



Media Contact:
Alyson O'Mahoney
(914) 241-0086 ext. 13
aomahoney@robinleedyassociates.com

Foundation Contact:
Bernetia Akin
(340) 775-8035
media@gruberprizes.org

Online Newsroom: www.gruberprizes.org/Press.php

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Pinar Ilkkaracan

Turkish Activist and Two Organizations She Leads to Share \$500K 2007 Gruber Foundation International Women's Rights Prize

Pinar Ilkkaracan's Efforts Key to Reforming Turkish Laws and Advancing Rights of Muslim Women

July 18, 2007, New York, New York -- The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation today announces that **Pinar Ilkkaracan** of Istanbul, Turkey, and two organizations she helped establish will receive its 2007 Women's Rights Prize. Ms. Ilkkaracan, **Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways** (WWHR) and the **Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies** (CSBR) will share the unrestricted \$500,000 (US) award. The Prize will be presented October 16, 2007, at a ceremony at the New York University School of Law.

Within a political environment not normally cited for advances in the status of women and their equal protection under law, Ms. Ilkkaracan has broken new ground in helping to effect radical and extensive reforms of Turkish law to bring equality to women in many areas.

In over twenty years of dedicated women's and human rights activism, she has boldly confronted topics long considered culturally off limits for public discussion and has thereby increased the knowledge of Muslim men and women regarding sexual and reproductive rights while advocating internationally for the advancement of those rights. By rising above controversy to build a solid base of support, she has created an international network to increase solidarity among women and girls in Muslim societies, and advanced learning on the issues of bodily integrity and human rights among all individuals within those societies, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Through WWHR – an organization she co-founded – and CSBR – an international network she initiated in Muslim societies – Ms. Ilkkaracan has played an important role in training Turkish women in legal literacy and helping to reform civil and penal codes to advance women's rights in Turkey and internationally.

- WWHR is an organization that, through more than a decade of activism, advocacy, and lobbying, has contributed significantly to various legal reforms in Turkey, networking in Muslim societies, and promotion of women's human rights at the United Nations level. Since 2005, it has had consultative status with the Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. In 1999, in recognition of its advocacy and lobbying efforts toward the adoption of a protection order law against domestic violence in Turkey, WWHR was elected as one of the NGOs worldwide to deliver a statement at the UN March 8th Global World Conference. In the same year, WWHR was awarded the 1999 Leading Solutions Award by the Association for Women in Development in recognition of its contributions to advancing gender equality and social justice. WWHR has initiated and is coordinating "The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies."

-more-





- Composed of 38 organizations from 14 countries, CSBR is the first active solidarity network in Muslim societies for the promotion of rights associated with sexual and reproductive health as human rights. Founded in 2001, it is involved in activist work on advocacy and lobbying for the promotion of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies. CSBR's founding principles include that sexual, bodily and reproductive rights are basic human rights, and that all people have the right to make decisions in matters relating to their sexuality, body, and reproduction free from discrimination and coercion. CSBR pioneered the first international meetings on the right to sexual and reproductive freedom in countries such as Lebanon and Tunisia, where sexuality had not been an issue to be talked about; realized significant achievements in various UN meetings despite alliances employing religion to attack the human rights of women, girls, and homosexuals; and launched international campaigns and actions concerning sexual rights and freedoms, human rights violations, reproductive rights, and the right to organize in many countries, including Malaysia, Lebanon, Egypt, Pakistan, Palestine, and Iran.

The work of Ms. Ilkcaracan and WWHR has brought about significant, tangible improvement in the day-to-day treatment of women under Turkish law. Moving into a shelter was once the only realistic solution to spousal abuse, but now a Turkish woman has the right under law to secure a protection order. Until passage of the civil code reforms of 2001, men were considered heads of the household, affording them sole responsibility and authority to make decisions regarding the family. Today, women are recognized under law as equal partners in marriage. In 2004, Ms. Ilkcaracan led the successful effort to reform the Turkish penal code to protect women's sexual and bodily autonomy, including the criminalization of marital rape and sexual harassment in the workplace. Access to reliable human rights education was once available only to women in three major population centers, but Ms. Ilkcaracan and the organizations with which she works have succeeded in reaching women in more than 35 urban and rural areas.

Not surprisingly, there has been resistance in some quarters to the work of Ms. Ilkcaracan, WWHR, and CSBR. During the campaign to reform the penal code, the Turkish government refused to meet with them, and voices supporting traditional gender stereotyping were easy to find in forums for public discussion. Yet along with the resistance, there has also been much support, and the coalition continues to grow stronger.

Ms. Ilkcaracan grew up in a political climate that viewed physical and emotional violence as an acceptable means of preventing young women from exploring their sexuality. Her involvement with the feminist movement and consciousness-raising groups led to the revelation that just being a woman was enough to make one a potential target of violence around the world. Ms. Ilkcaracan considers the consciousness-raising group the best tool ever created by the women's movement, and it is this approach that lies at the heart of the training for WWHR, which she founded in 1993. She drew upon her skills as a psychotherapist to enhance the importance of self-concept as a crucial factor in women's empowerment.

In addition to initiating CSBR, WWHR has, since its inception, initiated and led major legal reforms on gender equality, initiated the widest and most sustainable human rights education program for women in the world, and spearheaded the foundation of autonomous women's NGOs in the most disadvantaged areas of Turkey.

