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Human Rights

Women for Women Wins Hilton Humanitarian Prize

THE 2006 CONRAD N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize—at \$1.5 million the world’s largest—was awarded to Women for Women International on Sept. 14. The Hilton Foundation presents its annual award to an organization that “significantly alleviates human suffering.” Women for Women International is the first women’s organization recognized with this honor.



Zainab Salbi, Iraqi-born founder of Women For Women (Photo Courtesy Women for Women).

“Women and children bear the major burdens of the unprecedented number of wars and civil conflicts raging worldwide, and are often left to rebuild their lives without the basic necessities for survival or a viable means to earn a living and take care of their families,” noted Steven M. Hilton, chairman and CEO of the Hilton Foundation. “Women for Women International has demonstrated that it can create change and stability within a society by providing women survivors with the tools and resources to rebuild their lives. The organization also gives women the training and confidence to engage in their community’s, and ultimately their nation’s, economic, political and social structures,” he added.

In accepting the prize, Zainab Salbi, Women for Women International’s Iraqi-born founder and president, said: “It reinforces our vision that stronger women build stronger nations, and encourages us to work harder to bring the voices and concerns of the women we serve to the forefront.”

Salbi is an expert when it comes to helping women voice their concerns. Her second book, *The Other Side of War: Women’s Stories of Survival and Hope* (published by National Geographic and available from the AET Book Club) relates tales of unthinkable brutality, as well as courage, healing and renewal. Also featuring award-winning photography, Salbi’s book includes intimate portraits that introduce readers to mothers, daughters and wives.

According to Harvard Prof. Amartya Sen, a Hilton Prize juror who is a Nobel Laureate in Economics, “Women for Women International has sharply identified the nature and complexities of a much neglected need associated with wars—the urgency of providing rehabilitation to people, particularly women, left destitute, impoverished or displaced by

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the hostilities." He added, "The organization is already protecting millions of lives from short-term agony and long-term ruination."

Women for Women International currently operates in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, and now Lebanon. Since its founding in 1993, the organization has distributed more than \$28 million in direct aid and microcredit loans, and helped 30,000 women everyday, benefiting 5.3 million family and community members.

The Hilton Foundation was created in 1944 by the late hotel entrepreneur and business leader Conrad N. Hilton, who left his fortune to the foundation with instructions to help the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people throughout the world, without regard to religion, ethnicity or geography. Based in Los Angeles, the foundation is an independent nonprofit organization and is not part of the Hilton Hotels Corporation.

For more information about Women for Women International's programs and the prize, visit <www.womenforwomen.org> and <www.hiltonfoundation.org>.

—*Delinda C. Hanley*

Source:http://www.wrmea.com/archives/December_2006/0612056.html



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