

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

IAW website: <http://www.womenalliance.com>

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER -June, nr. 5



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

This newsletter is mostly about war and its aftermath, all rather sad and gloomy. There is one wonderful exception and a most promising one: the enormous response the IANSA got from people all over the world in its fight against small arms!

*Also: Gudrun Haupter spoke for IAW at the 56th Session of the World Health Assembly; in India women's groups are still confronting politicians about a law on sexual harassment; in the Philippines women's groups won a victory with the signing of the Anti-sex Trafficking Law *see notes. And sadly for us all, Mrs. Aroti Dutt, former President of the CWAI, active IAW member and a well known social worker, passed away last month.*

LETHAL WEAPONS

IANSA and Small Arms, UN Biennial Meeting of States, 7 – 11 July

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world have launched a Week of Action as part of their campaign against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Small arms - including handguns, rifles and military firearms - kill one person every minute worldwide. The Week of Action has been held a month in advance of the UN Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) on Small Arms scheduled for 7-11 July, which will review progress made by UN member states. NGOs are using the Week of Action to remind governments of the commitment they made and hold them to account. In July 2001, IANSA was instrumental in raising and unifying the voices of NGOs at the United Nations Small Arms Conference in New York, the first world gathering on small arms and light weapons. Information on: www.iansa.org

News Stories on http://www.iansa.org/action/news_coverage.htm

The Week of Action events are getting covered in national and international media around the world, and the stories keep pouring in. For example:

United States - The Pro-Gun lobby has leapt into action upon learning of the IANSA Week of Action. They report a sinister UN plan to steal their weapons.

http://www.gopusa.com/news/2003/june/0603_gun_ban.shtml

Lebanon - In an interview with Tele Liban, Fadi Abi Allam of the Permanent Peace Movement promoted the Week of Action and the Lebanese conference on small arms that he has organised. The programme was broadcast on Arab and Nile satellite TV.

Uganda - At a press conference in Kampala about the Week of Action, the government announced a census and voluntary collection of illegally held guns.

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200306050545.html>

Macedonia - In addition to articles in various printed media, the Balkan Action Network Against Small Arms (BANSA) gave presentations on national MTV, and on two radio networks.

And ... a network has been launched - you can join !

Contacting the Women's Network Organiser is easy: email <women@iansa.org>.

'Mini-Nukes' and 'Bunker-Busters',

Nuclear Weapons Development Tied to Hill Approval

The Senate agreed yesterday to require President Bush to win approval of Congress before ordering full-scale development of a new generation of battlefield nuclear weapons but turned back a Democratic drive to retain a decade-old statutory ban on such work.

Democrats vowed to continue fighting what they described as determined efforts by the Bush administration to produce new nuclear weapons, arguing that it would undermine US efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons, prompt a new arms race and invite nuclear war.

"We are in this for a long haul," said Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), suggesting Democrats will try again to halt the weapons development when spending bills are debated this summer and fall.

In response to Democratic attacks, Republicans said the administration is interested only in research at this point and argued that the new weapons could prove critical in modern warfare especially in dismantling chemical and biological weapons. It makes no sense not to explore options, they argued.

At issue were two systems: low-yield "mini-nukes" of 5 kilotons or less that Congress put off-limits in 1993, and high-yield, burrowing nuclear "bunker-busters" that target military facilities or arsenals.

Funds to continue to studies on the bunker-busters and language lifting the mini-nukes ban were included in legislation to authorise \$400.5 billion in military programs for next years, an increase of nearly \$18 billion over current spending.

A comparable bill before the House would remove the ban on research but retain it on other steps in the process and continue to fund the bunker-busting project. Differences between the two bills will have to be resolved in a conference between the chambers.

Although Senate Democrats conceded defeat in failing to retain the ban on smaller nuclear weapons, they claimed credit for prompting Republicans to strike the compromise requiring congressional authorization before full-scale development.

In a subsequent 56 to 41 vote, the Senate decided to keep a \$15 million allocation for continued research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, or bunker-buster, that could **explode with as much as 70 times the force of the Hiroshima bomb**. But it also imposed the same conditions as it did for the low-yield weapons.

