but we needed to trust *the process*. So we got everyone to agree on the process initially, not a total consensus but a ‘sufficient consensus’, knowing that others would eventually follow. This is part of the management of the conflict process.

115 Sathyandranath Ragunanan “Mac” Maharaj is a South African politician associated with the African National Congress (ANC). Currently he holds the role of official spokesperson for Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa.



Guest Speaker Ian White with participants.

However, peace processes are not linear or logical, and when you think of a peace process, it is not a straight line. The problem is, when you have fluctuation in the system, it affects everything. While we can project the future, it does not always go as planned and we do not necessarily know the outcome.

Now a few comments about the conflict in Northern Ireland. I have to restate one point: conflict is good, it is a big challenge for a democratic government but if we do not have conflict, we do not have a healthy and vibrant democracy. In Ireland, I remember my mother saying ‘if we locked up the IRA, it would all be finished’, and I realise that when we are in conflict, it is tempting to look for simple solutions to very complex issues.

On identity, I do not think that identity is important unless it is being threatened. That is the only time identity becomes important.

Conflict also involves more than two people; this conflict is not only between the Protestants and the Catholics. Colonel Gaddafi¹¹⁶ trained the IRA and provided guns for the conflict. The US provided funding for the IRA. Therefore, this shows that the diaspora also played a role in the conflict.

Peace is always a *process* and not a *project*: that was the biggest lesson we learned in Ireland. We thought that if we all did little things it would work. However, peace is a journey and not a destination. I have been a facilitator, facilitating communities to come together. One of the biggest challenges for me was learning to be non-judgmental. In many situations we judge people, but we should not because then we are part of the problem. We need to be *neutral* and *objective* so that we can be peace builders.

Civil society in Ireland has become very important in our peace process. The Glencree Centre occupied a place in the process. We even had the British Government call us up to ask us if we could set up meetings with the Republican community. But it is important to be transparent in these situations as all of us want the same objective; which is peace.

Unfortunately, it took us 800 years to realise that there is no sustainable *security* solution to the problem. Margaret Thatcher thought she could kill the IRA and she managed to kill a few, but in doing so she was responsible for hundreds of others joining the IRA in retaliation. Conventional warfare, which consists of tanks

¹¹⁶ Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi, more commonly known as Colonel Gaddafi, was a Libyan politician and ruler of the country for 42 years before being overthrown in the Libyan revolution in 2011.

and drones, is different from guerrilla warfare, which consists of suicide bombs, car bombs and small weaponry. Making them fight each other solves nothing. With regard to the victims, anyone who has lost family members deserves sympathy, but we should not be blinded by compassion. Victims are the biggest obstacle to peace because they want *justice*. But their idea of justice is to lock up the people who have brought them harm. However, there is a greater need for transitional justice.

Conflict and peace centre on two things: relationships and issues. There are five ways to bring peace during conflict:

- *Avoiding*: When the relationship and issue are both not important.
- *Accommodating*: When the relationship is important but the issue is not.
- *Competing*: When the issue is important but the relationship is not.
- *Collaboration*: When the relationship and the issue are important, but it is not necessarily appropriate for all situations. When all else fails, we should compromise, but this is not necessarily the starting point.

For example, if Eleanor and I here both saw an orange on the ground and both wanted it, compromising would suggest that we divide the orange in half. But what if I just wanted the rind and she wanted the juice? We could both have had what we wanted. There are different ways to come up with a solution. Therefore, dialogue and discussion always improve the conflict resolution process.

Participants: Thank you for your talk Ian, it has been very useful

Eleanor Johnson: Many thanks indeed Ian, this was an extremely useful overview. I now had over to Bejan Matur, who will close the visit.

Bejan Matur: When we step back and analyse the situation, we want to change the situation in our country. We met Jonathan Powell¹¹⁷ and he told us not to repeat the mistakes made elsewhere and to make sure that we can learn from our own past mistakes. It is important to see change as a peace process. We met with several Members of Parliament over the course of our visit, and while tensions were high, they have moved forward. When we look at the situation from afar, we see different issues and we have learned a lot. I hope that we have a follow up meeting. Thank you to Catriona Vine, Eleanor Johnson and Ian White. This visit has indeed broadened our horizons. We cannot change, but we can understand. We have gone through so many processes so far.

DPI started this women's group one and a half year ago with a roundtable meeting in Istanbul. This is because women's contributions are invisible; but they are *invaluable* in the process. Especially in Kurdish politics, women are very effective.

I believe that the process of grief and condolence is important because victims see this as closure. We have to move forward from

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Powell is founder and CEO of Inter Mediate, an NGO devoted to conflict resolution working in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Jonathan was Chief of Staff to Tony Blair from 1995 to 2007 and from 1997 was also Chief British Negotiator on Northern Ireland. He is a member of DPI's Council of Experts.

that. Academics do not write about understanding your opponent, but we must strive to do that as well. This is different from sadness. We have Islam, which offers different way of grieving. It is more passionate, which we think about and remember.

