



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

March 8: International Women's Day 2011

As we mark International Women's Day, I was struck by how much the fight for freedom in Tahrir Square in Cairo, where women were seen as supporters AND organizers may be a turning point that will galvanize all women who have not been fully heard in their communities around the world.

For all women of the Middle East this is their moment to seize the moment to build on the recognition that Egypt's revolution was the work of men and women. From media at the protest's height, estimates were that fully one quarter of the protesters were women.

What does this mean for Canadians and what can we do to support women's continued full participation in the future of their country? As a starting place we can encourage Egypt's new government to live up to the principles of the UN Security Council's now 10-year old resolution 1325 calling for the full participation of women in peace processes post-conflict.

We can also encourage our government to promote appropriate intervention in Libya in the interests of rebels now fighting with their lives to oust a dictator. Another UN lever, Responsibility to Protect, which was written about in these pages last week, doesn't *suggest* that the international community intervenes in a state when it will not, or cannot protect its people: it explicitly calls for this action.

The struggle for freedom and peace for men and women is surely the basis for the best kind of celebration of International Women's Day. Canada can and must do its part.

Kathryn White
Executive Director
United Nations Association in Canada

613-296-0975 (cell)
kate.wite@unac.org