



# Newsletter

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN**

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## ***THE RELAY TOURS EUROPE***

On May 9, after successfully crossing the Americas, the Charter and Solidarity Quilt received a warm reception in Europe. They were relayed through 15 focal points on this ancient continent, before being transmitted to women in Australia for the next lap of the World Relay.

### **Turkey**

#### ***First steps in Europe***

The Charter officially arrived in Europe during ceremonies held in Turkey. Women from Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus and Azerbaijan converged in Istanbul to welcome the Relay and transmit a message of solidarity and unity against nationalism.

On May 9, the women issued a joint news release. The following day, they cast flowers into the sea around a symbol of women's isolation, the Maiden Tower, located in the Bosphorus Strait on the spot where Europe and Asia meet. In other activities, 3000 women marched with the Charter and the Global Solidarity Quilt; they held a festival featuring music and theatre; and Turkish women presented their demands to the National Assembly. They called for a national action plan to eradicate sexual inequality, all forms of social inequality, and discrimination against women.

On May 11, 45 women left Istanbul to travel to Thessalonike, where they handed the Charter and Quilt over to their Greek sisters.

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### **Greece**

#### ***Against trafficking***

Women from the Greek WMW network were present for the reception of the Charter in Istanbul; they then held the official Relay in Thessalonike on May 12, in the course of demonstrations to mark the event. Speakers decried different problems with which women are confronted, such as the relocation of factories that has generated unemployment in Greece; the exploitation of women in these industries; wife assault, etc. The gathering was a demonstration of women's solidarity and friendship among peoples, countering those who characterize Greeks and Turks as enemies.

Activities were also held in Patras to denounce sex trafficking. This port city is the clandestine departure point of many to other European countries. In addition to a public meeting, women screened a film on trafficking, distributed hundreds of pamphlets, and held a theatrical event and torch-light march. A personal account of abuse given by a trafficking victim was received with a great show of solidarity. A delegation then left Greece and went on to Brindisi, Italy.

## **Cyprus**

### ***Greek and Turkish Cypriots demonstrate together***

Women from both sides of the line dividing Cyprus united to call for peace and the reunification of their island. First to arrive, Turkish Cypriot women welcomed their Greek Cypriot sisters with the slogan "Peace in Cyprus, we will not be stopped." The Greek Cypriot women chanted back: "Cyprus: united and in peace," and marched to the meeting point where some 100 women joined hands and applauded their joint effort. The meeting held on the demarcation line was an emotional one.

The women of Cyprus—Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Maronite and south European—all of them victims of war, have "a vision of a free and united country, a happy and progressive Cyprus, a country where all our children will be at home." This goal is illustrated in the square they attached to the Global Quilt.

*Adapted from an article in the Cyprus Mail.*



## **Italy**

### ***Brindisi welcomes the Charter***

The Charter toured Italy on May 13-14. Thirty Greek women travelled by boat between the ports of Patras and Brindisi for this leg of the World Relay. Women held a seminar and discussed war and women's role in peace-building in addition to the erosion of women's living conditions. On Saturday afternoon, 300 women marched in the city streets to raise awareness about the referendum to abolish the law concerning assisted reproduction, a measure that penalizes women and takes away the rights of children so conceived. At the

end of the demonstration, the Charter and Quilt were presented to the public. This was followed by a celebration, Mediterranean-style.

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## **Portugal**

### ***An urgent need to change the world***

Portuguese women didn't wait for the Charter and Quilt to begin their actions! On the eve of the official relay, they attended the Alternatives and Resistance Forum, where they promoted the Charter. When the Relay arrived, they organized a public event during which they read out the Charter, an artist unveiled the national quilt square and unveiled a manifesto containing the Portuguese March committee's demands. This document was presented to elected representatives with a petition containing over 700 signatures in support of the Charter. In this way, women hoped to illustrate how urgent the need is to change the world. Among their demands are the need to change the abortion law, protect women from wife assault, ensure women's representation in decision-making and political positions, combat the poverty, unemployment and insecure employment of which women are the principal victims, and end discrimination. Another petition was submitted to Parliament asking that May 17 be recognized as International Day Against Homophobia.

