



JOAN B. KROC
INSTITUTE FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

PEACE & JUSTICE COMPASS

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO'S JOAN B. KROC SCHOOL OF PEACE STUDIES

IPJ WITNESSES HISTORY IN KENYA ELECTIONS

by Zahra Ismail



Voters line up in Bungoma at 6 a.m. on election day

Kenya's elections on March 4, 2013, took place in a climate of uncertainty as the country went to the polls for the first time under a new constitution and since the devastating violence of the 2007 elections, which left more than 1,200 people dead and 300,000 displaced. As IPJ program officer, I joined The Carter Center observer delegation, which included 60 observers from 29 countries tasked with providing an impartial and independent assessment of the electoral process.

In the sprawling central high school of Bungoma in western Kenya on March 3, throngs of polling station staff, election commission officials and security personnel moved about at a rapid pace, pulling together election materials and readying them for transport to their specific polling stations. This was the scene across Kenya as officials prepared for the next day's historic elections.

Fourteen million registered voters, over 100,000 security personnel deployed across the country, over 31,000 polling stations — the logistics alone were daunting. Yet polling staff and officials were determined, many planning to spend the night at their stations to ensure nothing would go wrong.

"We are ready for tomorrow; everything is set," the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission official for Bungoma assured us. "We will not sleep, and have not for many nights leading up to this, so as to ensure that this election goes smoothly and our promises to the people are met."

ELECTION DAY

We headed out to our first polling station at 5:30 in the morning amidst a still starry sky, and as we approached, voters were already securing places in the long lines surrounding us. Some had arrived as early as 4 a.m., eager to cast their ballots.

As 6 o'clock passed, our station struggled with technical issues over its voter identification system, leading to a stir of impatience in the line. The polling staff, well-trained and ready to respond to these glitches, explained the delay to voters and moved to using the manual register. An hour later things were moving swiftly as voters were invited into the station one by one.

As we departed stations, people would call us over and ask, "How is everything?" Often nodding and smiling, they approved of what they had been seeing. "We are being well informed this time," one person shared, referencing the lack of transparency in the last elections.

At the final station we visited, one of the polling staffers remarked, "I think you were impressed with the unity we showed as a country." We were — and humbled.

Over 12 million Kenyans peacefully went to the polls on March 4, 2013, a testament to the will of a country that refused to participate in or witness the levels of violence of 2007.

The winner of the presidential election was Uburu Kenyatta, who will face trial at the International Criminal Court later this year for crimes against humanity during the previous election. While the peaceful elections were momentous and not to be dismissed, there is great tension in Kenya between the needs of peace and justice. The IPJ continues to monitor the situation and implement its violence prevention project with local partners.



Observers Krzysztof Iwinski and Zahra Ismail complete their observation checklist at a polling station

#POWER OF YOUTH THROUGH MEDIA

“Media has the power to entertain us, the power to upset us and the power to inspire us,” WorldLink Intern Marian Dorst of La Jolla High School affirmed, a sentiment shared by more than 700 middle and high school youth on January 24 at WorldLink’s 16th Annual Youth Town Meeting (YTM), with this year’s theme: “Changing Worlds: Media’s Power and Influence.”



Kenarov encourages students at the opening plenary (Photo by Jordan Bowman, Outside the Lens)

Students from San Diego, Baja Mexico and abroad addressed five student-chosen topics: social media’s revolutionary change, the relevance of traditional media, the relationship between media and government, media as humanitarian voice and media as global activist.

“... this event communicates that someone believes that we can start making change because we are young and driven.”

— CAROLINA DE LA TORRE MARTINEZ

It was only two years ago when protesters gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt — demonstrations that were largely organized through social media. At the YTM, local youth gathered to discuss, learn and question the continuing global rise in new media and the debatable role of traditional media. Students joined more than 20 leading experts including Santosh Shah, president of Today’s Youth Asia in Nepal; Dimiter Kenarov, freelance journalist based in Turkey; and Scot Chisolm, CEO and chairman of the San Diego-based organization StayClassy.



Shah, founder of Today’s Youth Asia, with student moderator Isaac Hortiales (Photo by Ariana Gallegos, Outside the Lens)

Chisolm left students with an important message: “The Millennial Generation is 80 million strong, and their collective voice has been the fire behind some of the top innovations and the largest social movements of the last decade.” He closed, “For the Millennial Generation, the best is yet to come.”

