

REFUGEE UPDATE

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INSIDE:

PAGE 2
UNHCR GLOBAL
CONSULTATIONS

PAGE 7
REFUGEE CAMP

PAGE 10
CANADA-COLOMBIA
MINGA

PAGE 13-14
CCR CONFERENCE

PAGE 15
CCR RESPONSE TO
SEPT. 11

HAWA ADEN MOHAMMED RECEIVES "VOICE OF COURAGE AWARD"!

BY ELSA TESFAYE MUSA

Refugee Update congratulates Hawa Aden Mohamed for receiving the 2001 "Voice of Courage Award" from the Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children-- a US based organization advocating for refugee and displaced women and girls. The award was given at a luncheon in New York on June 4 to Hawa and three other refugees from different parts of the world in recognition of their "outstanding work in promoting education in emergency settings."

Hawa was featured in the Winter 2000 Refugee Update special issue on women's concerns.

At a time when the international community had given up on Somalia, a country in the Horn of Africa racked by years of civil war, Hawa Mohamed decided that she would return to her country from years of exile to set up a centre for peace, education and human rights to provide support and training for women and girls whose lives had been turned upside down by war.



Children attending the Gulkayo Education Center for Peace and Development

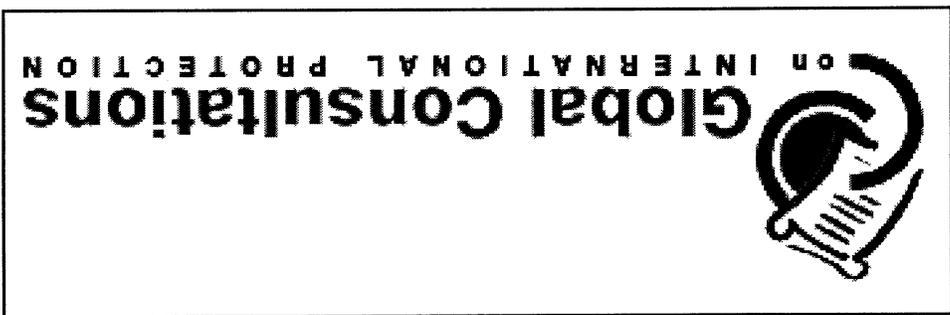
In a speech accepting the award on behalf of all Somali women, Hawa said: "Recognition has different meaning for different groups. For the die-hard conservatives, I am recognized as a woman who doesn't respect her culture or her religion, who is trying to bring change and 'foreign' ideas that would

In an effort to reaffirm the centrality of refugee protection and the continued relevance of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) launched the Global Consultations on International Protection in December 2000. The Consultations were intended to reaffirm the centrality of the 1951 Convention, to address questions of interpretation of the Convention and to examine areas not adequately covered by the Convention. The Consultations also sought to bring issues of refugee protection back to the forefront of international debate.

These are difficult times for those concerned with protection of refugees and other displaced people. Governments in all regions of the world are interpreting the 1951 Convention more narrowly. As Rachael Reilly points out "[u]nlike most other areas of human rights where it is possible to chart progress over the last decades, states have largely regressed in their commitment towards protecting refugees over the past fifty years."

UNHCR CONSULTATIONS: AN NGO PERSPECTIVE

BY ELIZABETH FERRIS



For others, I am recognized as a 'patron', someone who gave women and girls an education centre, where previously there was a broken down compound that

destroy the family system by asking questions and insisting that men should recognize women as their equal. We have been labeled as heretics for advocating women's rights, and the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation.

To reaffirm, in a declaration to be adopted, the collective commitment of states parties to the full and effective implementation of the convention and protocol and the values they embody
 To encourage States to withdraw any reservations they may have in place regarding the convention and its protocol and to encourage states which have not yet acceded to the convention to do so
 To enable them to present their vision and to agree on a provisional Agenda for Protection, drawn up as a result of the Consultations

The first track will culminate in a Ministerial Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, to be held in Geneva on 12 December, at the invitation of the Swiss government. The purpose of this high-level meeting will be:

- To commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1951 convention
- To reaffirm, in a declaration to be adopted, the collective commitment of states parties to the full and effective implementation of the convention and protocol and the values they embody
- To encourage States to withdraw any reservations they may have in place regarding the convention and its protocol and to encourage states which have not yet acceded to the convention to do so
- To enable them to present their vision and to agree on a provisional Agenda for Protection, drawn up as a result of the Consultations

Since it was launched in December 2000, there has been a wide variety of meetings at different levels, carried out along three tracks.

Track 1.

had been destroyed and looted during the civil war. We built this centre, thanks to all who supported it. We are happy to be recognized for this modest achievement and for our commitment to help women and children, in destitute condition, in a war-torn society?.

Elsa Tesfaye Musa for RU Board

Meetings, meetings, meetings

All participants in the Consultation agree that the Ministerial meeting should be substantive - that is, more than just a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Convention. Presently, the expectation is that the Ministerial meeting will endorse an "Agenda for Protection" which will guide the UNHCR's work in the coming years.

Track 2.

The second track of the Consultations was intended to provide a forum to take stock of developments in refugee law and discuss issues of interpretation of the Convention. Four expert Roundtables were scheduled, each with about 30 participants drawn from governments of states parties to the convention, NGOs, academics, the judiciary, and the legal profession. The Roundtables and their subject matter are listed below.

