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Women

Mediterranean Social Forum: Womens Assembly meets

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At the Mediterranean Social Forum (FSMed), Catalan and Italian activists from the World March of Women pressed for a plenary session devoted to the question of women's rights in the Mediterranean. A woman from Iraq spoke on the terrible situation created by the war, for everybody but particularly for women, whether in US prisons or as victims of sexual aggression.

[<https://npa31.org/IMG/jpg/wmwmsf.jpg>]

A Palestinian woman who works as a psychologist in the occupied territories gave a moving explanation of how the second intifada has worsened the situation of women. In addition to the violence of the occupation, conjugal violence is on the rise, with men, often humiliated by the occupation and their situation (unemployment and extreme poverty) taking it out against women. Another intervention concerned the impact of neoliberalism on the situation of women, particularly in the developing countries with the deleterious consequences of structural adjustment plans in the areas of education and health and for women.

The contradictory character of economic neoliberalism on the situation of women was stressed, in that across the world (apart from sub-Saharan Africa) women have entered massively into the sphere of wage labour, which gives them greater autonomy although they are concentrated in the most insecure forms of work (super-exploitation in the workplaces and development of informal work).

An assembly of women was also held during the FSMed. Several hundred people attended and the organizers were surprised by the high attendance. This exchange was very rich, with women from Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Palestine, Tunisia (and again many who did not get visas to attend the FSMed) discussing their lives and experiences and, for some, issues concerning immigration.

These debates allowed the drawing up of a Declaration of the Women's Assembly of the First Social Forum of the Mediterranean.

A.L.

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY AT THE MEDITERRANEAN SOCIAL FORUM

Barcelona, June 17, 2005

Women in the Mediterranean area are victims of violence, poverty, trafficking, wars and systematic violations of the human rights.

In the Mediterranean the women are victims of domination by three powers: patriarchy, neoliberalism and fundamentalism.

These dominant powers support and feed off each other to keep women under unacceptable conditions of life, with lesser rights than those of men in the same society.

The Mediterranean is the theatre of wars which generate violence, rapes, killings, arbitrary detention and

unacceptable life conditions and lack of rights, in particular for women.

Many women from the Southern shores of the Mediterranean were not able to participate here because they were denied visas. This instance adds to the reasons that motivate us to promote with the social movements in Medsf the struggle for the right of free circulation of people.

We, together in the women's assembly in the first Medsf, and coming from all the shores of this sea

DENOUNCE

The militarization of the area, the neo-colonial programs of control of natural resources

The systematic violation of women's human rights and the violence against women

The empowerment of fundamenatlm and political currents that deny the equality in rights of women and promote their loss of civil and social rights

The family codes that institucionalize women's subordination to men

The persistance of tollerance towards the so called 'crimes of honour'

The market in women's bodies and the existence of women and children trafficking mafias

The enslavement, forced labour and sexual mutilation imposed on women and children

The increasing poverty and precarization of women lives, the absence or violations of our social rights and the lack of free access to education and health

The laws of the market, of neoliberalism, which make women more precarious and devoid of economic, social and cultural rights

The bilateral agreements between governments in the Mediterranean area which implement regulation with differential status for women and men, unfavorable for the women

The constitution of Europe as a fortress, denying economic, social, cultural and political rigths for migrant women

The negotiations undergoing between Europe and the Islamic parties, even with the so-called 'moderate' ones

The persecution of women on the basis of their sexual choices

DEMAND

The recognition and support of the social movements, women's resistance and their struggles

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The immediate application, without reserve, by governments and the international institutions of all the protocols that enforce women equal rights

The free circulation of women in the Mediterranean

The right to live in democratic and non-religious societies

That the right to be refugees is applied to all women who are victims of sexual violence

WE SUPPORT

The Iraqi women that resist the imperialist occupation of the USA and its allies

The Palestinian and Israeli women that work together towards the resolution of the conflict and against the occupation of Palestinian territories

All the women that work for resolution of the conflicts in militarized areas and those who struggle for cultural rights and against authoritarian governments

The women who struggle against the patriarchal family codes

Women that struggle for the right of self-determination in sexual preferences and of their bodies and for the recognition of the right to access to free and legal abortion

FOR A COMMON WORK, FOR AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND SOLIDARITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

WE PROPOSE

The establishment of a web site of the Women's network to continue and forward the debate and coordinate the struggles

A common day of actions against violence on women every year on November 25. In the year 2005 this day will be dedicated to the Iraqi women that are arbitrarily detained and will demand their immediate liberation

We, women in the Mediterranean wish and struggle for a Mediterranean of peace, de-militarized, freed from violence, with equal social rights, democracy and equality between men and women