And as Carolina de la Torre Martinez from CETYS Universidad Tijuana remarked, “It’s so often that

I hear teenagers being put down or called immature, but this event communicates that someone believes that we can start making change because we are young and driven and still have a lot to achieve!”

To read more about the 2013 YTM and watch select briefings, please visit www.peace.sandiego.edu/worldlink.

The 2013 WorldLink Youth Town Meeting was made possible by generous donors: Kimberly Heller, Jean Pebrsson, Nika Water Company, Santosba Fund, University of San Diego Admissions and the Verizon Grant Foundation.

VICE PRESIDENT OF WEYOUTH TUNISIA REFLECTS ON YOUTH TOWN MEETING

Wafa Garbout is an 18-year-old baccalaureate candidate in the arts from Tunisia. After experiencing the revolution in Tunisia in 2011, Garbout helped establish WeYouth Tunisia, an organization focused on reinforcing leadership, citizenship and volunteerism among youth to develop a culture of dialogue.

As a speaker at WorldLink’s Youth Town Meeting, it was a great pleasure to represent Tunisia — that small country in North Africa. I was able to give youth in America and Mexico a better idea of the role that youth play in Tunisia, as well as the role of media in my country.

During each briefing session, I spoke about the crucial role media played throughout the Arab Spring. It was an effective weapon against corruption and dictatorship. I tried to make my fellow youth fully aware of the relationship between media and the government of Tunisia, which was controlling all aspects of media and sometimes killing and torturing journalists and politicians.

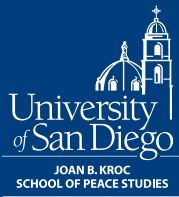


Garbout shares her story during the opening panel (Photo by Ninett Rodriguez, Academy of Our Lady of Peace)

In one session, I received a question about whether or not media is really free in my country. Everyone was waiting for the answer, eager to know more about the situation in Tunisia. Is my country stable now? Do we still suffer from tyranny? I simply said that we are not completely free. My answer was honest. And, I was right. One week after my return to Tunisia, we were shocked to learn about the assassination of opposition leader Chokri Belaid, a politician who fought for the benefit of Tunisia and poor people and openly called the government to action toward building a better future for the country.

I had a great opportunity to share opinions and experiences with youth from the United States and Mexico. Even during my visits to John Muir High School and The Bishop’s School in San Diego, I discussed many topics with students, such as education, gender issues and the current situation in my country. They were fruitful discussions.

Indeed, the Youth Town Meeting plays a relevant role in connecting the worlds of youth. It invites leaders from all over the world to exchange and share different experiences, to provide youth with knowledge and enthusiasm to take action and make the change we wish to see!



JOAN B. KROC
SCHOOL OF PEACE STUDIES



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BACKGROUND & MISSION

The mission of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies is to help build and sustain peace and justice through innovative learning, interdisciplinary analysis, advanced practice and engaged public policy. As one of the School's institutes, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) draws lessons for public policy from field-based peacebuilding and working with civil society, government and the security sector to strengthen women peacemakers, youth leaders and human rights defenders.

PEACE & JUSTICE COMPASS

An online version of this newsletter can be found at <http://peace.sandiego.edu> together with additional information about IPJ programs and activities. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the University of San Diego.

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PEACE TALKS & JUSTICE MATTERS

by *Interim Executive Director Dee Aker*



It is my privilege to welcome you to this edition of the Peace & Justice Compass. Milburn Line, our energetic, smiling leader for the past three years, has taken a post in China, leading a multiyear USAID rule-of-law project. He is both missed and congratulated by the IPJ team.

As I returned from Cambodia recently, where we worked with Woman PeaceMaker Thavory Huot (p. 6), I had a chance to think about the confluence of our programs and projects at home and in the world. We have so grown over more than a decade that our diverse programs now substantively inform and support one another.

In early March at the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women, and later that month in a remote community in Cambodia struggling to engage in responsive democratic peacebuilding, I experienced how investing in people — whether our local partners in the field, Women PeaceMakers, youth in the WorldLink Program, or our distinguished speakers — enhances the environments we work in to try to solve some of the most difficult problems facing individuals, communities, nations and the world.

This past year saw the Women PeaceMakers opening doors to us and our local partners in politically and socially restricted zones. Major international organizations commented on the success the IPJ has in bringing members of different political parties together in repressive settings where rights of speech, movement and assembly are limited. Our peacemakers are key to our fieldwork in such programs.