May 2001 Lisbon

Exclusion and cessation clauses

July 2001 Cambridge

Non-refoulement and supervision

September 2001 San Remo

Membership of a particular social group and questions of internal protection/relocation/flight alternative

November 2001 Geneva

Illegal entry and family unity

Track 3.

The third track of the Global Consultations was intended to deal with the so-called "gaps" - protection policy issues not adequately covered by the 1951 Convention.

Three meetings of the third track were scheduled for Geneva during 2001, with two additional meetings planned in 2002 (on the search for protection-based solutions and protection of refugee women and refugee children.)

The March 2001 meeting focused on "protection of refugees in mass influx situations," with substantive discussions on the overall protection framework in situations of mass influx; the civilian character of asylum; separating armed elements from refugees; registration; and responsibility/burden-sharing mechanisms. The June 2001 meeting looked at the protection of refugees in the context of individual

asylum systems, with particular emphasis on the asylum/migration nexus and fair procedures. The September 2001 meeting will continue to examine asylum processes, focusing on issues relating to the reception of asylum-seekers, including standards of treatment as well as complementary forms of protection. An additional topic will be how to strengthen the protection capacity in host countries.

Regional meetings

In addition to all of these meetings, UNHCR also organized seven regional meetings, each with a particular theme, as listed below:

February 2001 Pretoria

Maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, refugee status, camps and locations

May 2001 Ottawa

Incorporating refugee protection safeguards in interception measures

May 2001 Macau

Identification of persons in need of protection and development of effective protection frameworks

June 2001 Budapest

Application of the "safe third country notion," readmission agreements, determination of state responsibility for examining the substance of asylum application; legal and practical aspects of the return of persons not in need of international protection

June 2001 San José

UNHCR's supervisory role and the Inter-American human rights bodies

July 2001 Cairo

How to strengthen the capacity of first asylum countries in the region to offer adequate protection

November 2001 Oslo

Resettlement as a multifaceted tool and its relationship to migration

Refugee Participation

It is probably fair to say that refugee participation in the Global consultations process has been minimal although refugees have been invited to participate in a Forum of Refugees to be convened in France in September 2001 which has been structured to facilitate their input into the Consultation process.

The Consultations have given a face to the HCR's protection mandate and given a content to the idea of protection that States and individuals can relate to."

*Dr. Elizabeth Ferris
Executive Secretary for International Relations
World Council of Churches
Geneva, Switzerland*



UNHCR REFUGEE WOMEN'S REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR CANADA AND U.S.

BY SHURIA DINI

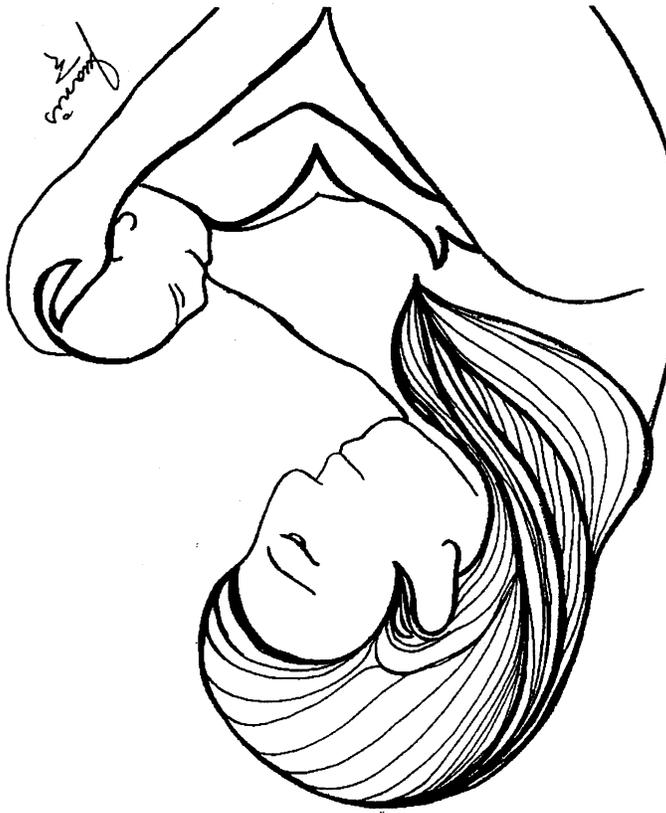
- ▶ to create a culture of learning from and listening to refugee women;
- ▶ to involve women in the transformation of UNHCR in their country of origin;
- ▶ to promote peace as prerequisite

sustainable development, gender-

- ▶ to enable refugee women to participate in refugee policy formulation and to make these policies gender inclusive.

Refugee women participating at the May meeting in Montreal discussed multiple issues facing refugee women and girls depending on their status in North America.

For women and children who are asylum-seekers some of the key issues identified were: * shelter, lack of access to legal representation, fear of access to phones, detention, fear of deportation, sexual



On May 3, UNHCR in collaboration with the US Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children and the Canadian Council for Refugees brought together 25 refugee women who live in the USA and Canada to discuss

key issues facing refugee women and girls in the region and propose ways of addressing them. The four-hour consultation was held in Montreal and attended by UNHCR Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Refugee Women, Joyce Mends-Cole and UNHCR Representative to Canada, Judith Kumin. The Montreal consultation was one in a series of several regional consultations designed to feed into a June Global Consultation on refugee women held in Geneva.

