

# NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

I have pleasure in introducing the 2017 edition of the ICJW Newsletter to you. This Newsletter is printed in three languages, English, Spanish and Russian, indicative of its wide global distribution

through ICJW's many affiliates and members. Its annual production maintains a tradition that is many decades old.

Since ICJW's foundation in 1912, when most global communication was necessarily printed, there have been hundreds of editions of ICJW Newsletter distributed around our global affiliate organisations. Recently, I was pleased to receive an ICJW Newsletter archive dating back to 1955. Its contents transported me back to the days of our mothers and grandmothers.

Despite the era's patriarchal naming of women as Mrs with her husband's name and surname, and the formality of the dress code and hats of the ICJW women in the photographs, these women emerge from the pages as strong feminist role models, proudly promoting women's rights and serving their communities. Maintaining such a tradition is the hallmark of ICJW today!

In November 2016, ICJW was saddened to learn of the passing of Honorary President Leila Siegel z'l in Switzerland. Leila's proud record of achievement included her involvement on behalf of ICJW at the UN in Geneva and in Nairobi, and her upgrading of our NGO status. She will be remembered for her most important contributions to our organisation.

Within this Newsletter you will find articles from current members of the ICJW Executive, who are all informed and valued ICJW volunteers with particular specialist knowledge. Their accredited representation to global and regional organisations, both Jewish and secular, is a major pillar of ICJW's raison d'être.

- Dr Sara Winkowski, ICJW Honorary President, ICJW's Representative and Vice President of the World Jewish Congress.
- Dr Karmela Belinki, ICJW Representative to the Council of Europe.
- Mary Liling, ICJW Representative to the Council of Europe and to UN Geneva.
- Eliane Sperling Levin, ICJW Representative to the European Women's Lobby.
- Dr Joan Lurie Goldberg, ICJW Representative to UN New York.
- Beverley Goldman, ICJW News Letter Editor.

With best wishes



Robyn Lenn OAM

President, International Council of Jewish Women.

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**EDITOR: Bev Goldman**

# The World Jewish Congress

Sara Winkowski



**T**he World Jewish Congress is the biggest and most important non-partisan international organization of the Jewish people. Since it was founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1936, the WJC has been at the forefront fighting for the rights of Jews. It

is based on the Talmudic phrase “*Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh beZeh*” - all Jews are responsible for one another. Its members - 102 national Jewish communities and 18 international organizations from around the world - represent the plurality of the Jewish people.

It is really the diplomatic arm of the Jewish People, and as such has been active in countless campaigns, advocating for justice and reparation for Holocaust victims and their families, restitution for stolen Jewish property, campaigning for the rights of Soviet Jews, and others.

Today the work is focused on these main issues: to combat antisemitism in all its manifestations and support Jewish communities world-wide; to foster, support and participate in the interfaith dialogue; to support the peace process based on a two state solution and the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state in peace, security and prosperity; to advocate for Jews in Arab lands, in support of the almost 866 000 Jews who lived in the Arab world in 1948 and had to flee their country, leaving behind substantial property and other assets; and to fight against BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions).

The WJC Executive Committee meets regularly to conduct the affairs of the WJC. The WJC Governing Board meets annually, and the WJC Plenary Assembly, which takes place every four years, brings together delegates from all

affiliated Jewish communities and organizations to elect WJC leadership and set policy for the Congress. It has five branches: the European Jewish Congress, the African Jewish Congress, the Latin American Jewish Congress, the American Section of the Jewish Congress, and the Asia-Pacific Jewish Congress. Each works independently but under the umbrella of the WJC to fulfill the mission stated in its Constitution and the policies established by its constituency.

In order to encourage and promote the involvement of younger Jews in Jewish communal and organizational leadership, the WJC initiated a new program, the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps. This is a worldwide network of young Jewish professionals selected on the strength of their personalities, intelligence, and potential effectiveness, and acting in the field of diplomacy and public policy on behalf of world Jewry. It currently has over 200 members aged 27 to 45 from more than 40 countries. The objective is to represent and strengthen the Jewish communities worldwide; and their activities focus on advocating on WJC core topics as well as safeguarding human rights and minority rights.

