Dear IAW members,

The news about the situation in the Near East is slightly better, but 'peace' is still far away. It is with this in mind that we mail you our monthly newsletter.

Our IAW friends in Kuwait did not succeed in getting a woman elected in parliament, but there is a woman minister in the new cabinet.

Our IAW friends who took part in the UN conference against small arms did not reach their goal, which was an accepted document, but the problem is so tremendous that we all have to move forward anyway.

IAW has warned often of the dangers of obstetric fistula, the damage of internal organs in immature bodies of girls, who are too young to conceive. UNPFA is bringing it now into the open.

As usual you will find news about conferences, events, interesting websites etc. at the end of this newsletter. For a start we have two quotations, mailed to us by Dr. Jocelynne Scutt, Australia.

'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.'
Dr Martin Luther King

'In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.'
George Orwell

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
WOMAN'S STRUGGLE

Women's Struggle is the name of the wonderful half yearly Journal of IAW Affiliate 'The Greek League for Women's Rights' (or in Greek: Agonas tis Ggynaekas).
Most of it is written in Greek but there is an English and French summary. Here is a selection.

Awards
There were two awards: one for two young journalists who best presented and supported gender equality. During the new year gathering, honorary former IAW President Alice Yotopoulos-Marangopoulou spoke on 'Human Rights at a crucial point'.
The other prize bears the name of Alice Yotopoulos-Marangopoulou herself and on March 8 went to Ms Chryssoula Yatagena, a former Public Prosecutor who pioneered the humanisation of prisons and the purging of the Justice system.

Start closing Guantanamo and stop the decline towards abolition of Democracy
This article in 'Woman's Struggle' is about the report by 5 independent UN experts on torture, made public on 15 February 2006. It was adopted the next day by Kofi Annan, who expressed the hope that “the US Government will close Guantanamo as soon as possible”.
In this experts report, specific acts of torture are denounced and the experts ask for the immediate closure of the Guantanamo purgatory. Concerning the detainees, the report calls for their release, or the immediate indictment of each one with specific charges and their trial.

The article ends with statements and demands. We call for:
1) the implementation of the relevant international and European laws: torture is prohibited without any exception and the places where torture takes place have to close immediately.
2. the prohibition of the abductions of "suspects" carried out by foreign secret services, from the territory of any country, starting with Greece, without any legal procedure, to transport them to Guantanamo or to any affiliates in Europe or elsewhere.

And, at the end of the article:

The Attorney General and Senior Law Lords of the United Kingdom, even belatedly, to complete their basically correct position with a more courageous step against tolerating the discrimination against citizens of non-British nationalities. The discrimination itself is a violation of international human rights law!

Governments of the European Union and the European countries, to stop being accomplices in the elimination of the HR and the personal security of your citizens, who entrusted you with their own protection!

The list of more recent human rights violations which you legalise with your measures, becomes longer with the addition of the right to private life and free correspondence and action, with the cameras and the monitoring of communication with electronic means.

This attitude results in the gradual but steady abolition of democracy.

Kuwait Emir retains Woman Minister in New Cabinet

Kuwait’s Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah named a new Cabinet excluding two key figures as demanded by the opposition after its impressive election victory, but MPs blasted the government for “falling far below expectations”. State media said the Emir gave the energy post to Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, an energy sector outsider — keeping the portfolio within the ruling family, which also retained the other key foreign, defense and interior posts.

Massouma Al-Mubarak, who in 2005 became the first woman to hold a Cabinet post in the country when she was named planning minister, was given the communications post. She is the only woman member of Cabinet.

Continue on: http://www.arabnews.com/?page=4&section=0&article=85149&d=11&m=7&y=2006&pix=world.png&category=World%22

Kuwaiti Women

On BBC News we found an interview with Nadia Al-Sharrah, Economist/political campaigner. She says: We didn't elect a woman to parliament. I think some of the women candidates were placed by the government to run against male reformist candidates in the same district. Most women voted according to what was best for Kuwait. They didn't vote for the women just because they were women.

