

President's report
ECICW General Assembly in Pavia, Italy
October 6-8, 2017

The new Feminism, the end of an Utopia?

We Feminists, where do we stand ?

In 1888 when ICW was founded, women were struggling for the right of vote. American women got it in 1919 and the British in 1918 after a long period of fight, a period of contempt, violence, prison endured by the Suffragettes. ECICW shall celebrate this Centenary next year together with our English sisters.

The second wave of Feminism happened a couple of years after WW II where the majority of the European countries granted the right of vote to women.

One can consider that a third wave of feminism appeared when Gisèle Halimi and Simone Weil incited the French Parliament to legalize abortion.

Now at the beginning of the XXI Century Feminists have to oppose the Islamist and Salafist movements that initiated a new deny of equality for women. Again and again, more and more the women's body is a matter of discussion, of violent confrontation whose game is democracy.

In the patriarchal system women's body was the property of fathers, then husbands, is still the property of the State when governments encourage directly or through an appropriate legislation women to have more children. In the Islamist society women's body do belong to Allah, to God in the Christian and Jewish worlds.

At our Seminar in Northern Cyprus in October 2016 we tried to demonstrate that freedom and equality for women can develop only in a democratic and secular society disencumbered from religious precepts.

Moreover Democracy is not a stage, it is a process. A lot of countries who call themselves democratic are not democratic when they deny women the same rights as men's.

At our last General Assembly in Tunis held in April 2017 we understood how difficult it is for the Tunisian women to restore the status they acquired in 1956 by President Bourguiba. The " Arab Spring" refused to mention the word of Equality in their Constitution in 2011. The women's status has slightly improved in the Constitution of 2014 after the March of Women. Last July the Tunisian Parliament passed a new law related to the equality in matter of legacy.

No country round the world applies a total Gender Equality.

What kind of world are we living in, we women, when our rights are constantly questioned and always matter of debates? From Trump to the

Saudis, one can deplore the weakness of our status. In Germany, in Cologne, in December 2015 one saw the lack of political determination of the Mayor of Cologne or more recently the absence of reaction of the surrounding public in Morocco looking at the rape of a young woman in a bus. One tends to deliberately minimize and ignore the aggressions of women in the public area.

Conclusion

The topic of the Seminar chosen by our host the CNDI, the role of women in the development of a cultural tourism gives us a reason to hope. Indeed the field of Tourism shows that women can achieve a lot and it is a sphere where women can contribute to the advancement of the society improving their financial independence and the general well being.

Italy offers a cultural patrimony unique in the world and we are keen to learn how women found their way and made themselves prominent in the most richest cultural environment.

Mazal Renford as our ICW Advisor for Peace and International Relations reported after her meeting at UNESCO:

“ The Empowerment of girls and women starts on the benches of schools with quality of Education and access to Culture and Information”.

Cosima Schenk