Likewise, our project in Kenya — where we work with local organizations to build community capacity in violence prevention and are beginning to link youth and police in new, non-violent relationships and support systems — allowed us to include our three Women PeaceMakers from that country. They modeled for the project's participants resiliency and the courage to cross the lines that divided Kenya after the 2007 elections.

In other contexts, former WorldLink delegates and interns recently reported from settings like Sudan, where they are seeing and working with some of our peacemakers and partners as they mitigate conflict and encourage inclusive approaches to problem solving. As you will read on p. 2, the WorldLink Program invited Santosh Shah, founder of Today's Youth Asia and the IPJ's local partner in Nepal, to address the bi-national Youth Town Meeting of high school students. Some of those students then traveled to Nepal to meet with Shah and see his work for themselves. And so we continue to build and link and strengthen the work for peace with justice.

I sincerely hope you enjoy our reports from the field and the halls of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies. We thank you so very much for your interest. Please let us know if you would like to support our work as we move forward.

STAFF MEMBER RECEIVES UNIVERSITY AWARD

IPJ Program Officer Jennifer Freeman received the University of San Diego's Employee Recognition Award last fall. Given to those who exemplify the university's core values — including academic excellence, knowledge, community, ethical conduct and compassionate service — the award was given to Freeman for her leadership of the IPJ's award-winning Women PeaceMakers Program, which she now directs.

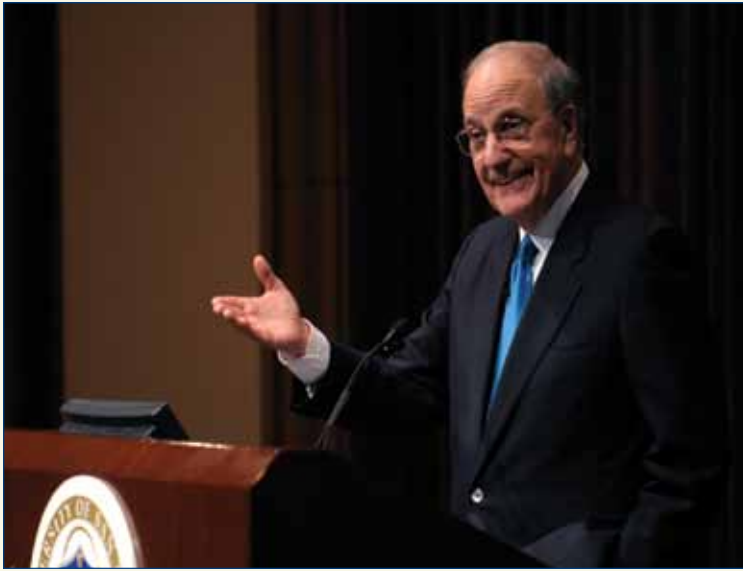
"She is the finest representative of outreach and inclusion I can imagine," wrote Dee Aker, the program's founder, in her statement nominating Freeman. Former Executive Director Milburn Line underscored, "Her perseverance, composure, good humor and service to this program have been remarkable."



Freeman has been program officer of the Women PeaceMakers Program since 2010

DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

NO SUCH THING AS AN INTRACTABLE CONFLICT



Mitchell explains how he helped the parties negotiate peace in Northern Ireland

If there is anyone who has reason to be certain about the potential for peace through negotiations, it is Senator George J. Mitchell, former independent chairman of the Northern Ireland Peace Talks from 1996 to 2000. Through many years of tough negotiations, ceasefires and violations, assassinations and bombings, Mitchell held to the belief that “people create conflicts; people can resolve them.”

In a Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series talk on Dec. 6, 2012, he described the gamble of setting a firm deadline for a final agreement in Northern Ireland by Good Friday, 1998. Two principles guided Mitchell in the process, principles that could be used in any negotiation, whether in business, politics or peace. First, the agreement had to be the agreement of the parties themselves, as only ownership by the parties would lead to a stable peace. Second, there had to be something for both sides so that they could hold up their successes to the hardliners within their constituencies.

“In conflict resolution you can’t take the first no for an answer, or a second no or the 10th no or the 50th no.”

— GEORGE MITCHELL

Mitchell referenced commonsense negotiation techniques that kept the dialogue going long enough to come to an agreement: listening skills, respect, humility, persistence and patience. “In conflict resolution you can’t take the first no for an answer, or a second no or the 10th no or the 50th no,” he counseled the audience.

