

**OSCE High-level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination**

Session 5

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On The Role of Education to promote mutual understanding and respect for  
diversity

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Summary

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Education can help us to use our minds freely and critically of global and local authorities , and of political - religious - sexual - social taboos , or it can do the opposite and push us to submit to dominating powers in the state and in the family , to cripple our creative critical mind and make us resist progress , liberation , independence , tolerance , respect of others , and equality between people regardless of religion , gender , class , race , nationality , color , creed , ethnicity and other .

Education , like religion and culture is an obedient servant to the political - economic power dominating the country

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We live in one world , not three worlds , dominated globally by the military patriarchal neo colonial system ,

We cannot separate the global from the local ( we use one word GLOCAL )

When Egypt was colonized by the British in 1882 the Egyptian educational system followed the British system .

Capitalist Christian patriarchal values dominated . The English language became the language of the upper classes and top government officials . Arabic became the language of the servants and poor men and women .

Divide and Rule is the law of all colonial - neocolonial global powers and their local groups . Religion is a strong instrument in dividing people and creating conflicts and wars between them . British old colonialism created conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Egypt and in other colonies in Africa and Asia . Egyptian people are tolerant by nature like all humans in the world . In my primary school in the Egyptian village my best two friends were : Isis , Christian and Sara , Jewish and me , Nawal Muslim . This was natural for all children .

Who divided us , separated us , and educated us fanaticism , intolerance and hating the other ? It was the school , the educational system dominated by the British colonizing mentality .

Today the British colonizers are replaced by the American neo colonizers .

The revival of religions , the so called Religious Fundamentalist Movements ( Islamic , Christian , Jewish , Hindu and other ) , are the product of neocolonialism and their allies in local governments .

I usually say : Ben Laden and George Bush are twins

Our world is controlled by power not justice . A super power like USA can invade Iraq to rob its oil , and Israel can rob the land of Palestine by power . In this jungle the military power need a veil to hide behind it . Religion is used to hide the economic material goals of colonizing wars .

To change the educational systems we need to change the political economic religious cultural systems globally and locally , we need to unveil the mind of teachers and professors and fathers and mothers . We need to separate religion from education , we need to have a secular society and secular laws and constitutions based on justice , freedom and equality for all regardless of all differences .

We have to organize globally and locally and struggle together to achieve these goals . The educational system can not be separated from other activities in our personal or political lives .

In our Arab Women`s Solidarity Association ( AWSA ) since we started 1982 we have two main aims to realize progress ;

- 1 - To unveil the mind ( knowledge is power for change )
- 2 - To organize ( unity is power for progress )

But the Egyptian Branch of AWSA was closed down by the government in 1991 because we stood against the Gulf war , the war in Iraq by George Bush the father . We still work as an international association with a consultative status with the UN - ECOSOC in New York , as an international independent NGO . We cannot separate the mind set of war from the unjust international and national law , from the unjust intolerant religious , cultural , formal , informal educational , media , systems in any country .

Nawal El Saadawi

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