

On the 8th of March, EuroMed Feminist Initiative celebrates the international day of women's rights as a day for peace, freedom, sustainable development, social justice, and equality as the oppression of women cannot be dissociated from all other forms of oppression and domination. Despite the relentless fight of women's rights activists and organizations to put end to discrimination and marginalization of women, one half of the society remains under the domination of the other. International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the achievements of women, but also a day to highlight all the obstacles and challenges that remain in achieving universal gender equality.

Women continue to be attacked, abused, and discriminated because they are women. The growth of conservative and fundamentalist trends is linked to an increase in personal, structural and cultural violence against women and girls. These violations are exacerbated in times of conflict, while women's participation in peace negotiations remains symbolic. Gender power structures reinforce gender stereotypes, hampering gender-equality thus positive changes for societies as a whole.

This 8th of March presents the opportunity to boost our efforts towards gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region with a focus on improving the livelihood, agency and legal and social protection for Syrian women refugees, IDPs as well as for women in host communities in three main host communities Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, by addressing the immediate needs of the most vulnerable women and bringing them to the policy level. <sup>1</sup>There is an urgency for these women to have access to safe spaces, comprehensive services and information about their rights as well as access to decent jobs and other opportunities to improve the quality of their lives. Reiterating on our engagement in the struggle for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, EFI along with a consortium of member women's rights organizations recently launched a regional campaign on zero tolerance for violence against women and girls in seven countries of the Southern Mediterranean, to contribute to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls by promoting a social environment that does not tolerate VAWG and where decision makers address it as a political priority<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, EFI will continue supporting a transition towards peace and democracy in Syria through promoting women's rights, combatting VAW and ensuring women's role and meaningful participation at all levels of political, social and economic reconstruction processes. <sup>3</sup>

*EuroMed Feminist Initiative is a policy network that encompasses women's rights organizations from the two shores of the Mediterranean. It provides expertise in the area of gender equality and women's rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, advocates for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.*

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<sup>3</sup> This program entitled "Towards Sustainable Peace and Democracy in Syria Through Strengthening Civil Society and Women's Rights" funded by Sweden