He also compared the difficult negotiations process in Northern Ireland with the three years he spent working with Israelis and Palestinians as U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace. He pointed to the importance of leaders in the region who are willing to compromise for peace, saying, “I believe that the pain from negotiating an agreement — which will be substantial — will, however, be much less than the pain that both will endure should the conflict continue.”

NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE CHALLENGES AUDIENCES

In celebration of International Women’s Day in March, Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee spent a day at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies interacting with students, faculty, supporters and community members.

Gbowee is best known for her role in forming the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, a movement that forced then President Charles Taylor to peace talks and pressured all parties to stay at the negotiations and come to an agreement. The civil war ended in 2003.

Gbowee started her day at the IPJ’s annual International Women’s Day Breakfast, where she urged the audience to reach across political, economic and social boundaries to build new coalitions against sexual violence.

“In order for us to end violence against women, we need to stop talking to ourselves,” Gbowee advised. “Next year, have this very beautiful breakfast. Bring in construction workers, bring in mechanics, bring in engineers, bring in the politicians in your state — people who do not understand what [violence against women] is, and drive it home.”

She reminded listeners that each incident of sexual violence affects an individual. “Every time we start to talk about sexual and gender-based violence, they are not numbers, they are not statistics. They are our daughters, our sisters, and ... some woman who could be the first president of this great nation.”

In an evening Distinguished Lecture, Gbowee described the anger over injustice that has motivated her and helped overcome any fear in dangerous or vulnerable situations — such as confronting Charles Taylor face to face.

Using two glasses to demonstrate her point, Gbowee said, “Anger is fluid, it has no shape or size. This is the peace container and this is the war container. All you have to do is think ‘Where do I pour my anger? ... Do I want to put this in this violent container and end up in The Hague or end up a villain? Or do I want to put it in this peace container and end up leaving a legacy like King or Mandela or Tutu or Mother Theresa?’”



Gbowee answers a question from Interim Executive Director Dee Aker on mobilizing a movement for peace in Liberia



IPJ INSIDER

BOLSTERING CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

“Do we really understand modern conflict? Have we responded well? Do we know how to do it better?” asked Rick Barton, U.S. assistant secretary of state for conflict and stabilization, to a full theatre at the IPJ. Barton addressed these questions as part of his lecture at an event in March, “Bolstering Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in U.S. Foreign Policy” — which also served as the West Coast launch of the publication, “Peacebuilding 2.0: Mapping the Boundaries of an Expanding Field.”

Barton detailed the role of the State Department’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), which he has led since its inception one year ago. The bureau engages in conflict prevention, crisis response and stabilization, aiming to address the underlying causes of destabilizing violence in priority countries such as Syria, Burma and Kenya.

He identified local participation and ownership as essential to CSO’s design and methodology, a point reiterated after Barton’s lecture by panelist Melanie Greenberg, executive director of the Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP). She said that the bureau has been “remarkably proactive in reaching out to new communities, very hungrily seeking new ideas and new kinds of catalytic action for resolving conflict.”

The report “Peacebuilding 2.0” is the outcome of the Peacebuilding Mapping Project — funded by the U.S. Institute of Peace and implemented by the AfP and Kroc School of Peace Studies — which surveyed AfP member organizations and others working in conflict contexts to gain a clearer understanding of the relatively new field of work and thought.



The event included remarks by (l-r) Brig. Gen. John Broadmeadow, Melanie Greenberg, Necla Tschirgi and Kroc School Dean Edward C. Luck

Greenberg and fellow panelists Necla Tschirgi, professor of practice at the Kroc School and principal investigator of the project, and Brig. Gen. John Broadmeadow echoed one of the report’s findings — “that peacebuilding takes place within a broad range of sectors. To be truly effective, the field must coordinate its efforts across these sectors.”

The convergence of representatives from civil society, the military, government and academia on the panel — and the fruitful dialogue that ensued — served as a microcosm of what needs to happen in the field, and what CSO seeks to exemplify in countries in crisis.

This event was funded by a grant from the Public Education for Peacebuilding Initiative of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

INSTITUTE HOSTS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT ON ELECTIONS IN KENYA



From Oct. 30, 2012 through Feb. 15, 2013, the IPJ partnered with Picha Mtaani, a youth-led organization in Kenya, to host the photography of Boniface Mwangi. The goal of the exhibit, “Never Again: Eyewitness Account of Post-Election Violence in Kenya,” was to create awareness of the unprecedented violence that followed Kenya’s 2007 elections. It also provided a lens for the work that the IPJ was conducting in the country in the run-up to the March 2013 elections (cover story).

