

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
ALLIANCE INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES

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

Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities
Droits Égaux - Responsabilités Égales

IAW NEWSLETTER - May, nr. 4



Equal Rights

Dear IAW members,

This time you will find a few “reflections” in the newsletter. On using quotas for empowering women in politics, on an unhappy ending of Violence against Women in CSW, on “terror” and the global women’s movement and on the situation of our sisters in Kuwait. And... several events and URLs, most of them sent in by members, will tell you that the global women’s movement is sturdily pushing forward in this complicated world.

Electoral Gender Quotas - Back again on the Political Agenda

New global website on electoral gender quotas

This new website - www.quotaproject.org - gives the first overview of the use of quotas for women in elections around the world. The website reveals that the use of electoral gender quotas is much more widespread in the world today than many people would expect. An increasing number of countries are in these very years introducing some kind of gender quota for public elections. In South East Asia people even speak about a "quota fever". In Latin America, 12 countries now have quota provisions in their constitution or in the electoral law.

This website is a result of a co-operation between International IDEA (www.idea.int) and the research project: "Quotas - a Key to Equality? **An International Comparison of the Use of Electoral Quotas to obtain Equal Political Citizenship for Women**, led by Drude Dahlerup, Dept. of Political Science, Stockholm University (<http://www.statsvet.su.se>).

It is hoped that this website will prove useful for all agencies and organisations that work to promote a gender balance in political life. The website is interactive, and you are invited to send your comments and updated information.

A qualitative jump

Today women constitute 15 per cent of the members of all parliaments of the world. The top rank is held by women in the parliament of Sweden: 45.3%, while the lowest is no women at all like in Bahrain. Given the slow speed by which the number of women in politics is growing, everywhere one hear a call for more efficient methods reach a gender balance in the political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism. The introduction of a quota system for women represents a qualitative jump into a policy of exact goals and means. Because of its relative efficiency, the hope for dramatic increase in women's representation by using this system is strong.

At the same time quotas raise serious questions and, in some cases, strong resistance.

What are quotas?

What are quotas and in what way can quotas contribute to the political empowerment of women?

Some quota systems are, however, constructed as gender-neutral, which means that they aim at correcting the under-representation of both women and men or at any rate they set up a maximum for both sexes. In this case, the requirement may be that neither gender should occupy more than 60 per cent and no less that 40 per cent of the seats.

A fifty-fifty quota is, in its nature, gender neutral, and it sets a maximum also for women's representation, which a minimum requirement for *women* in fact does not.

"Double quota" or "rank ordering quotas regulations" is used about a quota system that not only requires a certain percentage of women on the electoral list, but also demands a gender balanced rank order on the lists - in order to prevent women candidates just being placed on the bottom of

the list with few chances to be elected. Argentina, Belgium and Costa Rica are examples of countries with legal requirement for double quotas.

Different Quota Systems

There are several different sources for quotas systems. The most important types are the following:

* **Constitutional Quota for National Parliament:** These are quota provisions that are mandated in the constitution of the country. Examples are Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda.

* **Election Law Quota or Regulation for National Parliament:** These are quotas that are provided for in the national legislation or regulations of the country. Legislative quotas are widely used in Latin America as well as for instance in Belgium, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Sudan.

* **Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates:** These are rules set by political parties to include a certain percentage of women as election candidates. There might also be quotas for internal party structures, but these are not included in this website. In some countries many among the political parties apply some type of quotas, e.g. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Germany, Norway, Italy and Sweden. But in many other countries only one or two parties have decided to use quotas. However, if the leading party in a country uses quotas, like ANC in South Africa, that may have a substantial effect on the overall representation of women. Yet, most political parties in the world do not apply any quota system at all.

Other Types

In addition to this tri-partite division, the website has added a further quota type:

Constitutional or Legislative Quota for Sub-National Government: These are quotas that are provided for in the constitution or legislation that require or set targets for women to constitute a certain percentage of candidates at sub-national government level (including local, district or state/provincial levels). Examples are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, France and South Africa.

Quotas work differently under different electoral systems. Quotas are most easily introduced in PR systems and other multi-list systems. Also several majority systems have, however, introduced quota provisions as this website shows. But even in a PR-system, small parties and parties in small constituencies have difficulties implementing quotas without controversial central interference in the usual prerogatives of the local party organisation to select their own candidates.

With thanks to Drude Dahlerup, who gave us such an inspiring introduction at the IAW CEDAW Conference in Odense, Denmark, in October/November 2001, on Women in Public and Political Life.

