

Message from the President

Dear ICJW members,

Welcome to the latest edition of E-Links, where you will be able to read of the wonderful work that our Affiliates are undertaking around the world.



Thank you to all those who contributed and particular thanks to Clarita Spitz and Dee Hart, Chair and Vice Chair of our Community Services committee, who collated the information.

Each affiliate has its own unique projects. I hope that reading about them may encourage you to start something new and different in your own country. Women certainly make a difference wherever they are based.

Please circulate E-Links to your members and also print off some hard copies to use as publicity when you meet other groups.

In these difficult times it is important to show people that ICJW works for the *WHOLE* community and is truly promoting a *Just Society based on Human Rights and Jewish Values*.

With every good wish,

Penny

Penelope Conway
President, ICJW

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Introduction to E-Links

In this issue of E-Links we feature ICJW affiliates working in the Americas, in Canada, in Europe and in Australia, highlighting the reach of our active network of members circling the globe.

The valuable projects and initiatives undertaken by these affiliate organisations variously contribute to the welfare and advancement of women and children; support for the elderly and for women facing divorce; wider education and training; the prevention of racism and monitoring of anti-Semitism; reviving Jewish identity, music and literature in fractured communities; the promotion of social harmony; and active involvement in Holocaust remembrance.

Undoubtedly these reports will encourage us to continue our work in our own organisations, as well as inspiring us with fresh ideas for beginning new projects.

Clarita Spitz and Deirdre Hart,
ICJW Community Services Coordinators

Meet our Second Mexican Affiliate!



We are proud to welcome the latest new affiliate to join the International Council of Jewish Women: the [Federación Femenina de la Comunidad Judía de México](#) - the Women's Federation of the Jewish Community of Mexico. Their President, Sharon Charabati, signed our affiliation agreement in February with ICJW's Latin America Chair Lilian Grinberg. This is ICJW's second Mexico affiliate, alongside the [Voluntarias Judeo Mexicanas](#).



At the signing ceremony (l to r) Sharon Charabati, President of the Federación Femenina, Lilian Grinberg, ICJW Latin America Chair, and Francis Picciotto, Secretary of the Federación Femenina.

ICJW Interfaith Activist Honoured

In a special ceremony at the Belgian Parliament on 13 December 2018, the Dutch and French Speaking Councils presented 14 prizes for “Women of Peace”. Among the recipients of this prestigious award was ICJW Life Member Nadine larchy, honored for her interfaith work in Belgium. After more than 30 years of work in this area, Nadine has finally been accepted on to the Belgian National Council for Dialogue between Christian and Jews.

You can read more about the important intercultural and interfaith work being done by Nadine and her colleagues in Belgium on page 4.



Nadine larchy and the 14 Women of Peace awardees being presented at the Belgian Parliament

Monitoring Antisemitism in the Czech Republic

In 2018, the [Czech Council of Jewish Women \(CCJW\)](#) became a partner of the European Network Against Racism, organized by the European Union in Brussels.

Ivana Yael Nepalová, who is leading the ENAR project, recently became a member of the ICJW Antisemitism & Racism Committee. She describes the CCJW Project “Monitoring and Prevention” supported by ENAR.



“Our group of volunteers monitors activities of organized groups and movements involved in antisemitic propaganda on the internet and in the Czech media, and also collects data on antisemitic incidents in cooperation with Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic. Our main objective is preparing an official annual report on antisemitism for the ENAR. Our volunteers are supported by the Prague Jewish Community, and the report will be published by the Federation of Jewish Communities in April 2019, and available on their official website.

The CCJW supports our members who participate in the project, using tools and training provided by ENAR and CEJI, a leading provider of diversity education and training in Europe in the field of racism and discrimination. The volunteers work according to a daily or weekly schedule and the different categories are divided between them, including left-wing and right-wing extremism, Islamic radicalism, and antisemitism in general media and society.

By focusing on the problem, describing it and publishing our findings, we are working toward our main goal of creating a prevention program for the future, in order to prevent the pathological antisemitic behavior of persons or groups based on hate and racism in general.”

Women and Climate Change

In the UK, the [League of Jewish Women](#) held a Social Issues Seminar on Climate Change to mark International Women’s Day in March 2019.

The underlying message of the day was that the cost of not dealing with climate change far outweighs the cost of seeking solutions, and time is running out. The history and the frightening forecasts were laid out by Dr Michal Nachmany, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics. We were encouraged to become activists and to lobby decision makers to bring about the essential changes. Kate Metcalf, Co-Director of the Women’s Environmental Network, emphasised the gender issues which arise from the effects of climate change, as women are still regarded as the main providers of water and food in many parts of the world. Louisa Hoyes, Team Lead for the Communications, Education and Outreach Team of Veolia, addressed the need for individuals to choose environmentally friendly products and to recycle, with the goal of classifying nothing as waste.