The objectives for holding the regional and global consultations on refugee women were:

- ▶ to provide feedback to the UNHCR from refugee women and returnees;

orientation/gender claims not recognized and no financial assistance.

For women who are victims of the sex trade and labour trafficking some of the key concerns identified were:

- no access to education and health care
- * insecurity for young women brought illegally into the country for unpaid domestic work or sex work who fear for their safety and family members at home.

And for resettled refugee women:

- ▶ specific problems in both the short and long-term, ranging from problems in accessing safe housing and language to vocational training and childcare.

For a number of the refugee women, the consultation was also the first opportunity they have had to talk to UNHCR representatives on an equal basis, sharing with them their experiences with UNHCR in their first countries of asylum and in North America. For some

of the women, sharing their experience - the actual flight, trauma, and the kind of treatment they received - proved to be an extremely difficult and painful exercise.

The consultation was also a great opportunity to network, share ideas and exchange knowledge for refugee women who live in North America working hard to support their families and communities.

Participants at the Montreal meeting affirmed refugee women's contributions to their communities. They noted that refugee women are very resourceful agents for change. They said that UNHCR can and should place women at the centre of its policies and programs. They called on the UNHCR to give refugee women an opportunity to shape UNHCR's refugee policies and programs.

*Shuria Dini, Somali Community Association,
Halifax, Nova Scotia*

RESPECT OUR RIGHTS: PARTNERSHIP FOR EQUALITY

BY ELIZABETH FERRIS



On the first World Refugee Day, 20 June 2001, UNHCR convened a dialogue called "Respect our Rights: Partnership for Equality" which brought together 47 refugee women from all regions to discuss their concerns. The meeting, co-sponsored with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, represented the culmination of a series of some 25 local and regional consultations with refugee women. The main themes of the Geneva-based meeting were "Respect our Rights: Safety and Security" and "Respect our Rights: Choice, Change and Livelihoods." Discussions focused on security in refugee camps, the legal status of refugees, asylum issues, sexual and gender-based violence and equal access to shelter, water and health care. This Refugee Women's Consultation was intended to feed into the Global Consultations on International Protection and a representative from the Refugee Women's Consultation addressed the meeting of Track 3 Global Consultations in June 2001.

The dialogue with refugee women was a powerful opportunity to hear directly from women living in some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. The stories they told about life in the camps, about the

realities in which displaced women live, and about the hardships endured by urban refugees were chilling. These stories also stood in sharp contrast to much of the discussion going on in the Global Consultations on International Protection. While governments and experts debate the fine points of refugee law and while nuances of interpretation as interpreted through national interest are the main subject of much of the consultations, the refugee women presented a very different picture of protection needs on the ground. Over and over again, they emphasized the close relationship between protection and assistance - a subject treated only in passing in the Global Consultations. "We used to get food every 30 days, then every 45 days, now sometimes it doesn't come for 60 days," one refugee woman said. "When the food runs out, the children go hungry. Most mothers in our camp turn to prostitution to feed their children. Then their husbands beat them." Another refugee woman noted that "you have to be very strong to survive in the camps. You have to be able to push men away and to fight to get the food you need. If you're not strong, someone else takes the food." An internally displaced woman talked of the constant harassment of the displaced by armed forces on all sides: "first one

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) was invited to send three representatives. The delegation included Peter Stockholder, refugee lawyer from Vancouver; Eusebio Garcia, Quaker Committee for Refugees, Toronto; and Glynis Williams, Action Réfugiés, Montréal. We were selected, in part, because of our familiarity with detention issues since the Network meetings were preceded by workshop style

In April 2001, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which work with migrants and refugees in North and Central America, met in San José for one week. These meetings were part of the « Puebla process » which brings together government officials from the 11 countries of the region to discuss migration and foreign policy. The first such meeting took place in 1996 in Puebla Mexico, during which NGOs lobbied to be included in the discussions. Six years later, it is evident that the original informal lobbying of officials in the corridors has developed to a point where the NGO Network ("Red Regional" in Spanish) is invited to make several formal presentations to the Government delegations. This is in addition to the informal networking and lobbying that takes place during the coordinated coffee and meal breaks. The NGO network critiques government policies and programs, as well as shares information among themselves as they attempt to discern regional migration and enforcement trends. This latter is not a simple matter, considering that some organizations function in countries that are migrant-producers, while others principally receive migrants; others are territories through which migrants transit, and some countries experience all these phenomena!

- The increased emphasis on enforcement and detention reflected in the laws and practises of all countries
- The governments' increasing association migrants with criminal activity to justify approach to migration that focuses on national security
- The inadequacy of the current systems to ensure

While there are many differing perspectives on migration issues which the representatives bring to the table, the following regional trends did become apparent :

presentations on detention related subjects. Peter Stockholder had attended one earlier meeting concentrating on detention issues which had been held in 2000 in Guatemala. For Eusebio Garcia and this writer, it was our first exposure to the Network! Consequently, the following impressions are those of a newcomer to the process.

