

# UFER

International Movement for Fraternal Union  
Among Races and Peoples



## An Idea in Action

UFER News 02/ December 2011

The International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples (UFER) is a federation of organizations and persons involved in the promotion of understanding, dialogue and cooperation between races, peoples, ethnic and cultural groups, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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# EDITORIAL

By *Elly Koenig, President*

In September, I attended an international Grail meeting in South Africa. Women from eighteen different countries shared their experiences through inspiring stories. The main objective in all the countries is to develop girls' skills and show them how to solve their problems. In most countries the main problem is wide-spread poverty, especially new poverty caused by multi-nationals and other big companies that buy or even steal the land from the rural people and introduce mono-cultures for bio-fuel or palm oil.

What struck me in South Africa is the ongoing apartheid in daily life. Most white people live in big gated houses while most black and colored people are still living in Townships. Some have a shack of one square meter. They have no electricity, no running water in their houses. But even these little shacks are gated.

Although their situation is bad, people enjoy their new freedom and invest in their future. We visited a sewing project in Johannesburg. Young women and also men learn how to sew in order to start their own small business or build a cooperative together. They have recently started weaving colorful and original rugs, runners, bags, accessories and tapestry. To support the project, we bought a wonderful tapestry for the Dutch Grail which is celebrating its 90th anniversary.

One of the main tasks of the Grail in South Africa is to educate women and also men to take responsibility for their own lives in order to be able to change them. This is done through the "Training for Transformation Program." This program is based on the work of Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educator, inspired by the Transcendent to be a man of great compassion. He initiated the Movement for Basic Education in Brazil, based on his philosophy of "conscientization"- a process of becoming critically aware. Using and analyzing "Codes", he worked with poor people who had very little formal education in order to make them aware of the causes of their problems and to find out what they could do to solve them.

One of the principles underlying Paolo Freire's philosophy and education praxis is the need for *Radical Transformation*. "To achieve a just society it is necessary to transform every aspect of life, starting with the individual whose influence can spread to other levels----groups----wider political, economic and social structures----the Earth---and the Cosmos. People who relate to a greater power than themselves believe that they can be part of the movement towards a greater common good." <sup>1</sup>

We were able to admire the brand new suburb of Kleinmond with nice houses that replaced the Township that was there before. This project was initiated by the workers at the Grail Center in Kleinmond, with the help of the local community and inspired by the training for transformation program. This is an example of how important it is to keep our belief and hope in what we as people are able to do if we are working and struggling for the common good of all. Educating the young generation is particularly important; every seed we plant and that blossoms is worth our energy.

On behalf of the Board of UFER I wish all of you a happy 2012, full of hope and energy, drawn each day anew from the wellsprings of the Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Marilyn Aitken, *Emthonjeni- Come to the Wellspring – A Journey of Discovery for Young Women*, published by the Grail, P.O.Box 145, Unterberg 3257, South Africa, ISBN 978-0-620-47604. Marilyn is a Grail member living in Durban.

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC)

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 17<sup>TH</sup> SESSION (30 May-17 June 2011)

The session was followed by **Berhane Raswork** on behalf of UFER.

- The situation of human rights in several countries of **North Africa and the Middle East** - in particular Libya, Syria, and Yemen - was one of the preoccupations of this session. The Council also examined other reports on the situation in specific countries such as **Ivory Coast, Burundi and Haiti**. There was also a discussion on the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the incident of the humanitarian **flotilla to Gaza**. The Council regretted that a year after the investigation of the flotilla incident there had been no implementation of the recommendations of the report.
- The Council held two panel discussions on **violence against women**. A resolution (A/HRC/17/L.6) was adopted which underscores that States have the primary responsibility for protecting women and girls facing violence. It urges them to adopt appropriate measures such as to place a high priority on removing gender bias from the administration of justice, to ensure that mechanisms, services and procedures set up to protect women and girls facing violence are accessible to vulnerable groups of women such as those belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee and internally displaced women as well as migrant women. States should also provide fund and encourage counselling and rehabilitation programmes for the perpetrators of violence.
  - In his report to the Council, the Special Rapporteur on Racism, Githu Muigai, draws attention to the discrimination endured by the **Roma people**, especially in Europe, and **victims of caste system** worldwide. He called for better protection for these people.
- A Working Group on the issue of **human rights and transnational corporations** and other business enterprises, consisting of five independent experts of balanced geographical representation, was established for a period of three years.
  - The Council decided to hold a panel discussion, at the March 2012 session of the HRC, on the controversial issue of discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their **sexual orientation and gender identity** on the basis of a study to be prepared by the OHCHR. The resolution (A/HRC/17/19) was adopted by 23 in favour, 19 against and 3 abstentions.
- The Council also examined, as it is done at every session, the reports of 16 countries presented by the Working Group on the **Universal Periodic Review** (UPR).

