

Prominent female journalists attend Media Monitoring Seminar

By Lavinia Mohr, Deputy General Secretary and Director of Programmes, WACC



On 28 - 29 January 2008 twenty prominent female journalists from the Middle East, Turkey and Austria, representing a broad range of media, took part in a Media Training Seminar on Media Monitoring at the Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, organised by Austria's Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs. They debated questions such as how the media could contribute to changing stereotypes and prejudices and consequently to mitigating conflicts. The discussions focussed also on the presence of women in the media environment and the coverage of women in the media.

The objective of the meeting and training was to strengthen the journalists' mutual confidence and encourage their cooperation for further development of a network of journalists initiated in May 2007. Another purpose was to offer the participants a joint professional training. International experts presented experiences of media monitoring as an instrument of (self) critical media-analysis in order to explore and evaluate the media coverage about the Middle East conflict, the representation of 'the other', and the presence and representation of women in the media.

WACC's Director of Programmes, Lavinia Mohr, was invited to make two presentations at the training seminar. The first was on media monitoring concepts and methodology. The second focussed on the findings of the [Global As an example of a media monitoring experience involving the participation of media professionals, academic researchers and members of the public in 76 countries. The project's report](#)

'Who Makes the News?' shows that women's views, news, concerns, and perspectives as well as female journalists are seriously under-represented in the media around the world. The training also looked at the ways that language, terminology and images can contribute to misunderstandings about others. Dr. Claudia Schiffer of the Centre for Media Responsibility showed some of her work on the ways that media images of the Arab Israeli conflict in the German speaking media perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices.

The discussion touched on a broad range of topics from media accountability, press freedom and media credibility; censorship, self censorship and editorial independence; and conflict, xenophobia and cultural diversity. Practical concerns such as protection for outspoken and courageous journalists and health insurance for foreign correspondents also came up in the discussions.

Results of the training seminar include, amongst others, intensifying the exchange and co-operation of the participants' network and developing joint projects both within the region and with Austria. The importance of transparency, independence and fairness in media coverage was pointed out. More initiatives for the protection of journalists and ensuring press freedom were

claimed. The participants identified the challenge and the task to pursue more of 'peace-journalism', i.e. to cover not only the problems but also to report more about positive commitments and successes.

The training seminar was a follow up initiative based on the recommendations of the international conference

'Women Leaders ? Networking for Peace and Security in the Middle East', hosted by Austria's Foreign Minister Dr. Ursula Plassnik in Vienna in May 2007. The seminar is part of the focus of the Austrian Foreign Ministry to encourage intercultural and cross-border dialogue in the Middle East as well as between the Middle East and Austria.

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