



International Conference on Kurdish Women for Peace and Equality March 8th & 11th, 2007 (International Women's Day)

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The Kurdish National Congress of North America will hold a conference on Kurdish Women in Greater Kurdistan (Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria) and in the Diaspora.

The conference will be held in Southern Kurdistan and will be focusing on the role of Kurdish women in politics, science, art, and history inside Kurdistan and in Diaspora as well as marginal participation of women in politics. Kurdish Women compose half of the citizens in Kurdish society. Opportunities for women to be represented in political bodies and to have influence in political matters are important yardsticks of democracy and thus an integral indication of social development and democratization processes in the region. Increasing the active participation of women in politics and the representation of women in positions of power remains a crucial and critical step towards obtaining gender balance in Kurdish society. At the same time it is important to examine the "gender" of politics, science, art, and the implications of gender in the political, scientific and artistic aspects of life in Kurdistan. KNC holds the position that true peace, referred to in the peace studies literature as "positive peace" is only possible under conditions of just and fair gender relations, respect for democratic rights and freedoms, and equal opportunities for economic, social and intellectual development across age, class, ethnicity and gender.

The conference will address both quantitative and qualitative aspects of Kurdish women's role in politics, science and art. Studies on women and politics have suggested a variety of possible explanations for the paucity of women leaders and the marginalization of women in politics. These include electoral systems, party systems, gender-role socialization, women's movement, political culture, religion, and women's representation among professions from which potential leaders are drawn. The conference looks at both obstacles/constraints to progress and the emerging practices/strategies leading to progress, and encourages both structurally oriented and actor-oriented explanations for either the lack or the increase of women in political bodies, sciences and art in different cultural, political and developmental contexts across Kurdistan.

As for the qualitative aspect of Kurdish women and politics, science, art, and history the conference will address issues concerning gender and power relations. The conference will look into alternatives or informal channels of participation, Kurdish women's exercise of power through these channels, and Kurdish women's role in influencing

political, science and art agendas. Moreover, the conference will address the impact of diverse political discourses and religious systems on shaping the status quo. It will examine what political options these discourses provide for women and how women maneuver within or across different political discourses.

The conference will look into establishing channels of cooperation between women organizations in Northern America, Europe and Kurdistan for the purpose of advancing and enhancing women role in building the new civil society in Kurdistan and democracy.

The International Conference on Kurdish Women for Peace and Equality will be dedicated to the memory of the late ***Mrs. Soraya Serajeddini***, previous Executive Vice President of the Kurdish National Congress of North America.