Reflections on CSW and the Global Women's Movement

Women activists from several world regions have increasingly tried to put their thoughts on paper regarding the state of the global women's movement in the midst of recent dramatic and often devastating world events. This issue of IWTC Women's GlobalNet focuses on the thoughts of Carol Barton of the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ) and Ammu Joseph, co-editor with Kalpana Sharma of "Terror Counter-Terror: Women Speak Out" [Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2003]. Ammu was also one of 10 communications experts who participated in the UN/DAW Expert Group Meeting on women and the media, held in Beirut, November 2002 as part of the preparations for the 47th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2003.

The International Women's Tribunal Centre, a selection.

CSW, the Breaking Point

"A dramatic development shocked most delegates and observers on the last day of the 47th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. Only half an hour before the 15-day session was to end, Iran's representative, supported by delegates from Egypt and Sudan, rose to register his government's objection to paragraph (o), which read:

Condemn violence against women and refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination."

"They were not prepared to have their reservations on the paragraph officially recorded after the document had been adopted by consensus in its entirety. Nor were other delegations willing to drop the paragraph so that the rest of the document could be adopted by consensus."

“The session was suspended in the absence of consensus on the agreed conclusions relating to women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women, and delegates were told they would be informed about a fresh date for the resumption of work.”

Carol Barton writes:

“I think the failure of a negotiated agreement on the violence item at the CSW goes far beyond the possible weakness of the chair. The CSW took place parallel to the Security Council negotiations around war in Iraq, in the days right before the war began. It was increasingly clear that the US was planning to act unilaterally if it could not get SC approval. There is already a two-year history of the Bush Administration doing everything to undermine multilateral agreements, including the historic first of "unsigning" support of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Then we have the recent history of the Children's Summit +10 and the Asia-Pacific Population Conference, where the US and other religious conservatives openly tried to backtrack on agreed conclusions.

In this climate, countries that are usually willing to compromise became intransigent in the CSW process. We understand that this is currently occurring again at the Commission on Human Rights. It reflects a polarised world driven by a nation functioning from imperial might, that would only use the UN for rubber-stamping and to clean up its messes.”

**A Book to Read: Terror Counter-Terror:
Women Speak Out**

By Kalpana Sharm, Ammu Joseph and others (a review article by Bhaswati Chakravorty)

After Iraq, two pictures refuse to go away. One is that of a twelve-year-old boy with a hideously burnt torso and two bandaged stumps where his arms had been, an unlined face and steady eyes.

The face of collateral damage, embarrassing, if reports are to be believed, to Tony Blair.

Embarrassing. And another picture - of a man carrying away a richly upholstered chair from one of Saddam Hussein's magnificent abodes, his face obscured by the splendour of the loot. He is faceless, as is fitting - a figure engendered in the chaos unleashed by greed.

Yet the terms of this description are absurd, anachronistic, for we have moved far away from the theatre of the old morality play. Civilisation has taken giant steps forward, even al Qaida killers do not use scimitars to kill. It is possible, for those so privileged, to use atom bombs, but the progressive refinement of sensibility manifested since Hiroshima and Nagasaki now dictates the deployment of precisely targeted missiles, and civilly restrained tanks and guns, together with a few chosen words of regret for collateral damage. We can therefore be much more up front about things.

Shooting and shagging, screwing and killing

"War is shooting and shagging, screwing and killing," a young man back from the Serbo-Croat conflict is supposed to have announced. Looting, he might have added. But his mind was taken up with the most obvious associations in specifically male violence, killing and rape.

The comment has been quoted by Dubravka Ugresic, a writer living in Amsterdam in self-imposed exile from former Yugoslavia. Her article, "Because we're just boys", is part of the collection entitled *Terror Counter-Terror: Women Speak Out*, edited by Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma (Kali for Women, 2003).

Writings by activists, journalists, teachers, authors and researchers from Palestine and Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, the United States of America, Britain and Canada, Afghanistan and Israel have been brought together to expose and analyse the masculinist ethos that permeates all forms of imperialism, terrorism and fundamentalism - that is, the relationship between patriarchy and violence. "War, peace, terrorism, most fundamentalisms and fascisms are contracts between men," says the publisher's note, and since both peace and terror are "ultimately about power", it is "one reason why women, traditionally, have been part of neither war nor peace, except as ancillaries."