By Helen Dewar, Washington Post, May 22, 2003

MONEY AND POWER BACKING THREATS

UNITED STATES – EUROPE – a bitter dispute

The bitter dispute between the US and Europe over Iraq burst into the open again when the US threatened Belgium with a boycott and Germany and France registered protests at the UN about Washington's continued opposition to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The US defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, warned Belgium at a NATO meeting to drop its controversial war crimes law or face a boycott of NATO's Brussels HQ. Belgium, a founder member of NATO, has a law giving it jurisdiction to try war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity wherever they are committed. The Belgian government has already been trying to water it down.

Threats to suspend financial support

Mr Rumsfeld condemned "divisive politicised lawsuits" such as the one threatening General Tommy Franks, the commander of US forces in Iraq. The US is threatening to suspend its financial support for a new €400m (£280m) building for NATO. "It would obviously not be easy for US officials ... to come to Belgium," Mr Rumsfeld said. "It would not make much sense to build a new headquarters if they can't come here for meetings." He refused to say whether the US wanted to see the headquarters moved from Brussels, but added: "It's perfectly possible to meet elsewhere."

Belgium's defence minister, André Flahaut, insisted that American officials could continue to enter the country without fear of harassment. Belgium opposed the war in Iraq, along with France and Germany, and then joined them in launching a separate EU defence initiative in April. Mr Rumsfeld's remarks overshadowed a meeting designed to introduce an overhaul of NATO's military command to allow it to fight terrorism and other threats far from Europe.

International Criminal Court

The legacy of the Iraq war also surfaced in New York during a vote at the UN Security Council on a resolution extending for a year a US exemption from the International Criminal Court, which began work last year. Although it has the backing of 90 countries, including Britain and the rest of Europe, the court is shunned by the US because of fears that its servicemen could face trial. France and the other 14 council members voted unanimously last year to allow the US exemption from the court. But yesterday France, and Germany - which was not on the council last year - sent a protest to Washington by abstaining in the vote. Syria also abstained. A Security Council source said that France was emboldened by having Germany for company this year, but that France also "wanted to send a protest to Washington".

Britain, though a strong supporter of the court, voted to continue the US exemption. The British government regards the exemption as the least bad option, because it will avoid a repeat of the standoff last year in which the US threatened to block peacekeeping operations unless it was given an opt-out. The British government says it recognises American concerns but adds that it does not regard the prospect of US soldiers being tried by the court as a realistic one.

A Mixture of the Carrot and the Stick

Human rights groups said Washington had used a mixture of the carrot and the stick to force smaller countries to support it this year, and the UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, expressed his disapproval of the US opt-out. At the NATO meeting, defence ministers approved a new post to oversee an ambitious agenda for military modernisation. Norfolk, Virginia, will be the base for a "transformation headquarters".

The Guardian, June 2003.

THE AFTERMATH OF WAR, IRAQ

Schoolgirl is feared dead amid spate of rapes and abductions in Baghdad

They say that abductions and rape in "liberated Iraq" are only rumours. But on 22 May, Baida Sadik left her home in Shaab City, Baghdad, for school and never returned. Her fellow students said they saw her being shoved at gunpoint into a car. It was just after 8am.

She is - or was - 16 years old. The dark-haired, green-eyed Baida had pleaded with her uncle to be allowed to return to school amid Baghdad's post-war anarchy because she knew that her future depended on her studies - she wanted to become a nurse. But the full story of her ordeal may never be known. Her sister Nagham fears she is already dead.

For weeks, the reported rape and kidnapping of young women in Baghdad was treated with a mixture of scepticism and fear. But the tens of thousands of families who kept their daughters from school - or insisted US troops guard their classes - appear to have had good reason to worry. At the al-Kindi University Hospital in Baghdad, Dr Ahmed Assafi, the emergency room resident, says he has treated five young women who were raped in the aftermath of the war. But he says many other cases are never officially reported because of the Arab "honour" code towards women. "Baghdad has become a jungle, where anyone can disappear - and without anyone daring to intervene," Dr Assafi said as he prepared to help a middle-aged Iraqi man who had been shot in the head by thieves trying to steal his car.