I think when we reduce the number of constituencies to five, there will be a good chance for a strong woman candidate to succeed next time.

No surprise

I wasn't surprised that women didn't get a seat in parliament. Some of the female candidates got only two or three votes. It is understandable because this is the first time Kuwaiti women have run for office. Maybe Kuwaitis are not yet used to the idea of women participating in public life. But this result does not invalidate women's rights.

INTERNATIONAL ITEMS

UN conference draws attention to illicit trade in arms, but closes without a text

7 July 2006 – The United Nations conference on progress in stemming the illicit trade in small arms that fuel conflict and crime ended today without adopting a common position paper – as differences between delegations on follow-up actions remained unresolved – but it succeeded in drawing world attention to the issue, its chairman said.

A success?

“This conference was a success in that it brought great international attention to the issue,” Chairman Prasad Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka said, noting the broad media coverage of the conference, which opened on June 26 to review the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which remains the pivotal framework for international, regional and national activity to curtail illegal gun trafficking.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan reminded the Conference in his opening address, every year an
estimated $1 billion worth of these weapons are traded illicitly worldwide, exacerbating conflicts that kill tens of thousands, sparking refugee flows, undermining the rule of law and spawning a “culture of violence and impunity.”

**Illegal gun-trafficking in nearly 140 countries**

In the past five years since the Programme of Action was adopted, nearly 140 countries have reported on illegal gun trafficking, while a third of all States have made efforts to collect weapons from those not legally entitled to hold them, Mr. Annan said. Other progress included increased cooperation among and within regions to stem the flow of illicit weapons across national borders.

More than 2,000 representatives from governments, international and regional organizations and civil society took part in the two-week event.


*Editor's note: read also the observations of IAW member Susanne Rivelles in the next IWNews*

**HEALTH**

**UNFPA targets fistula - a little-discussed but frequent childbirth injury**

Stepping up the fight against obstetric fistula, the United Nations Population Fund has launched a fund-raising campaign to treat and prevent that is wreaking havoc for scores of women in developing countries.

Along with African countries, obstetric fistula is common in women in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. This creates a hole, leaving the woman incontinent, often disabled, in great pain, and unable to conceive again.

"We're hoping to be able to get commitment from people and governments to be able to invest in this," UNFPA's Dr. Arletty Pinel said. "And in the case of Africa specifically, governments must get to know more about obstetric fistula and maternal health, so even they can allot from their own budgets, money for this."

**Bring the problem in the open**

Now the fund is launching a campaign to bring the problem into the open. It is estimated there are 20,000 to 50,000 new cases of obstetric fistula each year, on top of the millions of women, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, who already live with the condition.

The United Nations Population Fund is hoping to raise awareness with a new campaign, saying the condition can be both prevented and treated easily, but more resources must be put into maternal health care.

Those behind the campaign are aiming to raise US$75 million over five years to help those women whose lives have been blighted by fistula and to save the lives of their children. (CNA /ct/UNWIRE) budgets, money for this."

*Editors note: fistula obstretica means leaking urine and faeces, and with it social dismissal.*

*See article re Dr Catherine Hamlin working tirelessly in this field in Ethiopia (IWN News April ’05)*

*Note:*

This article was published in Youth Information of the Indian Committee of Youth Organizations (ICYO). ICYO is a registered non-profit, non-governmental network organisation, committed in developing areas of mutual cooperation and understanding among different youth voluntary agencies, youth groups, clubs and individuals working in the field of youth welfare in India. ICYO functions as an umbrella organisation of over 356 youth NGOs spread across 122 districts of 22 states in India.

**CEDAW and Tobacco**

*Gudrun Haupter, convenor of the IAW Health Commission, writes:*

According to the 2005 decision CEDAW will now meet 3 times a year. In August China will be examined - where still are misconceptions about tobacco. Many even believe it is harmful only for Caucasians and it has beneficial effects on their own health. Although now only 4 % of women smoke against 61 % of men, with China's drive for change and westernisation this can be expected to change.

