



IFE-EFI STATEMENT

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

March 2018

TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI welcomes the new law amendments and recommendations in Morocco, Palestine and Jordan and expresses its full solidarity with women's rights, civil society and human rights organizations and movements and their continuous efforts to attain equal rights for women and to remove gender discrimination in law. The [Gender Regional Platform](#), with policy recommendations to the decision makers that was developed during a one year process in the frame of the project "Gender Regional Platform" funded by the European Union and gathered over 1000 representatives from women's rights CSOs, CBOs, gender experts, academics and researchers with decision makers and legislators, identified four priority areas of work among which ending discrimination and violence against women. Consequently, IFE-EFI appreciates the recent amendments as important steps to improve women's rights status in the region and hope that these amendments will lead to annulling all discriminative articles in national legislations existing mainly in the Personal Status Laws and Penal Codes, such as the concept of guardianship in law, inheritance law and the current legal exceptions in the child marriage laws in Morocco, Palestine and Jordan, as well as legislation that exempts the rapist from sanctions if he marries his victim in Palestine.

Morocco

On February 14, the Moroccan parliament adopted a new law on violence against women that criminalizes harassment, aggression, sexual exploitation or ill treatment of women. In addition, the new law obligates public authorities to take preventive measures and provides new protection mechanisms for survivors. The adoption of the law came after 5 years since it was first drafted in 2013, and was ratified by 112 votes.

Under the new law, tougher penalties are imposed for some forms of violence in the penal code when committed within the family. The law criminalizes forced marriage with a penalty of six months to one year in prison and a fine of 10,000 to 30.000 dirhams, or one of these two penalties. Furthermore, it imposes penalties for sexual harassment in public spaces and cyber networks.

The law includes positive provisions, such as a definition of violence against women "any act based on gender discrimination that entails physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm to a woman" and it provides protection and safety orders for violence survivors. These orders can only be issued during a criminal prosecution or after a criminal conviction and they can be cancelled if spouses reconcile which will only add more pressure on women to drop such orders.

Although the achievement is unfortunately far to be complete due to several shortcomings within the law, it's still a positive step towards protection of women's rights and curbing VAW in Morocco. Feminist concerns remain in regard to the law of violence against women, which is seen as not protecting women victims of violence and does not raise the question of prevention. Furthermore, there is a critique that the proposals from the feminist movement have not been taken into consideration in the recent legislation, and no sufficient public debate has been engaged.

Palestine

On 5th of March, the Palestinian Government approved a number of legislative amendments and regulations that give women more rights. The new amendments allow Palestinian women to pass on their citizenship to their children, open bank accounts in their names and change schools for their children without permission from the father/legal guardian.

Furthermore, the cabinet recommended a series of legal amendments, to be approved by President Mahmoud Abbas, which include canceling or amending laws that allowed rapists to marry their victims in order to avoid punishment and prison as well as adopting new laws that prevent men who murder, assault or rape women to evade lengthy prison sentences.

Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah said in a televised message that these changes “honor Palestinian women and that they are their rights and not a gift to them.” He vowed that more decisions advancing equality between women and men were planned.

In spite of these positive legislative changes Palestinian women face challenges on a daily basis such as access to health, education, employment, housing, political participation, gender-based violence and most importantly the ongoing challenges of the Israeli Occupation and their suppressive acts that violate human rights laws through illegal settlement activities and endless war crimes.

Jordan

On 27th of February, the Lower House’s Labour Committee submitted several amendments on the draft Labour Law to the Parliament to make it more gender sensitive. They included a two-day paternity leave for fathers, the presence of daycare centres at workplaces if the total number of worker’s children is 15 or more and the introduction of new laws that criminalize gender-based wage discrimination.

Social attitudes and legal barriers posed by the traditional roles of women in society, the lack of daycare centers and gender-based wage discrimination adversely affect women’s participation in labour market. Jordan was ranked 138 out of 144 countries in women’s economic participation and 142 out of 144 countries in labour force participation at the Global Gender Gap [Index](#) issued on November 2 by the World Economic Forum (WEF) for the year 2017.

In spite of these important steps, there are still remaining obstacles that slow down the progress towards gender equality. We hope the new amendments will be ratified to help the increase of women’s labour participation, reduce gender inequalities, decrease pay and earning gaps and foster the idea of joint parental responsibility between women and men.

The [Gender Regional Platform](#) underlines the necessity to strengthen the connection between legislations and actual implementation with follow up mechanisms. Legislation is needed to challenge and change the deeply rooted gender-based discrimination against women but it must be translated in concrete actions. [The Declaration of the Euro-Med Women’s Rights Civil Society Conference](#), which was handed to the Ministers in the Euro-Med Region during their 4th UfM Ministerial Meeting on women’s rights on 27th November 2017 in Cairo, urges and proposes concrete and tangible measures towards improving the status of gender equality in the Euro-Med region.

Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI advocates for gender equality and women’s universal human rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.