From Lisbon to Coimbra to Porto, numerous events were organized to mark the presence of the Charter: street actions, poetry, theatre, public demonstrations, news conferences, talks, workshops, discussions, the creation of a national quilt square, and a children's quilt to raise their awareness about wife assault. Last, women relayed the Charter and Quilt over the Minho river to their sisters waiting to continue the celebration in Galicia.

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## **Galicia**

### ***Women row for their rights***

Portuguese women sent the Women's Global Charter for Humanity and the Solidarity Quilt off by sea to Camposancos, Galicia. Women rowers offered a lively spectacle as they escorted the ferry from its departure point in Caminha, Portugal. These athletes were chosen because they are an example of the discrimination women experience: they don't enjoy the same rights as their male counterparts during competitions.

The crowd enthusiastically welcomed the delegation, accompanying them to the theatre in this seaside city where the rest of the event took place. Several well known figures also attended. Women's voices filled the hall as sections of the Charter were read out and various women spoke, including coordinator Lupe Ces: "We don't want wars that kill us, neither do we want a peace that oppresses us." The national quilt square—representing two intertwined needles—was also presented during the ceremony.

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## Basque country

### ***United to promote their values***

Basque women received the Relay from the hands of the Galicians with whom they had travelled from Portugal. They organized public ceremonies enlivened by dancing and poetry readings. They obtained the support of political representatives to call for a better world and issued a call to mobilize for the 24 Hours of Solidarity on October 17, 2005.

The women of Euskal Herria chose to promote, in addition to the values of the Charter, respect, recognition, health, multiculturalism and diversity. They are also working together to draft a national Charter that they will present on March 8, 2006!

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## France

### ***12,000 women on the Cane-Canebière!***

A large European action attracted over 12,000 women in Marseille during the weekend of May 28-29. Delegations were applauded in the Old Port, forums were overflowing, women celebrated, attended a concert and sang together: "Toutes les femmes de la Terre, se retrouvent sur la Cane-Canebière..." (women of the world are here together on the Cane-Canebière), referring to the avenue along which they marched. The event was so successful that organizers had to quickly revise their plans, including additional speakers and actions to ensure everyone's participation!



Various proposals and ideas for joint campaigns emerged from the events. Migrant women announced the creation of an international coordinating committee to jointly oppose laws adopted by governments in the European Community that denies immigrants' rights. Finally, the Europeans in Marseille issued a call to continue the struggle of the World March of Women, a process seen as irreversible because of the enormous solidarity women have generated among themselves.

## **Belgium**

### ***In solidarity all the way to Marseille***

A delegation of 402 Belgian women, including three Iranian refugees, participated in the huge demonstration in Marseille; they will remember it for the rest of their lives. Already, on the trip to France, ties of solidarity were being formed! They participated in numerous forums and workshops, and listened to many different women's personal accounts and speeches. "We're coming home reinforced, enriched, and more enthusiastic thanks to all the contacts we made with women beyond religious, political and cultural differences."

Applause accompanied the transfer of the Relay from France to Belgium. The singer Claude decried sex trafficking in one of her songs. The public demonstration was followed by music and dancing. Then, on the trip back, women passed the hat to raise funds for the Relay to the Netherlands. Three women from the delegation that went to get the Charter and Quilt are Iranian refugees.

Belgian women consider their actions a success and are planning further actions in which they hope to be even more numerous.

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## **Netherlands**

### ***Simple ceremony in Utrecht***

In the Netherlands, on June 2, women symbolically presented the Charter and the Quilt to the woman mayor of Utrecht. It was an occasion of great solidarity and the organizing committee was satisfied with the result. Women in attendance voted for the national quilt square. A day later, a delegation went to Copenhagen, Denmark, for the next leg of the Relay.

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## **Denmark/Sweden**

### ***Taking action for peace and women's rights***

Swedish activities began on March 8 with a gathering of 2000 people in Gustav Adolf square in Gothenburg. On June 4, Swedish and Danish women converged in Copenhagen to jointly celebrate the Relay of the Charter. The Swedish feminist and literature professor Ebba Witt Brattström spoke and Gothenburg women sang their song for the March: "For you, my sister." Peace activist Erni Friholt reminded everyone of the need to take collective action for peace and to fight violence and poverty, which, she said, can only be achieved through transformation of the current economic and political order that restricts women's democratic and human rights.

In their platform, Swedish women demand measures to eliminate violence against women; protect the social security system; ensure the right to work, a salary and childcare; protect immigrants' rights and guarantee their right to asylum; eliminate racism; solutions to conflicts; and oppose militarism.