Ref: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11170&LangID=E>  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/BetterprotectionforRomaandvictimsofcastesystems.aspx>

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 18 SESSION (12-30 September 2011)**

Paul Beersmans, Jeannine Hendricks and C.M. Eya Nchama represented UFER at this session.

- **The Council dedicated a lot of attention to the situation of human rights in Syria.** A half-day session was dedicated to a discussion on the subject as a follow-up to the Special Session held on 22 August 2011. The discussion was introduced by an overwhelming report on the situation in this country presented by the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Council also announced the appointment of the members of the Commission of Inquiry to investigate alleged violations of human rights law in Syria. Chaired by Paulo Sergio Pinheiro (Brazil), the Commission includes Karen Abu Zeid (United States) and Yakin Erturk (Turkey).<sup>2</sup> As if this was not enough, Syria was due to present its report under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) shortly after the HRC session (on 7 October).

UFER representative in Geneva, C.M. Eya Nchama, did a lot of lobbying to bring the case of the Syrian psychologist **Rafah Nached**, arrested on 10 September and well-known to several UFER members<sup>3</sup>, to the attention of the delegations to the HRC as well as to the members of the newly created Commission of Inquiry.

- Several **Special Rapporteurs** also presented their reports on issues such as: children and armed conflict, the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination, contemporary forms of slavery, access to safe drinking water and sanitation, indigenous peoples, contemporary forms of racisms, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance
- The human rights dimension of the **crisis in the Horn of Africa** was also seriously examined. “If we genuinely want to address the crisis and prevent it from ever happening again, there is a responsibility for all of us, as individuals and for the institutions we represent, to analyse the complex and multiple causes of this crisis and to adopt a multifaceted approach to addressing them. The crisis we are facing is not only a food crisis, but fundamentally a human rights crisis,” said the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang.
  - The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Gulnara Shahinian, qualified as a form of slavery the work carried out by **children** as young as three years old **in mines and quarries**. In her report, she shows the dramatic effects of this work on the health of children but also recognizes that poverty is one of the main reasons why children work in the sector and one of the obstacles to eradicating slavery. She stresses that it is the responsibility of Governments to provide alternative livelihoods to families through which they could supplement their income.
- **High officials** of many countries addressed the Human Rights Council stressing the achievements of their respective country in the field of human rights. They all confirmed that they promoted and protected human rights and condemned all types of violations of these rights. They also assured that they fully cooperated with and supported the initiatives and actions undertaken by the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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<sup>2</sup> The report has been released on 28 November 2011:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/17/docs/A-HRC-S-17-2-Add1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See page 18 of this Newsletter for more information

- It must be stated again that **the influence** and the possibilities of **NGOs** have declined. For the each item of the general debate only two minutes speaking time were allotted to NGOs. The same goes for participation in panels or during the interactive dialogue. For interactive dialogue only twenty to thirty minutes speaking time in total were given to NGOs. Whereas some 5 to 600 NGOs registered for the Human Rights Commission, this number has now gone down to only 2 to 300 inscriptions since the creation of the Council.

Ref: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11460&LangID=E>  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/CrisisHornAfrica.aspx>



## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

### THE NGO COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

*By Joy Garland, UFER Representative at the United Nations in New York*

Every third Wednesday of the month finds me at a meeting of the NGO Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. We meet at the Church Center for the United Nations across the street from UN headquarters. On October 20, Sonia Heckadon from UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) spoke to us about her work with indigenous women, particularly about issues around maternal health and mortality. A very large challenge is to convince western medical personnel to learn about indigenous beliefs and practices in regard to the experience of giving birth, otherwise women may resist help if their culture is not integrated into the birth experience. An example given was the preference for many indigenous women in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia to give birth standing or sitting, rather than lying down as in Western society.

UNFPA aims to bring into the health services an understanding of cultural norms and practices combined with the importance of consulting with the women (and families) about the number of children they wish to have. In countries that have been colonized, it is important to convey that health services are not meant to control population, but to improve maternal health and reduce mother and child mortality. They also encourage doctors to work with traditional birth attendants.

### THE PERMANENT FORUM of 2012

The issue of free, prior and informed consent will be a prime focus of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which takes place at the UN in New York, from 7 to 18 May 2012. When I was visiting our daughter in Portland, Oregon in 2010, I met Rev. Albert Krueger, an Episcopal priest who is part Native American and who is trying to help the Grand Ronde Nation (<http://www.grandronde.org/>) in Portland retrieve its artifacts from the London Museum. Rev. Krueger introduced me to Professor Robert Miller, who teaches Native American Law at the Lewis and Clarke Law School in Portland, OR and who also has Native American ancestry.

