

# WOMEN WHO PURSUE PEACE AND JUSTICE AND COUNTER/PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM (C/PVE)

On any given day you can find news reports of violent extremism worldwide. These stories include horrific accounts of war and genocide, rape and enslavement, refugees, suicide bombers and the destruction of ancient cultures. Far less reported are stories of people working on the ground to rebuild their communities and stop the devastation. But these stories are important, especially those of women who, although relatively unknown, are at the heart of global efforts to respond to violence and extremism.

And where better to start than with religiously driven women who actually are peacebuilders? In the U.S., we rarely talk about the vocation of peacebuilding, but across the world such people exist. Both here and abroad, there are women whose beliefs lead them to pursue peace as their daily work and chosen vocation.

One place to find religiously motivated women peacebuilders is among Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers in Action Network* and among the women who have been finalists for the *Peacemakers'* award. Using solution-oriented approaches to mitigate hatred, violence and terrorism, these powerful activists represent countless women now working around the world to counter and prevent violent extremism. (In academic and practitioner circles, this concept is often referred to as either CVE; PVE; C/PVE).

## **RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED WOMEN PEACEMAKERS**

### **JAMILA AFGHANI of Afghanistan, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* (2011)**

- A survivor of childhood polio, Jamila is a Muslim woman who faces ongoing threats from those who oppose her work in Afghanistan. A faithful adherent of Islam, Jamila has persisted in her work, despite the danger, in her home city of Kabul. Jamila currently works for the Afghan government as the Deputy Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). Simultaneously, she supports her NGO, the Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization (NECDO), which provides health, literacy, vocational, internet, peace education, human rights, and gender training from an Islamic perspective for women, youth and children.
- In collaboration with the [Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equality](#), Jamila created the first holistic gender-sensitive imam training program for Muslim religious leaders in Kabul and the surrounding areas. Using an Islamic perspective, Jamila's training program teaches imams about basic rights of women. The successful program has inspired some participants to deliver a series of khutbas (Friday sermons) on what they had learned, in 20 of the city's influential mosques.

- An Islamic scholar herself, Jamila is also working toward the creation of an Islamic institute for women in Afghanistan, so that more women can truly understand Islamic traditions and its commitment to respect for women. With such strengthened understanding, Jamila believes they will be better able to protect themselves from injustice and violence, and play a greater role in national affairs.<sup>i</sup>
- Read more about Jamila and her work in [Contested Terrain: Reflections with Afghan Women Leaders](#) by Sally L. Kitch.

### **HIND KABAWAT of Syria, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* (2007)**

- When Hind's country first descended into civil war, she reached out to those closest to Syrian President Assad, imploring him to follow in the footsteps of the great proponent of nonviolence, and former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela – and not the former president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, who is remembered for his brutality and the Bosnian genocide of 1995. When Assad chose not to pursue nonviolence, and Syria became engulfed in war, Hind shifted her efforts. A highly spiritual Orthodox Christian **no** longer able to return to her home, Hind now seeks to help her fellow countrymen and countrywomen. Covering herself to appear Muslim, she has even slipped back into Syria to meet with displaced fellow-citizens and to bring supplies, conflict resolution training, medicine and hope.
- Hind also strategically works with partners to build a brighter future for Syria. With fellow Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action*, she conducted a series of interventions that trained Syrian peace activists in Jordan and Turkey. The trainings covered basic skills for countering violent extremism: conflict resolution skills; empowering peace activists to broaden regional coalitions and social networks; and preparing alliances for reconciliation when the fighting stops.<sup>ii</sup> To learn more about Tanenbaum's interventions with Hind and her fellow *Peacemakers*, read more [here](#).
- Today, Hind is a member of the High Negotiation Committee, where she is one of the 34 opposition members engaged in the current Syrian peace negotiations. As of this writing, the negotiations are slowly moving forward (read Hind's account in her Foreign Policy article "[The Syrian Revolution Is Not a Holy War](#)"). She remains committed and even hopeful, despite the continuing violence in her homeland. During the lengthy negotiation process, she noted that individuals from the warring factions are now seizing "[the collective opportunity to save the lives of Syria's future generations](#)."<sup>iii</sup>
- Read Hind's most recent articles in [The Huffington Post](#).

### **SAKENA YACOobi of Afghanistan, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* (2002)**

- A devout Muslim woman from Afghanistan, Sakena completed her education in the U.S. As she studied Islam and gained a deeper understanding of her faith, Sakena found that her religion offered immense resources for understanding peace, justice, and equality. After completing her studies, Sakena stayed in academia and taught at D'Etre University in Michigan. During this time, Sakena knew she eventually wanted to return home to Afghanistan to educate and empower women. In 1992, Sakena's work with women began when she flew to an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. Later, she became coordinator of the International Rescue Committee's Female Education Teacher Training Program.<sup>iv</sup>
- In the Afghan refugee camps, Sakena frequently encountered women who craved educational opportunities for themselves and their children. She founded the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) in 1995 to address the vast educational disparities she had uncovered. During the Taliban regime, AIL

operated 80 secret schools for 3,000 girls in Afghanistan.<sup>v</sup> Sakena's students learned that women can – and must – contribute in fundamental ways to establishing a peaceful society. Today, AIL operates in Afghanistan and provides educational opportunities that once did not exist.<sup>vi</sup>

- The Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL) trains women and children in leadership, literacy, health and marketable skills. Simultaneously, AIL teaches students and participants how to negotiate constructive relationships with men in a patriarchal society.<sup>vii</sup>
- Watch Sakena's TED Talk "[How I stopped the Taliban from shutting down my school](#)"<sup>viii</sup> and hear how she describes her journey.<sup>ix</sup>