Perhaps the most astounding comment that one has heard in response to our perplexed Canadian reactions to this statement, the person might hasten to add : « well, we do have Colombians refugees in Costa Rica, and Africans in Honduras and Mexico ». What we quickly realized was that the Canadian and American NGOs often focus on refugees or asylum-seekers while the southern organizations most often work with migrants who may be fleeing for a variety of reasons including poverty, generalized violence and human rights violations. Sorting through the terminology for the common ground was our first task.

« THE PUEBLA PROCESS » MEETING IN COSTA RICA

BY GLYNIS WILLIAMS



armed gang comes and takes all of your things, then another armed group comes and is angry because you 'helped' the other side. So they take everything and you're left with nothing." Some of these issues - such as the need to separate armed elements from the civilian population - have been discussed by the Global Consultations. But other issues - such as the impact of UNHCR budget cuts on refugee protection or the particular protection needs of internally

displaced people - have been largely missing from the global consultations.

Dr. Elizabeth Ferris is Executive Secretary for International Relations at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland

access, determine eligibility and review decisions for individuals seeking protection as refugees.

In Canada, the relevance of these regional meetings be lost in our understandable preoccupation with legislative changes and new regulations. However, many of the disturbing aspects of C-11 are echoes of the international trends towards enforcement and interdiction. As refugee protection is a global concern, Canadian input can strengthen the standards

and practices to which we must hold our respective governments accountable. Whenever possible, we should attempt to be seated at the table with our NGO colleagues. Everyone, but most especially the multitudes on the move, will benefit!

Glynis Williams is the Coordinator of Action Réfugiés in Montreal



REFUGEE CAMP TOURS CANADA FALL 2001

"You have three minutes....gather your family and leave," are threatening words most Canadians will probably never hear.

For millions of people around the world, these very words ignite a long and perilous journey to the relative safety of a refugee camp. It is difficult for most of

to imagine the trek to safety and the hardships of life in a refugee camp. This is why the international medical relief organization, Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has decided to tour Canada this fall with a replica of a refugee camp.

'A Refugee Camp in the City' is an interactive outdoor exhibit consisting of tents similar to those found in actual refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

The camp includes a health clinic, cholera treatment centre, vaccination station, latrines and waste management facilities, - all built from the same materials MSF uses in actual camps. Visitors will see what it's like to sleep in a tiny tent meant to hold upwards of 12 people, taste the nutritional biscuits used for emergency feeding (BP-5), and get a

feel for the difficult circumstances that refugees cope with in a camp situation.

"What makes the refugee camp so powerful is its ability to make the experience of being a refugee a bit more tangible for people who really have no concept of what it is like" says Clea Kahn, Refugee Camp Communications Officer.



The purpose of the exhibit is to stimulate public awareness of the lives and circumstances of the world's 39 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). While Canada is home to more than 120,000 refugees, for many people living in Canada, it can be difficult to imagine what the lives of displaced persons are like, how the very things most of us take for granted - clean drinking water, shelter, an adequate food supply - can cease with the blink of an eye.

"Even though there are many refugees living in

Canada, most Canadians have little personal

It is not only refugees who are at risk. The violence has devastated the lives of some 300,000 Guineans as well. A once thriving market town, Guekadou, was laid waste and virtually abandoned after close to months of vicious fighting. We heard heart-wrenching stories from small villages in the area - such as that of Etienne Yombouna, a 15-year-old who was abducted

Refugee camps throughout the region have emptied overnight after being infiltrated, invaded and attacked. Thousands of women, children and men have streamed into the area's dense forest or to neighbouring camps, only to be forced to flee again as attacks mount. What is perhaps most cruel is that these are the same tragedies, the same perpetrators that forced people from their homes in Sierra Leone in the first place.

armed rebel groups, armies and civil defense groups on all sides of the borders. Refugees are no longer seen as people in need of protection, but as targets, shields and the enemy.

First to know the spreading horror were over 500,000 Sierra Leoneans and Liberians who remain in Guinea. Where there was once safety there is now terror. Throughout southern Guinea, refugees have been beaten, raped, killed, abducted, arrested and threatened. The attacks come from every corner -

In the past six months Guinea has begun to descend into the same hell that Sierra Leone and Liberia have known for over a decade. Years of unchecked abuses and no justice in those two countries have spilled across the border into southern Guinea.

In March 2001, I participated in an Amnesty International research mission to Guinea, along staff from AI's International Secretariat, and AI Denmark as well as two film-makers. We heard first-hand the devastating consequences of years of war and atrocities in West Africa. And we left, with so many voices, names and stories entrusted to us, and the certainty that this crisis must no longer be forgotten.

BY ALEX NEVE
FORGET NO MORE



In 1999, MSF was the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for its work in international medical relief.

Founded in 1971, Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) delivers emergency medical aid to victims of armed conflict, epidemics, natural and man-made disasters, without discrimination and irrespective of race, religion, creed, or political affiliation. A private non-profit organization, MSF is an international network with offices in 18 countries. MSF is currently active in more than 85 countries.