Professor Miller has recently completed a new law review article on the Doctrine of Discovery that summarizes and compares all the work he has done on examining Discovery across many different countries. It is entitled "*The International Law of Colonialism: A Comparative Analysis.*" It is available now, for free, by clicking on the link below and downloading a copy of the paper. You can register for free in about 10 seconds to get onto SSRN." <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1920009>

It was the opinion of our Forum sub-committee that few governmental officials or indigenous people understood at this time about what "free prior and informed consent" meant. The American Embassy representative told us, at the 2011 Forum, that it is difficult to consult with a discreet group of indigenous people and then gain consensus when it is unclear where the authority lies. Is it in the Chief or the Council of Elders, and what if they don't agree? This can become an excuse for inaction on the part of the government.

### **PARTICIPATION IN OCCUPATION WALL STREET (OWS)**

The Chair of our NGO Sub-Committee of the Permanent Forum, Roberto Borrero, was invited by the Occupy Wall Street Committee to participate on Columbus Day (commemorating the "discovery" of America, second Monday of October,) in Zuccotti Park. Roberto read a Proclamation about Indigenous People's Rights and why for them Columbus Day was not a cause for celebration. Many men and women shared an indigenous perspective on the issues of the day which included a spiritual component. I met a Taino ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta%C3%ADno\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta%C3%ADno_people)) woman who was conducting a smudging or cleansing ceremony she offered to participants and we became friends. The indigenous people led the whole group on a march from the park to the American Museum of the American Indian with the sound of drums and the blowing of a ceremonial horn. It was an unforgettable experience. *(The picture shows Joy Garland with the Taino woman).*



## LANGUAGE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

- “As indigenous languages die, so too do integral parts of indigenous peoples’ cultures, a process that often involves violations of indigenous peoples’ human rights to culture, language and even self-determination,” said the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kyung-wha Kang, at a panel discussion held during the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the Human rights Council, in September 2011).  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/HRC18PanelIndigenous.aspx>
- Experience in Norway and Malaysia reveals that teaching children in their own language during early child (preschool) education establishes a firm foundation and facilitates learning of other languages at a later age (from a UN Study on the right of indigenous peoples to education A/HRC/12/33).  
<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/151/81/PDF/G0915181.pdf?OpenElement>
- “Culture is more than beads and feathers, songs and dances ... It is our way of life, our spirituality, our history, our worldview, our relationship with our Mother Earth, our relationships with one another ... So when we talk about culture and language in our education, it should be reversed to read: education in our culture and language” (Statement made by the Assembly of First Nations of Canada, at the panel discussion on language rights of indigenous peoples, at the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the HRC).

### UN Indigenous Peoples’ Partnership (UNIPP)

- Four United Nations entities<sup>4</sup> launched the UN Indigenous Peoples’ Partnership (UNIPP), a new initiative to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, aiming to strengthen their institutions and ability to fully participate in governance and policy processes at the local and national levels. UNIPP will help address various social, economic and political issues by working with governments and indigenous peoples’ organizations through various means including training, promotion of dialogue, the establishment of consultative processes, legislative review and reform, as well as conflict prevention.  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38455&Cr=indigenous&Cr1>

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## Bits and Pieces

- In adopting the **Convention on Domestic Workers**, on 16 June 2011, the 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) recognized that “domestic workers around the world who care for families and households, must have the same basic labour rights as those available to other workers: reasonable hours of work, weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, a limit on in-kind payment, clear information on terms and conditions of employment, as well as

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<sup>4</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

respect for fundamental principles and rights at work including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining". "The Convention shall come into force twelve months after the date on which the ratifications of two Members have been registered with the Director-General." (Art.21)

[http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/media-centre/press-releases/WCMS\\_157891/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/media-centre/press-releases/WCMS_157891/lang--en/index.htm).

- The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20-22 June, 2012, to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The theme for **Rio+20** is "a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication." Major groups engaged in the process include indigenous people, women, farmers, NGOs, trade unions, science and technology, business and industry, and youth. The official Web site is [www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org). Information on sustainable development and the process can be found on [www.stakeholderforum.org](http://www.stakeholderforum.org).
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has launched the *Let's Fight Racism Campaign*. The campaign encourages the individual to "take a stand against racism", with a number of suggestions available. [www.letsfightracism.org](http://www.letsfightracism.org)

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## MIGRATIONS

### UFER SEMINAR ON IMMIGRATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

*On the occasion of its General Assembly held in Brussels, from 18 to 23 September 2010, UFER organized a three-day seminar on the issue of immigration and human rights. In this issue of the Newsletter, we continue to give reports of contributions made during this seminar. You will find condensed presentations of a contribution made by Ms. Ivonne van de Kar on human trafficking as well as of the Religious diversity and anti-discrimination training given by CEJI.*

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING – A CONTEMPORARY FORM OF SLAVERY

*By Ivonne van de Kar, Director of the Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV)*

Human trafficking, which purpose is EXPLOITATION, is a flourishing trade today. Recruitment for this vile trade is done through different means: threat, coercion, use of force, abduction, fraud, abuse of power (namely towards vulnerable persons), with a view to obtain the consent of or the control over the persons. Human trafficking (of men, women, children) always takes place in a context of inequalities (North/South, rich/poor), wars, migrations, poverty or crimes.

