

SOLWODI

Solidarity with
women in distress

Solidarität mit
Frauen in Not

Newsletter

No. 78, December 2008

Dear Friends of SOLWODI,

The Christmas time has started. In this year the economic recession is throwing a shade on it. The so far usual excessive consumption will thereby be reduced. But this might also be a chance, a chance to stand by and listen to stories, stories being told by women in the prison in Berlin-Köpenick (see page 3), waiting there to be deported. Those women will not get Christmas presents. The German state is sending them back – without showing mercy – in their home countries, which means back into poverty.

Jesus, whose birth in a stable, we are celebrating at Christmas, had a simple message for us. It said: all people have the same dignity, regardless of what they own, their colour of skin, nationality or sex. The dignity of women is not being respected, when prostitution becomes more and more popular and when prostitutes are being treated like worthless objects. Engaging for this dignity of women, working as prostitutes, SOLWODI started on 25. November a campaign for a reform of the present law. How you can support us in doing that, you can read on page 4.

Being in prison to be deported and prostitution – 2 sad themes. But there are also happy events to be reported at. In October I received 2 high-level awards for our SOLWODI work (page 2). Therefore I am saying many, many thanks to all our full-time and honorary workers and supporters for their engagement.

I am also saying thanks to the LOTTO- foundation Rhineland-Palatinate (see below) and to the natural cosmetics firm "Primavera" and as well to all donators, who supported us generously in 2008.

I wish to all of you a merry Christmas and that god may bless you

Yours, Sister Lea



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Christmas Promotion – Primavera gives presents to SOLWODI

The gift set "Neroli Cassis" (with a face lotion, cleansing milk, a night cream and a small brush) from Primavera is also a present given to SOLWODI, because the firm is donating the money being raised from selling the gift-sets to SOLWODI. The gift-set has been created in a limited number of 250 pieces for the journal "Brigitte", as one out of 45 proposed Christmas presents which can be ordered. Primavera only produces "authentic products" of highest quality, using only biologically grown components. The firm with its headquarter in South Western Bavaria feels obliged to the principle of "Fair Trade" and refuses to use animals for trials. So, order the gift-set (for 49.90 Euro, this includes the mailing costs) as long as they are in stock.

You can do this per telephone: 08376 / 8080 or per e-mail: brigitte@primavera-life.de



Some words concerning ourselves: SOLWODI – team in Saarland

As was already announced in the last circular letter, we plan to establish an honorary SOLWODI – team in the Saarland country, which should engage in public relation work, fundraising and networking. First contacts have been established.

People interested to support that team should call 089 / 27370600 or e-mail leonhardt@solwodi.de

SOLWODI – Donations – Tel. 0900 111 00 84

It's so easy to make donations for SOLWODI. Just pick up the phone and dial. When you hear the signal tone, you have already donated 3 EUROS for SOLWODI. This donation appears on your next telephone bill.

Guardini - award and honorary doctorate for the founder of SOLWODI

2 high level awards for Sister Dr. Lea Ackermann: On 29. Oct. she received from the theological faculty of the university of Luzern in Switzerland an honorary doctorate and on 7. October she had received from the catholic academy in Bavaria the Romano Guardini award.

The academy stated the following reasons for giving that award to Sister Dr. Lea Ackermann: With her very active engagement for women in distress she could reduce their misery. With her activities she has made the public realize how the dignity of women is being degraded by allowing trafficking of women, enforced prostitution, and sextourism. She is a very good example for the vivid proclamation of the message of the bible. Similar sentences can be read in the certificate of the University of Luzern. In addition it was stated, that sister Lea contributed essentially to the public understanding of prostitution and how it is related to violence and repression.



Sister Lea with Dean Ruth Scoralick and University Rector Rudolf Stichweh

The dean of the theological faculty, Prof. Dr. Ruth Scoralick, who read the eulogy in Luzern, regretted not to be able to explain, in the available time, the activities of SOLWODI in full width. There was really not much time on that 29. Oct., since other honorary doctorates were awarded as well at that occasion. On 7. October however in Munich sister Lea alone stood in the centre of the awarding ceremony of

the catholic academy. 450 guests had come to celebrate with her, when she received the Guardini-award – among them many highranking persons from Bavaria. The then deputy-minister-president of Bavaria and also minister for women, Mrs. Christa Stewens, stated in her eulogy, that this award for the SOLWODI- founder – the 2nd woman among 28 persons, who received that award so far – also indicates the growing sensibility for the problems of sexual violence against women and girls in the public. The minister also mentioned that sexual force and violence belong to the worst offences against human rights. But the sexual enslavement of women and girls is all over present, even in front of our hosedoor.