### **DENG GIGUENTO of Philippines, Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* (2015)**

- One of Tanenbaum's newest *Peacemakers*, Deng is the Training Coordinator for Peacebuilding at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in the Philippines, where she seeks to counter violent extremism through peacebuilding and reconciliation.<sup>x</sup> Deng's approach can often be characterized as a mix of negotiation and reconciliation, notwithstanding imminent danger.
- One example of Deng's bravery, and care for others, occurred in the 1980's when she risked her life to protect a priest from inebriated soldiers during an investigation of possible war crimes committed against a remote village. Though similar risks still lurk in her current work, Deng now spends her time advising and training military leaders and officers, despite corruption and conflict in the Philippine military. Respected by many, she also maintains close connections with non-state actors, a testament to the trusting relationships she is able to establish in her work as a negotiator.<sup>xi</sup>

### **JANNETH LOZANO BUSTOS of Colombia, Finalist for Tanenbaum's *Peacemaker in Action* Award (2015)**

- For Janneth Lozano Bustos, peace is born in the hearts and personal experiences of her fellow Colombians. Believing that they have the power to affect change, she has worked for more than three decades for the protection of indigenous women's rights in Colombia,<sup>xii</sup> most notably the Nasa indigenous women from northern Cauca – one of Colombia's most violent regions. The risks are high, and Janneth herself has been caught in the midst of armed confrontations. Often working in the field for extensive periods of time, she has sometimes been unable to travel home due to the region's volatility.
- Motivated by her unwavering Catholic faith and experienced as both an educator and social worker, Janneth leads transformative workshops and lends critical assistance to women in need. She finds personal inspiration and solace in Catholicism but loves working with individuals who practice a variety of religions and spiritual beliefs. Always respectful, Janneth urges the women to protect their rights, orchestrate their future, and take on the leadership of their communities.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Other entities recognize and honor women working for peace within their countries and contexts. Below, we share a non-exhaustive list of organizations, alliances, events, and publications that work with and/or bring attention to courageous women peacemakers and peacebuilders, both religious and not.

- Religions for Peace's [Global Women of Faith Network](#) brings together women of faith in an effort to share resources and strategies to work toward peace.
- [Women PeaceMakers](#) program at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at The University of San Diego brings together women each year to share their experiences in conflict. The program includes [narrative profiles](#) of the women.
- The Institute for Inclusive Security focuses on the power of women peacebuilders through their [Women Waging Peace Network](#).
- [Women Without Borders](#) empowers women to create a new female security paradigm and most recently does this through their [Mother Schools initiative](#).
- The Carter Center created the [Forum on Women, Religion, Violence & Power](#) in an effort to bring together human rights defenders who work on women's rights issues.
- The book [Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen](#), edited by Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, explores the dynamic lives of women religious peacebuilders.
- [International Civil Society Action Network \(ICAN\)](#) for women's rights, peace and security promotes civil society activism in those key areas.
- A [Global Alliance of Women Countering Extremism and Promoting Peace, Rights & Pluralism](#) formed in 2015. The alliance works to develop gendered understandings and responses to extremism from the local level to the international level.
- Each year, the United Nations (UN) hosts the [Commission on the Status of Women](#). The goal is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

---

<sup>i</sup> "Jamila Afghani, Afghanistan," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/jamila-afghani-3/>. Accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> "The Syria Intervention Summary Report," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Tanenbaum-SyriaIntervention.pdf>. Accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>iii</sup> "Hind Kabawat, Syria," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/hind-kabawat-2/>. Accessed February 29, 2016

<sup>iv</sup> "Underground Woman: Sakena Yacoobi and the Afghan Institute of Learning," *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, ed. David Little, Tanenbaum (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 382-401.

<sup>v</sup> "Who We Are," Afghan Institute of Learning, <http://www.afghaninstituteoflearning.org/who-we-are.html>.

<sup>vi</sup> "Underground Woman: Sakena Yacoobi and the Afghan Institute of Learning," *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*, ed. David Little, Tanenbaum (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 382-401.

<sup>vii</sup> "Dr. Sakena Yacoobi," Afghan Institute of Learning, <http://www.afghaninstituteoflearning.org/our-founder.html>.

<sup>viii</sup> "How I Stopped the Taliban from Shutting Down My School," Ted Talk by Sakena Yacoobi, [https://www.ted.com/talks/sakena\\_yacoobi\\_how\\_i\\_stopped\\_the\\_taliban\\_from\\_shutting\\_down\\_my\\_school?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/sakena_yacoobi_how_i_stopped_the_taliban_from_shutting_down_my_school?language=en). Accessed February 29, 2016.

<sup>ix</sup> "Sakena Yacoobi, Afghanistan," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/sakena-yacoobi/>. Accessed February 12, 2016.

<sup>x</sup> "Maria Ida 'Deng' Giguiento, the Philippines," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/maria-ida-deng-giguiento-2/>. Accessed February 29, 2016.

<sup>xi</sup> "Maria Ida 'Deng' Giguiento, the Philippines," Tanenbaum, <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/meet-the-peacemakers/maria-ida-deng-giguiento-2/>. Accessed February 29, 2016.

<sup>xii</sup> "La Piragua," CEAAL.org, [http://www.ceaal.org/images/stories/LaPiragua/La\\_Piragua\\_35.pdf](http://www.ceaal.org/images/stories/LaPiragua/La_Piragua_35.pdf). Accessed March 16, 2016.

<sup>xiii</sup> "Peacemaker in Action Awardees & Finalists," Tanenbaum <https://tanenbaum.org/peacemakers-in-action-network/2015-awardees-finalists/#Bustos>. Accessed March 16, 2016.