

PRESS RELEASE

March 8, 2022

International Women's Day 2022

More than 120 years after Factory Inspector Lucy Deane informed the British Parliament of the “evil effects of asbestos dust” in a workplace, women campaigners continue to address the dire consequences of asbestos exposures. It is fitting that on International Women's Day, these efforts are recognized not only to pay tribute to their engagement but also to reinforce their message that exposure to all types of asbestos must be eradicated.¹

Following consultation amongst members of the virtual campaign to ban asbestos, including organizations whose logos are above, it was decided to make a public statement showing our appreciation and gratitude for the work of:

- Dr. Anna Suraya, Indonesia;
- Lecturer and Researcher Asli Odman, Turkey;
- Dr. Federica Grosso, Italy;
- Campaigner Joanne Gordon, UK;
- Labor Prosecutor Dr. Marcia Kamei Lopez Aliaga, Brazil;
- Campaigner Melita Markey, Australia.



In their honor, an original image was commissioned by artist Ajat Sudrajat in which they are pictured together, a feat never before achieved as they live in Asia, Latin America, Europe and Australia. Despite the distance between them, their level of commitment and active engagement somehow makes it appropriate that they be depicted together.

Commenting on this initiative, Co-Founder of the Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-Exposed (ABREA) Fernanda Giannasi said:

“From the nurses in the clinics, to the doctors in the oncology wards, the civil servants in local government and federal agencies, the lawyers at the Public Prosecutors’ office, the union officials and members at trade union halls, to the courageous victims, family members, grassroots activists, journalists, authors, filmmakers and broadcasters, so many of those who have propelled the issue of asbestos injustice onto the public’s consciousness in Brazil have been women. ABREA was proud to nominate their colleague and friend Dr. Marcia Kamei Lopez Aliaga for this accolade. Her persistence, intelligence and empathy have broken through bureaucratic barriers and overcome judicial obstacles which had prevented justice from being done. As the former manager of the Labor Public Ministry’s National Program to Ban Asbestos, Marcia had made banning asbestos a priority, lodging legal actions against multiple companies for negligently exposing workers to asbestos. Fines issued upon their conviction were used for campaigns to support the asbestos-injured and raise asbestos awareness. Marcia, we salute you!”²

Endorsing Fernanda’s comments, IBAS Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen added:

“Grassroots work to make manifest the global asbestos epidemic has been fundamental in convincing national governments of the urgent need to enact measures to safeguard the lives of citizens by mandating increased protections and ending consumption of a known carcinogen: asbestos. The work of medical specialists Dr. Anna Suraya and Dr. Federica Grosso has not only been life-saving for patients with asbestos-related diseases but also documented the human consequences of asbestos use in Indonesia and Italy. Campaigners Joanne Gordon and Melita Markey have marshalled support services in their local communities and throughout their countries, pioneering outreach initiatives to highlight the harsh reality of life for asbestos victims and improve access to medical treatment and compensation. The frontline advocacy of Researcher Asli Odman and Labor Prosecutor Marcia Kamei, respectively at the Turkish shipyards and in the Brazilian courts, has proved pivotal in exposing the deadly price paid by workers and local people for the profits of negligent corporations. Each one of these women is motivated by the desire to help others. They are worthy role models for the next generation of female asbestos activists and an inspiration to us all. That is surely something to celebrate.”

Welcoming the well-deserved recognition of these six global leaders, Executive Officer of Australia’s Union Aid Abroad Kate Lee said:

“Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA was established in 1984 by a young Australian nurse Helen McCue who had a vision of how the Australian trade union movement could help improve the lives of workers and marginalized people around the world. Thirty-eight years later, APHEDA has become a key partner in the struggle to eradicate the global asbestos hazard with a particular focus on Asia. We are proud to have worked closely with Dr Suraya and her colleagues in Indonesia and are delighted to acknowledge the work of our compatriot Melita Markey in Western Australia. We congratulate all the women who are being honored on International Women’s Day with this recognition.”

Notes for Editors

1. For additional details, please email: Fernanda Giannasi (ABREA) at fer.giannasi@terra.com.br or Laurie Kazan-Allen (IBAS) at lkaz@btconnect.com
2. Information about the groups which issued this press release can be accessed at:
 - Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN)
Website: <http://anroev.org/aban>
 - International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)
Website: <http://ibasecretariat.org>
 - Australia's Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA
Website: <https://www.apheda.org.au/>
 - Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto (ABREA)
[Brazilian Association of the Asbestos Exposed]
Website: <http://www.abrea.org.br>
 - Indonesian Ban Asbestos Network (INA-BAN)
Website: <http://inaban.org/>
Email: Darisman at: mandarisman@yahoo.com

¹ For more detail on the work of these formidable women, please see: Reflections on International Women's Day 2022:

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-reflections-on-international-womens-day-2022.php>

² Interview with Fernanda Giannasi. March 1, 2022.