This EXPLOITATION is materialized into prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices, forced begging and also in removal of organs. It is a global phenomena and no country is spared: country of origin, country of transit or receiving country. Reported cases are only the tip of the iceberg. Only a small number of individuals implicated in this traffic are arrested and judged each year. According to statistics, (2009), the five countries on top of the list in this traffic are: the Netherlands, Nigeria, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria.

The victims of this human trafficking can be found on various work and living places: hotel and catering industry, domestic work and Au Pairs, agriculture, construction, begging, child labour (civilian and soldiers), and prostitution.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. This Protocol provides the first definition of human trafficking. As of today, it has been ratified by 147 countries. <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

Several NGOs are involved in the struggle against human trafficking. Most of them work within networks such as **ECPAT** (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children)<sup>5</sup> **RENATE** (Religious in Europe Networking against Trafficking and Exploitation)<sup>6</sup>. The International Organization for Migrations (**IOM**) is also involved in this struggle.<sup>7</sup> October 18 has been chosen as European Day against Trafficking.

While NGOs and Churches are more oriented towards prevention, protection, assistance to victims and human rights, governments are more concerned about law enforcement, organized crime and illegal migrants. When both collaborate, their action can be more efficient.

The Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV) is one of these NGOs. It was founded in 1991 by retired missionaries. It is now an ecumenical and lay organization with two staff and 30 volunteers. Its objective is to combat human trafficking, with a particular attention to women, and the corresponding forced prostitution. Its mission is to form a national and international network of religious against trafficking in women and to actively show solidarity with oppressed women. It works on prevention, awareness raising, networking, advocacy and lobby. It also supports small projects. It produces material: leaflets in 53 languages, newsletter, videos, etc. For more information on the work being done and the material available, consult the website of SRTV: [www.srtv.info](http://www.srtv.info).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ecpat.net/EI/index.asp?action=set\\_language&language=fr](http://www.ecpat.net/EI/index.asp?action=set_language&language=fr),

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.renate-europe.net/index.php?content=library>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/activities/by-theme/regulating-migration/counter-trafficking/lang/en;jsessionid=61400861D932F1C61E28061A12B39CEB.worker01>

## PARENTS EXCHANGE DAUGHTER FOR MONEY

The Dutch Public Prosecutor reports that the parents of an 8-year-old girl exchanged her for money because they had financial troubles. They advertised on the internet and asked for someone to give them a loan. A 32-year-old man responded: he would give the loan on condition that he could have sex with their daughter. The parents sent him photographs of the child, including pornographic ones. All this became public when the parents lent their laptop to a relative, who discovered the emails. He notified the police and, one day later, the parents and the man were arrested. They have been charged with distributing pornography and the abuse of another child. The young girl mentioned here has been brought to a safe place.

Extract from *In Global Justice Overcoming Poverty (GJOP)*, a Network Bulletin from the Grail in Australia (no 82 October 2011).

*Source: 'Trouw', daily news-paper, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Sent by Ton Brouwer*

On December 21, 2010, the European Commission launched a website on Human Trafficking. The site gives visitors information about how human trafficking is being combated within the EU. Each member country provides not only information on its own legal affairs, but also on aid to victims and measures to prevent human trafficking in general.  
<http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/index.action>

Extracted from *Transactions*, SRTV Newsletter Eighteen Issue, July 2011, p.4

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## Cultural and religious diversity training

*Resume prepared by Colette Pasquis  
participant in the seminar*

During the seminar on *Immigration and Human Rights* half-a-day was dedicated to training for the recognisance of and respect for the diversity of beliefs and values of each individual and for the development of anti-discriminatory values, practices and policies. This is a joint project of citizens of six European countries but the training is offered by the CEJI (Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe). The training usually covers several days, which means that we received a condensed version.

We started with the following exercise: among the "Golden Rules" of the different religions, about twelve of them, which were presented to us in an anonymous way, we had to identify to which religion they referred. It was not easy, for example the equivalent of "Do not do to others as you would not have them do to you" can be found in each of the twelve religions. It became obvious to us that there are indisputable similarities between the concepts and ethics from one religion to the other. This is a way to get rid of prejudices and to see the links between the different religious cultures.

The moderator insisted then on the fact that sharing our convictions facilitates dialogue on tolerance and diversity. With that purpose in mind, we formed sharing groups on the basis of poetical and philosophical texts which were proposed to us. Those who had chosen the same text got together for an exchange. In my group, I remember having very much appreciated the contributions made by the various members. Some reflections prompted me to change my point of view on one or the other issues related to my personal convictions.