There are 18 Jewish international organizations accredited at the WJC. Only 3 have been elected to the Executive Committee, and ICJW is one of them. We bring the woman's voice to meetings where there are few women present. While over 90% of the Jewish communities worldwide have a male president, that is certainly obvious in all our meetings. Fortunately we did ensure that the Jewish Diplomatic Corps has gender equality.

To represent ICJW at the WJC is a real honor and a privilege, and I thank our President for allowing me to do it.

*Sara was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, and she holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Education. She is Honorary President of the International Council of Jewish Women, Member of the Board of Governors of B'nai B'rith International, and this is her fourth period as Vice President of the World Jewish Congress.*

# Striving for the Highest: From Ideals to Reality in Israel

## Looking Back at the ICJW Herczeg Seminar

### Mary Liling



**S**timulating?  
Thought-provoking?  
**I**nspiring?  
Educational? Yes, all these adjectives describe most of the sessions, which lived up to the standard set by the title. We were fortunate to hear top speakers and experts in different fields who confronted Israel's

present-day complex realities with a rich variety of Jewish sources. Many topics are worth mentioning (How We Help Children at Risk, Israel and the UN, Israel through the Lens of Literature), but in this overview I prefer to focus on other highlights.

Introducing “Women Exploring Jewish Wisdom and New Possibilities”, Rabbi Tamar Elad Appelbaum set the tone for the entire seminar. All of us present noted that not only does Tamar follow the footsteps of her teacher and mentor, Alice Shalvi, but she is opening many doors in Jerusalem through the creation of a pluralistic, inclusive conservative synagogue Kehilat Zion, where many Jewish traditions are observed in addition to new approaches.

It is hard to choose from among the many beautiful interpretations we heard, whether from the Song of Songs, Rabbi Nahman of Breslau or Yehuda Amichai. In brief: eyes (“like pigeons”) hold beauty when gazing at the future, seeing what could be better, while being realistic and aware of what has already been accomplished. Women, together, bridge different worlds, and imagine another one. Fundamentally “we are the most important Jewish text”.

Professor Daphna Hacker, specialist in Family Law, gave us harsh facts on today's new gender war in Israel. In the name of equality, men are even asking for the custody of babies!

Aggressive men's organizations are attacking recently acquired women's rights, and because of fear, women prefer to stay in bad marriages and postpone divorce.

“Today's Global Refugee Dilemma” gave us basic information on the Jewish perspective on this global crisis. According to Rabbi Rosen “we thought that our values and identity were self-evident. Not anymore today”. For Jean-Marc Liling, expert on migrants, who spoke of “the strangers in our midst” and “those knocking at our doors”, the refugee crisis is a “mirror of ourselves”, who we are as Israelis and what the country is going to become. Israel has been successful with Jewish Aliya, but the government has only a reactive policy towards African migrants which is dictated by fear. The dilemma is that the word “refugee” hits a chord in referencing our Jewish history and culture.

Personally, I found the panel: “How Can Women Affect the Peace Process?” especially meaningful, moving and valuable. As a representative of ICJW, I feel the need to be informed so that I am able to inform others. This was precisely the case in June in Strasbourg and then in Geneva, when at several meetings I spoke of the National Action Plan in Israel based on UN Resolution 1325 and the objectives of Women Wage Peace. I was happy to present “another reality” with details: the turquoise scarfs worn by WWP that blend the Palestinian green with the Israeli light blue!