Representing the Jewish Community in Belgium

The [Council of Jewish Women of Belgium](#) (CJWB) is actively involved in many aspects of Belgian public life, working with the different religious and cultural groups.

Liliane Seidman represents the CJWB at the Federation of Jewish Organisations in Belgium, called in French CCOJB. They defend the values of solidarity, education, and transmission of memory by respecting pluralism and by underlining the message of successful integration. They have monthly meetings dealing mainly with antisemitism in different areas (football stadium, newspapers, speakers, universities etc.).

As conference coordinator of the new “Friends of the CCOJB”, Liliane has organised two conferences for the Belgian public, promoting intercultural exchanges. The first focused in geopolitics, especially in the Middle East, and the second was a debate with the French journalist and writer Philippe Val who is well known for his involvement against antisemitism. Three more conferences will take place in the next few months with eminent speakers.

The Ghent branch of CJWB, under the leadership of Eliane Sperling, participated in several activities in memory of the Holocaust. During the 8th May celebrations, the emphasis was on peace, and it was noteworthy that while the liberation of the camps was mentioned, there was no mention of the Holocaust or the word “Jews” by officials during the ceremony. In October a number of members attended the yearly pilgrimage to Kazerne Dossin, from which Belgian Jews were deported. Kristallnacht in November was marked with the support of the City authorities, with non-Jewish school children providing a musical background and reading out names on the local memorial.

Evelyne Haberfeld represents the CJWB at the Council of French Speaking Women. She participated in a conference at the European Parliament in June 2018, which was devoted to trying to tackle radicalization by recognizing and facing Islamic extremism in Great Britain.

Since October 2017, Evelyne Haberfeld, Nadine Iarchy and Mariem Bouselmati have been running a ‘think tank’ to discuss improving relations between the different religious cultural communities in Belgium. They chose the name “Ladies of the Olive Tree” (Les Femmes de l’Olivier) because this particular tree is a well-known symbol for peace. They arranged for young Muslims to visit the Great Synagogue in Brussels, and held a Muslim-Jewish-Christian Iftar meal during the month of Ramadan.

Ayala Bleys, President of the Council of Jewish Women of Belgium, represents the CJWB at the Council of Dutch (Flemish) Speaking Women of Belgium. She was invited to a seminar hosted by the Embassy of Bahrain on “Baharaini Women and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030”. The female Ambassador of the Kingdom opened the event, and two representatives of the Supreme Council for Women spoke about their work on the empowerment and advancement of women on a national, regional and international level. Women from different organizations and politicians from the Belgian and European Parliaments attended. Although they knew that she was Jewish, the ambassador, the speakers and the Bahraini delegation were very happy about her participation and treated Ayala very kindly.

An Oasis of Productive Entertainment in Las Américas

The following article on the work of our Colombian affiliate [Fundación Amigos de la Comunidad Golda Meir](#) was published by *El Heraldo*, the local Barranquilla newspaper.

At the Golda Meir Community Development Center, mothers, children, young adults and seniors do crafts, dance and learn entrepreneurship to escape their routine. Seniors do exercise and dance. A group of women makes crafts with ribbons. They take their creations home or give them to their children and grandchildren, they say.

According to the board of directors of the Fundación Amigos de la Comunidad Golda Meir: "We want them to feel useful and important. Make them noticeable in an environment that has made them invisible. The idea is for people to attend because they wish to prosper, and for them to escape their day to day routine."



Another group of women seek to become microentrepreneurs. With the craft classes they carry out projects that they later replicate at home and sell what they produce, like Christmas tree ornaments, candles or dog toys made of recyclable materials.

Two years ago, Ketty Carreño (pictured here) started to attend the craft classes accompanied by her son Asael. Her dream, she says, is to be a businesswoman. "I would like to advertise everything I make, and I strive every day to make it happen," she says.

The courses, and the guide to be microentrepreneurs, are designed to give these 25 women an extra source of income. In addition, there is a kitchen where bakery courses are given, a computer room, a reading room, and a space to display the crafts.

For Bibiana Pérez, coordinator of the center, "It is an exciting experience to see how they forget the problems they have at home and come to enjoy. This, without a doubt, makes their lives more bearable amidst so many needs."

As one of the 12-year-old children attending the center says: "Happiness, love, and affection are transmitted day by day. That is the best".



Photos: César Bolívar

Jewish Identity & Dance in Budapest

Dr. Katalin Pécsi-Pollner reports from Hungary about the exciting cultural and educational programs organized by the [Esther's House Association](#).