Ms. Ilkcaracan is the editor of *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*, and the forthcoming *Sexuality in the Middle East: Contemporary Issues and Discourses*, a collection of articles by women and men from throughout the Muslim world. In 1998 she coauthored *Human Rights Training Manual*, which is being used in community centers across Turkey to increase women's knowledge and understanding of a whole range of individual rights, including sexual and reproductive rights. She continues to be a leading advocate for women's human rights internationally.



The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize is presented to an individual or group that has made significant contributions, often at great personal or professional risk, to furthering the rights of women and girls in any area and to advancing public awareness of the need for gender equality to achieve a just world.

In addition to the cash award, Ms. Ilkcaracan will receive a gold medal. The citation honoring her achievements and those of WWHR and CSBR reads:

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation proudly presents the 2007 Women's Rights Prize to Pinar Ilkcaracan and two influential organizations that she helped establish: Women for Women's Human Rights-New Ways and the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies.

The Women's Rights Prize honors trailblazing women's rights advocate Pinar Ilkcaracan for her leadership in securing legal reform and working to end violence and discrimination against women in Turkey and regionally, and for helping to create and strengthen networks and coalitions across communities and borders.

Women for Women's Human Rights has played a critical role in advancing women's civil and reproductive rights and raising awareness about gender-based violence. The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies has helped shatter myths about customs and religious practices and has united women's rights advocates from 14 countries in a sustained effort to protect women and girls.

"This award will be important in helping to sustain the tremendous energy we have already generated in support of our never-ending struggle for universal human rights," said Ms. Ilkcaracan. "It is too easy to accept as intractable political reality that one society or another will always relegate certain of its citizens to lives devoid of freedom and equality. The fact is, it is precisely these individuals – both women and men – for whom the work of our coalition can have a most profound and positive impact and for whom we continue to dedicate our best efforts."

Linda Basch, president of the National Council for Research on Women, called Pinar Ilkcaracan "a strong and vocal supporter for opening minds among decision-makers and the general public with regard to women's reproductive rights and the need to end violence against women." Dr. Basch noted Ms. Ilkcaracan's key role in demystifying cultural taboos and misconceptions about customary violent practices against women – practices that have often been portrayed incorrectly as uniquely Islamic by the news media and by certain political groups.

"She and the members of her networks," said Dr. Basch, "are building awareness that women's issues are everyone's issues and, in so doing, are helping to bridge the gap between the northern and southern cultures and building a more secure and just future for families and communities everywhere."

The enormous impact of men in leadership positions becoming advocates for women's rights was underscored by **Zainab Salbi**, founder and CEO of Women for Women International, who has personally witnessed this in countries such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "The work of Pinar Ilkcaracan creates this sustainable change in Turkey," said Ms. Salbi, "and provides the rest of the world with a model to learn from."



GRUBER FOUNDATION

2007 Gruber Women's Rights Recipient... 4

Members of the Committee that Selected the 2007 Women's Rights Prize Recipients:

- **Dr. Linda Basch**, National Council for Research on Women
- The **Honorable Bernice Donald**, U.S. District Court, Western District of Tennessee
- The **Honorable Cecilia Medina Quiroga**, University of Chile
- The **Honorable Navanethem Pillay**, International Criminal Court
- **Ms. Kavita Ramdas**, Global Fund for Women
- **Professor Peter Rosenblum**, Columbia Law School
- **Ms. Zainab Salbi**, Women for Women International

Past Honorees of the Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize:

- **2006: Unión Nacional de Mujeres Guatemaltecas (UNMG)**, a leader in working toward peace-building and equitable political participation in Guatemala; **Sweatshop Watch**, a strong advocate for the economic and political rights of migrant workers in the US; and **Judge Cecilia Medina Quiroga**, who has advanced the rights of women through international law
- **2005: Shan Women's Action Network**, dedicated to ending the oppression of minority women along the Thai-Burma border; and **The Women's League of Burma**, a multi-ethnic umbrella organization committed to empowering women and enabling their participation in the democracy movement
- **2004: Sakena Yacoobi**, whose grassroots program within the International Rescue Committee quadrupled the number of Afghan girls enrolled in schools; and **Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL)**, an organization she co-founded, which provided health and human rights education to 350,000 women and girls in Afghanistan and Pakistan's refugee camps
- **2003: Judge Navanethem Pillay**, the first black woman attorney on the High Court of South Africa, who has been a strong advocate for human rights and women's issues; and **Pro-Femmes Twese Hamwe**, an umbrella organization comprising over 40 women's groups across Rwanda, dedicated to achieving peace and eradicating discrimination

The Peter and Patricia Gruber International Prize Program honors contemporary individuals in the fields of Cosmology, Genetics, Neuroscience, Justice and Women's Rights, whose groundbreaking work provides new models that inspire and enable fundamental shifts in knowledge and culture. The Selection Advisory Boards choose individuals whose contributions in their respective fields advance our knowledge, potentially have a profound impact on our lives, and, in the case of the Justice and Women's Rights Prizes, demonstrate courage and commitment in the face of significant obstacles.

The nomination form for the 2008 awards and additional information about nomination requirements and selection criteria may be found on the Foundation web site at www.gruberprizes.org/Nominations/Nominations.php

* * *

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities, please visit www.gruberprizes.org.

* * *

For more information on the 2007 Gruber Prizes, email media@gruberprizes.org or contact Bernetia Akin of the Gruber Foundation at (340) 775-8035, or by mail 140 W 57th St Suite 10C New York, NY 10019. Media materials and additional background information on the Gruber Prizes can be found at **our online newsroom:** www.gruberprizes.org/Press.php.

-end-