“The pictures are powerful and they tell a horrifying story that the world should know,” remarked Afarin Dadkhah, master’s student in the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, after viewing the exhibit. “As a student in the peace and justice program it reminds me painfully why I am here and strengthens my determination to be a force in advancing the cause of peace.”

IN MEMORIAM

Long-time IPJ volunteer and donor Virginia LNatwick passed away in January at the age of 90. An enthusiastic supporter of progressive causes and a friend to many, she will be sorely missed.



IPJ IN THE FIELD

BEYOND THE HEADLINES, SIGNS OF HOPE IN NEPAL

Scanning the daily headlines from Nepal, a reader might conclude that there is no progress in getting beyond the political instability that continues to plague the country. Major outstanding issues have yet to be resolved, including the drafting of a permanent constitution, the creation of new states and the implementation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

However, there are signs of progress. The country remains relatively peaceful, the army integration process is nearly complete and there are indications that a new round of elections might be held later this year. With dedicated local partners Sano Paila, Today's Youth Asia and Women for Peace and Democracy - Nepal, the IPJ continues to see remarkable efforts pursued by citizens in civil society and parts of the security sector to keep their country on a path to sustainable peace.

Building on past work with the security sector, in late 2012 IPJ Interim Executive Director Dee Aker and Program Officer Chris Groth held negotiation and communication skills trainings in Kathmandu with the Nepal Police Narcotics Control Bureau — a small but dedicated group of officers who, despite limited resources, have made inroads in combatting drug trafficking across the country.

The IPJ also brought together women leaders from the Nepal Armed Police Force and former Maoist combatants to explore how they might collaborate to promote security in their communities. Continuing several years of work with the Nepal Police in the Terai region, Aker and Groth conducted a community policing workshop.

IPJ UNITES WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS IN CAMBODIA

In late March, Interim Executive Director Dee Aker and Program Officer Zahra Ismail returned to Cambodia to work with women seeking to be more involved in politics. The IPJ partnered again with Khmer Ahimsa, an organization led by Woman PeaceMaker Thavory Huot, to conduct three trainings on negotiation and strategic communication skills. The pair was most recently in Cambodia in March 2012.



Participants in Kampang Thom

"I have, since I saw you last, been working to bring other women into politics," reported one returning participant. "But women have many responsibilities, and it's hard to convince them that this is important. So I am here to get more tools to do so."



Aker receives an update on the work of Sano Paila from its founder, Kanchan Jha, and program coordinator Sadhu Ram Khadgi

In the face of extreme political and security challenges, the officers who participated remain dedicated to strengthening ties with the communities they serve.

In the first training of its kind in Sunsari District, IPJ Program Officer Zahra Ismail joined Aker to conduct a workshop with Muslim and Hindu women seeking to move into leadership roles. The training brought the two communities together to focus on the challenges of gender inclusion, justice and reducing political tensions.

In Parsa District, the IPJ also held roundtables with youth who are at risk of joining armed groups, and Groth conducted interactive programs at several schools and participated in World AIDS Day events with Sano Paila.

In Barsedth, an impoverished and underdeveloped area west of Phnom Penh, the participants — including commune councilors, village chiefs, district education and women's affairs officials, and the deputy district governor — asked that the two-day trainings start an hour earlier than scheduled. They wanted more skills and interaction to deal with the challenges they had identified.

For some, it was their first encounter with women from other districts and parties. As the trainings progressed, so did their confidence and trust in one another, particularly across party lines. Participants were oriented to local solutions, not expecting or advocating for NGOs or outsiders to be the source of resolving issues. They focused on community-driven possibilities for solving everything from access to water pumps, to convincing couples to obtain birth certificates for their newborn children.

In Phnom Penh, the training brought together women from the capital and three other districts, including a number of women who participated in the 2012 training. In a social and political context where women are discouraged from acting outside their traditional family roles, and where there is an increasing clampdown on free speech, assembly and movement before upcoming elections, several of the women reported that they have been able to get one, two or even three new women to get politically involved in their communities.

