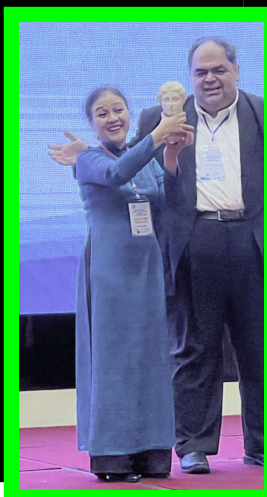


SOME OF THE WONDERFUL WOMEN AT THE 22ND ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD PEACE COUNCIL IN NOVEMBER 2022 IN HANOI

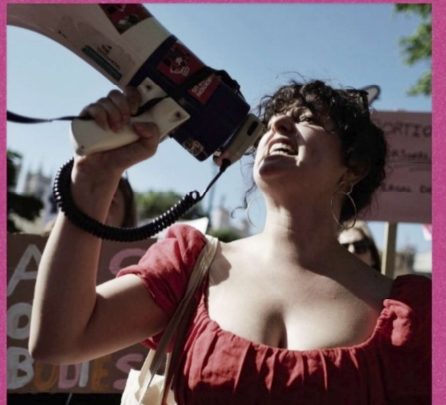


JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN 50P SPRING 2023

WOMEN'S ISSUES

spotlight on anti-abortion groups

**ABORTION RIGHTS
AGM: THE POWER
OF GRASSROOTS
CAMPAIGNING.**
SATURDAY 11TH MARCH 2023



THROUGHOUT history, anti-abortion movements around the world have shown a remarkable consistency in their tactics. Legal initiatives, like six-week bans, are tested and replicated in courts and legislative assemblies around the world. We hear coordinated messages in the ways anti-abortion campaigners talk about abortion: for instance, experts studying anti-abortion discourses have noticed the global adoption of the 'both lives matter' framing. And we see the same protest tactics replicated time and again: from eerily identical scenes of clinic harassment during the global '40 days for life' to the repetition of the 'March For Life' blueprint. In 1974, the founders of the US March For Life vowed to march every year until the Roe v Wade ruling, enshrining the constitutional right to an abortion, was overturned. Since then, these demonstrations have spread far and wide including Marches For Life in London, Dublin, Paris, among others.

We might assume that international abortion groups are just taking inspiration from the well-established 'pro-life' movement in the USA. But investigations have found more deliberate coordination and underhanded funding links between organisations in the US Christian right and anti-abortion groups around the world. A key report from the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (EPF) states that US donors sent \$81.3 million to help fund anti-abortion activism and other 'anti-gender' conservative causes between 2009 and 2018. As an important note, these anti-gender causes also include campaigns against trans lives: we have a common enemy and our fight for bodily autonomy is one and the same!

This coordination gives the impression of a global groundswell of anti-abortion sentiment, especially when coordinated protests such as the '40 days for life' are occurring around the world. These shared

resources allow the anti-abortion movement to become a loud minority, drowning out popular support for the bodily autonomy and personhood of pregnant people.

Faced with this well-resourced and powerful opponent, the pro-abortion movements are fighting hard to insist that universal abortion access is non-negotiable. It is fair to say that the global pro-abortion movement has historically been more fractured and localised but this is changing. With the example set by Latin American pioneers, pro-abortion movements are linking up and nurturing global networks of solidarity and care. We can see this in actions around International Safe Abortion Day, global knowledge-sharing networks and coordinated counter-protest actions, like the March For Choice.

Undoubtedly, there is power in setting our own agenda and not being dictated to by the anti-abortion movement. This is especially true when anti-abortion campaigners try to bait us into bad-faith arguments. There is also power in standing up to anti-abortion protests. We can do both!

That is why coalitions of pro-abortion and feminist groups turn out every year to counter protest the so-called March For Life wherever it rears its head.

