



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Imane Khalifeh (Lebanon)†

Honorary Award (1984)



"...for inspiring and organising the Beirut peace movement."

Imane Khalifeh

Imane Khalifeh was born in 1955 and was educated in Beirut both before and during the civil war that erupted in 1975. While a teacher at the Nursery School of Beirut University College, at which she was also a research assistant and teacher trainer, she endured the agony and misery of both children and adults. Out of this experience she developed in April 1984 the idea of organising a peace march, at which the silent majority of Lebanese, who were against the war, could express their protest and revulsion over the nine years of death and destruction, through which they had been forced to live.

The idea caught on. The poem written by Khalifeh suggesting the march, was printed in most Beirut's newspapers. There seemed to be an enormous upsurge of popular feeling for the march and against the war. Perhaps for this very reason there was also an upsurge in the fighting between the rival militias the day before the proposed march, which was called off to prevent any more casualties. A petition circulating instead quickly collected over 70,000 signatures.

Khalifeh's mobilising poem said in part:

"We want simply to live in peace
We want to raise up our children
And save our brothers and sisters...
We want our families to remain whole
Let us walk out of our isolation and join one another.
Let us walk out of our tears and screams of pain."

Imane Khalifeh remained in Lebanon until 1989, working for peace. In the end, disgusted and frustrated, she left the country and lived in Paris. War stopped in her country, she said, but the people never found the peace they dreamed of. She died in 1995.