WHO continues to push for the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. At the General Assembly in May I talked to our contact person at the Tobacco-Free Initiative (TFI) and confirmed our intention to further collaborate.

**Doha Round of international free trade talks - negotiations suspended**

WTO Chief, Pascal Lamy told heads of delegations in the informal meeting that he will recommend a “time out” to the General Council on 27 July. He did not suggest how long the talks will be suspended.
They can only resume when progress can be made, which in turn will require changes in entrenched positions, he said. The suspension will apply to all negotiating groups.

Mr Lamy reached this conclusion after talks among six major members broke down on 23 July. Ministers from Australia, Brazil, the European Union, India, Japan and the United States had met in Geneva to try to follow up on instructions from the St Petersburg Summit on 17 July.

**Turkey - projects on women's rights issues**

UNDP conducts two major projects on women's rights issues in Turkey. 'CEDAW Follow Up Project', carried out within the framework of Women's Integration in Development programme, aims to promote women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming in Turkey.

While Turkish women highly participate in professions and were granted the vote in the 1930s, and Turkey is apparently the only Muslim country with equal rights of inheritance and divorce for both sexes, women still face significant inequalities in property ownership, literacy ratio, political representation and visibility, especially in the less developed parts of the country. Turkey ratified the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) in 1986. However, there are still significant violations of women's human rights.

The 'CEDAW Follow Up' project started in 2005 with a budget of $ 30,000. UNDP's main partner in this project is Uçan Süpürge' (the Flying Broom) Women's Organization.

**Women in Politics**

The main objective of the second, 'Women in Politics' project is to increase the number of women in the Turkish Parliament. The project promotes women's participation in politics, as a means to deepening democratic practice and strengthen the visibility of gender in the period leading to the 2007 general elections in Turkey. UNDP's project has a budget of $ 120,000, and its major partner is the Association of Supporting and Training Women Candidates (KA-DER). UNDP also partners with the broader community of women's activists, including the women's branches of the leading political parties.


**UNESCO calls for more international aid to African education**

UNESCO has called on the international community to give more aid to African education because almost 50 percent of primary school-age children in west and central Africa are out of school and the ratio is more than one-third in eastern and southern Africa. UNESCO estimates that if the education for all goals are to be reached by the target date 2015, aid to basic education needs to rise to some 12 billion U.S. dollars a year up from about 4.4 billion dollars in 2004.

UNESCO director Koichiro Matsuura said in a press release that there are over 100 million children out of school in the world today, accounting for around 18 percent of the total school-age children.

**Gender Equality Architecture and UN Reform**

Jul. 2, 2006. This paper briefly outlines the successes and failures of the current UN system in addressing gender equality and women's rights, and puts forth several principles and characteristics that are critical to reforming the gender equality architecture in order to deliver consistent positive gender equality outcomes. On UN News Centre at http://www.un.org/news

Main recommendations of the report of the Secretary General on http://www.un.org/reform/pdfs/bullet%20points.pdf

**The Bride Price**

*Another story brought to us by IAW member Anjana Basu*

In many societies, the term "child bride" calls to mind impetuous sweethearts, a ladder cautiously positioned beneath a bedroom window, a silent kiss in the moonlight and a young couple making an anxious getaway to a justice of the peace. But this is not a ready image the world over. In Afghanistan, a child bride is very often just that: a child, even a pre-teen, her innocence betrothed to someone older, even much, much older.

**Eleven years old**

Roshan Qasem, 11, will join the household of Said Mohammed, 55; his first wife, their three sons and their daughter, who is the same age as Roshan. Rather than a willing union between a man and woman, marriage is frequently a transaction among families, and the younger the bride, the higher the price she may fetch.
Girls are valuable workers in a land where survival is scratched from the grudging soil of a half-acre parcel. In her parents' home, a girl can till fields, tend livestock and cook meals. In her husband's home, she is more useful yet. She can have sex and bear children. Afghanistan is not alone in this predilection toward early wedlock. Globally, the number of child brides is hard to tabulate; they live mostly in places where births, deaths and the human milestones in between go unrecorded.