The Twin Towers

The occasion for the volume is the attack on the World Trade Centre, and the twin towers shimmer as changing images throughout the book – interlocked symbols, sometimes of American military and economic might, sometimes of the mutually opposed but inextricably coexistent phenomena of state and non-state terror. It is, as Rohini Hensman says, "a cosy relationship best

exemplified by the business association of Bush the father with bin Laden the father in the Carlyle Group, whose investments in armaments could mean that both fathers profit from the war declared by their sons!"

Inevitably, the book goes far beyond its focal theme of masculinity and militarism, laying bare the network of economic, political and ideological interests that bind together the initiators of aggression. What emerges is a picture of the perpetrators of a new reign of terror, racism, sectarianism and inequity, who, with their propaganda machinery, frighten, confuse and brainwash people. So civil liberties can be eroded through newer patriot acts or Prevention of Terrorism Acts, through racial and communal profiling, while the myth of The Enemy is rammed down people's throats in order to dominate, grab and exterminate in the name of democracy, salvation, freedom, justice, security, love of country or god.

A sinking feeling

One reads all this with a sinking feeling after the events in Iraq. The apparent irrelevance of the unprecedented anti-war movement across the world seems to shadow forth another set of interlocked but opposed twin towers: governments and their people. The abyss in between resounds with the hollow roar of a newly constructed language, deeply corrupted in order to exclude the simple meanings of words like "No blood for oil, no war at all".

Rubina Saigol foresees this when talking about 9/11: "Those who construct knowledge and hold the power of making meaning, seized the moment to forever alter the way the world thinks about war, terror, rights, justice, legality and life itself."

But such a change did not happen in a day. The corruption of language is the fruit of sustained effort on both sides of the thin red line. The result contributes to a major form of collateral damage, an impalpable one, that of dissidence. In a world suddenly peopled by Us and Them, a world created by an era of unrelenting violence and escalating fear, there is no space for a third voice.

Susan Sontag asks why "debate equals dissent, and dissent equals lack of patriotism now". And Sontag is no pacifist, neither does she agree with a position such as Noam Chomsky's. Yet she has been called "America hater", "moral idiot" and "traitor" for asking why the men who rammed the WTC were "cowardly" and the men who bombed Kosovo from an unreachable height were brave.

Sunera Thobani, the Canadian critic who thought she had spoken pure common sense, was called morally bankrupt. Just two examples are enough to typify a worldwide phenomenon: the silencing of debate.

Barbara Lee was a minority of one in the American house of representatives when she voted against giving the president power for military attacks. Subsequently, she needed more bodyguards. The violence that dissent now attracts is born of the recently substantiated meanings of "national security", "the greater good", or "patriotism". Democracy is destined to mirror its declared enemy, religious fundamentalist rule.

But why only women?

The militarisation of women, whether in Tamil death squads in Sri Lanka or among the Hindu right in India, prove that women are not "naturally" peaceable. Madeleine Albright is not an exception, women possessed of greater power have put men to shame by their active interest in perpetrating or perpetuating violence. Power is the leveller of gender differences. Will women, once empowered, be as violent and warlike as men? But that is a question that must be left to the future.

For the moment, as the writers point out, most women remain disempowered; they are the worst victims of political and religious violence very often carried out in their name. Always left out in peacetime negotiations – the Afghan women "rescued" from the Taliban found no place in the *loya jirga* - they still have the greatest stake in peace.

And disempowerment is also a kind of power. It provides the interest and the insight to dissect, expose and dissent. When women argue or disagree, the attack against them is phrased in gender abuse. In specific cases, gender is combined with colour, caste or class, whichever is relevant. For these "illegal combatants", and their kindred among men, it is more urgent than ever now to find a way between the two towers.

See for the article: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1030419/asp/opinion/story_1886240.asp

Editors note: this article was sent to us by IAW member Anjana Basu. Thank you, Anjana!.

Current Conditions in Kuwait

The area surrounding the State of Kuwait is passing through accelerated incidences in the course of the coalition led war against Iraqi regime (Freedom of Iraq). Such war is aiming at liberating Iraq, its potentials as well as its people, from an oppressive regime, which incurred many premeditated tragedies to the Iraqi people and destroyed their abilities, wealth and infrastructure.

Over the last years, this regime intended directly to sever Iraq's relations with its neighbours, which negatively affected regional security and stability and further resulted in forging a division in the Arab Nations with its dangerous reflections still threatening Arab solidarity and weakening the common Arab work.

Kuwaiti Women

The Kuwaiti Woman who has exerted her best efforts to defend her country is absolutely ready to carry out such a role in these days and forever. Kuwait, small in area but great in stance, does not accept under any circumstances to bid for its Arabism and national loyalty.