Thank you to all of you for your participation in what has been an extremely valuable and important visit here in Ireland. I hope there will be more to come.

Appendix

DPI Comparative Study Visit: The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution 28 November - 2 December 2013

Turkey Participants

- Nurcan Baysal, Journalist and Founding Member of the Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research
- Cansu Çamlıbel, Journalist for Hurriyet Daily Newspaper
- Esra Elmas, Democratic Progress Institute
- Sibel Eraslan, Journalist for Star Gazette Newspaper
- Kezban Hatemi, Lawyer
- Bejan Matur, Author and Poet
- Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Journalist for Daily Zaman Newspaper
- Fatma Bostan Ünsal, Başkent Kadın Platformu

International Participants

- Dermot Ahern, Former Irish Member of Parliament
- Paula Bradley, Democratic Unionist Party, MLA
- Breige Brownlee, Sinn Féin Councillor and Former Republican Prisoner
- Lynn Carvill, Women's Sector Lobbyist, Women's Resource and Development Agency
- Kevin Cooper, Press Photographer

- Tanya Hughes, Director, Ballybeen Women's Centre
- Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, DPI
- Eleanor Jordan, Centre Coordinator, Windsor Women's Centre
- Vasundra Kamble, Member, Alliance Party
- Avila Kilmurray, Founding Member, Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
- Amanda Marshall, Education and Training Coordinator, Ballybeen Women's Centre
- Susan McEwen, Development Director, Corrymeela Community
- Anne Marie McWilliams, Former Republican Prisoner
- Liz O'Donnell, Former Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Ireland
- Geraldine Rice, Member, Alliance Party
- Catriona Vine, Deputy Director and Director of Programmes, DPI
- Ian White, Director of International Programmes, Glencree Centre

DPI Board and Council of Experts

Director:

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.

Prof. Penny Green (Secretary)

Deputy Head (Research), Dickson Poon School of Law, King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom. Professor Green joined King's in September 2007 following eight years as Professor of Law and Criminology at the University of Westminster. Prior to that she held posts at the University of Southampton and the LSE.

Arild Humlen

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

Prof. David Petrasek

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

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.

Priscilla Hayner

Co-founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, former consultant to the Ford Foundation, the

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

Antonia Potter Prentice

Antonia has 17 years experience across a diverse range of humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues in the not-for-profit sector, most recently specialising in women's empowerment and gender. This includes extensive management and leadership at a strategic level. Educated at Oxford and the London School of Economics, she has worked in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor, Switzerland, India, USA and Indonesia for NGOs including Save the Children, Concern Worldwide, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Oxfam GB and Médecins du Monde.

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.

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.

Ali Bayramoğlu

Writer and political commentator. He is a columnist for the Turkish daily newspaper Yeni Safak. Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission Established by Prime Minister Erdoğan.

Prof. Christine Bell

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

Cengiz Çandar

Senior Journalist and columnist for Radikal Daily News, expert on the Middle East and former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

Yılmaz Ensaroğlu

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. Member of the Wise Persons Commission established by Prime Minister Erdogan.

Prof. Mervyn Frost

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

Martin Griffiths

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, founding member of Inter Mediate, 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, UN Assistant Secretary-General. Martin was formerly senior advisor to Kofi Annan during his time as joint U.N.-Arab League special envoy to Syria.

Dr Edel Hughes

Senior Lecturer at University of East London. Prior to joining the University of East London, Edel was awarded an LLM and PhD degrees in International Human Rights Law from the National University of Ireland, Galway in 2003 and 2009 respectively. Edel was a lecturer in law at the School of Law, University of Limerick, between 2006 and 2011.

Prof. Dr Ahmet Insel

A managing editor of Turkey editing house Iletisim and Head of the Department of Economics in Galatasaray University, Istanbul. Also a Professor at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. Author and columnist.

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.

Salomón Lerner Febres

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

Prof. 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 for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Formerly Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

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.

Jonathan Powell

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

Sir Kieran Prendergast

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

Rajesh Rai

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. He is Founding Director of HIC, a Community Centred NGO based in Cameroon, and of Human Energy (Uganda) Ltd, and was previously a Director of The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI). Rajesh also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Council and internationally, in India, Africa, Asia, and the USA.

Prof. Naomi Roht-Arriaza

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

Prof. Dr. Mithat Sancar

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on constitutional citizenship and transitional justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper. Has written extensively on International Human Rights Law and Constitutional issues. Member of Turkey's Wise Persons Commission Established by Prime Minister Erdoğan.



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