



The Suzanne Mubarak
Women's International Peace Movement



Rolling Back Militarism: A Task for the Global Movement
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The **Institute for Peace Studies** was inaugurated on the 16th of February, 2006. It is an NGO founded by the Suzanne Mubarak Women's International Peace Movement, and is hosted at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

The mission of IPS clearly states that it should endeavor **to promote the culture of peace in the region; engage in a series of partnerships on regional and international levels and, develop training and research programs that will enhance human security and peace, as well as expand the role of women and young people in the process of peace building.**

As such, from the very beginning, we have sought to structure our program around this mission statement. Our work program takes three different forms: teaching, conducting joint workshops, seminars and meetings with other organizations, and research. So far, we have not started on our research program but hope to begin soon. We have partnered with several regional and international organizations and held joint workshops, seminars and meetings. At this point in time our main concern is to promote the culture of peace and educate the public about peace matters as well as teach them the necessary



skills to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner. Some might think that this is an easy task, but I assure you it isn't!

- 1) We are situated in a region that is teeming with conflicts of every sort and kind, and we, more often than not, address people who have misconceptions about the “culture of peace” and “peace education”; misconceptions that come with a long history of strife within the region and a tiresome struggle against inequity on all levels.
- 2) Particularly relevant here is that we have to deal with learners who are the products of a traditional educational system; a system that is based on a teacher-centered approach to learning rather than a learner-centered approach.
- 3) In addition, we also face a whole set of conflict issues that are inherent in the existing educational system. One important issue is the brutal competition that is built within the system itself. Students are constantly made to understand that they must excel and get good grades, not because it is a character building asset, but because they have to find a place for themselves in the system. As a result, competition begins early on in life when children are pressured to compete for a place in the intermediate level, then in secondary schools and finally in university. This is a perfect ingredient for frustration and conflict. Matters are even made worse when learners discover, upon graduation, that there aren't jobs in line with their acquired knowledge. Consequently, a senseless dissatisfaction is created and indirectly causes the exclusion of a large percentage of youth from public life, thus fostering frustration, an acquired hostility and a readiness to embrace violence in any conflict situation.



Knowing that educating for peace is no easy task under the given circumstances, we at IPS, started by:

- a) **Creating a learning space for women and youth by offering educational courses to the public.** In the past three years we have offered courses in Human Rights, Culture of Peace, Conflict Resolution, and Mediation & Negotiation, and plan to increase and diversify the courses in the near future.
- b) **Our comparative advantage lies in the fact that we offer these courses in Arabic** – only one course is offered in the English language – which means that we can reach a larger public within Egypt and in the Arab world.
- c) **We also give a cultural dimension to the materials** we teach in order to make it more understandable for the Arab-Muslim learner. With the help of experts in the field, we have compiled our own courses, added a cultural component and used these materials for teaching.
- d) Another advantage is that **we offer our learners a new learner-centered approach** that is implemented by the instructors who come from UPEACE to teach. This engaging, interactive teaching methodology not only offers a new approach but also allows for cooperative learning; a thing that creates a sense of belonging and harmony among the learners which is what we view as an initial step towards disseminating the culture of peace.
- e) **Creating a network of learners** who are dedicated to peace education and have become active participants in many of our other activities. In fact, most of our learners stay in contact and most of them have come back to take other courses.



Our next step is based on a new strategy which is to focus on human security as a foundation for peace. Thus, we must exert a significant effort to:

- Educate people on disarmament and human security; a thing that will bring us closer to the public and their immediate, daily concerns.
- By virtue of our position within the Arab region, we can act as a liaison between international organizations and Egyptian and Arab intellectuals/institutions working in the same field.
- We can also help provide an Egyptian, Arab and Muslim perspective on many of the discussions.
- We can help mobilize many of the local and regional actors and engage them in our work.

This is where IPB becomes very important to our work. The very fact that we are members of IPB will enable us to benefit from the campaigns that it conducts and the resources it provides. Particularly important is the networking opportunities the Bureau provides for regional bodies such as ours.