The participants had an attitude of serenity which created an atmosphere of peace and confidence. However, we experienced the first and only open conflict of our three-day seminar. This incident made me think that those who are of the opinion that the religious issue is in itself a source of conflict are right. But even this brief incident was fruitful because it enabled us to realize that sharing on our cultural values is very important. We were able to become aware of the multiple aspects of the religious culture: philosophical, superstitious, ritual, educational, social, and psychological, according to the different visions.

We can only recommend such types of trainings, when one considers that religion is a universal phenomenon and a source of sometimes fatal drifts. Instead of always predicting its imminent death, it would be better to support groups which are trying to use it for peace.

For more information on these trainings consult the CEJI Website: [www.ceji.org](http://www.ceji.org)



## INTERNATIONAL GATHERING ON NON-VIOLENCE

*Research Fellow, Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies and Member of UFER Board of Directors and the Grail<sup>8</sup>*

Over 100 community leaders from around the world met in Antigua, Guatemala, on Oct 17-21, 2011 to share strategies and best practices of popular education on non-violence. The international gathering brought together facilitators of the "Alternatives to Violence Project" ([www.avpinternational.org](http://www.avpinternational.org)), a program begun by Quakers in Green Haven prison, New York in 1975 at the request of inmates. It has since spread around the globe to many new settings. Participants came from as far as Rwanda, Kenya, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. Latin American countries represented included Cuba, Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.

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<sup>8</sup> Monica was a member of a feminist international which went to Honduras last August. This delegation was composed of the following organizations: "Just Associates (USA)", "Feminist Radio (Costa Rica)", "the Nobel Women's Initiative, Petateras (Mesoamerica)" and «the Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity (Mexico)». For more information on the organizations and on the reports on solidarity : JASS (Just Associates) - Feminist Movement Building: [www.justassociates.org](http://www.justassociates.org)  
Mercy Institute Justice Team: <http://www.sistersofmercy.org/>  
Quixote Center/Quest for Peace: <http://quixote.org/>

I was very fortunate to be able to attend with four other women from Ecuador, including a medical doctor, a nutritionist, and two development workers who have been involved in the Alternatives to Violence Project for over a decade. We listened with particular interest to stories of grass-roots leaders from Colombia, whom we plan to invite to Quito to offer their new workshop focused on "healing from trauma." They have offered their 3-day workshop for survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia, including former child soldiers.

Other stories which impacted us greatly were those from the trainings in Rwanda, which have been developed with a focus on "Healing and Rebuilding our Communities." These workshops have a maximum of 20 participants, half from each side of the conflict; often sole family survivors of the genocide sit beside those who assassinated their beloved family members. By the end of a series of 5 workshops in one village, there is a large celebration for the whole community. Often those who hated each other, dance together.

The testimonies of healing and community-building were many. From the United States, there were many accounts of working with maximum security inmates in a process of creating small group safety and facilitating intense personal growth. Several former inmates, now workshop facilitators, were present. From throughout the Americas, including Central America, participants spoke of successful programs with gang members. Some participants stayed after the gathering to work with gangs in Guatemala.

Over all, the gathering was fantastic. The creativity and courage of attendees was deeply inspiring. The passion was palpable in participants' commitment to working with those considered "disposable" in our consumer culture, with those "invisible" and at the margins of society. As one workshop facilitator declared, when asked if he likes his work with the imprisoned: "No, I don't like it. I LOVE IT!" In a world of continually escalating violence, it is extremely encouraging and energizing to be part of a movement which, like UFER, is filled with members dedicated to building peace through creative non-violence, whatever the odds, in the most conflict-ridden places in the world.



## MINING INDUSTRY AND SOLIDARITY AMONG PEOPLES

*By Gaëtane Gascon, member of the Editorial Board*

*"The rich African minerals are indispensable to the Western economies. However the mining industry contributes very little to the African development."<sup>9</sup>*

Why should we be concerned about the Canadian mining activities in Africa? Because international solidarity demands that we consider the manner in which mineral extractions are done and its consequences on the populations.

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<sup>9</sup> *Mining in Africa: Regulation and Development*, (2009) produced under the direction of Bonnie Campbell and published by Pluto Press London, UK.

Recently, some UFER members of Montreal had the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the Canadian mining extraction in Africa following Raymonde Martineau's return from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We were joined by Bonnie Campbell<sup>10</sup>, specialist in political economy. With her research teams, Bonnie has directed many publications in French and in English on the mining industry in Africa. She made us aware of the responsibility of the industrialized countries in the ill-development of many African countries sources of natural resources.

I summarize here some of the elements of our exchange.

### ***Some facts***

Despite the facts that the industrialized countries rely on Africa to access the indispensable minerals for their development, the inhabitants of that continent do not benefit from the wealth of their land. Canada's immense territory is rich with many different minerals, petroleum and sources of hydroelectricity. The greatest number of mining companies is found here. Moreover, our country, Canada, is the most important source of mining investments in Africa, excluding South Africa.