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## **Romania**

### ***Developing the World March***

The relay in Romania was on a small scale. Thanks to it, however, participation in the March was renewed with the adoption on June 7, in Bucharest, of a strategy to develop March actions in Romania. The long-term goal is to include antipoverty organizations and groups in the actions linked with the World March of Women.

The aim on June 8 was to develop an action plan to increase the presence of the Coalition on Violence Against Women (VIF) in the March's activities. A discussion was held on the importance of the Charter in the fight against violence against women. The purpose was to draw up a timetable of debates organized in different regions of Romania until October 17 to analyze "the importance of the Charter and how women fighting for their rights can use this document as a tool to strengthen women's presence in politics."

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## **Bulgaria**

### ***Women and politics***

Bulgarian women welcomed the Women's Global Charter on June 9-11. Women--from NGOs and civil society groups, journalists and candidates for the presidential election--gathered for a debate on sexual equality policies. They warmly applauded the Charter, which had been translated into Bulgarian and was even published in a feminist magazine.

Bulgarian women then passed the Relay over to their sisters in Switzerland.

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## **Switzerland**

### ***Colourful caravan and various actions***

After Bulgaria, the Swiss caravan attracted attention as it made its way through many cities from June 10-14. Over 30 events took place in some 20 localities: marches and demonstrations, seminars, picnics, bicycle tours, film screenings, photo exhibits, etc.

Several demonstrations were held throughout Switzerland, including in Berne, in front of the Palais Fédéral, where women demanded better daycare services for their children, chanting “Children are worth gold.” In Geneva, women decided to conclude their action in front of the World Trade Organization (WTO) building.

Bojura Bavlova, a Bulgarian women, joined the Swiss caravan in the later stages of the trip.



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## **Castilla/Catalonia**

### ***Actions during the Social Forum***

Actions about the Relay of the Charter took place during the Mediterranean Social Forum in Barcelona (see below).

*Articles by Martine Sénécal, Liaison Officer, Burkina Faso*

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## **24 Hours of Feminist Action in Pursuit of the Sun**

Following the sun as it lights up the planet, women in all time zones will successively take to the streets at noon on October 17 to stage actions for one hour. This is how they will show their support for the blueprint for society depicted in the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. In the Pacific Islands (New Caledonia, Samoa, etc.), the women of Asia will kick off the relay, followed by the women of Africa, then Europe and so on. In 24 hours, we will circle the planet to make women's voices heard.

This call to action goes out to all women's groups who belong to the World March of Women and to those who wish to join us. Whether at the neighbourhood, community or national level, let's all act together on October 17 by organizing public events. All forms of action can serve to demand a world without poverty, violence, discrimination, a world of globalized solidarity. The watchword is to be simple, positive, in touch with one another, to show that, with our differences and similarities, women are united. Groups in various regions of the world have begun to organize their activities. Some will ring bells and alarms in cities and villages to alert the population that women are mobilizing throughout the world to vigorously defend the values in the Charter. Others will organize vigils or actions during which women will form human chains of solidarity. Creativity is the order of the day when thinking up activities to illustrate our resolve to go after our dreams and build a world where equality, freedom, justice, peace and solidarity are what cement our ties.

Write us and tell us about the actions you are planning for October 17. We now have a new address to receive your ideas and messages on the subject: [24hrs2005@gmail.com](mailto:24hrs2005@gmail.com)

**Join us for the 24 hours of feminist mobilization to show that women on the move change the world!**

*Nancy Burrows, Liaison, International Secretariat*

## **Mediterranean Social Forum: A Sea of Rights**

It was under this slogan that close to 5000 people converged on Barcelona from June 16 to 18, 2005, when this magnificent city hosted the 1st Mediterranean Social Forum (Fsmed). The result of several years of preparation, the Forum's particularity was bringing together representatives of countries with very diverse histories: from Palestine, where daily life has been dramatic for decades, with little or no hope of a peaceful solution, to Turkey, which wants to join the European Union but continues to repress any opposition to the regime. From affluent old Europe supporting neo-colonialism to the demands of the Sahraoui people, who took advantage of the Forum to make loud and clear their desire for freedom and independence. The complexity of this sea of rights to be established or defended showed different facets over the three days of the event. It's not clear if a second edition of this Forum will take place, but the desire is most definitely there to maintain this space for trading ideas, learning and acting. The only shadow falling over the event was the sparse turnout of Barcelona's population and especially of the social movements that abound there. The mere fact of creating this meeting space was a challenge, however, and it was tackled!

