



INVITATION

A Global Conference: “Women and the 21 Century - Feminist Alternatives”

Introduction

Today we live in a world, dominated by a privileged minority, using patriarchal, military, neo-liberal, neo-colonial and religion based systems to oppress the disadvantaged majority in private and public spheres.

While the new imperialist military attacks, invasions and occupations of last decades were launched under the pretext of democracy or security, they have actually initiated incubators of regimes which have made women more vulnerable, legally and otherwise, and aborted a century of women's struggle for liberation. Women have more and more limited access to the public space and their right over their body and sexuality is violated every day. At the same time trafficking and global pornography is increasing in the public sphere.

Churches, religious institutions, religious movements and organisations are launching an unprecedented attack against the fundamental rights that women conquered after a 100 years of harsh battles. Since the three monotheist religions that are interwoven in the roots of our cultures are promoting the idea of the inferiority of women, secularism, defined as non interference of religion in States' matters, is our political answer for the preservation and promotion of women's rights and to clericalism and all fundamentalisms.

The building of a WORLD of solidarity, peace and equality means raising consciousness as to the essential links that exist between the struggle against neo-liberalism and the defence of a secular culture, between the struggle against patriarchy and militarism and the defence of the right of women to full citizenship and their right over their bodies and lives.

Background

Over 150 women and men from the Balkans, The Middle East, Caucasus, Europe and USA, participated at the International Conference: ***Peace and Security – Feminist Alternative*** held in Skopje on 05-06 October, 2009. The participants contributed to promotion of a space for non-violent and peaceful conflict resolution, at a local and international level and issued an appeal: ***Feminists for one World Free from Military, Patriarchal, Imperialist, and Religious Domination***. The Conference agreed that one of the steps that should be urgently taken towards global peace, security and stability is to organise a Global Conference and to promote feminist and secular alternatives for *Peace and Justice* in the spirit of the Beijing's Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals, CEDAW and the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, UNSCR 1820 and 1888/89.

Several national and international organisations, networks and initiatives who participated in Skopje, took initiative to co-organise a Global Conference in Cairo and were joined later by others. These are:

Antico, Women's Civic Initiative - R. Macedonia, organizer of Skopje Conference
Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), Egypt
European Feminist Initiative Network (IFE-EFI)
Organisation for Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), Iraq
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT), Egypt
HEYA Foundation for Women, Egypt

As the dates coincide with the 8th Anniversary International Conference of Arab Women's Solidarity Association (ASWA), Egypt, all the above mentioned organisations agreed with the proposition of Nawal Al Sadaawi to join and widened this event and together with AWSA organise the Global Conference on "**Women and the 21 Century – Feminist Alternatives**" in Cairo, 16-18 December 2010.

The Cairo Global Conference Dec 2010

The Conference "**Women and the 21 Century - Feminist Alternatives**" in Cairo, 16-18 December 2010, takes one of the steps that are urgently needed towards global peace and justice. The Conference will elaborate a feminist critique of the international development and politics. It will provide space for exchange of feminist analyses and feminist grassroots work together with other democratic and secular movements and analyses across the world.

Goals of the Conference

- Elaborate on the link between feminism and its proposals for peace and justice with secularism, as a global precondition for democracy and development, that contributes to fostering peace at the local and global level;

- Provide a space for exchange of views, experiences and knowledge among feminists, peace activists, researchers, practitioners, progressive women and men from the civil society and the political sphere globally;
- Promote secular and feminist alternatives to the present increasing influence of religious fundamentalisms and conservative thoughts of patriarchal hegemonies;
- Open broader channels for solidarity communicating, networking, strengthening of the egalitarian community globally.

The Conference expects to gather women and men who work for promoting a secular and peace world, where women and men enjoy equal rights and where religious structures are separated from state and politics. The participants from all parts of the world and different contexts are invited to share perspectives and experiences. They will gather to explore perspectives for a different world that is equally possible for women to live in. Progressive film makers, writers, media key-figures will join to debate and raise their voice for feminist alternatives to dominance and superiority power.

Content of the programme

The Conference will raise and discuss during two days links and issues as:

- International politics and feminist critique to development;
- Political religious groups, military violence and limiting the freedom of women;
- Global Patriarchal and social sexual violence against women;
- A Global-Local Solidarity and feminist movements for secular society as essential precondition for real democracy, just peace and full equality between people regardless of gender, class, religion or other characteristics;
- Feminist analyses on structural violence against women and its continuum in peace and war;
- The fundamentalist economic system and its relation to militarism, neo-colonialism etc.

We are happy to hereby invite you to participate in the conference and contribute to affirming feminist alternatives in the global debate and we ask you to reserve the date. Please confirm your participation not later than 30th April.

Format of the Conference

The Conference will last for 2 and half days and start in the morning of Thursday, December 16th. The participants should arrive in Cairo on Wednesday December 15th. Departure time is on December 19th.

As soon as we have received confirmation of your attendance, a registration form will be forwarded, followed by a preliminary program.

The Conference is based on interactive participation, dialogue and discussions, with two panels in the mornings and four workshops in the afternoons. The language of the Conference is English and there will be translation in Arabic, Spanish and Serbian or Croatian.

You are kindly asked to fundraise from your or other institutions for accommodation and travel expenses. The Conference organizers are also fundraising and as soon as there are available funds we shall inform you whether it would be possible to cover some of your expenses. Meanwhile, please take the opportunity to apply for funds at other institutions.

Participation fee is 50 euro. The information of the bank account where you can pay the fee will be provided in the registration form. Students and participants up to 25 years of age are freed from fee.

Organisation of hotel and other logistic issues will be taken care of by the organisers and you will be informed as soon as we receive your answer.

Contacts

Please, send your confirmation to Dr Francine Mestrum at mestrum@skynet.be
For any questions and information do not hesitate to contact her and/or Lilian Halls-French at lilianhalls@free.fr

WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO YOUR PARTICIPATION!

Yours Sincerely,

The International Organisational Committee