

First Lady Laura Bush Leads Global Battle Against Breast Cancer



Mrs. Laura Bush attends a briefing with medical professionals and members of the Saudi Cancer Society at the King Fahd Medical City facility in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to discuss the success and progress of the U.S.-Saudi Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research. (White House photo by Shealah Craighead)

Breast Cancer is the leading cause of cancer among women in the world. Incidence and mortality rates remain highest in developed countries, with the United States having the highest rates. In 2008, the American Cancer Society estimates 180,510 of new diagnosed cases in the United States. Although the number of cases in the U.S. remains high, the number of women dying from breast cancer has declined significantly. Eighty percent of breast cancers in American women are diagnosed at earlier stages (stage I or II), because of greater awareness and mammography screening. The 5-year survival rate for women

diagnosed with early stages of breast cancer is currently 92% (American Cancer Society).

The World Health Organization estimates that more than 1.2 million people will be diagnosed with breast cancer each year worldwide. Now with early detection such as mammography, the treatment options are greater, meaning a better survival rate. However, the cost and the stigmatization of breast cancer further prevents women from seeking life-saving treatment and diagnostic testing. About 70 percent of breast cancer cases in the Middle East have advanced to stage III or IV (locally advanced or spread to other areas of the body) by the time women see a doctor.

Recently, the State Department created the Middle East Partnership Initiative's for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research Project, which First Lady Laura Bush helped launch last year. The Partnership

joins medical and community organizations from the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), Saudi Arabia and Jordan with the medical expertise of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

This initiative was expanded when the Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research of the Americas was announced uniting experts from the U. S., Brazil, Costa Rica, and Mexico in the fight against breast cancer. Experts from the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, and Susan G. Komen for the Cure will work with partners in the Americas to increase research, training and community outreach in the region. In March 2008, First Lady Laura Bush visited Mexico for the launch of the U.S.-Mexico portion of the Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research.

The State Department will continue to raise awareness of this issue through projects and partnerships. For more information about the projects and programs at U.S. Embassies, please visit the website for the Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues at www.state.gov/g/wi.

Colombia's International Woman of Courage Takes Flight Against Terrorism



Director Andrea Bottner with Colombia's 2008 International Woman of Courage, Captain Erika Pedraza Murillo.

Andrea Bottner recently visited Colombia where she honored Captain Erika Pedraza Murillo, Embassy Bogota's nominee for the Secretary of State's 2008 International Women of Courage award. Captain Pedraza serves as a UH-60 "Blackhawk" pilot working for ARAVI (Area de Aviacion) for DIRAN (Colombia's Anti-Narcotics Police). In the world of counter-narcotics

and counterterrorism, Captain Pedraza faces danger on a daily basis. She has also overcome many hurdles in this traditionally male-dominated field, as a woman and a single mother.

As a valuable member of the ARAVI team, the "air wing" of the Colombian National Police, Captain Pedraza directly supports counter-narcotics and counterterrorism missions. ARAVI helicopters serve primarily as transport and eradication escorts. They are also involved in interdiction operations, provide in-country transportation of individuals being extradited to the U.S. and are used in some counter-terrorist operations.

While in Colombia, Ms. Bottner flew on a mission with Captain Pedraza to witness some of her daily challenges.

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Message from the Director

by Andrea G. Bottner



The Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award is given every year by the United States Department of State in honor of International Women's Day. The award pays tribute to the bravery and leadership of outstanding women around the globe. It symbolizes the United States commitment to these women as they struggle for social justice and women's rights.

The Office of International Women's Issues has the distinct honor of administering this award on behalf of the Secretary of State. This year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, celebrated eight remarkable women. These International Women of Courage represent Somalia, Paraguay, Pakistan, Kosovo, Fiji, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian Authority. They are among over 95 exceptional women nominated by United States Embassies worldwide, for their extraordinary work in advancing women's rights.

Throughout this edition of our newsletter, there are references to their inspiring work. They have shown us what is possible, when one woman takes a stand. I hope you are as impressed by their courage, tenacity and sheer determination, as we have been. Though obstacles arise, their work continues. And we continue to stand with them.

International Woman of Courage Combats Trafficking in Persons



Secretary of State Rice with winners of the 2008 International Women of Courage Award. Cynthia Bendlin is fourth from the left.