ELLIOTÉ LONG IS AN ABORTION RIGHTS SUPPORTER

ABORTION RIGHTS AGM TAKES PLACE 11AM SATURDAY 11 MARCH FOLLOWED BY A PUBLIC MEETING AT 1PM FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT CHOICE@ABORTIONRIGHTS.ORG.UK

a positive people's assembly

OVER 250 people attended the conference at Friends Meeting House. Introduced by **Steve Turner** Unite, the morning was broken down into sessions on NHS and Social Care and Building Trade Union Solidarity. Each session was introduced by speakers on a panel followed by debate on motions relevant to the session.

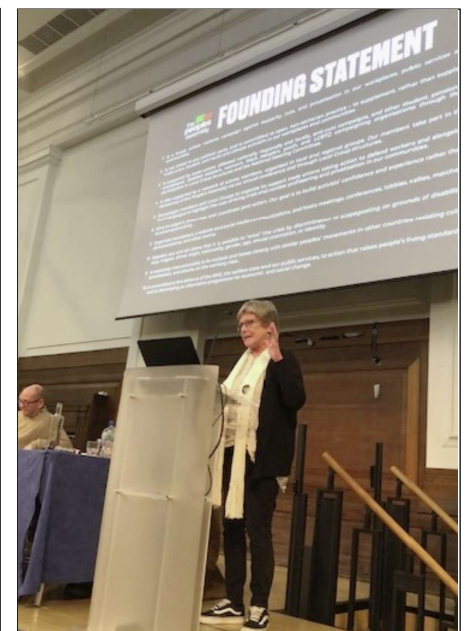
Mark Serwotka PCS GS, addressed the conference via video noting the high level of in-work poverty and the anger that has led PCS members to escalate industrial action. There were powerful presentations from a nurse, a paramedic and a doctor from A&E highlighting the crisis in the NHS which leads to ambulances queuing for hours outside A&E and the shocking figure of 500 preventable deaths each week. In 2023, we find hospitals setting up food banks for staff.

Paula Peters from DPAC referred to the broken social care sector which con-

tributes to premature deaths of disabled and older people. She reported high levels of debt because of inability to afford the cost of care which can lead to bailiffs being called in.

Other key speakers included **John Hendy KC** who highlighted rising inflation and the determination of the Tory government to curb trade union activity. **Kevin Courtney** NEU joint GS, noted the government's intention to legislate for minimum levels of service during strikes while such standards cannot be met day to day because of staffing shortages.

The NAW motion was moved by **Sandra Durkin** NAW Secretary, and carried unanimously. Although our motion was the only one that focused specifically on the impact of austerity on women a speaker on food poverty reported witnessing a woman who walked two miles with small children to a food bank and collapsed in the queue. **Rose Keeping** NAW President, spoke of her own experi-



reflections on alice

ence as a child when her mother lived on a poor diet to ensure she could feed her children. Two examples some 50 years apart of how women bear the brunt of poverty.

This is the NAW motion that was carried (seconded by Coventry and Warwickshire PA):

Women constitute 50.57% of the UK population (OECD) but face the highest level of poverty, are more likely to be in low paid or insecure employment and struggling with debt. Women do the majority of unpaid work, caring for children, elderly and vulnerable adults, are at a higher risk of poor health and domestic violence. Even before the pandemic, women were disproportionately affected by 11 years of austerity policies. The cost-of-living crisis will result in even more being thrown into poverty.

The National Assembly of Women calls on the People's Assembly to highlight this disproportionate impact of the cost-of-living crisis on women through publicity and campaigning in the following areas:

■ Health

Of the 1.4 million NHS staff – 76.7% are women. In adult social care 80% of all jobs are done by women. In direct care and support 85-95% of jobs are done by women. [King's Fund].

■ Work

Women make up 82% of hospitality workers [Institute of Fiscal Studies] so are at greater risk of redundancy. There has been little change in the gender pay gap since 2012 [Office of National Statistics] and 54,000 women a year may lose their job due to pregnancy or maternity.