WOMEN PEACEMAKERS PROGRAM

BREAKING BARRIERS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The IPJ was one of over 6,000 nongovernmental organizations at this year's U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), an unprecedented participation of organizations and activists in the annual meeting. This year's topic — the elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls — is a particularly pressing concern, and one that cuts across previous CSW topics.

For the seventh year in a row, the IPJ presented a panel event. This year's featured partner organizations from last fall's "Breaking Barriers" conference, and was concerned largely with the rule of law and gender justice in transitional societies, including Guatemala and countries in the Middle East. The event also served as the official launch of the final report from "Breaking Barriers."

Women PeaceMakers were also in attendance at CSW and spoke out forcefully on the need for justice for women victims of violence. Luz Méndez of Guatemala, a peacemaker in 2004, spoke on the IPJ's panel and many others, including a session on reparations organized by Finland, the ICC Trust Fund for Victims and several other groups. She recounted the recent historic case she has been involved with in Guatemala: the first instance of a national court hearing the testimony of indigenous women on the crime of sexual slavery during an internal armed conflict.



(l-r) Elisabeth Rehn (chair of the board of the ICC Trust Fund for Victims), Dee Aker, Luz Méndez and Jennifer Freeman at the Commission on the Status of Women

Zeinab Blandia, a peacemaker in 2009, represented the Nuba Mountains on a panel of Sudanese and South Sudanese women. After decades of civil war and a peace agreement that resulted in the independence of South Sudan in 2011, there is ongoing violence and suspicion between the many tribes and mixed populations of both north and south. But women in both countries are building bridges across the new border, and persevering, as Blandia remarked: "We keep telling our stories, everywhere we go."

To read Editor Emiko Noma's blog post from CSW, please visit <http://sites.sandiego.edu/ipj/blog/2013/03/12/longing-for-justice>

IPJ AND DIPLOMACY COUNCIL HOST WOMEN OF COURAGE

The IPJ partnered with the San Diego Diplomacy Council to host the recipients of the 2013 International Women of Courage Awards, selected by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and First Lady Michelle Obama. The awards are given annually to women "who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and empowerment, often at great personal risk." Two of the nine awardees traveled to San Diego for the conclusion of their national tour.



Second Lt. Bahaduri receives the award from Michelle Obama and Secretary Kerry (Photo courtesy of State Department/Public Domain)

Second Lt. Malalai Bahaduri of Afghanistan left a career in telecommunications to join law enforcement, enduring death threats and physical abuse, including at the hands of an uncle who broke her nose after learning of her decision. Bahaduri became the first female member of the Afghan National Interdiction Unit and is now an instructor committed to the professional development of the Counter Narcotics Police.

Dr. Josephine Obiajulu Odumakin of Nigeria has handled over 2,000 cases of violations of women's rights, including cases of extrajudicial practices committed by government security agencies. She and Bahaduri spoke on March 15 at the IPJ, along with San Diego District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis.

The event at the IPJ was one of many in recent years in cooperation with the San Diego Diplomacy Council. The council's international delegations often meet with Women PeaceMakers in residence and IPJ staff to enhance the cross-cultural exchange of ideas.

U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN AND STATE LEGISLATORS COMMEMORATE 10 YEARS OF WOMEN PEACEMAKERS

U.S. Congresswoman Susan Davis of California and State Legislators Mark Wyland, Joel Anderson, Christine Kehoe, Juan Vargas and Toni Atkins recognized the Women PeaceMakers Program during its 10th anniversary last fall. Congresswoman Davis read a statement from the floor of the House of Representatives on September 11, while the California state legislators submitted Joint Member Resolution No. 546 on September 28, congratulating the University of San Diego on the success of the program and "extend[ing] sincere best wishes for its continued success in the years ahead."





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Fostering Peace, Cultivating Justice, Creating a Safer World.

The Aja Project, a San Diego-based nonprofit organization, was represented by members of its Youth Advisory Council (YAC) at this year's WorldLink Youth Town Meeting (p. 2). The organization provides photography-based educational programming to youth affected by war and displacement, and has partnered with the IPJ's WorldLink Program for years.

Through a Symbolic Self-Portrait Photography Project, YAC students explore their unique identities by creating images using a variety of advanced photography techniques. Students reflected on their images through written narratives, gaining insight into the personal and cultural values shaping their identity. Below is one from a participant in this year's Youth Town Meeting.



Nazar Alabid, age 17, refugee from Iraq: Alone in the struggle, I was the only one who looked and spoke differently. Criticized, made fun of, but still I managed to survive.

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