The latest rape case treated by the doctor was a female student at the Shaab City Secondary School. Like Baida, she was abducted on her way to school but, in this case, the kidnappers threw acid in her face to prevent her ever being able to identify them. The men spent two hours in the car raping the blinded girl.

Somehow, the student managed to escape and was taken to hospital.

Baida Sadik's brothers have been relentlessly searching for her since she disappeared, plastering the walls of Baghdad's hospitals, police stations and schools with her picture, taking turns to drive around the slums at night even though they risk being killed. Attached to Baida's portrait is a note that says: "In the name of honour, please come forward". Honour, indeed, seems to be a theme in the tragedy of Baghdad's kidnapped women. It plays an essential role in the patriarchal Iraqi society, where a woman has to preserve her dignity at all costs to safeguard her family's reputation.

Sahar al-Yassri, a lawyer who has represented rape victims, explained: "In Iraq, a woman who suffers rape or has been abducted becomes dead to society." Before the war, women who wished to prosecute their aggressors after a sexual assault would be referred by the police for examination by doctors at the Baghdad mortuary. DNA tests were unavailable during the 12 years of UN sanctions against Iraq.

But Dr Ali Fa'ak, the director of the Baghdad morgue, says that in the "New Iraq" women can no longer be referred to him. "They are now even more vulnerable than before the war because they can't have their assailants prosecuted," he says. This has produced a grim situation. Because the corpses of men and women are still examined by pathologists, a raped woman has a better chance of triggering an investigation if she is dead.

By Victoria Firmo-Fontan in Baghdad, 07 June 2003

Sent in by IAW member Helen Self, asking: What can IAW do?

AND ANOTHER SIDE OF WAR, AFRICA

UN Adviser urges Security Council Missions to Africa, to focus on Women, Girls

New York, Jun 6 2003

On the eve of a United Nations Security Council mission to Central Africa, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's top adviser on women's issues has reminded the delegation of its commitment to put women and girls at the centre of peace efforts and to ensure that women played a greater role in the region's overall reconciliation processes. In a briefing note to the 15-nation Council, Angela King noted "women and girls have been plagued with violence, loss of loved ones, destruction of communities and untold hardships in these regions riddled by internal conflict and war."

Trafficking, forced displacement, massacres targetting women

With the Council delegation set to leave for Central Africa, Ms King's note highlights trafficking, forced displacement, massacres targeting women and, particularly, the use of rape as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She emphasised recent reports from the DRC's bloodied north-eastern Ituri district of a disturbingly high number of mass rapes and brutal atrocities committed against women and girls as young as two years old. Ms King also offers practical recommendations and outlines benchmarks on gender issues that the Council should consider throughout its assignments in Africa, particularly in its meetings with women's organisations.

The note, prepared jointly with an Inter-agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, encourages the Council to look for the impact of the conflict on women and girls, equal participation of men and women in consultations, mechanisms to address victims, and programmes to respond to and prevent violence, abuse and exploitation of women and girls.

For more details go to UN News Centre at <http://www.un.org/news>

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WAR, SEXUAL HARASSMENT

While Cruise missiles rained on Iraq, and the Anglo-American forces showed off their latest armaments on real-time TV, men, women and children in India were dying for reasons unrelated to that kind of war. They continued to die of hunger and disease, to be killed in sectarian violence, to be murdered because they were women, to be brutalised because they belonged to a particular caste. The list has remained depressingly consistent over time.

If you look at the newspapers of the last three weeks, it would be hard to imagine that there has been anything else happening anywhere else in the world except in Iraq - barring the spread of the mysterious Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Yet, life does not stop just because a jugalbandi called Bush and Blair decide to work out their war fantasy in a land some distance away from their own and representing no convincing danger to their lands.

In the last month, women's groups have also been involved in another kind of war as they engaged in a vigorous debate with the National Commission on Women (NCW) about **a bill on sexual harassment** that has yet to be tabled in Parliament. The Sexual Harassment of Women at their Work Place (Prevention) Bill 2000, has been pending for the last two years. Women's groups rejected the first draft as they found it completely inadequate. In the course of the last two years,

these groups have consulted other groups around the country and communicated their suggestions both orally and in writing to the NCW. Despite this, the new draft fails to reflect any of the many constructive suggestions put forward by women's groups.

