



EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية  
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## Press Release

6 May 2019 Amman

### Launching of the Regional Campaign on Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls

The Regional Campaign on Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls was launched on 2-3 May 2019 in Amman, Jordan in the frame of the project “Combating Violence against Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region”, funded by the EU. The launching conference gathered about 140 participants from 14 countries in the Euro-Med region. The participants represented ministries, institutions, political parties, CSOs and CBOs. They also included members of parliaments, gender and legal experts and activists, journalists and researchers. Click [here](#) to view the photo album.

During the opening panel, Ms. Layla Naffa from Arab Women Organization in Jordan and Ms. Lilian Halls-French, Co-President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative presented the objectives of the regional campaign. Ms. Layla Naffa explained that the campaign strives to capture shared regional challenges such as legal discrimination against women, gender stereotypes, social tolerance, impunity for perpetrators and victim blaming, while addressing priorities specific to the different national contexts. Ms. Lilian Halls-French reminded that this campaign was built on the analyses and achievements of several years of common investment for women’s rights in the region.

Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa, Chair of the Coalition of Women MPs from Arab Countries to Combat Violence Against Women and a member of the Jordanian Parliament stressed that “Violence against women is no longer acceptable” and insisted that the parliaments must work so that “policymakers be aware that combating violence against women is like other priorities on the policy agenda of the States”.

H.E. Ms. Basma Mousa Ishaqat, Minister of Social Development, Jordan expressed her appreciation for choosing Jordan to host this important event. She reiterated the commitment of the Ministry to combat violence against women and girls in partnership with the civil society. “The Ministry of Social Development will continue to cooperate with the women’s rights organizations in providing services and strengthening protection mechanisms on national and regional levels”.

H.E. Dr. Amal Hamad, Minister of Women’s Affairs in Palestine, prevented to travel by the Israeli authorities from traveling to Jordan, delivered her opening address via video and expressed her deep regret at her inability to attend. “What happened to me, is clear evidence of the kind of violence to which Palestinian women and people are subjected”. The minister stressed the commitment of Palestine to international women’s rights instruments and notably the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) without any reservations.

In the institutional panel on governmental commitment, H.E. Ms. Haifa Hajjar Najjar, a Senator in the Upper House of the Jordanian Parliament, underlined that “Reforming education system is of paramount importance in addressing gender stereotyped roles, deconstructing discrimination and combating violence against women and girls.” Ms. Maya Khoury, representative of the Office of the Minister of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth in Lebanon, elaborated on the work of the newly established National Gender Observatory hosted by the Ministry and on its role of combatting VAWG. Ms. Najet Jaouadi, Director of VAW Police Unit (WVV) at the Ministry of Interior in Tunisia focused on the pioneering work of this unit, while Ms. Saeeda Al Atrash, Head of Gender Unit, at the MoSD, Palestine shared the Ministry experience in establishing protection measures. Ms. Laurence Pais, Deputy Secretary General of Social and Civil Affairs Division, UfM, elaborated on the plan of UfM to follow up on the implementation of the ministerial declaration 2017. All guest speakers highlighted the urgency of adopting and implementing VAWG policies and laws.

During the conference, participants discussed the shared challenges and national priorities regarding violence against women and girls, its continuum and the aggravating factors. Participants agreed that in order to eliminate this violence, all discriminatory laws and legislation that withhold women’s rights and bring about violence against women should be annulled. Many achievements were made in terms of combating violence against women and girls but the challenges remain enormous. These challenges include, but are not limited to, the persistent impunity of perpetrators, social tolerance, victim blaming, and the weak protection mechanisms for the victims.

Four parallel sessions discussed priorities, most urgent actions and policies in the areas of data collection, education, argumentation for the annulment or amendment of discriminatory laws as well as raising awareness and communication strategies to tackle discriminatory legislation, social tolerance for VAWG and victim blaming.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Borianna Jonsson, Executive Director of EFI underlined the principles of the Campaign. She emphasized the vital role of the Civil Society Regional Observatory established in Amman since 1st January 2019 to follow up and monitor the governmental commitments in the area of VAWG, liaise with concerned stakeholders, make an assessment of VAWG policies, identify gaps and provide recommendations. Ms. Jonsson reminded that the campaign will be monitored and measured every year at such gathering and emphasized the importance of this rich and high-level discussion all along the two days.

**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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