For more information and for people living outside of the cities where the tour will be held, visit MSF Canada at <http://www.msf.ca> Or call MSF toll-free at 1-800-982-7903.

resource includes excerpts and information taken from MSF volunteers when they assess needs in the field. Since 1996 the Camp Exhibit has toured 12 countries and has been visited by more than 140,000 visitors. The Camp Exhibit will tour Canada in September and October in the following cities: Halifax from September 6 - 10, Montreal: September 20 - 24, Ottawa: September 28 - October 2, Toronto: October 11 - 15 and Vancouver: October 25 - 29. Admission to the camp and all associated events is free.

Leslie Shanks, President of Médecins Sans Frontières Canada, "The Camp brings the appalling conditions of refugees home for Canadians." In addition to the general public, the refugee camp will focus on educating students about refugee and IDP issues. Groups of elementary and high school students from across the country have already booked visits to the Camp. Canadian teachers can also access a learning resource at MSF's website to help students learn more about refugees and IDPs. In addition to worksheets and questions for discussion, the learning

by rebels when he turned back to rescue his 9-year-old brother who had tripped and fallen. His brother is safe, but three months after the abduction there still was no news of Etienne.

But, suspicion and uncertainty have driven a wedge between refugees and many Guineans, who had generously sheltered the refugees for several years. In the mid-1990s, Guinea was home to 700,000 refugees - equivalent to 10 percent of the population in one of



the world's most impoverished countries. But now, refugees are often accused of being rebels and beaten, arrested and killed by villagers, local defense groups and the military. At official and unofficial checkpoints, fleeing refugees are taunted, threatened, beaten and forced to pay money or food rations.

The overwhelming majority of refugees with whom I spoke insisted that all they want is to return to Sierra Leone. They want to return even though they know that war and human rights violations continue in Sierra Leone and that Revolutionary United Front rebels, flush with diamond trade profits, control large parts of the country. Almost all told me that if the choice is to die in Guinea or to die in Sierra Leone, they would prefer to die at home.

But that cannot be the choice. There must be a choice that is safe, secure and alive. The world must insist and ensure that all parties to the regional conflicts stop violating human rights. There must be a vigorous international protective presence throughout the region, including a human rights monitoring program. Countries such as Canada must provide a choice of resettlement abroad for those who need it. More must be done to cut off the lucrative diamond trade that allows the rebels and their Liberian military backers to flourish. UN agencies and aid organizations working in the region must have the resources they need and not be hindered in their work. The international community must finally bring justice to the region by setting up the promised Special Court to try Sierra Leone's human rights criminals. The world must stop forgetting.

One of the defining moments of my trip was when I asked 60-year-old Mabinte Bangura for the names of her loved ones. Three years ago, she fled Sierra Leone after her husband was shot in the back by rebels. A month ago, having fled a besieged refugee camp in southern Guinea, she watched and wept helplessly as those same rebels abducted her 15-year-old daughter and mercilessly assaulted her 17-year-old son. She has had no news of her daughter, but fears the worst, knowing only too well the rebels' record of rape, mutilation and murder.

Mabinte readily gave me her children's names. She paused and was silent before naming her husband. Obviously emotional, she exchanged words with our interpreter. He told me she was finding it difficult to say her husband's name, because she had not spoken it aloud for several years. And then she did. Bockarie Mambu.

I felt that she had kept his name to herself so that she would not forget - but that she was now giving me his name so I would ensure he would not be forgotten. He cannot be. Nor can the thousands of others who have been killed or disappeared over the past decade. The best way not to forget is to make sure it happens no more. Bockarie Mambu.

Alex Neve is General Secretary of Amnesty International in Canada



CANADA-COLOMBIA MINGA RETURNS DECLARATION OF SOLIDARITY AND ACTION PLATFORM AUGUST 29, 2001

The 30 Canadians from diverse movements and backgrounds who went to Colombia from August 13-28 returned to Canada last night after two weeks of intense learning, travel, and building connections with Colombians fighting for peace and justice.

The delegation started by participating in a Women's Mobilization in Barrancabermeja, and then split into 5 teams to visit peace communities, Afro-Colombians, indigenous people, unionists, campesinos, women's organizations, environmental organizations, and many others who are working to build alternatives, to resist aggression, and construct a just peace in Colombia.

The Minga ended with a 2-day meeting in Bogota where all the teams were re-united. The teams, and many representatives from the Colombian counterpart organizations who hosted them in the regions, met and shared what they had learned and began to develop a plan of action for ongoing solidarity work. The declaration made by the Minga is below.

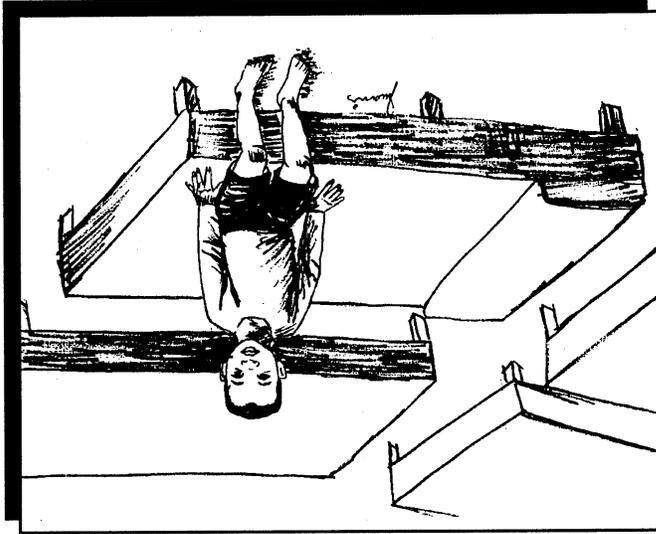
Dignity in Resistance: Minga for Life and Against Violence: First Encounter with Colombia's Invisible Struggles
August 13-28, 2001

The Minga for Life and Against Violence was conceived between Colombians and Canadians to create a bridge of solidarity between representatives and leaders of the people of both countries.