This is not the space to discuss the details of the bill that the NCW is supposed to circulate and discuss with a wide cross-section of women's groups. But the critique prepared by the women's groups needs to be heeded if the government is serious about having a useful law. There is absolutely no point in stuffing our statute books with laws that remain on paper and give no real solace to the people for whom they were designed.

A selection from: Another kind of war, by Kalpana Sharma, Hindu Sunday Magazine April 20 2003. Sent in by IAW member Anjana Basu.

Self-defence training to prevent rape, abuse, sexual harassment

The incidence of rape and sexual abuse is increasing in the capital city of India, Delhi, The Youth Information highlighted this problem in its past issues.

Ms Aparna Basu, President, All India Women's Conference (AIWC), New Delhi provided information to ICYO that her organisation is taking measure to curb the such incidents and prepare the today's women to face such unfortunate situation. 'All India Women's Conference', with the help of Delhi Police, arranged 'Self-Defence training' for the girls residing in the AIWC's Working Women's Hostel in February-March, 2003. This includes the practical training on using book, bag or dupattas for self-defence. The Delhi police provided certificates to these trained girls. The organisation is planning to conduct more such trainings.

Sent in by IAW member Sachiko Okumura, Japan

Philippines - Anti-sex Trafficking Law a Victory for Women's Groups

For setting standards to address the issue of sex trafficking, Gabriela welcomes the signing into law of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 today May 26 in a ceremony in Malacanang attended by women's groups and Bayan Muna Representative, Liza Maza. Gabriela is in the forefront of the fight against sex trafficking both at international and domestic levels. In 1998, it launched a global campaign dubbed "Purple Rose Campaign Against Trafficking of Filipino Women and Children."

According to Emmi de Jesus, deputy-secretary general of Gabriela, the law adds up to a series of measures initiated by women's groups to protect women and children from persons and institutions who are out to exploit their innocence and poverty. The law is particularly strong on giving sanctions to military personnel engaged in trafficking as well as to Internet sex traders. "This law would not have been passed if not for the vigilance of women's groups," said de Jesus. The law, however, could not curb sex trafficking, affirms de Jesus. It sets limits on the protection of women and has loopholes that are out to benefit perpetrators, such as the provision on confidentiality.

As the privacy of victims is ensured, so is that of the perpetrators. The abusers risk no exposure and could go on their way undetected as they damage more lives. Poverty and Macho culture remain the stumbling block.

Emmi de Jesus, Gabriela, 26 May 2003, website: http://member.tripod.com/~gabriela_p

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

Aroti Dutt – In Memoriam

Well known social worker Mrs Aroti Dutt, President Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Association Former World President Associated Countrywomen of the World and Founder President of several national and international organisations passed away on Tuesday 6th May. She was a pathbreaker in women's welfare work and opened up several new areas as regards women's income generation and child care.

Saroj Nalini Dutt Memorial Association's Headquarters at Ballygunge Station Road housed 22 different sections all personally overseen by Aroti Di - as she was fondly known to all. Mirpur Village Centre, Gurusaday Museum for Women and Children, Brotochari Gram, the Bidhova Ashram at Puri and old peoples' homes at Mirpur and Madhyam gram were also part of her huge area of activity. Her death leaves a void that will be difficult to fill.

Country Women's Association of India (CWAI)

Child and Adolescent Health and Development

Statement of Gudrun Haupter at the 56th Session of the World Health Assembly, May 2003. In addressing child and adolescent health and development, and particularly the health and development of girls, I am speaking on behalf of the International Alliance of Women, the World Federation of Mental Health, the Inter-African Committee and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women.

We welcome WHO's proposal of a **strategy** for improving the health and development of children and adolescents, as well as its comprehensive global assessment of violence in the World Report on Violence and Health. Both make it clear that, although physical and psychological abuse and neglect concern both sexes, women and girls are more vulnerable to many forms of violence such as sexual abuse and exploitation, infanticide, female genital mutilation or forced early marriage, to mention only a few. All these have life-long health and development implications. We therefore urge governments, experts and civil society to follow WHO's lead and consistently apply a gender perspective in preventive and reactive measures as well as in treatment.