*Born in France and now living in Geneva, Mary Liling studied Sociology and Anthropology at Brussels Free University and McGill University (Montreal). She joined ICJW in 1979 and for many years she represented the Belgian affiliate of ICJW to the National Council of Belgian women. She has represented ICJW at the Council of Europe (since 2000) and UN Geneva (since 2008) and has also participated in NGO committees including CSW, Human Rights and Migrants.*

# Jewish Women in Europe Today

**Karmela Bélinki**



The age of intelligent and well-educated housewives who have been the backbone of Jewish voluntary movements is definitely over. In the little space that I have been given I cannot analyse the reasons, nor can I outline future developments.

European Jewish women are not and have never been a homogenous group. Post-Shoa Jewish women have very different backgrounds, everything from personal traumatic experiences to second and third generation traumas. Jewish women in Europe from previous colonies of different European states and, after the birth of the state of Israel, from Arab countries, have their own experiences of war and occupation and expulsion. Their experiences count.

There is a new phenomenon in Europe with Jewish women emigrating from Israel to Europe. Like the men they are emigrants from the country of Israel, most often without much understanding or knowledge of what it is like to live as a minority amongst an overwhelming majority. These migrant Jews from Israel have either very little to do with the traditional Jewish communities, which are struggling for their survival, or instead they try to emulate life in Israel. They can be compared to other migrants in today's Europe.

There is a third segment of division between Jewish women in Europe, east and west. Although Jewish women in the west were often integrated to the verge of assimilation, they were not officially deprived of their Jewishness until the period between the two world wars. They were hampered by social standards in the general society, but not forced not to be Jews.

Jewish women in Eastern Europe had very little chance to be Jewish except in the negative sense after the Iron Gate was closed. It had started in the early days of the Soviet Union and continued until the fall of communism. It embraced most of Eastern and Central Europe for 45 years. They are now learning about being Jewish from the beginning.

Young European Jewish women range from being totally uninterested in their Jewishness to adapting to the strict conformity of the very religious. They are now the new generation whose basic principle is me, my and mine, all immediate and instant. Unlike their grandmothers, or even in some ways their mothers, these young women are not interested in continuous voluntary work, but only in projects with concrete goals. Their lifestyle has become more fragmented due to technological developments. This is being presented as a subjective impression and a gross generalisation. There is fortunately, however, a variety of lifestyles among them.

The young generation of Jewish women has a different conception of time and the future. They live in an age where continuity is no longer meaningful, where everything has to be experienced immediately, because there are numerous threats for the future, ranging from ecological catastrophes to wars. What they do not realise, however, is that being Jewish has always meant living between the sword and the dagger, and that Jews have survived as Jews because of their faith in hope and the future.

*Dr. Karmela Bélinki PhD, is a journalist, academic and writer living in Helsinki, Finland. Her career in journalism spans more than fifty years. Her literary publications include academic works, non-fiction and fiction. She was sent on expert assignments to the UN and its agencies and to the European Union. Karmela was an ICJW delegate to the Council of Europe together with Mary Liling for fifteen years.*

# Prostitution: The Oldest Profession

Eliane Sperling-Levin



Prostitution and the concomitant human trafficking are not new. Female prostitution is called “the world’s oldest profession”. Its economic impact is mind-boggling, estimated at over 100 billion dollars, making it more profitable than other criminal activities such as drugs.

There are two approaches to prostitution:

- Sex work is a job like any other
- Prostitution is exploitation of a person’s body seen as a commodity, incompatible with the dignity and value of a human being.

Women’s organizations, ICJW among them, demand that prostitution and human trafficking, which provides the women for the sex trade, be considered a violation of human rights. This is a Western concept and historically recent. What is needed to combat and counteract it is a lengthy process of internalization and acceptance by the world.

Prostitution is also the oldest form of exploitation, with poverty being its mainstay. Women are the prime target of this abuse. Even today, in so-called advanced, democratic countries, equality is far from being achieved. There are, however, legal instruments to counter this form of abuse. The 1949 UN Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings and Exploitation of Prostitution stated that it was “incompatible with the dignity and value of human beings”. This convention has been ratified by the European Council but it is not equally implemented. In many countries, the legal position still differs markedly from the facts on the ground.

