



November 2008 LAA/UN

Legislative Awareness & Advocacy/
United Nations Committees

November 2008

Zonta Club
Of
Northern Valley, NJ

60th Anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights December 10, 2008



Pictured above is Eleanor Roosevelt, head of the United States delegation to the United Nations. She holds the ratified version of the International Declaration of Human Rights which was ratified on December 10, 1948.

This is an historic moment. We should recognize the work accomplished by human rights activists over the past 60 years. They

worked to secure the conventions that make up the human rights framework.

What are the principles of the human rights framework? They are:

- Dignity—the core basis of human rights.
- Universality—they are not experienced in the same manner for all people, but governments and communities should uphold certain moral and ethical values that cut across all regions of the world.
- Equality and non-discrimination—the same rights to all women, men, girls and boys
- Indivisibility—includes all political, social, economic, cultural and collective rights.
- Government responsibility—governments should not withhold them or apply them to some people and not others.
- Private responsibility—corporations and private individuals should also be accountable.

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"The World Came Together..."

Mary Robinson, U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights, 1997-2002, writes, "The world came together after World War II to craft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights out of respect for the dignity of each human being. Article 1 states that every human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights. Article 29 reminds people that everyone has duties to the community, without which we don't reach the full expression of our personality."

She goes on to remind us that the U.N. Millennium Assembly's poll showed that an overwhelming majority of people

all over the world identified the need for greater protection of human rights.

"Human insecurity is a daily reality for the hundreds of millions who live in absolute poverty or in zones of conflict....For women, gender is itself a risk factor threatening their security because of the secret violence of household abuse, the private oppression." The world needs to be reminded that EVERY government accepts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

International Violence Against Women Act

Introduced by Senators Joe Biden (D-DE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN), the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) makes ending violence against women and girls a top diplomatic priority. It creates an Office of Global Women's Initiatives in the State Dept. to coordinate all efforts to combat violence against women. It also creates the Office of Global Women's Development at the Agency for International Development (USAID) to integrate violence prevention programming into current foreign assistance activities, as part of overall responsibilities to coordinate all USAID programming regarding

international women's issues.

Specifically, the I-VAWA would do the following:

Increase Legal and Judicial Protection to Address Violence Against Women and Girls, Increase Health Sector Capacity to Address Violence Against Women and Girls, Change Social Norms to End Violence Against Women and Girls, Increase Women's Economic Opportunity and Education, Address Violence Against Women and Girls in Overseas Natural Disaster and Conflict-Related Humanitarian Situations, Increase U.S. Training of Overseas Foreign Security Forces on

Violence Against Women and Girls.

Senator Menendez of New Jersey has signed on to support this bill.

The bill directs the U.S. government to create a comprehensive, 5-year strategy to reduce violence in 10-20 different countries that have severe levels of violence against women and girls. The Act authorizes more than \$1 billion over 5 years in U.S. assistance to support international programs that prevent and respond to violence. The funds will go to health programs and survivor services, encourage legal accountability and a change of public attitudes.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

The theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is "Every Human Has Rights." The campaign begins on November 25th and ends on December 10th (the 60th anniversary of the ratification of the International Declaration of Human Rights).

A copy of a letter sent to both *The Record* and *The Twin Boro News* is attached to this newsletter.

Former Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, said, "Violence against

women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace."

We should all join the effort to raise awareness. Gender violence is used as a method of control as well as a tool with which to limit women's freedom and to bring them to submission.



UNIFEM—SAY NO TO VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

On November 25th, UNIFEM will mark the end of its signature campaign which was launched a year ago, with the support of Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman. UNIFEM will hand over the signatures it began gathering one year ago. The goal was to have 1 million signatures. At present, over 500,000 people have signed. We can help support this effort by signing, if we have not done so already, and ask our families and friends to do so as well.



We simply have to go to www.saynotoviolence.org and add our names. Add your voice to an ever-growing campaign to end violence against women.

Working for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

The signatures will be handed directly to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We are in count-down mode. Don't put it off.



UNITED NATIONS BRIEFING DISARMAMENT: FRESH ANSWERS TO OLD QUESTIONS



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon identified among the five public global goods that serve the interests of all States the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament. Noting that nuclear disarmament had long remained only an aspiration rather than an accomplished fact, the Secretary-General stressed that he saw great potential for fresh answers to the old questions posed by the issue of disarmament. The Secretary-

General offered a five-point proposal. First, he urged all Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon-states, to fulfill their treaty obligations to undertake negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. Second, he suggested that the Security Council's permanent members begin discussions on security issues in the nuclear disarmament process, giving unambiguous assurances to non-nuclear weapons states that they would not be the targets of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Third, the Secretary-General called for renewed efforts to strengthen the rule of law in disarmament by bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBT) into force and beginning negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a fissile material treaty immediately, without preconditions. Fourth, he invited nuclear-weapon states to send information on their efforts in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to the UN Secretariat for further dissemination to the public. The fifth suggestion was a reminder of other

complementary measures that must be promoted, including the elimination of other types of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); new efforts against WMD terrorism; limits on the production and trade in conventional arms, and new weapons prohibitions, including bans on missiles and space weapons.

At the briefing were Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs who summarized the Secretary-General's remarks. Also in attendance and speaking to the issue were David Webb, Vice Chair of the UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, David Burroughs, Executive Director of the New York based Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, Michael Renner, Worldwatch Institute, Clara da Silva, Legal Advisor of the Control Arms campaign and Cora Weiss, President of The Hague Appeal for Peace.

Copies of the briefing summary are available by emailing me at marymac43@verizon.net

New York Times Warns of Lean Times Ahead

A recent *New York Times* special section "Giving" (Nov. 11, 2008) warns that non-profits should brace for lean times ahead. In the picture to the right, a woman is picking out groceries with her children at a community center food bank.

Due to the shrinking economy, donations will be down in all sectors, warns the NY Times. Food banks will be hard pressed to provide food for all the hungry.



The financial crisis has caused many to think more than twice about what charities and non-profits they give to.

Although not mentioned in the article, we must also be aware of the very great possibility of shrinking state government budgets and what the effect will be on social service agencies and institutions such as Shelter Our Sisters.

The LAA Committee has joined with Shelter Our Sisters to spread news of any initiatives that may cause hardship to organizations such as theirs.