Earlier this year, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the second annual International Women of Courage Award to eight women who have shown exceptional bravery in advocating for women's rights. Among them was Cynthia Bendlin from Paraguay, honored for her outstanding courage and leadership in combating the trafficking of women. Through her work with the International Organization of Migration, she fights the criminal gangs who prey on women in the tri-border area of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. The majority of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation in this region are young women from poor rural areas, lured with false promises of jobs as waitresses or domestic helpers, and taken to small cities and towns.

Bendlin and her colleagues work under extremely difficult situations. As the human trafficking criminal networks operating in the area saw their livelihood threatened, they issued death threats against Bendlin and her team. For Bendlin the award "provides renewed strength so that we can continue with the important work that lies ahead. There are an estimated 6,000 potential victims in the tri-border area, so we must respond in a clear, forceful and effective manner."

On June 4, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice released the 2008 Report on

Trafficking in Persons. The Report assessed 170 countries and is regarded as the most comprehensive worldwide report on the efforts of governments to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons. Its findings serve as the primary diplomatic tool through which the U.S. Government encourages countries to partner and fight against forced labor, sexual exploitation, and modern-day slavery.

As Secretary Rice stated, "The goal of this Report is to shine a light on recent accomplishments and encourage governments in their resolve to confront those who prey on the weakest and most vulnerable members of society."

Human trafficking is a deeply dehumanizing form of exploitation which occurs in virtually every country around the world, including the United States. It affects men, women and children who are held in domestic servitude, exploited for commercial sex, and coerced into work in factories and sweatshops.

Estimates of the number of victims vary widely. According to the U.S. intelligence community, approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year. Roughly 80 percent are female and up to half are minors. These figures do not include the millions who are trafficked for purposes of labor and sexual exploitation within national borders as well.

Somalia's Woman of Courage Fights Female Genital Mutilation



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with Farhiyo Farah Ibrahim of Somalia, a 2008 International Women of Courage awardee.

Farhiyo Farah Ibrahim was one of eight recipients of the 2008 Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award. Recognized for her work in the Dadaab refugee camp, Farhiyo faced strong opposition from her highly conservative and patriarchal society as she promoted an end to female genital mutilation (FGM), better treatment for rape victims and more secondary education for Somali girls.

The Dadaab camp's isolation in arid north-east Kenya means exposure to the outside world is extremely limited and life is especially harsh for women, who have traditionally played a subordinate role to men in conservative Somali society. The only African winner among the 2008 honorees, Farhiyo carried on with her advocacy in the face of ostracism. She believes her community should be supporting—rather than stigmatizing—rape victims, single mothers, divorcees and widows.

Dadaab is the only world Farhiyo knows. This makes her views on female

empowerment—and her willingness to fight for women's rights—all the more remarkable. Her most challenging role has been as a campaigner for the elimination of FGM, also known as Female Circumcision (FC), Female Genital Cutting (FGC), and Female Genital Surgeries (FGS). These include a range of practices varying from a simple nick of the clitoris to the partial or complete removal and infibulation of the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Those who practice FGM believe that a circumcised woman will attract a favorable dowry.

Today, an estimated 70 million girls and women have been subjected to FGM in 28 countries in Africa and in Yemen. Unfortunately, medical complications often occur, such as septicemia, pelvic inflammatory disease, and other numerous long and short term health effects. Farhiyo works to inform families and women of these complications, and continues to fight against this practice. ♡

Supporting Women Peace Builders in Iraq

Last June Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice chaired the United Nations Security Council's Open Thematic Debate on sexual violence as a tactic of war. The debate addressed the widespread use of sexual violence in conflict situations. In her presentation, Secretary Rice urged the international community to end sexual violence and related acts of sexual exploitation and abuse.

"States have the responsibility to protect their citizens from such crimes, even in situations of armed conflict. States have the ability to stop such atrocities if they have the political will to do so," said Secretary Rice.

To address the need for more women peace-builders, the Office for International Women's Issues (G/IWI) will sponsor Women as Agents of Peace, a targeted training program for Iraqi women peace-builders to be held in Washington, DC.

G/IWI coordinated a selection process to nominate Iraqi women peace-builders. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Iraq, the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad were instrumental in selecting qualified candidates.

The training will include sessions on conflict resolution facilitation, leadership, messaging, and how to engage more women in peace-building initiatives. This training program is part of a five point plan developed by G/IWI to increase women's inclusion in U.S. Government sponsored peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization initiatives.

