

## Making Peace Work for Women by Kitty Parisi CSJP-A

Recently, a Pax Christi NGO said to me, "I am convinced that any hope for world peace will depend upon women." He spoke about his latest peace-making trip to the Israeli-Palestine area and the talks he held with groups of men and women from both sides. His question to each group was, "Would you be willing to forgive past injuries and live in peace with each other for the sake of your own security and peace and that of your children?" The majority of the men said, "No! We want revenge!" The majority of the women said, "Yes. We want security and peace for ourselves and our children."



During armed conflict, women and children experience the same sufferings as men: injury, death, displacement, and hardship making a living. But women and girls suffer even more misery as victims of sexual violence. In contemporary warfare, forced pregnancy and prostitution have become weapons used to kill off the enemy's future progeny and ethnic race.

To combat this, women are becoming empowered as mediators and peace builders. At the grass roots level, they are organizing across ethnic and party lines to advocate and lobby for disarmament and the destruction of weapons and land mines. In Africa, Asia, and the Mideast, women's groups are actively working for peace, sustainable development and reconciliation among combatants.

Others are realizing that a lasting peace cannot be achieved without the inclusion of women. In November, the UN Security Council reaffirmed Resolution 1325 and its commitment to: ❶ fully implement international humanitarian and human rights law to protect women and girls from violence and human rights abuses; ❷ end

impunity of those responsible for violence to women; ❸ recognize the contributions by women as advocates, mediators, and peace builders; ❹ ensure women's equal and full participation and involvement in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security during and after conflicts and wars; ❺ ensure women's involvement in the reconstruction processes in conflict and war-torn parts of the world; and ❻ encourage Member States and the Secretary-General to maintain regular contacts with local women's organizations involved in conflict areas.

### Achievements of Resolution 1325:

- ❶ *Resolution 1325 has been a catalyst for grass roots women to mobilize for equal participation.*
- ❷ *Women in Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, the Congo, Iraq and Sudan have used Res. 1325 to lobby for their voices to be heard in the peace building processes, in post-conflict elections, and in the rebuilding of their societies. Women have been included in disarmament and reintegration programs in Haiti and Africa.*
- ❸ *In Rwanda, women hold almost 50% of seats in the Lower House and 35% in the Upper House of Parliament. In Timor-Leste, women represent 25% of the National Parliament. In Iraq, women won 31% of the National Assembly seats in the 2005 election.*
- ❹ *The Prime Minister of Mozambique (elected in 2004) is a woman.*
- ❺ *The United Kingdom has instituted a model action plan to implement Res. 1325 and train and appoint more women to its domestic and foreign service departments.*
- ❻ *Many countries are signing on to the CEDAW Convention, called the "international bill of rights for women."*

For more information on this subject, go to [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org).



## A Different Day at the UN by Suzanne Golas CSJP

Several months ago in an issue of *Peace and Justice Matters* there was an article called “What Happens Every Week When Kitty & Suzanne Go to the UN?” The article told the story of a day at the UN, a day of meetings, briefings, caucuses and generally heady activities. This is another story, another day – or rather afternoon – spent on that international territory known as the “New York headquarters of the United Nations.” The story is different – the day was different. I tell this second story because, for me, it was a powerful reminder of why we CSJPs are at the UN.

The story is about a special session that was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the UN and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dag Hammarskjold, the second Secretary General of the organization.

As I walked into one of the very large, and usually very formal and austere conference rooms, I had my first clue that something different was going on. The walls were festooned with hundreds of balloons and sprays of exotic flowers (compliments of a local florist). At each place there was a small packet of decorative cookies (compliments of a local bakery). Balloons, flowers and cookies in a UN conference room— something I had never experienced in my eight years of frequenting these hallowed halls!!!

The room was filled with a mixture of hundreds of UN dignitaries, workers and NGOs. On my left were two men from maintenance, clad in their denim work clothes. On my right was a young woman from the Libyan mission.

The session began with a moment of silent meditation which was the precursor for an afternoon that was a harmonious blend of festive celebration and peaceful reflection. International dancers danced in the aisles. A video montage captured the spirit of the UN in its founding years. Students of the United Nations International Middle School expressed hopes for the UN’s future. A UN shaped birthday cake was rolled in to applause.

Dag Hammarskjold was Secretary General of the UN from 1953 to 1961 when he was killed in a plane crash. The spirit of this renowned peacemaker and mystic continues to inspire the finest ideals of the United Nations. It was profoundly moving, in the celebration, to hear UN dignitaries share favorite quotes from his diary, “Markings.”

### Quotes from “Markings”

*“Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.”*

*“To preserve the silence within – amid all the noise. To remain open and quiet, a moist humus in the fertile darkness where the rain falls and the grain ripens – no matter how many tramp across the parade ground in whirling dust under an arid sky.”*

*“Maturity: among other things – the unclouded happiness of the child at play who takes it for granted that he is at one with his playmates.”*

*“...we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.”*

After a period of quiet reflection, we all shared with those near us our hopes for the UN. I heard my own hopes and dreams echoed in the words of the young Libyan woman sitting next to me.

And as the United Nations chorus sang the “Song of Peace” from Finlandia, I believe the many present, in a special moment, shed the mistrust, doubt and tedium that can weigh heavily on us, and, once again, saw the shared vision of a United Nations that could indeed contribute mightily to world peace and social justice.

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**Does the United Nations want to be a world government?**

The UN is not, and was never intended to be, a world government. As an organization of sovereign and independent States, it does only what Member States have agreed it can do and is their instrument.