



**Women's Commission
for Refugee Women and Children**
122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289
tel. 212. 551. 3115
fax. 212. 551. 3180
info@womenscommission.org
www.womenscommission.org

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children was established in 1989 to address the particular needs of refugee and displaced women and children. The Women's Commission is legally part of the International Rescue Committee, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The Women's Commission receives no direct financial support from the IRC.

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Institute for Public Dialogue
2310 Marinship Way #16
Sausalito, California 94965

February 21, 2008

Dear Mr. Connolly,

It is a pleasure to write a letter of endorsement for the Institute for Public Dialogue and specifically for the Institute's Public Talks proposal to the United Nations and the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children believes that the principle of transparent, open dialogue is much needed in the situations of conflict and displacement where we focus our work. We find, for example, that refugee women and youth are seldom informed or consulted during peace processes and, as a result, their needs and interests are seldom reflected in the subsequent peace agreements. The Women's Commission promotes the participation of displaced women, children and youth in decisions that affect their lives. Public Talks appears to be a venue for such – through information dissemination to those more vulnerable groups who don't often have easy access to information and decision-making bodies.

There are many protracted situations of conflict where behind the scenes negotiations stall and fail to achieve lasting results that restore peace, stability, and dignity to those who have been victims – most often women and children. Colombia, Myanmar, the Israeli-Palestinian situation, and Sri Lanka immediately come to mind as countries and regions where new approaches are needed. Public engagement and transparent negotiation processes, it seems, could provide a new tactical approach to end these stalemated situations while ensuring the participation and investment of the most marginalized.

We wish the Institute success and broad endorsement for the realization of Public Talks.

Sincerely,

Director, Protection Program
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

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