The path traced by WHO in these two documents has already gone a long way in raising the awareness of the international community to the specific rights and needs of this age group in matters of health.

We would like to list but a few concrete new developments which we NGOs have long advocated:

- * The Commission of Human Rights recently appointed a **Special Rapporteur** on the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. His preliminary report this year has clearly emphasised his intent to tackle issues of relevance to children and adolescents.

- * NGOs are already fully engaged in preparations for the Study on Violence against Children undertaken by the UN in which WHO is a prominent partner. This offers an additional avenue for effective NGO/IGO collaboration and we look forward to joining forces with WHO to ensure that children's and adolescents' right to health can serve as a powerful motor to achieve their empowerment as effective actors in violence prevention.

- * Another area of common concern is the sexual violence perpetrated against adolescent girls. It leaves them most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, STDs and massive neglect. This is compounded by a pervasive denial of their rights to reproductive health. There is an urgent need for deliberate community-based efforts, legal and policy responses at all levels, particularly from the health sector.

- * Finally, in support of WHO's strategic objective to ensure that health systems meet community needs for quality, accessibility and sustainability, we would like to share our concerns:

Health care and services are among the main targets of the debate on privatisation where cost-effectiveness and profit – rather than accessibility and quality – are the prime consideration. We are concerned by the reduction of States' responsibility in the delivery of services. In our view this endangers the health of children and adolescents. We urge the adoption of **strong monitoring criteria** to ensure the highest standards of quality and independence for health care and service delivery, free from the intrusion of vested economic interests. In this context, we welcome the identification of good practice in impact assessment to ensure responsible national and international health policy.

We welcome the inclusion of the issues just listed into WHO strategy to improve child and adolescent health and development and hope that at the stage of implementation the views and the best interest of all children will remain a guiding principle.

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION

NEW UN Report

Workplace discrimination is still prevalent and could have disastrous effects on social cohesion and political stability if it continues unchecked, according to a new report released today by the United Nations labour agency. While the most blatant forms of discrimination at work may have faded, many remain a persistent and daily part of the workplace, or are taking on more subtle forms, the UN International Labour Organisation (ILO) says. "Every day, around the world, discrimination at work is an unfortunate reality for hundreds of millions of people," ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said. "This new report, aptly entitled '**Time for Equality at Work**,' shows decisively that unless we take action, that time is still a long way off."

See also <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2003/19.htm>

Women are by far the largest discriminated group, with the pay gap between the sexes still significant in most countries, the report states. Racial discrimination also persists, though older theories of the purported superiority of one racial or ethnic group over another have been replaced by allegations that foreign and "incompatible" cultures may have disruptive effects on the integrity of national identities.

Despite these stumbling blocks, the report stresses that laws banning discrimination are indispensable. Effective enforcement institutions, positive action, unbiased education, training and employment services, and data to monitor progress, are also necessary. This mix of policies and instruments is essential whatever the form of discrimination, the study concludes.

New York, May 12 2003. For more details go to UN News Centre at <http://www.un.org/news>

Women in Politics

Good news of gender equality in the Welsh elections - The new Welsh assembly is the first legislative body in the world **made up of equal numbers of men and women**. Read about it in this BBC News story, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/2963364.stm

Good news, too, of five women ministers in the Netherlands, after heavy campaigning by women NGOs, including sending a list of 100 women capable of becoming a minister to political parties, thus preventing them saying afterwards: "We looked and looked but could not find any!".

Note: to avoid misunderstanding, we always send the IAW Newsletter:

1) in the body of the e-mail, and 2) as an attachment, saved in Word 6.0/95. Both have exactly the same content. The only difference is, that the attachment has a better lay-out, so it will be easy for Affiliates to copy it and send it by post to IAW members without e-mail. Also, please advise Pat Richardson if you know of any IAW members or affiliate/associate organisations with an e-mail address.

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