A delegation of 30 Canadians, representing organizations and social movements of women, indigenous, African-descended, unionists, Faith groups, NGOs, academics, and parliamentarians arrived in Colombia on August 13. Their intention was

to listen, observe, and reflect about the roots of the crisis, social injustice, and violence that Colombia lives. The purpose of this effort was to construct a platform for solidarity between peoples to promote a just and peaceful way out of the crisis that Colombians are suffering.

The Canada-Colombia Minga delegation began its work in Barrancabermeja, joining the International Women's Mobilization Meeting with a great number and diversity of people and organizations who collectively represent



program of terror.

2001.

4. In contrast to the 'official versions' presented in the mainstream media, drug trafficking is a result of the

3. This strategy of annihilation uses homicide and intimidation to try to destroy the leadership of the social and popular movements and organizations in Colombia. As an example: 87 unionists, 15 indigenous leaders, and 1000 campesinos have been killed since January 2001.

2. There is ample evidence of a national project, linked with the international project, of systematic and cultural aggression in accord with international interests against the rights and integrity of the Colombian people. Fear, silence, the dispersed nature of organizations and movements, and murder are the fundamental instruments of this

1. The primary cause of conflict in Colombia is the imposition of a global economic model that is geared toward the accumulation of wealth and resources in the hands of multinational corporations. The human and environmental consequences of this aggression for Colombia and the world are profound.

Following:
The Canada Colombia Minga Recognizes the dignity in resistance.

Colombian people are an example to the world of in the middle of horror and deprivation. The these people who live, protect, and defend despite being admiration for the beauty, courage, indomitable spirit of Canadian delegation felt moved to express our profound strategies of resistance. Having learned this, the aggressions and aggressors they face, and their proposals for peace and social transformation, of the campesinos and many others) we learned of their the majority of Colombians (organizations of women,

historical process of aggression against the Colombian people, and not the cause of the crisis

5. Plan Colombia and its extension in the Andean region are strategies designed to extend economic exploitation. The US-sponsored and led "War on Drugs" is a pretext by which corporate interests are being extended throughout the continent.

6. Social movements and their leaders are being criminalized and falsely stigmatized as guerrilla collaborators. International solidarity movements are being similarly treated.

7. Popular movements in Colombia and their leaders represent and express creative, brave, diverse, and viable projects and proposals for peace and social transformation. These are indispensable alternatives for the peaceful, nonviolent transformation of the country.

Platform of Action

In accord with the process of reciprocal international solidarity between peoples:

1. We declare a "permanent SOS" for the protection of social movements and popular organizations in Colombia who are at risk of extermination.

2. We support the proposals, projects, and "life plans" of the social and popular movements in their struggle. To this end we will seek ways of exchange of knowledge and capacity with the goal of promoting and strengthening leadership in both countries.

3. We will contribute to the establishment of networks and communication mechanisms at the national and international levels to promote resistance and peaceful solutions to the conflict.

4. We affirm the strategies and plans of action of the Canada-Colombia Solidarity Campaign, defined in the platform of solidarity put forward at the Ottawa forum of December 2000 as follows:

- ▶ Opposition and denunciation to Plan Colombia and support for an alternative strategy of international, reciprocal, solidaritous cooperation.
- ▶ Support for a negotiated, political solution to the Colombian conflict with direct participation, with

decision-making power, of the social and popular movements and organizations at the negotiating table.

- ▶ A critical evaluation of the foreign policy of Canada towards Colombia and the participation of Canadian capital and corporate interests with particular emphasis on the energy and mining sectors.
- ▶ Support for the invisible popular struggles of Colombia and a commitment to making them visible.

The Canadian delegation recognizes that Canada's people, its popular movements and social organizations, are also confronted with the same economic model and its nefarious consequences. As a result, the situation requires reciprocal exchanges of experience and strategy in the interests of both peoples.

It seems clear to us that Colombia is in a crisis whose conclusion will have serious repercussions for Colombia and indeed for the entire region. On the one hand there is the risk of the imposition of an authoritarian, militaristic model. On the other hand, the possibility of establishing a society that is diverse, inclusive, and authentically democratic.

The Canada-Colombia Minga is committed to the kind of international solidarity that seeks social transformation, that seeks to defend life, justice, and diversity. In this sense, our struggle is with that of the 'invisible struggles' of Colombia and elsewhere. It is an answer we make for our own dignity, an answer to further the interests of all of the peoples of the Americas.