The program's mission is to provide capacity-building training for Iraqi women peace-builders who are interested in improving the impact and effectiveness of existing peace-building efforts. The goal is to create a network of women peace-builders in Iraq by facilitating a dialogue with peace-builders who have successfully implemented grassroots initiatives in other conflict countries. ♡

Highlighting Gender-Based Violence Prevention Efforts in Vietnam



The official U.S. Delegation to the 2008 Global Summit of Women in Hanoi, Vietnam from left to right: (Back row) Shinae Chun, Susan Au Allen, Ludy Green, Leanna Brown, Summit participant, and Sandy Lineberry; (Front row) Yvonne Boice, Amy Blyth, Andrea Bottner, and U.S. Treasurer Anna Cabral.

The 18th Global Summit of Women was held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from June 5–7, 2008. The delegation, consisting of nine U.S. women leaders in business and government, was led by U.S. Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral. The Summit explored Asia-Pacific economies in the global marketplace and gathered women entrepreneurs, Fortune 500 executives, and high-ranking government officials to discuss

the advancement of women in business and government. Over 900 local and foreign delegates from 70 countries attended.

As a member of the U.S. delegation, Andrea Bottner, Director, Office of International Women's Issues, addressed participants on gender-based violence issues, specifically the U.S. response to Trafficking in Persons.

Many in Vietnam viewed the Global Summit of Women as an opportunity to raise

awareness of important women's issues. While in Vietnam, Ms. Bottner visited a domestic violence hotline and shelter facilities, and spoke to government officials and NGO representatives about the most difficult part of addressing domestic violence—changing cultural attitudes. She also shared the U.S.-based coordinated community response model in which everyone in a community—

advocates, police, health professionals, lawyers, judges, etc.—understands the problem and plays a role in crafting the solution.

During her visit to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in June 2008, Ms. Bottner highlighted progress made and discussed ongoing challenges related to domestic violence in Vietnam. In meetings with Government officials, the Vietnam Women's Union, as well as local and international non-governmental organizations and media, Ms. Bottner praised the passage of two pieces of positive legislation impacting women, the 2006 Law on Gender Equality and the 2007 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

Ms. Bottner emphasized the importance of education in tackling gender-based violence. She stated, "Women need to be educated that violence and discrimination against them are unacceptable." She stressed that authorities and the media play key roles in raising the awareness of both men and women on this issue. ♡

Multimillion Dollar Initiative Boosts Empowerment of Iraqi Women



Members of the Multi-party Women's Caucus work together to develop regional work plans to further advocacy initiatives.

Empowering Iraqi women is a U.S. foreign policy priority of the Bush Administration. Through a variety of programs, the U.S. is building Iraqi women's participation in the political process to create a strong, sustainable civil society. These programs comprise a long-term strategy, designed to give Iraqi women the tools they need to build a free society.

Since 2004, the Office for International Women's Issues (G/IWI) has supported Iraqi women through the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative (IWDI). A \$24.5 million

initiative, this competitive grant program builds the capacity of Iraqi women enabling them to participate more fully as political and economic leaders in Iraq.

To date, programs under the IWDI led by U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGO) partners on the ground in Iraq, have trained over 7,000 Iraqi women in several key skill areas, including: leadership,

political participation, entrepreneurship, media skills, women's rights advocacy, coalition building, negotiation, and training on Iraqi women's constitutional rights.

G/IWI recently awarded a number of new grants to U.S.-based NGOs working on women's issues in Iraq. New projects are being developed under several new grant focus areas.

One exciting new focus area is the elimination of violence against women. The project provides legal, social and medical services

for victims; improves government responses to gender-based violence and encourages greater awareness of gender issues.

Entrepreneurship and economic capacity building for widows is another new focus for IWDI. Through this project, 470 widows are being trained to be economically self-sufficient. As a result, disadvantaged Iraqi widows will acquire the skill sets to enhance their understanding of their rights and civic responsibilities.

Another new program area will focus on women and peace-building, and will strengthen the capacity of women and civil society actors in the Tameem governorate to work cooperatively against violence and hate in their communities.

Iraqi women are eager to play an active role in rebuilding their society. With programs such as these, more women will be able to take part in the democratic process and serve as examples for future generations. ♡