It was also the place where, for the first time at a forum, women were successful in insisting on holding an assembly of women as part of the program without other activities being held at the same time. Thus almost 500 women got together to talk about the lives of women in the Mediterranean, their hopes and resistance. The women drew up a proposal for the assembly of antiwar movements to integrate, in current struggles against imperialism, a clear and powerful denunciation of violence against women in conflict-torn countries, most particularly, Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan. It was a place where women living under Muslim law reaffirmed the importance of joining our voices to condemn fundamentalisms and fight against the negation of women's existence and rights.

The Catalan women of the World March of Women were especially active in organizing the 1st Forum. They also organized seminars where we presented the Women's Global Charter for Humanity and talked about the Relay of the Charter and the solidarity patchwork quilt. Women from Valladolid, Catalonia and Andorra took the occasion to add their square for the quilt, illustrating their commitment to change the world. Turkish, Greek, Moroccan, Algerian, French and Italian women were present. We also took part in the Fsmed march, in the first bloc (the tradition continues as we take our rightful place). The streets of Barcelona echoed with the familiar chant of "So-so-so solidarity" with women everywhere on the planet. We've just taken another step in our move to change the world.

*Diane Matte, Coordinator, International Secretariat*

## **NATIONAL SNAPSHOTS**

### **India**

#### **A Victory over Domestic Violence**

Indian women rejoiced in late June when the Protection from Domestic Violence Bill was passed by the Council of Ministers after a ten-year battle! As we went to press, we didn't have access to the full text of the bill, but women in India had good reason to believe that no changes were made to the definitions of domestic violence and family relations, as well as the right of residence and to protection.

The women of the World March in India fought to have the bill adopted. In the year 2000, a delegation that met with the President of the country insisted on the need for such legislation. In January 2001, the President had said that women must be protected against violence, including violence in their homes.

#### **Occupation in Iraq Denounced in Istanbul**

An international tribunal modelled on the Russell Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal was held in Istanbul, June 24 to 26, to denounce U.S. President Bush and British Prime Minister Blair for committing crimes against humanity. The tribunal examined the legal status of the war, the United Nations' role, war crimes, the media's role, and the destruction of cultural and environmental sites caused by the occupation of Iraq. On June 28, the women of the World March heard the testimony of an Iraqi woman.

## **WEB SITE: NEW FEATURES**

Now, you can hear the Women's Global Charter for Humanity on our Web site. You'll find it in Section 2005, Audio files and songs. The international version of the March song, *Capiré*, is also available. Click the "Quilt" link in Section 2005 to view the quilt squares created by women in each country. If your country's quilt square isn't there, please send a copy to:

relaismondial2005@hotmail.com and/or bverdiere@marchemondiale.org

## **A Multilingual Charter!**

The three official languages of the World March of Women are French, English and Spanish. It goes without saying that the Charter is available in these three languages. Thanks to women's involvement throughout the planet, however, the Charter has been translated into several other languages, and these versions are available on the Internet: Bulgarian, Catalan, Dutch, Galician, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Turkish. We're soon expecting translations into Arabic, six Indian languages and Swahili.

Have we overlooked any? Let us know all the languages in which the Women's Global Charter for Humanity is being disseminated and we will be glad to publish them.

## **Collaborators**

Thanks to all the women in countries that have hosted the Relay who have regularly sent us information.

Thanks to this Newsletter's contributors:

Élise Boyer (English translation), Nancy Burrows (International Secretariat), Nicole Kennedy (English translation), Diane Matte (International Secretariat), Magaly Sala-Skup (Spanish translation), Martine Sénécal (Liaison Officer), Brigitte Verdière (Communications).

## **Contact information**

<b>World March of Women</b> 110, rue Ste-Thérèse, #203 Montréal (Québec), CANADA H2Y 1E6 Telephone: (1) 514-395-1196 Fax: (1) 514-395-1224	<b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:info@marchemondiale.org">info@marchemondiale.org</a> <b>Web site:</b> <a href="http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org">www.worldmarchofwomen.org</a>
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