Esther's House is planning a major educational conference about Jewish Identity, to take place in May 2019, with three main themes. The first theme is Jewish Family Today, with lectures and seminars given by the young researchers from the University's Cultural Anthropology Department. Secondly, Progressive Aspirations in the Synagogue: equality between women and men, with talks given by younger rabbis, cantors and activists, in partnership with the Jewish Theological School. The third theme will be Contemporary Challenges in Secular Jewish Life, with innovative workshops and seminars organized by creative activists. This conference will be the first cooperation between the academic world, the Rabbinical School and secular activists.

The Esther's House monthly Book Club has a massive and enthusiastic audience. Their other regular program is a Jewish Dance Circle, where they learn Eastern European traditional dancing, instead of Israeli dancing. One of their musicians is a New Yorker with Hungarian descendants who came to Budapest to collect Jewish music in 1999, then stayed on to live and play music. Their dance teacher arrived with similar aspirations, wanting to learn how Eastern European Jews used to dance, and she has stayed to teach others. Today, there are participants from three generations dancing together in the old style.



Traditional Hungarian Music and Dancing at Esther's House in Budapest

Update from Switzerland

The [Swiss Union of Jewish Women](#) has active affiliates in Zürich, Berne, Lausanne, Basel, St. Gallen, and La Chaux-de-Fonds. The largest affiliate in Zürich manages a daycare center where they organise activities for the elderly and look after them when needed, in cooperation with the Jewish community. They are seeing a trend that more Jewish families are moving from smaller communities to Zürich because of the Jewish day school there.

The Prenuptial Agreement is finally in force in Switzerland as it conforms with Swiss law. Their committee is now looking to establish a contact center for women who are facing divorce.

Priority Programs in Canada

Debbie Wasserman, President of the [National Council of Jewish Women of Canada \(NCJWC\)](#), describes their organization's three priority programs.

1. Educating young people about the crime of Human Trafficking so that they will not become victims.
2. Educating the Jewish public about the currently identified Jewish Genetic Diseases, to encourage genetic testing by young couples considering having children to determine their risk factors.
3. Encouraging Organ and Tissue Donation, by educating Jewish groups about the importance of this mitzvah and encourage people to donate their organs.

NCJWC looks forward to hosting the ICJW Executive Meeting in Canada in May 2019 in Toronto, Ontario.

Advancing Women's Rights in Australia

The [National Council of Jewish Women of Australia \(NCJWA\)](#) runs grassroots programs and projects that reach members of the Jewish and general communities, ranging in age from the very young to seniors. For example, their very successful Mum for Mum program in New South Wales, and the Caring Mums program in Victoria, bring trained volunteers to work with socially isolated new mothers across the wider community during the first year of their baby's life.

In August 2018, NCJWA launched the Sylvia Gelman Foundation to advance the education and status of women in Australia and elsewhere. The Foundation has the potential to advance women's rights within the Jewish community, the wider Australian community and internationally, by offering scholarships within Australia to suitable candidates for study or research in the area of Women's Rights.

Sylvia Gelman AM MBE was present for the launch of the Foundation that was established in her honour, but sadly she passed away a few weeks later. She was National President of NCJWA from 1973 to 1979 and a Life Governor of the organisation, as well as an Honorary Life Member of ICJW. She was a deeply loved and highly respected mentor, a true matriarch of the community who will be greatly missed.



Sylvia Gelman z'l with the President and Past Presidents of NCJWA on her 90th birthday

Remembrance & Celebration in Bulgaria

Despina Staneva, President of the [Council of Jewish Women in Bulgaria](#) (CJWB) reports on their recent activities to remember the Holocaust and celebrate Jewish life.

“In 2018, we organized Remembrance Trips to mark the 75th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews from being sent to the Nazi death camps. [Bulgaria’s Jews were saved on the order of Tsar Boris III but all the Jews from the Bulgarian-occupied territories of Thrace, Macedonia and Pirot were deported and killed.] As the next generations of survivors, we do not want to forget those innocent victims of the Holocaust, so we organized and made pilgrimages to the assembly points for their deportation to the Nazi camps. The trips were financed with our own personal funds.

CJWB delegations travelled to Pazardzhik and Plovdiv in Bulgaria, Pirot and the Niš Concentration Camp in Serbia, Thessaloniki in Greece, and Skopje in Macedonia. At each destination, we met representatives of the Jewish community, learned new facts about their history and their current situations, visited Jewish places, laid wreaths at the memorials, and celebrated Shabbat together with the local Jewish communities.



Proclaiming #WeRemember at the Sofia Monument of Gratitude for the rescue of Bulgarian Jews



Presenting Jewish food at the Kardzhali International Cuisine Festival

“In the summer, CJWB joined with the Krug (Circle) Art Movement, the Municipality of Kardzhali and the Organization of Jews in Bulgaria Shalom, to help organize the First Multinational Cuisine Festival in the town of Kardzhali. Our members actively participated in the presentation of Jewish customs, holidays, traditional dishes and traditional Sephardic songs.