In 2010, the Istanbul Convention against Violence against Women was voted on in the Council of European nations but

not ratified by all 47 member states. In 2014, Eurostat asked its member states to integrate into their statistics all income produced by illegal activities like prostitution. Women’s groups protested vigorously against the trivialisation of the action of using women’s bodies as commodities. This shocking move was cancelled.

A major breakthrough occurred in 1999 – the criminalisation of the purchase of sex. Sweden’s now famous law punishes the buyer; and this model has now been adopted by Norway, Iceland, France, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland.

With the break-up of the Soviet Union, thousands of women from Eastern Europe were added to the flow of those from Asia and Africa. Impoverished, with no work opportunities, they came from Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Bulgaria, Russia. They ended up in China, Western Europe, but also in Turkey and Israel. Many who were promised a better life have instead become virtual prisoners and dare not lodge complaints, as they are illegal immigrants and may be expelled from the country.

In 2009, ICJW adopted the definition of trafficking from the 2000 UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. “The receiving, harbouring... by means of threat, force, fraud, for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation.” The fight against this has been central to ICJW’s activities.

30th July is the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, an official UN observance, established in 2013 by the General Assembly. Awareness of the problem is on the increase; but exploitative sex remains an international problem. So much of what is distressing in the position of women everywhere stems from the inequality between the sexes.

*Eliane studied Engineering at McGill University in Montreal. She was president of ICJW’s Belgian affiliate for 12 years and Vice-President of the ICJW Grants and Anti-Semitism Committees, as well as ICJW’s delegate to the European Women’s Lobby.*

# An Overview of Climate Change

Joan Lurie Goldberg



Climate change, global warming, sustaining the earth, sustaining the oceans, protecting the world's growing population... these are some challenges facing us all in the 21st century. What are governments, grassroots organizations, NGOs and the UN doing?

What is the role of humans and what is the cause? A primary cause is the emission of so-called greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide. Life on Earth is sustained by energy coming from the sun. About half the light reaching Earth's atmosphere passes through the air and clouds to the surface, where it is absorbed and then radiated upward in the form of infrared heat. About 90 per cent of this heat is then absorbed by the greenhouse gases and radiated back toward the surface. It is not possible to account for the current warming just by looking at variations in the emission rate for the sun. The conclusion, therefore, is that the so-called greenhouse gases which absorb and re-radiate must be increasing in density. Currently scientists' most conservative estimate is that the increase in temperature caused by the increasing radiation from greenhouse gases is, with a probability greater than 95%, due to human activity. Humans must change their behavior - the temperature increases and sea level rise are both accelerating and will cause more and more harm.

How much damage will be done if we do nothing? 2016 was the hottest year ever recorded and the third year in a row to set a record for global surface temperatures. NASA says that Earth's average surface temperature has risen approximately 2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degrees Celsius) since the late 19th century.

This is dangerous news for the entire world, but especially lethal in certain areas. In South Asia rising temperatures

are a matter of life or death. Average surface temperatures will increase about 4.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the 21st century. In humid areas like Bangladesh and South India, human workers will no longer be able to cool their bodies effectively by sweating and with exterior temperatures about 35 degrees Celsius even the fittest workers will die in less than a day. Sea level rise and sea temperature increases due to glacial melt and thermal expansion affect many ocean-based ecosystems, most critically the island nations which are losing land.

For many years, NGOs at the UN and elsewhere have been very active in the climate change arena. The issue of Environmental Justice needs to be addressed – historically the richest countries have been the polluters and the poorest and most vulnerable the victims.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change began the international response to climate change in 1992. It established a long-term objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

The Paris Accord, reached in 2015, (with 195 signatories) is a huge step forward. If the major polluters (US, China and India) fulfil their pledges the increase in temperature may be held to about 2.25 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. However, unlike the preceding Kyoto protocols, the Paris agreement is non-binding on the nations which signed it. The idea was that nations could tailor their climate plans to their own situations and alter them as circumstances changed. There is evidence that the mere existence of the accord had prodded dozens of countries to enact new clean-energy laws.