■ Benefits and Childcare

In July 2022 over 2.8m women were on Universal Credit. Half of in-payment households have children. Affordable childcare is key to increasing women's employment and reducing child poverty.

in summary

This was a very positive event demonstrating the strength of the People's Assembly in uniting organisations opposing austerity measures. While opposition parties' response to Tory policies is lacking we note that trade unions are currently taking a lead in terms of industrial action which not only seeks to protect members' terms and conditions but also protect public services.

**NAW SECRETARY SANDRA DURKIN
REPORTS ON THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY
AGAINST AUSTERITY CONFERENCE ON
14 JANUARY 2023**



**PAM FLYNN, FORMER NAW EC MEMBER
REFLECTS ON ALICE MAHON**

ALICE attended NAW Annual General Meetings and seminars when she was able. I remember her as a principled truth-teller, even when the truth was difficult to hear. Her record of outspoken opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is well known. Also her expertise and deep knowledge of atrocities in Kosovo and the Balkans in the 1990s.

At our meetings, Alice shared her experience of politicians' venality – of their corruption and vested interests. She knew who had shares or directorships in private healthcare companies, who was on the take, who was an uncritical supporter of NATO. She knew too which European politicians were in thrall to the United States or other interests.

Less well known is her conviviality, generosity and popularity.

A few years ago, a friend and I went to see Alice for lunch at a popular Italian restaurant in Halifax. She insisted on paying for our meal. Towards the end of that meal, two women approached our table.

"Are you Alice Mahon?"

"Yes, hello."

The women were former, now retired, Halifax Council staff who had taken action for equal pay and better conditions. Years earlier, Alice had supported their campaign, when she was a local councillor. One of the women had a well-worn press cutting in her wallet, showing a photograph of the protest. They were thrilled to be able to talk and remember with Alice, and she with them.

Alice was always open, hospitable, collegiate, and principled. We applaud her contribution to the wider women's movement and to the NAW's development and campaigning.

Alice Mahon

28 SEPTEMBER 1937 TO 25 DECEMBER 2022

ALICE Mahon was a fearless campaigner for peace, socialism and internationalism. She was a committed anti-racist, a feminist and staunch trade unionist. Alice left school at 16 and had a variety of jobs before training as a nurse. She joined the Young Socialists and at 20 joined the Labour Party. Her involvement in the National Union of Public Employees led her to work in the trade union movement and she went on to study at the University of Bradford and then taught TU studies at Bradford & Ilkley Community College.

Alice became active in local politics and was elected to Calderdale council from 1982-1987 serving on the Calderdale district health authority. Encouraged by veteran Labour MP Barbara Castle, Alice won the selection ballot to become Labour candidate for Halifax and in 1987 won the seat from the sitting Tory MP. Alice served the community of Halifax for 28 years.

Never afraid of speaking truth to power she stood up against Tony Blair, opposing the Gulf War in 1991 and tabled an Early Day Motion against the intervention which was supported by 162 MPs. She was an outspoken opponent of NATO and used her position as an elected member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to make the case at every opportunity. Alice opposed the Balkan War, visiting Belgrade whilst under NATO bombardment. Becoming increasingly frustrated with the direction of the Labour Party, she resigned in 2005, rejoining when Jeremy Corbyn was elected Leader.

But Alice never confined her engagement in the cause of peace and justice to Parliament. She was one of the first MPs to join the Committee to Stop the Gulf War in 1990 and helped set up the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. She was a vocal supporter of anti-austerity and against privatisation undermining the NHS. She was Vice President of CND as well as of the National Assembly of Women.

remember the people of **Afghanistan**



SHUKRIA RAHIMI SAYS DO NOT FORGET THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN

SEVERAL years ago, with the start of the talks in Doha between representatives of the Taliban and the US, Afghan women formed various committees and groups in the hope of conveying their interests and messages to the negotiators and thereby influencing the proceedings.