The way mining extraction is done in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) determines the stability and development of Central Africa, the most instable region during the last decades. The struggle against underdevelopment and the type of governance are directly linked with mining activities in that country. Conflicts' analysis reveals that the access and control of mining resources are at the basis of the human rights violation, environmental depredation and miserable working conditions.

The gap between rich and poor and between the nations has considerably grown during the last decades. Here the agricultural land is threatened by gas exploitation projects. The First Nations, in particular, are affected directly by the mining activities and the building of dams for electricity. Canada lost his first place as a country where living conditions are optimal, mainly because of the chronic underdevelopment of the Indigenous nations.

### ***Political decision makers change the course of History***

This deplorable management of collective resources is the results of decisions taken by social and political actors. In Africa, in particular the structural adjustments imposed a few decades ago have resulted in weakening the State's capacity to act on one hand and on the other hand, it has given more freedom to the companies. There is a consensus to incite governments and mining companies to revisit the mining rules and open the contracts so as to favor the creation of an industry that contribute to support socioeconomic development and protect the environment.

Moreover, it is not sufficient for the mining industries to increase the fees and taxes due to Africans, it must also reinforce the governance of the countries where it is active and prevent foreign power's accumulation

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<sup>10</sup> Bonnie Campbell, professor of political economy, University of Quebec in Montreal, adviser on many national and international instances, works closely with civil society in Canada and elsewhere. She coordinates teams that undertake serious researches here and abroad and work in close collaboration with civil society organizations and national and international instances.

excesses, another sign of the “financial insolence and arrogance.”<sup>11</sup> Politics must resist being the instrument of the economic and act in the interest of those that it represents.

It is important to train, recruit and elect decision makers able to listen to experts, unions, academia and ecologists. Scandinavian experiences show that it is possible to imagine democratic projects.

In the Outaouais region, where I live, the last years have seen a democratic renewal. The movement ‘Women and Politics’ is part of this renewal; it supports women that want to take up elected position in public service. Already, the leadership of women is felt and many women have been elected either at the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

### ***A vibrant civil society is a guarantee for changes towards democracy and justice***

A healthy mining industry goes hand in hand with the growth of democracy. Minority groups and countries with a weak civil society suffer the most. This rentable mining sector must benefit the whole of society, including the minorities, indigenous people, women, the workers here, in Africa and elsewhere. The mining industries could be a powerful lever of development.

Fortunately, a number of persons and organizations, researchers, artists, members of civil society humanitarians, religious organisations are deeply concerned with these questions. With the media, they question Canadian mining companies’ behavior. They seriously look for various solutions and raise public awareness thanks to the quality of their work and their international solidarity links.

### ***Appeal to citizens***

This year, Western countries ‘*indignados*’ question the international financial system which is intimately linked with the mining industry. Their non-violent approaches are one more voice that demands a change and new ways to manage our collective resources. In Québec, the “indignados” are now removing their tents for the winter, and proposing new forms of popular expression and mobilization. We are called to develop a type of citizen identity enriched by the differences in religion, culture, political orientations and others.

Because of what mining extractions represent for development and peace in our countries, citizens must look into their conscience not only at the time of elections, but also in daily life. Young active retirees for example can devote part of their energy to understand the importance of mining extraction. They can feed their network with information which is not lacking and support civil society organizations and people at the forefront of the struggle.

### ***Appeal to UFER readers***

Here I speak to you, UFER Newsletter readers, I know that many among you are confronted daily with social problems created by underdevelopment, human rights abuses and poverty. And I know that like me, you imagine other ways to be together and share our “precious small blue planet” borrowing the words of Julie Payette a young astronaut from Quebec.

I would be very happy to read your comments and know what you are doing and what are your preoccupations and reasons for hope.

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<sup>11</sup> *Mining in Africa: Regulation and Development*, (2009) produced under the direction of Bonnie Campbell and published by Pluto Press London, UK, p.232

# UFER CHRONICLE

## TESTIMONY

*By Bijay Singh, Director of Solidarity for  
Developing Communities (SFDC), Orissa, India*

### WHAT IT MEANS TO ME TO BE A MEMBER OF UFER

In 1995, I met Lieke Coenegracht and the late Onesta Carpena, both working in Cambodia, without knowing that they were members of UFER. While working in Cambodia until 2000, I was greatly influenced by these two persons because of their spiritual and dedicated life for the poor. Their simplicity and the books we read together during the Tuesday night book club, managed by them, made me look inwards and it was during those years that my inner transformation began. It helped me take a long standing decision to return to my village, in India, to work with my community.

But I kept going to Cambodia because my family decided to stay on. In 2001, Onesta and Lieke had a poster of UFER but I did not ask what it was about. However there was some discussion about the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination and I had an opportunity to talk about how the Dalit's community in India, to which I belong, was discriminated. Eventually, in 2004, upon their recommendation, I received an invitation to attend the Training Program on Management and Resolution of Conflicts in South Korea. It was during this training that I came to know UFER and became a member. One important thing happened in this training. I better understood that conflict is all pervasive in human life and how it manifests in the society. The training content and the people present in the training created within me an intense desire to learn more about conflict and peace building because there was enough evidence of latent conflict in my village area. This providential training made me pursue and complete a 2 years Masters Degree on Applied Conflict Transformation and Peace Building from 2005 to 2007.