In Solidarity,

The Canada-Colombia Minga

(Signed by 30 delegates, representing: Indigenous communities and peoples; Unionists; Women's organizations; Faith groups; Academics; Politicians and political activists; Non-governmental organizations; Environmental organizations; Peace movements; Afro-Canadian communities and organizations; Social justice activists)

(From the website:

www.zmag.org/CrisesCurEvts/Colombia/ccscminga.htm)



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON REFUGEE WOMEN FLEEING GENDER BASED PERSECUTION MAY 4-6, 2001, MONTREAL, QUEBEC

BY ELSA TESFAYE MUSA

Montreal last May. While it is impossible to report on such an important event in a few words, the three themes listed below kept cropping up in plenary sessions, workshops and in informal conversations :

How does one report on a two-day international conference with 21 workshops and over 250 participants from 29 countries? I've been struggling with that question ever since I agreed to do a brief write up on the International Conference on Refugee Women Fleeing Gender Based Persecution organized by the Canadian Council for Refugees, CCR, in

- * *Refugee women are not a homogenous group. We cannot speak for all other refugee women. It is important to recognize this in all the work we do and create spaces to address our specific needs. Nonetheless, we must work together to create and strengthen solidarity amongst us and address the issues we have in common, including patriarchy, which is at the root of our problems.*
- * *We cannot separate gender issues from racism. We must address them together and explore how racism plays a role in refugee status decision-making and in services offered to refugee women.*
- * *We must address root causes. We cannot advocate for the rights of refugees without also condemning the governments who create refugees. Civil society and NGOs must call on their governments to be accountable for forced migration.*

Anyone wanting to know more about the conference should get a hold of the CCR's report on the conference proceedings. The CCR website will indicate when and how the report may be ordered www.web.net/~ccr. The report is a useful resource for anyone interested on the issue of gender based persecution as seen through the eyes of advocates, refugee women, lawyers, academics, social workers and so on from diverse places as Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Canada, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Iran, Kenya and many more. The May, June and July issue of "Women's Asylum News" www.asylumaid.org.uk also carried reports on the conference.

Elsa Tesfaye Musa
Anglican Church of Canada
Primate's World Relief and Development Fund



CCR CONFERENCE IN SASKATCHEWAN

BY JANET DENCH

In May 2001, the Canadian Council for Refugees met for the first time in Saskatchewan. Our hosts in Saskatoon demonstrated that the region's reputation for hospitality is well-deserved, through their many initiatives to ensure that all participants had a good time. Part of the local organizing committee's goal in inviting the CCR to hold a consultation in Saskatoon was to increase the profile of refugee work in the province. Judging by the large number of local residents who came out to hear our plenary speaker, Stephen Lewis, on the world situation of refugees, they were very successful in this objective. For those attending the conference from outside the region, one of the most positive local contributions was the integration of aboriginal perspectives, both in the social events and in the official program (including a workshop on aboriginal-refugee links).

Resolutions adopted at the General Meeting reflect some of the workshop topics and prevailing preoccupations (although ongoing issues of concern are not picked up, if we already have a past resolution articulating our policy).

A workshop on detention, which heard from the Canadian Red Cross about the detention monitoring role they have been invited to play, led to a resolution calling for the findings of the Red Cross to be disclosed as fully as possible. Another resolution urged that adequate national standards be adopted, for both CIC and non-CIC detention facilities, and for management oversight boards to be established.

A major current issue for organizations offering settlement services is the new accountability framework being developed by CIC. Concerns about the implications of this framework were set out in a resolution, which directed the CCR to make inquiries about confidentiality issues, because organizations are being asked to pass on to CIC identifying information

about their clients.

C-11, the new immigration legislation making its way through Parliament, formed a backdrop to discussions. Thoughts about the many people caught up in the current system who risk being transferred to the new system resulted in a resolution calling on the government to allow such people to apply for landing under relaxed criteria. Members were also concerned about people from what we call moratoria countries (i.e. countries to which Canada does not generally deport) who can remain in limbo indefinitely: a resolution was adopted calling for landing for them once they have been three years in Canada.

During the consultation, we heard that CIC did not have budget available for the In-Canada Service Provider, a new program intended to offer services to refugee sponsorship groups. In the circumstances, the CCR was concerned that CIC at least continue to fund the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, which has become an invaluable resource to sponsors.

The next CCR consultation will be held in Toronto, November 29 - December 1. A special feature of this conference will be a special one-day series of workshops on the reception and integration of resettled refugees, to which NGOs and governments from other resettlement countries are invited. Our goal is to promote information exchange and networking between those involved in refugee resettlement in different countries, and we already know that there will be participants from various parts of the world (including Chile and Bénin!).

Janet Dench is Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Refugees.



For further information, brochures or registration, contact Maritza Perez at (514) 277-7223 or email at ccr2@web.ca

- ▶ Join us to exchange information and prepare resolutions on a broad range of refugee and newcomer issues;
 - ▶ Contribute to the CCR working groups' ongoing dialogue on policy and legislation;
 - ▶ Consolidate an international network of support among frontline service providers and solidarity groups.
- Refugee and immigrant settlement in Canada
 - Inland protection of refugee claimants
 - Overseas protection and sponsorship
 - Gender and anti-racism issues

Plenary sessions, workshops and working group meetings on:

**FALL CONSULTATION
 NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 1ST, 2001
 THE COLONY HOTEL, TORONTO, ONTARIO**



Make Yourself at Home!

Mi Casa es Su Casa:

STATEMENT OF THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES IN RESPONSE TO THE ATTACKS ON THE U.S.