One of those groups was the Co-ordinating Council of Women Struggle in Afghanistan, which consisted of women's rights activists based both inside and outside Afghanistan.

We were aware of the very real and imminent danger of the various Taliban wings merging to take power in the country – especially considering the previous dark experience of Taliban rule, which harmed the women of Afghanistan most and led to their exclusion from all fields of society; whether social, political, economic, and even educational.

From forced marriages and the stoning of women through to public flogging, we wanted to warn the world that the rights and freedoms of Afghan women should not be sacrificed on the altar of the peace negotiations.

Despite the promises of the Taliban's

representatives in Qatar and the seemingly widely held optimism internationally that they had somehow changed, we emphasised that not only had they not fundamentally changed, but they had also learned the dark arts of political deceit and to say what they thought their opponents wanted to hear.

Ever since the Taliban returned to power in mid-August 2021 and that relatively moderate image they promulgated during those early days – by announcing a public amnesty, promising to form an inclusive government, and to respect the rights of women and minorities in the hope of securing international recognition and legitimacy – the painful truth has gradually emerged as their lies have been revealed.

Since then, all social, economic and political areas have faced significant problems.

The Taliban government could not provide even the most basic of social services to the people. We have witnessed an increase in violations of human rights; the disappearance of former government/state employees; arrests and fierce repression of women; house-to-house searches; and widespread repression and violence against minorities.

The Taliban have further consolidated

their grip on power in little more than a year by severely suppressing the media – threatening, arresting, beating and torturing journalists – as well as monitoring the work and activities of international organisations such as the UN, thereby turning Afghanistan into an information vacuum.

Despite the efforts of courageous activists, many of the Taliban's transgressions and human rights violations are not even recorded, let alone reported.

Against this backdrop, the Taliban have committed countless crimes. Their fighters subject women and girls to inhumane and humiliating acts and, in predominantly non-Pashtun or mixed populations areas, have used sexual violence and forced marriage as weapons of war.

In recent weeks, numerous reports and horrific stories regarding the forced marriages of young girls, widows and even married women have been emerging in public media and on social networks.

Videos of women being publicly beaten for venturing outside the house without a chaperone – usually a husband or close male relative – talking on a mobile phone, or wearing brightly coloured clothes under their burqa, starkly illustrate the difficulty of life for women and girls in Taliban-controlled areas.

The Taliban have also suppressed all

peaceful women's marches since they arrived in Kabul.

Women's rights activists have been tortured and imprisoned – and if they are not killed, they are often left in a terrible mental state. The last year has been a catastrophe for the women and girls of Afghanistan.

From the outset Taliban restricted women's access to work. In most government offices they did not have the right to be present at their workplaces, and they were only given a monthly allowance or stipend by presenting proof of employment.

Soon after they were forced to wear hijabs and headscarves and were prevented from actually going to work without being accompanied by the aforementioned chaperone.

Strict veiling for women in the education system and removal of women's right to study certain subjects was followed by an outright ban of women in education.

A ban on women travelling without a chaperone, attending amusement parks or restaurants – all normal ordinary life activities – is a reality for women in today's Afghanistan.

The statement of the minister for women's education that women are only created to serve men represents the fundamental outlook of the religious extremist groups – especially the Taliban.

This belief is deeply rooted and so powerful that such a hateful mentality goes unchecked.

It is clear that the rights and freedoms that Afghan women desire cannot and

will not be granted by the Taliban regime.

People who are prepared to blow themselves up in pursuit of their ideological goals will not be swayed from their core belief of ownership over a woman's body and mind.

They oppose women's education because they are afraid of an informed woman, a woman who is independent, and who will raise children prepared to ask questions instead of blindly obeying orders.

This is the existential danger that threatens their belief system.

The attitude of an Afghan woman and the attitude of a Talib are incompatible. The Taliban ask: "Why should women work? Why should women study?" Women ask: "Why shouldn't women have the right to work? Why shouldn't women be educated?"

