

PRESS RELEASE

International Team of Women Leaders to Visit Palestine to Lend Support to Palestinian Women during the Presidential Election with a stop over in Cairo.

The Global Coalition – Women Defending Peace, established last November in Geneva at an international conference, is sending an international team of women leaders to Palestine from 7 to 10 January 2005 to lend support to Palestinian women during the presidential election. The Global Coalition is responding to an invitation by Zahira Kamal, Minister for Women Affairs of the Palestinian Authority and Salwa Abou Khadra, President of the General Union of Palestinian Women. The November conference, which established the Coalition, was held under the auspices of H.E Suzanne Mubarak, President and Founder of the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement (SMWIPM), and Micheline Calmy-Rey, Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The mission is the first concrete action by the Coalition since its establishment. It translates a commitment to support any opportunity for empowering women politically and ensuring their adequate representation at all levels of decision-making. The ultimate objective is to ensure that, when the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resumes, Palestinian women play their part at the negotiating table and in the reconstruction efforts.

The delegation will include women from nine different countries. It will be led by Gertrude Mongella, President of the African Parliament, and will include Anna Balletbo, President of the Olof Palme Foundation, Rebecca Carter, Carter Center, Anja H. Ebnother, Assistant Director for PfP Programmes and the Maison de la Paix, Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Aleya El Bindari-Hammad, Secretary General of the Global Women Defending Peace and Board Member of the SMWIPM, Therese Gastaut, Spokesperson of the SMWIPM, Anne-Marie Lizin, President of the Belgian Senate, Flora MacDonald, former Foreign

Minister of Canada, Ndioro Ndiaye, Deputy Director General of the International Organization for Migration, Zohreh Tabatabai, Director of Communications of the International Labour Organization and Ruth-Gaby Vermot, Swiss Member of Parliament.

Before traveling to Palestine, the team is assembling in Cairo to meet on 6 January with H.E. Suzanne Mubarak to discuss the content of the mission and to agree on its detailed terms of reference.

Taking advantage of their presence in Cairo, the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement will host two consecutive panels highlighting peace and security matters on 6 January on the premises of the National Council of Women. Held under the auspices of HE Suzanne Mubarak this special event will host in addition to members of the delegation, parliamentarians and representatives of NGOs, learning institutions and the media.

During its stay in Palestine, the delegation will meet with key representatives of the Palestinian Authority and parliamentarians, as well as representatives of women's organizations. It will travel throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and meet local representatives and visit election centers. The delegation will also meet with the press.

The mission is unique in that it illustrates women's resolve to achieve participation in the political life of their respective nations as a necessary requirement for peace and development. It also demonstrates the importance of international solidarity to achieve this objective.

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