

## **WIB Frederick Letter excerpt in support of WIB Belgrade:**

We have great concern to learn that Belgrade Women in Black are being investigated for allegations of organizing prostitution in that city. This complaint was first filed in February 2005 by a local man, well known to the police and the community for his recurrent violent behavior. Despite the apparent falsehood of the charge, the police investigation has continued until the present time. In addition, the coordinator of the Belgrade Women in Black, Stasa Zajovic (herself nominated for the Nobel Prize for Peace), has been investigated constantly for allegedly organizing a network of women in prostitution. Other Women in Black activists have also been interrogated and their office files repeatedly examined.

Numerous personal threats, including death threats, have been made to members of the group. The charges are absurd, and are transparent attempts to silence Belgrade Women in Black.

Along with other internationals, we believe that the constant police pressure on the Belgrade Women in Black is an attempt to criminalize those sectors of civil society that are confronting the past and condemning war crimes committed during the 1990s by the Serbian regime. We interpret these harassment charges, threats and police comportment towards Belgrade Women in Black as a way of obscuring and avoiding the condemnation of those crimes and preventing processes of democratization.

In essence, the police and Ministry of Interior have been discrediting and criminalizing a group whose sole purpose is the promotion of non-violence and democratic process in the achievement of peace in the world. Therefore, we join Belgrade Women in Black in asking that the investigation against them be dropped immediately, that action be taken to prosecute the originator of these false accusations, and that the local police put an end to the continual phone harassment and threats to which these peace activists have been subjected.

We further ask that police and Ministry of Interior resources be used in the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of the harassers and attackers of Women in Black and other pro-democracy and human rights activists, journalists and members of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities in Belgrade.

These developments are an alarming expression of a type of repression that indicates a government and society retreating from progress toward a peaceful and democratic state, so needed and struggled for in this region."