"Freedom of Iraq", which was launched from Kuwait soil as well as from lands, air and waters of other Arab countries, essentially aims at liberating the Iraqi people from the aggressive regime of Baghdad. In this respect Kuwait's attitude is frank and clear and never employs indulgence or equivocation. Consequently, an aggressive media campaign was launched against Kuwait, its leadership and people. But we confirm that these incidences will not prevent our support firstly to our leadership and secondly to the Iraqi people and their rights for freedom.

Furthermore, the Kuwaiti Woman realises the dimensions of Kuwait's political and external media attitude. We are proud that the State of Kuwait is the first country to respond to the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people and that the first medical and food aids caravan was sent off from this good land, furthermore, the first drop of drinking water is Kuwaiti water, supplied from Kuwait to Iraqi Um Al Qaser.

We confirm being proud to belong to this country, our continuous readiness to defend it and protect its sanctity and dignity, and being proud of our constitutional freedom and legitimacy.

*Prepared by Women Affairs Committee, Council of Ministers, Kuwait, 8/4/2003 (a selection)
Send to us by IAW member Hessah Majed Al-Shaheen*

EVENTS AND URLS

Interesting US Websites

<http://www.feminist.org> – <http://www.MsMagazine.com> US international news for women, US Amnesty - <http://www.amnestyusa.org/women> . New: European and North American WomenAction (ENAWA), a media, ICT and advocacy network - <http://www.enawa.org>

Important UK Web Addresses

The Fawcett Society <http://www.fawcettsociaty.org.uk> - Women's National Commission <http://www.thewcn.org.uk> - The Women's Library <http://www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk>

Important United Nations Websites

CSD, Commission on Sustainable Development, 11th Session, New York, 28 April – 9 May 2003.

Documents on http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd11/_docs.htm

General Assembly Working Group on Conference follow-up and implementation:

<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/wgga/wgga.htm>

Comments of Victoria Clarke of the World Federalist Movement & International NGO Task Group on Legal and Institutional Matters (INTGLIM) are to be found on <http://www.wfm.org>

IANSA, Action against Small Arms

A week in June, 1-8, against small arms: the role of civil society; advocacy and youth awareness; children in situations of armed conflict etc. etc. with: IANSA - International Action Network on Small Arms and MALAO - The Movement Against Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. Their vision is to have one West Africa and one Senegal free of the proliferation and circulation of SALW, for a long term development of Peace and Security. In the same week

actions in Senegal, UK, the Balkan region, Nigeria, Congo Uganda and the Pacific. Information:
<http://www.iansa.org>

Empowering Women, New Delhi

Invitation for four days in May-June 2003; SNDT Women's University (Mumbai) and Centre for Women's Development Studies (New Delhi) are privileged to host an international conference on Empowering Women through Information and Knowledge: From Oral Traditions to ICT. The Conference will be a residential one, with a combination of invited and contributed papers, symposia, posters and video presentations. For further and update details, please do visit: <http://gendwaar.gen.in> or email to Prof. Harsha Parekh, Conf-Chair : harsha_parekh@vsnl.com

Transformation, Participation and Gender Justice, Vienna

Feminist challenges in a globalised economy, 22 - 24 May 2003 Seminarzentrum Am Spiegeln, Johann-Hörbiger-Gasse 30, 230 Vienna, Austria, www.eurosur.org/wide/UB/WCW.htm.

Second World Congress on Family Violence, Prague

The National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence (NCCAFV) organises a Congress, sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and convened under the auspices of the International Network on Family Violence (INFV) and its Secretariat: The National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence (NCCAFV) in the United States. Date: June 21 to 26, 2003. Venue: Prague Czech Republic. The Theme of this Congress is "Protecting Every Generation – Sharing Solutions that Prevent Child Abuse, Spouse/Partner Abuse (Domestic Violence) and Elder Abuse"

Contact info: email: wcfv@aol.com or go to <http://www.wcfv.org>

World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva

From 15-26 September 2003 World Summit on the Information Society WSIS – PrepCom-3, Geneva (Switzerland). The Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for WSIS (PrepCom-2) gathered more than 1500 participants representing 146 Member States and numerous international agencies, and business and civil society entities See <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

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.

Contacts

IAW Newsletter / News Flash	:	Joke Sebus	< joke.sebus@inter.nl.net >
International Women's News	:	Priscilla Todd	< toddsec@netlink.com.au >
Membership Officer	:	Pat Richardson	< iaw.membership@tsn.cc >