The women of Afghanistan have perhaps learned to temper their expectations of the international community, especially the US and its Western partners.

We do not covet invitations to the European Parliament and the UN, nor meaningless awards that pay lip service, nor headlines and photos on the back covers of Western magazines, as such measures are designed to act like a sedative, one that does not cure the pain but provides temporary relief.

Our question to the international community is how can millions of dollars continue to be deposited into the coffers of the Taliban if the world is genuinely concerned about the plight of Afghan women?

How can it be that the daughters of Taliban leaders go to their private schools in Qatar while we ordinary women are written off and continue to live in abject poverty?

I call upon feminists around the world, all those who believe in the equal rights of men and women, all those who cannot imagine their daughter living in such a society, to become the voice of the oppressed Afghan women.

If this trend continues here unchecked, Afghanistan will once more become a threat to the entire world.

Afghanistan and the plight of its people must not be left to slide into obscurity and be forgotten out of sight.

Ask your governments to stop offering financial aid and lending legitimacy by official recognition of the Taliban. Afghanistan should never be rewarded for their repressive campaigns against women.

The only solution to the country's problems is the formation of a representative government of national accord – one in which Afghan women do not play a token role as in the past, but participate in the exercise of political power and are in a position to defend the millions of those at the forefront of bringing about progressive change in Afghanistan.

SHUKRIA RAHIMI IS A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVIST IN AFGHANISTAN

THIS ARTICLE WAS FIRST PUBLISHED JANUARY 2023 IN THE MORNING STAR

international women's day

NAW EC MEMBER MARY DAVIS REMINDS US OF THE ORIGINS OF IWD

WITHIN the last 10 to 15 years many thousands of women worldwide have begun to recognise and to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD). It is, however, unfortunate that its origins are not more widely known given that its foundation almost 100 years ago and subsequent history is truly inspirational.

The motivation for IWD came from two sources: the struggle of working class women to form trade unions and the fight for women's franchise. These two issues united European women with their sisters in the USA. In 1908 hundreds of women workers in the New York needle trades demonstrated in Rutgers Square in Manhattan's Lower East Side to form their own union and to demand the right to vote. This historic demonstration took place on 8 March. It led, in the following year to the 'uprising' of 30,000 women shirtwaist makers which resulted in the first permanent trade unions for women workers in the USA.

Meanwhile news of the heroic fight of US women workers reached Europe – in particular it inspired European socialist

women who had established, on the initiative of the German socialist feminist, Clara Zetkin (1857-1933), the International Socialist Women's Conference. This latter body met for the first time in 1907 in Stuttgart alongside one of the periodic conferences of the Second International (1889-1914). Three years later in 1910 at the Copenhagen Conference of the Second International Clara Zetkin proposed the following motion:

"...the Socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women's Day, whose foremost purpose it must be to aid the attainment of women's suffrage. This demand must be handled in conjunction with the entire women's question according to Socialist precepts. The Women's Day must have an international character and is to be prepared carefully."

The motion was carried: 8 March was favoured, although at this stage no formal date was set. Nonetheless IWD was marked by rallies and demonstrations in the US and many European countries in the years leading to World War One, albeit on different days each year (eg. 18 March in 1911 in Austria-Hungary, Germany, Denmark and Switzerland and the last Sunday in February in the US.)

In 1917 in Russia, International Women's Day acquired great significance – it was the flashpoint for the Russian Revolution. On 8 March (Western calendar) women workers in Petrograd held a mass strike and demonstration demanding Peace and Bread. The strike movement spread from factory to factory and effectively became an insurrection. In 1922, in honour of the women's role on IWD in 1917, Lenin declared that 8 March should be designated officially as women's day. Much later it was a national holiday in the Soviet Union and most of the former socialist countries. The cold war may explain why it was that a public holiday celebrated by communists, was largely ignored in the West, despite the fact that in 1975 (International Women's Year), the United Nations recognised 8 March as International Women's Day.