With this new knowledge and the moral and financial support of Lieke and Onesta, I continued working for social justice and against discriminations based on caste and gender in my village area. In this process, an organization, which was created before but was defunct, has been strengthened in the name of Solidarity for Developing Communities (SFDC). Here "developing communities" means the Dalits (untouchable) and Adivasi (indigenous) communities of India which are the most marginalized and discriminated against. Over the years our programme of Peace, Development and Spirituality has grown. This would not have happened without my contact with the UFER members and the training of 2004. A peace building organization in Orissa, keeping the Dalits and Indigenous people in mind, is emerging which has similar goals as UFER.

In December 2007 and August-October 2008 there were violent conflict in my area targeting the people of my community in which more than 100 were killed, over 8000 houses and 250 Churches were burnt, a nun

was gang raped and over 50,000 people were displaced. We could not prevent the conflict but our organization played an important role in post-conflict relief, rehabilitation and trauma counseling in partnership with others. On September 1, 2007, Onesta died but the Foundation she had established still helps us financially and since the beginning, as my spiritual mentor, Lieke is continuing to be an inspiration to me. I receive the UFER newsletter which provides inspiring stories and insightful articles. Publication of my write-ups on the caste discrimination and on internal migration has strengthened my belonging to UFER as this sharing helps me shape and achieve the vision and mission of the organization I am heading now.

My participation in the General Assembly of 2010 in Brussels opened up another new phase of relationship. It reconnected me with UFER members whom I had met in the training of South Korea and connected me with new members. It provided an opportunity for me to talk about the caste based discrimination in person and to think over how this issue could be brought to the UN Human Rights Council. I especially thank Raymonde Martineau for this opportunity without which I would have missed what I got.

I would like to mention in particular Sharon Joslyn, who represents UFER at the UN in New York. She kindly invited two girls from our organization to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 55) in March 2011. She assisted us in many ways in our efforts to obtain the visas. Unfortunately, because of our late application, we were not able to send the two girls. Sharon has again invited two Dalits girls this year for CWS-56 to be held from Feb 25<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Our organization is registering for this session and applying for funding to the UN Women's fund as an organization associated to UFER. We hope to get similar opportunities in future for the girls from the Dalits and indigenous communities to take up different issues of discrimination availing ourselves of the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council of the United Nations) status of UFER. I believe that by taking up the issue of discrimination based on caste, ethnicity and gender UFER and the Dalits human rights organizations like ours will complement each others in the fulfillment of their goals.

What makes me close to UFER, more than anything else, is its people. The members of UFER I have met have worked in so many poorer parts of the world. Their experience, qualities as well as their simple and dedicated life are an inspiration to me. My desire from the childhood to overcome the discrimination (of untouchability), and the mission of UFER to build a discrimination free society go together, and that's why UFER means a lot to me.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

### ***Grand-daughter found in Argentina***

The Grand-mothers of the Plaza de Mayo informed us that another one of their grand-children, Laura Reinhold Siver, born in February 1978, has regained her identity. She was the daughter of Susanna Leonor Siver and Marcelo Carlos Reinhold, both arrested in 1977 and reported missing since then. Susanna was four months pregnant at the time of her arrest. Marcelo's mother had contacted the Grand-mothers in 1982 in order to find her grand-daughter. Laura herself always had doubts about her identity. She had requested to undertake DNA tests. This is the 105<sup>th</sup> case resolved by the Grand-mother.

## ***Detained in Syria***

The psychoanalyst **Rafah Nached**, 66, well known from several UFER members, has been arrested at Damas airport on 10 September, where she was getting ready to board a flight for Paris to assist her daughter giving birth. She was detained for two months under the accusations of “promoting upheaval, the overthrow of the government and disrespect for public order. Her professional commitment has always been of scientific and humanitarian nature, at the exclusion of all political implications.



Her case has mobilized people throughout the world, especially among the scientific community. The European Parliament and prominent political figures have also called for her release. UFER has launched a petition, sent communications to various UN mechanisms, contacted a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and undertaken a letter campaign to embassies of the Syrian Arab Republic in various countries.

During her detention Rafah continued her humanitarian and professional commitment providing therapies for women detainees and their children. She even asked her husband to bring her toys for her to be able to do some therapeutic activities with the children.

On 16 November, Rafah was released on bail, which means that the accusations against her have not been dropped. She can still be brought before a court. We must continue to be vigilant. We thank all those who have intervened in various ways for the release of Rafah.

