

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF.



International Women's Day

International Women's day is 101 years old! Over a century of celebrating a day which was not born from celebration but out of protest and of demands for change. From the 1908 protest by 15,000 garment workers marching through the streets of NYC demanding shorter work hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labor to 19 March 1911, when the nascent International Women's Day was marked for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland and brought over a million women and men into the streets. What they were demanding was the right to vote, to hold public office, the right to work and an end to discrimination.

In 2012 the demands that WILPF and our sister organisations continue to make are remarkably similar: to bring about change through peaceful, non-violent, participatory action, and address the political economy of violence.

The world is in a state of almost permanent conflict, declared, unfinished or imminent. The causes of those wars lie not just in realpolitik and the supposed security of States, but in economics and the need for resources. It was the lack of economic rights that sparked the uprisings in the Arab States followed by demands for civil and political rights: the same message as over 101 years ago!

WILPF reasserts that demand. Social and economic rights and justice without discrimination are central to peace and sustainable development. In the context of the 21st century and globalization we must use the tools of the international and national systems to bring this about.

It is for the above reasons that WILPF's international programme is framed by three broad areas: Challenge Militarism; Invest in Peace; and Strengthen Multilateralism. We are proud that WILPF has strengthened our programme of work in the last year with the aim of implementing the WILPF "integrated approach" to security and ensuring that the Women Peace and Security agenda lies with those it is supposed to serve and nether essentialises us nor co-opts us into the military definitions of security.

The peaceful struggle of three women who lived the demands of Security Council Resolution on women, peace and security (SCR 1325), was recognized when they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: Leymah Gbowee, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia) and Tawakkol Karman (Yemen). We congratulate the new Laureates for the examples they have set and dedication to peace. To date, only 12 other women were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize including WILPF's first International President Jane Addams and Emily Balch.

There is much to be done - from the wars in African countries and Afghanistan, the instability in the Arab region, the threats of war against Iran, to the global recession and environmental degradation. International women's day is indeed a day to recognize what has been done so far but also to raise our voices, to protest and to call on all of us to keep on working for peace.