**One girl in seven married under 15**
But there are estimates. About 1 in 7 girls in the developing world (excluding China) gets married before her 15th birthday, according to analyses done by the Population Council, an international research group.

In the huge Indian states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the proportion is 36 percent; in Bangladesh, 37 percent; in northwest Nigeria, 48 percent; in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, 50 percent. Tens of millions of girls are having babies before their bodies are mature enough, increasing the likelihood of death from haemorrhaging, obstructed labour and other complications.

**Hunger and years of drought**
Stephanie Sinclair's striking photographs of child brides in Afghanistan remind me of my own travels over remote landscapes during the time of the Taliban, when recurring years of drought had parched the final resources from millions of the destitute. Fathers then were especially keen to convert their daughters into brides. It was a way to deliver the girl from hunger — and a way to at least temporarily ward off famine for the rest of the family. Young boys were sold into bondage with the same painful practicality. "Rarely have I seen anything more heartbreaking than the tears of a relinquished child."

The drought has since passed, but the poverty remains, as does the widespread custom of early marriage. Some Afghans readily use their daughters to settle debts and assuage disputes. Polygamy is practiced.

**Thirteen years old**
A man named Mohammed Fazal, 45, told Sinclair that village elders had urged him to take his second wife, 13-year-old Majabin, in lieu of money owed him by the girl's father. The two men had been gambling at cards while also ingesting opium and hashish.

But the practice of early marriage stems as much from entrenched culture as from financial need. Bridal virginity is a matter of honour. Afghan men want to marry virgins, and parents prefer to yield their daughters before misbehaviour or abduction has brought the family shame and made any wedding impossible.

**An end to schooling**
Unfortunately, there are no reliable data about the age of Afghans at marriage. Husbands are not ordinarily old enough to be their wives' fathers or grandfathers, but such February-September couples are hardly rare either. In such marriages, the man is likely to view the age difference as a fair bargain, his years of experience in exchange for her years of fecundity. At the same time, the girl's wishes are customarily disregarded. Her marriage will end her opportunities for schooling and independent work.

On the day she witnessed the engagement party of 11-year-old Ghulam Haider to 40-year-old Faiz Mohammed, Sinclair discreetly took the girl aside. "What are you feeling today?" the photographer asked. "Nothing," the bewildered girl answered. "I do not know this man. What am I supposed to feel?"


AWID International Meeting Money and Movement, November 9-11, Mexico (http://awid.org/moneyandmovements/)


WEL Informed, June 2006
The electronic newsletter of Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), Australia, has an interesting article about 'Women's Paid Work'.

WWSF Women’s World Summit Foundation has an e-Newsletter 2006 Edition. Nr. III is giving updates on activities of the women's and children's section. Please share with your network and friends.

A new website on http://www.un-ngls.org/
Subject: Secretary-General’s Report International Migration and Development The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration and IOM co-publish booklet on Migrants’ Remittances

Mumbai
Mumbai came to a shocking standstill on July 11 when serial blasts ripped through its local trains, killing and wounding hundreds. But the city of dreams stood fearless and fighting fit. Salute Mumbai's never-say-die spirit and Light a Candle for those who succumbed to the blasts or got injured. For every candle you light, CNN-IBN and Channel 7 will donate Re 1 for the relief of the victims. On http://clients.ibnlive.com/features/mumatt/index.php

Editors note: this is a sympathetic idea to collect money for the victims, but the problem is: they ask for your phone and email address. I never do that, but it is up to others to judge for themselves.

Note
We are sending this newsletter as an attachment, saved in Word 97.
Please be so kind to advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address, in case they are not on our mailing list.

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