



With breaking stories and  
newswire products from

**UN NEWS CENTRE**



## **UN lauds awarding of Nobel Peace Prize to three women's activists**



2011 Nobel Peace Prize joint winners Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Tawakkul Karman, and Leymah Gbowee

7 October 2011 –

United Nations officials have hailed today's awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to three women's activists, saying the recipients demonstrate the vital role that women play in advancing peace and security, boosting development and securing human rights around the globe.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female elected head of State; Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist; and Tawakkul Karman, a journalist and pro-democracy activist from Yemen, are the joint winners of this year's prize.

Nobel judges, announcing the decision in Oslo, Norway, cited the winners' "non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peacebuilding work."

[Speaking](#) in New York, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said the award could not have been better chosen.

"It underscores the vital role that women play in the advancement of peace and security, development and human rights," he said.

"I myself have met women who have been the victims of sexual violence. I have seen for myself women's leadership power in building and sustaining peace. And I have heard the voices of women calling for justice and democracy in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond."

In a subsequent [statement](#) he described the winners as "three inspirational women of uncommon courage and commitment" and reaffirmed that promoting the cause of women is a top priority of the UN.

"With this decision, the Norwegian Nobel Committee sends a clear message: women count for peace. It is a testament to the power of the human spirit and underscores a fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter: the vital role of women in the advancement of peace and security, development and human rights."

Mr. Ban's remarks were echoed by Michelle Bachelet, the Executive Director of UN Women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, who [noted](#) that each of the three Nobel recipients had overcome huge obstacles.

"All over the world, women are demanding their rights and their equal participation in peacebuilding, democracy and the development of their nations, and this year's Nobel Peace Prize sends a message to the world that now, the 21st century, is the time for women's full and equal participation at all levels of society," Ms. Bachelet said.

Helen Clark, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), [said](#) Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, Ms. Gbowee and Ms. Karman demonstrate "what can be achieved when women participate and take on decision-making roles, and they serve as an example for us all."

Margot Wallström, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, said the recipients' careers offer motivation to other women.

"If only three of the world's women can achieve all they have, imagine what can be done if half of the world's population is allowed the rights women are entitled to," she said.

In its announcement the Nobel committee cited Security Council [resolution 1325](#), the landmark text from 2000 that recognizes women and children constitute the majority of victims of conflicts, have a vital role in resolving those conflicts and must be given an equal role to men in all peace processes.

Ms. Wallström noted that, more than a decade after that resolution was adopted, less than 10 per cent of all peace agreements are negotiated by women and less than 3 per cent are signed by women.

“Women’s participation in peace processes needs to engage peacemakers, peacekeepers, peacebuilders and political leaders – not only women’s rights and gender experts,” she stressed.

Ray Chambers, the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Malaria, spotlighted the work of Ms. Johnson Sirleaf as Liberian President in fighting the spread of the deadly disease across Africa.

“By working to save the lives of nearly 800,000 children a year, President Sirleaf is helping to bring transformative progress to Africa, and I look forward to continuing our work together,” he said.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)) also welcomed today’s announcement and offered its congratulations.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf is running for re-election as her country’s President, with the polls set to take place on Tuesday, and in a statement UNMIL underlined that “the elections are for the Liberian people to decide at the ballot box.”

Judy Cheng-Hopkins, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, praised the work of women worldwide in translating the theory of peacebuilding into concrete actions in countries emerging from conflict and misrule.

“The peacebuilding architecture can learn from these exemplary women,” she said. “Liberia is one of six countries on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, which champions the role of peacebuilding. The \$395 million Peacebuilding Fund has invested in 22 countries, including Liberia, to extend peace, justice and security – a feat that cannot be realized without the active leadership and participation of women.”

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[Boosting women’s political participation vital for democracy, UN forum stresses](#)