*Dr Joan Lurie Goldberg has represented ICJW at the United Nations in New York for over 10 years. As a remote sensing scientist, she is a member of the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development. She also represents ICJW on the board of the American Section of World Jewish Congress and is active in Israeli and Jewish affairs in New York and Israel and at the UN.*

# Whither Anti-Semitism?

Bev Goldman



**T**he incremental rise in anti-Semitism in the past decade has in many cases hidden itself behind the scourge of anti-Zionism. As far back as 10 years ago, Lord Michael Grade, chairman of the BBC from 2004 to 2006, lamented that anti-Semites

use Zionism and Zionists as a proxy for attacking Judaism and Jews and for anti-Semitism.

The world's oldest hatred has more than once, and in various guises, transmuted into a visceral loathing of Israel; and the internet, satellite television and social media play a major part in disseminating this base hatred.

But reviled as the most murderous ethnic prejudice in human history, true anti-Semitism invades campuses, church bodies, NGOs, the media, the arts world, the political arena. In the past two years polls show that some 55% of Western European Muslims (in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium and the UK) harbour anti-Semitic attitudes. In Poland and Lithuania, there has been a sharp spike in negative attitudes and acceptance of hate speech toward Jews. The recent "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville was ostensibly about protecting a statue of Robert E. Lee and asserting the legitimacy of white supremacy; but thousands of demonstrators chanted hatred against Jews. And according to the ADL Global 100 Report, 1.09 billion people in the world today harbour anti-Semitic attitudes.

Today, despite this, the world is speaking out against anti-Semitism. Voices are being raised and heard, voices that carry authority, voices of leaders, of prominent world figures, voices that may be genuine or may just recognise that anti-Semitism is politically incorrect, but voices nonetheless that wield influence and change policies. So whose voices are these?

There's French President Emmanuel Macron, who condemned anti-Zionism during the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Vel d'Hiv deportations, calling it "a reinvention of anti-Semitism." During a visit to Hungary by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu (who was criticised for meeting with a government widely seen as one of Europe's worst promoters of anti-Semitism and Holocaust revisionism), the Prime Minister Victor Orban said that the Hungarian government today has a "zero tolerance" attitude to anti-Semitism, although that does not match the reality on the ground. A rally against anti-Semitism late last year was headlined by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel has been outspoken against anti-Semitism and blamed the laxity of previous governments for its rise in his country.

US President Donald Trump has said "The anti-Semitic threats targeting our Jewish community and community centres are horrible and painful", although there are currently many doubts about how genuine his sentiments are. For British Prime Minister Theresa May, the freedom to practise religion without anxiety or prejudice was a "fundamental tenet of our society"; and she has reiterated her commitment to expunging anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial from British society. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has said, "My government will not support one-sided resolutions criticizing Israel ... and we deplore the boycott campaigns designed to delegitimize the Jewish state."

So, in a world which today is upside down and unrecognisable, maybe something good will happen.

*Bev has a Masters Degree in Feminist Literature. She was the editor of the Who's Who of Southern Africa; she runs the Media Team Israel for the SA Zionist Federation; she sits on the Board of Governors of the Rabbi Cyril Harris Community Centre (RCHCC); and is National Vice-President of the Union of Jewish Women South Africa.*

# ICJW Events



*ICJW European Regional Conference in Madrid, Spain, November 2016*



*Participants at the ICJW Jerusalem Herczeg Education Seminar in Israel, May 2017*

## **JOIN us in Sydney AUSTRALIA!**

**International Council of Jewish Women Quadrennial Convention**

**May 27 - May 30, 2018**

***EVOLVING BEYOND TRADITION - The Impact of Women's Perspectives and Developing Roles.***

For all details: program, registration, accommodation & partner's program, contact [office@icjw.org](mailto:office@icjw.org)