14 SEPTEMBER 2001

In the wake of the horrific terrorist attacks this week in the United States, the Canadian Council for Refugees offers its condolences to the victims and their families. As an organization committed to the protection of human rights, the CCR condemns these attacks on civilian lives and urges Canadians, as well as immigrant and refugee communities, to speak out against violence and intolerance in our society. These terrible violations must not be answered by further violations of human rights. Reports of attacks on Canadian Arab and Moslem communities are extremely disturbing. Many new Canadians came to this country to escape from violence and persecution on the basis of religion, race or nationality. Refugees and immigrants are as horrified as anyone by the events and condemn the violence. Canadians need to work together to ensure that our country is a haven from hatred and discrimination. Those in authority and the media have a particular responsibility to combat intolerance. Talk is already beginning on what changes in the immigration system might be needed to protect ourselves against terrorist attack. Much of this talk focuses on the refugee claim system. The Canadian Council for Refugees notes:

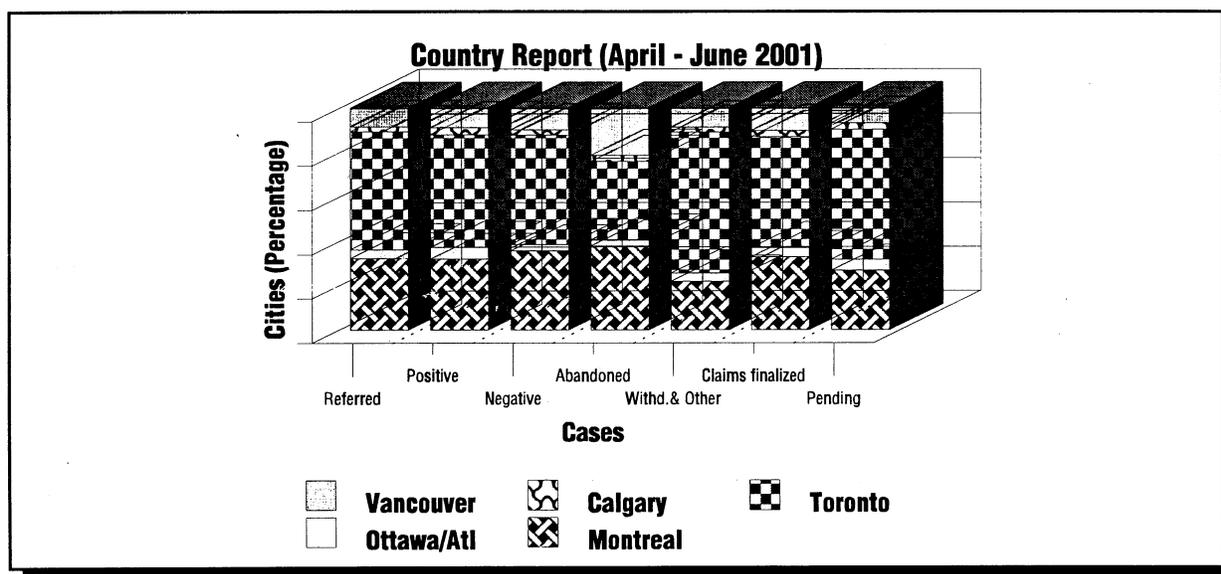
- ▶ *Refugee claimants make up only a tiny percentage of the visitors and immigrants that enter Canada every year (only one-tenth of 1%). While everyone shares the concern that terrorists not be allowed to use the refugee claim process, it is misguided to look only at this part of the immigration system. A sophisticated terrorist is surely more likely to enter, say, as a visitor than as a refugee claimant (since the latter are fingerprinted and interviewed). Furthermore, a focus on refugees alone risks leading to measures that penalize innocent refugees, who themselves are victims of violence, including terrorism.*
- ▶ *Canada already has in place laws that clearly exclude from admission to Canada anyone who is likely to engage in terrorism. There is no need for stricter laws (on the contrary, the current laws throw too wide a net and catch people who in no way represent a security threat). The implementation of the laws is inevitably challenging and calls for sophistication on the part of the government, since active terrorists obviously don't say that they belong to a terrorist organization.*
- ▶ *There are limits to what can be achieved through the immigration process. The problem of terrorism in North America and elsewhere is not going to be solved by focusing on this one small issue. To do so would cause harm to immigrants and refugees, who are already a vulnerable community, without getting at the true solutions.*

The Canadian Council for Refugees supports efforts to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice, but notes that those efforts must not compromise the fundamental principles of due process and human dignity. These principles must be basic components of any action in order to avoid an escalation of violence. The only way to make real the dream of permanent world peace is for all humanity to work permanently for justice.

Country Report (April to June 2001)

The Immigration and Refugee Board has released the following statistics for refugee claims for the period April to June 2001. Their fiscal year begins in April.

City	Referred	Positive	Negative	Abandoned	Withdrawal & Other	Claims finalized	Pending
Montreal	2885	1231	825	258	126	2440	8766
Ottawa/Atl	349	206	66	17	22	311	1628
Toronto	4730	1953	1139	242	367	3701	19203
Calgary	197	120	52	19	12	203	954
Vancouver	732	332	224	143	49	748	2175



REFUGEE UPDATE

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