Today we acknowledge that IWD gives us an opportunity to draw attention to our own struggles for women's rights, to link this with women's struggles worldwide and to demonstrate international sisterly solidarity with working women everywhere. However, the socialist feminist origins of IWD should never be forgotten.

iran: widespread protests continue

OVER recent weeks, Iran has been the scene of widespread protests following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in the custody of the so-called “morality police” in Tehran.

The country has seen popular protests in all of its 31 provinces, with protesters demanding basic human and democratic rights, as well as social justice. Protests are now into their ninth week, despite the dictatorship’s recourse to brutal violence.

The Iranian regime has been blindsided by the uprising. Despite its heavy-handed tactics and rhetoric casting all protesters as agents of the US, Britain and their regional allies, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia, the protests rage on.

build-up to the current unrest

This current wave of protest is the fourth large uprising to take place in the country over the last 12 years. In the wake of the violent suppression of the “green movement”, following the rigged presidential elections in June 2009, it became clear that the regime was utterly beyond reform.

While attempts to paper over the cracks were made in Hassan Rouhani’s two-term presidency, which came to office on a supposedly “reformist” ticket, the last few years have seen the eruption of mass protests and continuous industrial unrest.

The current protests follow two years of widespread strikes by workers in various industries and teachers, as well as protests from pensioners and demonstrations by women and students against the regime’s draconian anti-people policies.

In the past two months, 381 protesters are known to have been killed as well as 57 minors and 50 members of the regime’s forces killed; 16,088 people are known to have been arrested, 497 of whom are students; 2,097 detainees have been identified, and 990 separate protests have taken place across 146 cities and 140 university and college campuses around Iran.

Protests continue in defiance of a warning by the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that they must stop, a vote by 227 of Iran’s 290 legislators on 6 November that the death penalty should be applied to those protesters brought before the courts on charges of “serious crimes against the state”, and repeated demands by regime chiefs for a hard line to be taken against the protesters.

On 19 November Ayatollah Ali Khamenei predicted an end to the “evil” current protests, stating that they are “doomed to failure”, according to the Iranian state news agency IRNA.

This has been widely interpreted as his giving a nod to the regime’s security forces to finally and decisively move on the protest movement.

an economy in freefall

According to the regime’s own statistics, almost 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. This is the result of three decades of neoliberal economic shock therapy and policies imposed by the regime, all prescribed and encouraged by the IMF and World Bank.

These have included unchecked privatisation, the bankruptcy of many small to medium-sized enterprises, sky-high unemployment, and the erosion of workers’ rights.

In 2018, following the unilateral abrogation by the Donald Trump administration of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a raft of inhumane sanctions was reimposed on Iran.

These sanctions have exacerbated the collapse of Iran’s currency and the freefall of its economy, hitting ordinary Iranian people the hardest.

The imposing and upholding of these sanctions by the US, through the sanctioning of any third party attempting to deal with Iran, is rightly seen as grossly unjust.

imperialist interference

The US, Britain and their reactionary allies Saudi Arabia and Israel, see the current turbulence and upheaval in Iran as an opportunity to interfere in the country’s internal affairs.

This is through support for anti-democratic forces discredited by the majority of ordinary Iranians, such as the remnants of the ousted Shah’s regime and the Mojahedin-e Khalgh Organisation (MKO), also known as the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), which is currently based in Albania and bankrolled by Saudi Arabia.

Media platforms backed by these same forces receive extensive funding and resources to drown out external reportage of the protests in Iran, and those dissenting voices that remain unaligned with their interests and the imperialist agenda behind them.

However, it is clear that the vast majority of protesters inside Iran remain unmoved by these groups’ designs and are firmly opposed to any imperialist intervention in Iran.

One of the main slogans of the current protest movement, which resounds around the country’s university campuses, hotbeds of organised opposition to the regime, translates as “Down with the oppressor; whether Shah or Supreme Leader!”

the anti-imperialist charade

A major cause of confusion in left-wing and progressive circles is the mischaracterisation of the Iranian regime as an anti-imperialist force, often owing to its record of posturing against the US.

