News | 10.12.2011

International Human Rights Day

Added symbolism as Peace Prize Awarded to Three Women

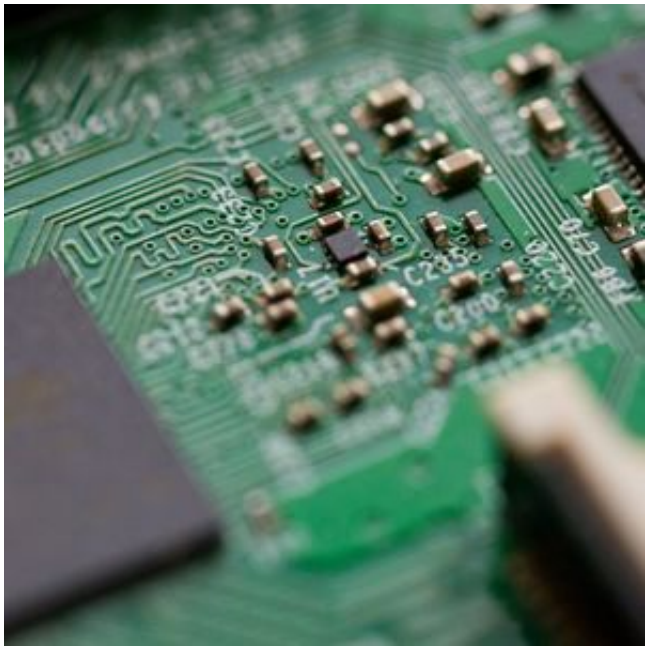
Three women from African and Arab states will today be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. With added symbolism, the Liberians Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee as well as the Yemeni Tawakkul Karman will receive this prize on International Human Rights Day. This is an important sign as violations of human rights against women continue all over the world, in particular in the mass rape of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the innumerable homicides of women in Mexico and Guatemala. Johnson-Sirleaf is the first elected African woman President. She has become a symbol both in her country and internationally for the reconciliation of a society which suffered 14 years of civil war. It is of great political foresight that the Norwegian Committee also decided to award the prize to a representative of a NGO: Gbowee gained her experience as a street worker and women's political activist. She connected Muslim and Christian women and organised a "sex strike" which helped to begin the peace process. A few days ago I had the opportunity to talk with Ms. Karman and we were in agreement: It is necessary to install an independent international commission in Yemen to investigate the violations of human rights. In addition the international community has to observe if the changes pronounced by the government really are taking place. With the decision to award the prize to Karman the Committee acknowledges Muslim women who fight for gender equality in an extremely male dominated society. The jury is also giving an important signal to the Arab Spring: The fight for women's rights in their countries must also have an important role. Every government elected in this region has to make a point of breaking through the patriarchal systems of violence in their countries. The recognition of women as important activists to stop wars as well as the fact that gender equality must be the base of every struggle for reconciliation are stipulated terms of the UN-Resolution 1325, which was adopted eleven years ago. For a long time feminists and other female activists worked hard for this resolution. The fact that the Committee in Oslo now awards the Nobel Peace Prize to these three women is a symbol of great recognition of all the women who have fought and continue to fight, from Sanaa to Berlin, from Monrovia to Peking, from Istanbul to New York against sexual violence and war crimes Barbara Lochbihler
Chair of the Human Rights Commitee

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Barbara Lochbihler

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