## ***Death row in Ohio (USA)***

As announced in our last Newsletter 2011-01, **Brett Hartmann** was due to be executed on 16 August 2011. On 12 July, the Parole Board voted unanimously against mercy for him. On 13 July, however, Brett received a new stay of execution from Governor Kasich following a recourse introduced by another detainee on death row to the effect that the execution procedures and practices used in Ohio do not respect the required standards. A judge agreed with the plaintiff and the Governor decided to postpone executions to give the state time to address the federal judge's concerns. Brett has received a new date of execution: 13 November 2012. He thus gain time and time is precious for his lawyers. We can even hope for the abolition of death penalty in Ohio as has been the case in Illinois and New Mexico recently. According to Amnesty USA, “a majority of the U.S. public now prefers alternatives over the death penalty as the best punishment for the crime of murder”. This is an encouragement to continue to intervene on behalf of Brett Hartmann:

<http://www.enddeathpenaltyforbretthartmann.com/index.html>



## COMMUNICATIONS

- **The Board of Directors of UFER** held its annual meeting on 21 & 22 June 2011 in Brussels. Here are some extracts of the reports:
  - A partnership has been initiated with two African organizations: *the Alliance for Migration, Leadership and Development (AMLD)* based in Senegal and headed by Mrs Ndioro Ndiaye, guest speaker at the UFER GA in 2010 and the *Union for the Development of Humanity (UDH)* based in the Democratic Republic of Congo in which two AFI-ICA members are active.
  - Guidelines proposed by Sharon Joslyn with a view of improving communication among us during meeting held in several languages have been adopted. A French version of the document has been produced by Marielle Peltier. These guidelines will be used for our future meetings.
  - The next meeting of the Board of Directors will take place in Cornwall, near New York, in a Grail Center, from 21 to 24 May 2012.
  - The membership fees which had not been raised for the past 15 years will go from 25 € to 35 € or from US\$ 35 to US\$ 50 starting in 2012. However, those who are not able to pay this amount will not be excluded. (See Communication included with this Newsletter).
- **The Grand mothers of the Plaza de Mayo** have received the 2010 Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize at UNESCO Headquarters, on 14 September 2011, in the presence, among other personalities, of Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, President of Argentina. You can see videos of the ceremony on YouTube such as:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQKtTt5FjSw&feature=related>
- Kenyan environmentalist and Nobel laureate **Wangari Maathai** died of cancer at 71, on 26 September 2011. The president of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO), Cyril Ritchie, paying tribute to her qualified her as “an outstanding humanist, an outstanding civil society activist, an outstanding leader ... She was truly a universal beacon of light, he said. Now that that light is extinguished, what better legacy could Wangari have than the universal redoubling of the commitment of all of us to the values that she so outstandingly incarnated.”

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## NEWS FROM THE MEMBERS

- The **Union for the Development of Humanity (UDH)** reported to us that during the recent election in the Democratic Republic of Congo they had deployed 32 electoral observers and 22 witnesses in the province of Western Kasai and the city of Kinshasa. During the whole campaign UDH has undertaken activities of civic education within the population, encouraging Congolese not to sell their vote and to avoid using violence. The organization also asked the Medias not to distort information and to respect the code of ethic of journalists. UDH was the witness of many irregularities during the 28 November election in which Joseph Kabila was re-elected as President of the country.
- **Mrs Ndioro Ndiaye**, Director of the Alliance for Migration, Leadership and Development (AML) was appointed Executive Secretary of the national Plan of Actions for the implementation in Senegal of Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, on women, peace and security.
- **An Alliance of NGOs in India**, in which Bijay Singh - Director of Solidarity for Developing Communities (SFDC), Orissa, and member of UFER - is involved, has produced a report on religious freedom in India for the Universal Periodic Report (UPR) mechanism of the Human Rights Council to which India will present its own quadrennial report in April 2012.
- **Members from the Grail in Europe** are launching a project, in the spirit of the training for transformation philosophy. They are going to develop in the next three years a training course entitled "Leap of Faith". The training will address issues such as: economic reality, multi-faith reality, influence of religions and values in every aspect of our lives, prevention of conflicts, "scapegoating", recognition of women as key players and agents of change in society, development of women leadership and empowerment of women.

The purpose of the training is to achieve a better understanding of the different needs and points of view, to discuss openly about our different religious interpretations, improve our European community in a sustainable way, renew the energy of the Grail in Europe. A request for funding has been presented to the Grundtvig program for informal adult education of the European Commission.

- **Alfred Yambangba Sawadogo**, from Burkina Faso has published a new book: *La chefferie coutumière à la croisée des chemins, (Customary Chieftainship at the Crossroads)* at l'Harmattan.

The annual membership for 2011 is of 25 € or 35US\$. It can be:

- # sent to the following account in Belgium  
Banque Fortis: IBAN: BE50 0013 6970 0018 BIC: GEBABEBB
- # or transmitted to a member of the Board of Directors or the IS of AFI/ICA