



Women in Black
London

INCLUDE SYRIAN WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS

Women's interests not represented: High-level talks in Switzerland are aiming to create a transitional government in Syria that could end a war that has so far killed an estimated 120,000 people, and forced more than 2.3 million to flee the country. In these "Geneva II" negotiations, brokered by the UN, delegations of the Syrian government and opposition forces are the key actors. So far, they appear to contain one sole woman apiece. Also involved are representatives of around 25 nation states and five intergovernmental organizations, each watching out for its own interests. **Women and women's interests simply do not feature.** Yet of the estimated 9.3 million Syrians currently in need of humanitarian assistance, 80% are women and children. **Who has a bigger stake in peace than women?**

Without women, peace agreements fail: Experience shows that peace deals negotiated exclusively between the armed men of warring factions commonly fail. Sustainable peace requires the engagement of civil society organizations - especially those of women, who have the key role in sustaining everyday and community life in times of peace and of war.

UK Government supports 'women's security' while fuelling war: The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office is rightly praised for taking a lead in its *Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative* and the UK *National Action Plan* for implementing the UN Resolution 1325, recognizing women's suffering in war and their contribution to peace. Yet, in sharp contradiction, the UK Government, in the interests of British business, has authorized £22 billion in arms exports to Middle Eastern countries in the last five years, thus heightening international tensions, Sunni-Shia strife, fundamentalist misogyny and state repression.

Women in Black support *Women Lead to Peace*, the bold move of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Nobel Women's Initiative, Code Pink and other international women's NGOs, to win the inclusion of women in the Syrian peace process.

To support the **Women Lead to Peace** campaign, sign the petition at
<<http://www.wilpfinternational.org/geneva-ii-petition/>>
To support the **Campaign Against the Arms Trade in opposing weapons exports**
go to <<http://www.caat.org.uk/get-involved/join-us.php>>

**To: The Rt.Hon. William Hague, Foreign Secretary,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Whitehall SW1.**

I support Women in Black's call upon you to act on your proclaimed concern for 'women's security' by banning UK weapons deals with all Middle Eastern states, and by pressing on all concerned in the Syrian peace negotiations the following demands of the *Women Lead to Peace* campaign:

- Reserve seats for women in the formal delegations
- Include an all-women independent delegation as third party in the talks
- Ensure gender expertise in the teams of intergovernmental agencies
- Document women's needs and interests in position papers at the talks
- Include a Syrian civil society forum in the peace process with a fair presence of women

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____

Women in Black hold vigils every Wednesday from 6-7 pm at the Edith Cavell Statue, opposite the National Portrait Gallery, St.Martin's Place, London WC2. Our vigils are silent, women-only, and if possible we wear black. Contact: <wibinfo@gn.apc.org>. Donations welcome