However, despite the Iranian regime’s anti-imperialist rhetoric, the Islamic Republic has been a faithful aide to impe-

rialist designs.

This ranges from its support for the Contras in Nicaragua and secret relationship with the US and apartheid South Africa during the 1980s, to its active participation in the US’s destabilisation and overthrow of the left-wing People’s Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the civil war in Tajikistan, the subsequent invasions and occupations of both Afghanistan and Iraq – and its continued support for some of the most reactionary forces in the region, including the Taliban.

The Iranian regime’s calculated mass murder of thousands of political prisoners, many of whom were drawn from Iran’s left-wing and progressive opposition parties, in the summer of 1988, was a crime against humanity, one for which it remains unapologetic and whose perpetrators now occupy high office.

The people of Iran, with women and youth at the very forefront, are now opposing a dictatorship which has proven itself incapable of reform or heeding the calls of the population for basic human rights, including the holding of a legal referendum on the country’s constitution and an end to over four decades of repression.

The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People’s Rights (Codir) calls upon the trade union movement in Britain to make clear its opposition to the action taken by the authorities in Iran by writing to the Iranian embassy or diplomatic mission.

Codir further demands the immediate release of all those detained during the current protests and their safe return to family and loved ones; the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience held in Iran; for the government in Iran to honour commitments and obligations under international human rights law; and the swift formation and dispatch to Iran of a fact-finding committee, under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council, tasked with investigating all incidents arising from the current protests in Iran.

PAYAM SOLHTALAB IS A PEACE ACTIVIST AND MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF CODIR

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CODIR AND DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN, PLEASE VISIT WWW.CODIR.NET

International Women’s Day

celebration with music, food and international speakers

Saturday 11 March

7pm to 9.15pm at Ealing Green Church, London W5 5QT

Organised by Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Parties in Britain

women's struggle in india

CAROLYN JONES (BELOW LEFT) DESCRIBES WOMEN IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE IN UNITY AND EQUALITY. SHE IS AN NAW MEMBER AND VICE CHAIR OF MORNING STAR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



THE 13th All India Democratic Women's Association's (AIDWA) conference took place in January 2023 in Kerala, under the title Struggle in Unity and Equality. The conference takes place every three years, bringing together 850 delegates from across 23 States of India, this year ranging from 21 to 80 years of age.

I was invited to attend the Conference to address the delegates (thanks to Joginder Baine of the Indian Workers Association). Unfortunately, due to the amount of business, the International Session was cancelled. However, I did meet many of the officers and delegates, extending sororal solidarity wishes from the National Assembly of Women, the *Morning Star* and the Communist Party of Britain.

AIDWA is an independent left organisation committed to achieving democracy, equality and women's emancipation. In policy and practice it upholds secular values against all forms of fundamentalism, challenging and resisting cultural practices demeaning to women, including those imposed in the name of tradition. AIDWA is closely associated with the CPI(M) but is not affiliated to Women's International Democratic Federation.

AIDWA has 11 million members and its main focus of work is amongst the poorer sections of women in both urban and rural areas, who constitute the majority of India's female population.

The conference took place against the political backdrop of a second Modi government, increasingly spreading division, neo-liberal policies and authoritarian control over every aspect of Indian life.

Delegates discussed the impact of Modi's pro-corporate, anti-women, anti-people, communal policies, including laws against inter-caste, inter-religious marriages that deny the right to self-choice; the four labour codes and three, now-repealed, farm laws. Delegates also noted the watering down and scarcely implemented laws aimed at protecting women, including anti-dowry, rape, domestic violence, and workplace harassment laws and condemned those BJP members who support the accused in cases of atrocities against women, in the name of religion, caste, party or familial connections. The rights won by the women's movement over the years are being systematically dismantled.

