

### Women, Peace and Justice

Principal Held, Members of the faculty, Dear Staff members and above all, students

I am much honored to be given this opportunity to share with you some of the most important and sensitive topics of our present time- women's undeniable contribution to justice and global peace.

I wrecked my mind during the past couple of days asking myself of the best way to sum up the role of women in our present society and women effect on global peace. I've then decided to share with you my personal experience of witnessing women struggle and thrive in the face of war, gender inequality, violence and death.

In the 1980's, Sudan, the largest country in Africa, witnessed the longest civil war in modern history. As a result, millions lost their lives in the war and millions more went to seek refuge in neighboring countries. Women in particular suffered the most as they struggled to overcome the atrocities of war, rape and torture in addition to raising their children.

Growing up in Northern Sudan, I vividly remember the panic and fear that my family had to go through as we continue to follow the news about our relatives in the South. My aunt, accompanied by her husband and her two little children, had to flee her village in the middle of the night. They struggled as they tried to find their way through the bushes to a safer haven. My aunt's husband was unfortunately arrested as he tried to lead the way for his family. He was slaughtered in front of his wife and two children. Haunted by the memories of their father's last moments of life, my two little cousins and my aunt continued their journey to the borders of Sudan till they reached the neighboring country of Zaire. Like many women in similar situations as hers, my aunt graciously and courageously cared for her two children and continued to provide her medical expertise to her fellow country women. It was more than ten years till my family met **with** my aunt and cousins. My aunt said, quote "The scars of war are engraved on our hearts, us women, but we are determined to start anew".

Women not only witnessed and suffered from the atrocities of war, but they continue to remain victims of rape and violence. In many parts of the world, women have demanded justice and fair trials to their perpetrators. And I believe that unless we fight injustice, we will not be able to achieve peace.

Peace is not born, peace is made. And it can only be achieved through the contribution of women. From the struggle of the Bhutanese women in Nepal to the standing hopes of the Afghani women in Afghanistan. And from the historical role that Indira Gandhi played in fighting the oppression in India to the on going fight of so many African women in Africa. We continue to witness and attest to the power of women to change the world and stand in the face of injustice and violence.

Today, as we celebrate the Annual Peace Day, let's recall in our hearts that peace come from within and that we women are not only a vial part of the peace process but the main one. Thanks again for giving me the opportunity to share this important event with you and let **us** end with the words that Jesus said: "Peace be with you".