At the Sephardic dinner we met a group of women from Israel who were interested in the history of the Bulgarian Jewish community. We introduced them to elderly Holocaust survivors who shared their memories, and also to the active women from the community and to the leaders of clubs and initiatives.

The Council organized events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and International Women's Day, We have set up a committee to examine the needs of socially disadvantaged members of the community. Their report will inform decisions on how to help them. Within the community, we regularly share information about campaigns for free mammography examinations, osteoporosis tests, etc. Council members participate in all volunteer activities of the community, such as collecting paper, and deleting swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti from the walls of buildings in Sofia.”

Combating Violence Against Women in Israel

Aviva Kohlman reports on the activities of affiliates of the [Council of Women's Organizations in Israel](#) (CWOI) to combat domestic violence and help its victims.

In December 2018, millions of Israeli women took to the streets to demonstrate against domestic violence that had resulted in the deaths of 24 women during 2018. The leaders of WIZO, Na'amat and Emunah were invited to meet with Israel's President Reuven Rivlin and his wife Na'ama to discuss the issue.



The struggle to prevent violence against women in Israel is a multi-pronged effort, including appropriate legislation, education, information and resource development, women's professional training and job opportunities, and, of course, enforcement. CWOI affiliates provide counselling and legal advice, with emergency hotlines advising on the location of treatment centers, and where to turn in cases of domestic violence or other potential dangers.

Preventing Domestic Violence

Our women's organizations support and run 19 shelters for abused women and their children. Every year approximately 500 women are forced to use them. Centers for the prevention of violence in the family can be found throughout the country. Emunah sponsors a center that deals with domestic violence. It also trains group leaders to lead workshops for parents about dealing with sexual issues.

WIZO is conducting a major research project in cooperation with Bar-Ilan University on the treatment of violent men. They also encourage men to turn to their centers in order to receive the professional help that will enable them to alter their behavior patterns.

Approximately half a million children in Israel are suspected of being exposed to some sort of domestic violence. Special preventative programs have been designed for children, teenagers, and men. Lectures and workshops have been held in order to increase awareness in hospitals, child clinics, and educational institutions of children who have been exposed to violence. A special program for teenagers is helping this age-group identify early signs of possible violence in their relationships and to build healthy interactions, through workshops held in high schools, in the army, and in universities.

Other Support Programs

WIZO has a special program for women who are in the process of separating from their spouses. They have a hotline for advice on labor laws and the rights of women in the workplace. They have begun dealing with the issue of post-partum depression, by raising awareness of the phenomenon and running special programs for women after childbirth. They also run leadership training programs to encourage women to take on managerial positions and leadership roles in all spheres of public life, including a special leadership program for ultra-orthodox women.

Advocacy & Community Action Across America

Felicia Anchor, ICJW North American Regional Chair, reports on the priorities of the [National Council of Jewish Women USA \(NCJW\)](#), led by its President, Beatrice Kahn.

NCJW recently relocated their headquarters to Washington DC, effectively combining their New York and Washington DC offices. They are actively working on judicial nominations, campaigns to try to ensure a fair and independent judiciary, and encouraging voting in elections. They are also campaigning for automatic renewal of the Violence Against Women Act, which has had a significant impact on ending domestic violence. Other issues on the NCJW social policy agenda include: online education about white supremacy, civil rights, civic engagement, federal courts, sex trafficking, religious freedom, reproductive health rights and justice, and Israel. These topics will all be discussed at the NCJW Washington Institute in April.

While the national organization focuses on advocacy, many local Sections develop and implement community activities and projects in order to meet unmet social needs in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. These projects include:

- **Back to School Stores** which provide clothing and school supplies to families who cannot afford to prepare their children for the school year.
- **Revitalizing School Libraries** by updating books and materials in school systems which have had to reduce library services and materials due to budget cuts.
- **Meals on Wheels** delivering kosher meals to individuals who are not able to prepare their own food, in conjunction with Jewish Family Services
- **Social Media Programs** to educate parents and grandparents about the challenges and danger these formats may create.
- **Voter Registration Drives** to ensure that citizens are registered and ready to vote in elections.
- **The Talk Project** - educating high school teens about sexual violence



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FORTHCOMING ICJW EVENTS

May 27 – 28, 2019	ICJW Executive Meeting, Toronto Canada
November 4 – 5, 2019	ICJW Executive Meeting, Athens, Greece
March 2020	UN CSW64 (Beijing +25), New York
May 4 – 5, 2020	ICJW Executive Meeting, Zurich,