The problem of growing sexism has already been anticipated by the Prof. in theology Romano Guardini (1885 - 1968) 50 years ago. In one of his lectures in ethics – sister Lea cited some of his statements in her lecture – he got outraged about the misuse of the female body in each kind of advertising. What heavily counts is the fact that this is done to increase the profit; it would disappear immediately, if the male customers were not interested in that. Sister Lea said this applies also to the trafficking of women and enforced prostitution. If men wouldn't demand that, there would be no sexual enslavement of women and girls.



Sister Lea and Dr. Florian Schuller, Director of the Katholischen Akademie

The Munich archbishop Dr. Reinhard Marx was astonished, what sister Lea had discovered in Guardinis publications about women. He heartily thanked sister Lea for her work and for her engagement for a better world. We must all try hard, to create a world in which men and women live at the same level and in which women are not being degraded to be just objects without rights.

Before brother Prof. Dr. Fritz Köster had stated in his eulogy: Sister Lea is wandering around in this world with open eyes and ears and she is closely looking at things which are often overlooked by our contemporaries. She takes action where she believes it's necessary, even, when later on unforeseen inconveniences will follow. Out of that attitude SOLWODI was founded and brother Köster confirmed: Lea, I have often seen you shouting and angry – just continue that way. Thank you!

The eulogies and sister Leas lecture can be found under: www.solwodi.de (Aktuelle Auszeichnungen)

Please do some advertising for SOLWODI – books!

We can often hear, that bookshops don't have our books in stock. Therefore we are asking you: Recommend SOLWODI – books to your book-shop. Recommend to them to order SOLWODI – books and to present them in their shop-windows. The publishing houses have got the following titles available: Lea Ackermann / Fritz Köster: "Über Gott und die Welt" (About god and the world) (Kösel), Lea Ackermann / Inge Bell / Barbara Koelges: "Verkauft, versklavt, zum Sex gezwungen" (Kösel) (Sold, enslaved, forced to sex), Lea Ackermann / Reiner Engelmann (Publisher) "Solidarität mit Frauen in Not" (Horlemann) (Solidarity with women in distress), Lea Ackermann: "Um Gottes Willen, Lea!" (For Gods sake, Lea)

Christmas: Stories from today about poverty, escaping and being homeless

A child is being born in a stable, because there is no place in a home. Shortly thereafter its parents have to escape in a foreign country. That's the Christmas story of Lukas and Matthäus in the new testament – a story of poverty, escaping and being homeless. Such stories are also being told by women who are interned in the prison of Berlin-Köpenick, waiting there to be deported. Colleagues of our Berlin SOLWODI-team, who try to help those women, have written down 3 typical stories for this circular letter, to remind us of Jesus. When Jesus came to this world, he showed solidarity with the poorest people. For all his followers, who call themselves Christians, this means to leave nobody alone, who is living in poverty.



Children in a SOLWODI-House

Christine*, coming from an East African country, tells the following story:

My mother has no husband. She escaped from our village with me and my brother because my grandmother had threatened that I should be circumcised. That's how we came to the city and its slums. My mother worked as a hairdresser and she saved every cent in order to be able to send me to school. But life is very tough in the slums. There, one has no perspective. For that reason my mother managed to have me go to Germany. When I arrived here, I had no home to live in. From time to time I found a place, but the price for that was, I had to have sex with those men. It's so sad – I had hoped to find a job and to live a life in dignity. I don't know, why they deport us. We have come here to work. I am strong. I can do those jobs, Germans don't want to do. But I don't get a chance. It's my dream to become a journalist and then help my home country.

Fatima comes from a North African country and that's her story:

I met my husband in my home country, when he came on leave. He is a fellow countryman, but he has been living in Germany for many years and he has a residence permit. He told me, he owns a restaurant in Berlin and he promised to marry me. So I left my family, because they didn't want me to marry him. They said, he is not a good man, but I didn't believe that.

When I came to Berlin, the situation was totally different, He didn't have a restaurant and he refused to marry me and also to get papers for me. He didn't allow me to leave the home and he also didn't allow me to learn the German language and to use the telephone. I had to clean, to cook and to take care of him. I was his slave. Then he started beating me. When I complained, he said, he would call the police and send me back, since I had no papers and therefore no rights. But I can't return to my family, because this would be a disgrace for my family. One evening I said, I would go on the street and ask for help. At this moment he started beating me so heavily, that a neighbour could hear it, who called the police. They came and arrested me. Since I had no papers, they immediately brought me to the prison, although I was hurt.

