



GENEVA PEACE TALKS 8 A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

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The eighth round of the Geneva peace talks between the Syrian government and opposition parties under the auspices of the United Nations took place from 28 November to 15 December 2017. Women's participation didn't meet the expectations and hopes of women's rights defenders. Only 3 women out of 23 representatives of the opposition delegation and 2 out of 12 representatives of the Syrian regime delegation participated in the peace talks. This was not a surprise since only 16 women out of 140 took part in the Riyadh-hosted Syrian opposition meeting on the 23rd of November 2017, which aimed at forming a unified delegation to Geneva talks.

The UN Special Envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, said that the agenda of negotiations included four basic issues: a new constitution, governance, elections and combating terrorism based on 2015 Security Council Resolution 2254 endorsing a peace process in Syria. The UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015) encourages the "meaningful participation of women in the UN-facilitated political process". However, women's participation in the peace negotiations remained persistently low.

The Women's Advisory Board, the Civil Society Support Room and the Constitutional Experts Advisory Room have agreed on ensuring a quota of a minimum 30% women in any future constitutional document. The women's rights organizations and alliances as Syrian Feminist Lobby, Syrian Women's Network, and the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy, Syrian Women's Forum for Peace, have demanded for a long time a gender quota as a needed step towards women's equal participation.

Euromed Feminist Initiative has highlighted time after time the importance of women's participation in formal decision making and peace negotiations and expresses full solidarity with all civil society organizations and movements in Syria that work to unveil and address the structural barriers women face. This is the most efficient way to promote women's rights as a priority on the political agenda. Sustainable peace and democracy are elusive, when women are not enabled equal access in the peace-making process. Only the participation of women's rights defenders in peace talks makes sure that women's rights and interests are being addressed throughout the transitional period, as well as in developing national policies and the new constitution.

Euromed Feminist Initiative has been cooperating and supporting Syrian partners and legal experts on building an inclusive constitution process since 2012. The last achievement of this work, the "**ABC for a Gender Sensitive Constitution**" provides a gender perspective to constitution making, drawing attention not only to provisions on gender equality but also to the inclusiveness of the whole approach. This means a constitution which recognizes all citizens as being of equal worth, and being equal before the law and in the law; a constitution which prohibits all forms of gender based oppression, violence and discrimination.

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.