The conference considered six Commission papers, each of which had been discussed prior to the conference by thousands of women at unit, district and 22 state conferences across the country. The papers were on 'women's right and the question of unity', 'employment and women', 'rights of the girl child', 'the freedom struggle and women's movement', 'the NEP and its impact on women', and 'climate change and women'.

Conference hailed the massive participation of women in struggles against reactionary forces and neoliberal policies,

including the role of peasant women in the historic farmers' struggle and the role played by AIDWA in the massive protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

Looking to the future, emphasis was placed on maintaining the contacts developed with Muslim women during the CAA struggle and the need to take on the patriarchal forces by deepening AIDWA's work against caste discrimination. The conference also endorsed calls for a campaign for an Urban Employment Guarantee Act and opposition to any further attacks on the Rural Employment Guarantee Act, alongside the fight for the rights of unorganised sector workers like home-based and domestic workers.

Thirteen resolutions were unanimously adopted and a series of future tasks identified. Delegates spoke of the need to popularise the pro-people's alternative policies of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala.

To round it all off, an inspiring exhibition entitled 'History of the Women's Movement' was on display, highlighting the part played by many women across the globe in their struggles for liberty and equality.

It was truly an honour to be part of this stimulating event and to meet such wonderful women.



UNISON Women's National Conference was held in February, bringing together frontline women workers from a huge variety of public services including the NHS, local councils, utility providers and education.

In her annual report to conference, Anne McVicker, Chair of Unison National Women's Committee, acknowledged that while "everyone is experiencing the financial pinch" the cost-of-living disproportionately impacts on women stating that we "are the 'shock absorbers of poverty'".

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT IN PIC LEFT: NAW EC MEMBERS LIZ PAYNE AND MEGAN DOBNEY, LYN-MARIE O'HARA FROM THE SUCCESSFUL GLASGOW EQUAL PAY CAMPAIGN, UNISON'S NATIONAL EQUALITIES DIRECTOR GLORIA MILLS, NAW EC MEMBER ANITA WRIGHT, AND THE MAQUETTE OF THE FORTHCOMING STATUE OF SYLVIA PANKHURST



subs alert!

All – well, it's that time of year again and time to renew your affiliations!! Bank transfers are fine (and easy!) and the bank details are:

Sort Code: 60-83-01
Account number: 20364894
Account name:
National Assembly of Women

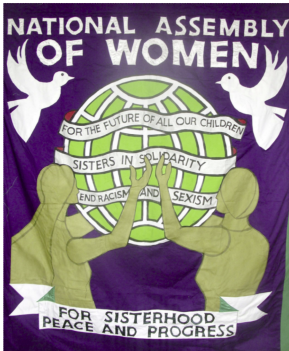
Thanks in advance for your continued support – we couldn't do it without you – and I hope to see many of you at our AGM on 10 June in Liverpool.

Carolyn Simpson
Treasurer

PS: And cheques are fine as well – please send them to me at Carolyn Simpson, NAW, 13 Wren Gardens, Hornchurch RM12 4DT.

10th anniversary – history of the NAW

Sisters in Solidarity



A summary of the NAW's campaigning years 2012 to 2022

THE NAW, born in St Pancras Town Hall in 1952, was 70 years old last year. We published a companion booklet to the first history cataloguing the first 60 years (available to view or download, bottom right on the home page of our website at www.sisters.org.uk).

Hard copies of the 2012 to 2022 booklet are available free to members from megan@gn.apc.org or NAW, 26 Birchanger Road, London SE25 5BB. For non-members please send £3 (cash or cheque).

A pdf is available from megan@gn.apc.org and it will shortly be available on the website under the publications tab.

what's on...

NAW Executive Committee meetings are open to *all* members.

- EC 11 March London
 - EC 16 May online
 - AGM 10 June Liverpool
- For more information about meetings please contact the Secretary, Sandra Durkin, on naw@sisters.org.uk or at NAW, 72 Beaconsfield Road Coventry CV2 4AR

join the NAW now!

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