Tamara, comes from an East European country and that's her story:

That's the 3rd time, I am in Germany. When I tried it the first time, I was here for 2 years, and then I was arrested and deported. Hiding in a lorry – together with many other women – I tried it again to come here. But they caught us before we reached the German border. When I finally managed to obtain papers, I came again to Germany. Now I have been here for four and a half years. I have been working as a cleaning woman, illegally. I had to work, I have 2 daughters. My husband died some years ago. My daughters are

working and go to university but they can't take care of themselves. I must help them. It was a tough job, but it was good. From time to time I could transfer money and doing so, I was caught.

What shall I do now – try to come here again? This costs a lot of money- 1000 Euro for the papers and for the people bringing you here. They say, it's easier in Greece, but I am anxious. I have heard of difficulties there. One Russian woman even died. The Greek police are less friendly than here in Germany. But I have no choice. In my home country there is no work for me. My home country is poor and I am too old.

Thi Thuy from Eastern Asia and **Angela** from Western Africa have told us similar stories. Those 2 however have already been deported to their home countries. With the network of Christian orders and humanitarian organizations, SOLWODI tries to support women in their home countries after having been deported. Thi Thuy therefore decided not to have an abortion but to have her baby. Angela didn't find a place to stay, but nuns offered her a place to stay with them. A baby is being born; a stranded woman finds an asylum. The Christmas story is a very current story – with its message of dignity, love and solidarity.....

* The names of the above women have been changed.

**In the name of human dignity:
SOLWODI campaign for a reform of the present law concerning prostitution**

In January 2007 the Federal Government announced a reform of above law. So far, nothing has happened. We are anxious, that this reform will be pushed in the next parliamentary term, after the election in autumn 2009. Therefore SOLWODI intends to make this law a subject to be discussed in the election campaign before. SOLWODI is forwarding its own law-proposal, assuring human dignity for prostitutes being forced to do that job. This campaign will start on 25. November 2008 – the international day for „No violence against women“.

The aim of the former (red-green) government was, to improve the situation of prostitutes, living here legally and working voluntarily. The aim was missed, because the law didn't improve the situation of the prostitutes, just contrary it helped the brothelowners, whose houses have become accepted in the public – since they are often looked at like gambling halls – and those men now exploit the prostitutes without mercy. (See also the report of the criminal director Klaus Bayerl from Augsburg in the circular letter Nr.77)

Since 23 years SOLWODI accompanies victims of trafficking and enforced prostitution. We are well familiar with the red light milieu. We therefore know that the job as a prostitute, even under most favourable conditions, will negatively influence the psychological, physical health, the self-esteem and the abil-

ity and will to live a self determined life. For that reason we fight for the abolition of the prostitution. But we are well aware, that this might only be possible in the long run. Since the conditions, under which prostitutes are suffering, are beneath human dignity, we decided at short notice to start that campaign. SOLWODI therefore demands from parliament to respect and to protect the human dignity and the self determination of woman working as prostitutes and to sue those consequently, who act in the red light milieu and in the sex industry against those principals for profit reasons.

For the campaign the following statements were formulated:

- Requests for law-changes and the justification for that
- Paper with arguments, informations and thoughts on which the campaign will be based on

- 2 preformulated letters – stating the SOLWODI requests and the names of the supporters of those requests – to be sent to the 2 responsible federal ministers Ursula von der Leyen (for women) and Brigitte Zypries (justice) as well as to the members of parliament, representing the supporters in parliament

- Notice to the press
- Comment with the title: „My personal opinion to prostitution „from Sister Anna Mayrhofer, nun and head of the SOLWODI – advice team in Osnabrück.

All texts can be found on our homepage www.solwodi.de If somebody has no access to the internet, the text can be mailed to her or him for 2 Euro (Our address: see imprint).

Contact:

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Bank Accounts

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Acc.-No. 656565 1000
Sorting Code 570 900 00
BIC GENODE51KOB
IBAN DE68 5709 0000 6565 6510 00

Landesbank Saar, Saarbrücken
Acc.-No. 2000 9999
Sorting Code 590 500 00
BIC SALADE55XXX
IBAN DE84 5905 0000 0020 0099 99

Kreissparkasse Rhein-Hunsrück
Acc.-No. 11 270 00
Sorting Code 560 517 90
BIC MALADE51SIM
IBAN DE02 5605 1790 0001 1270 00