



Press Release

National Dialogue

Following up on the 4th UfM Ministerial Meeting on Women's Rights

8-9 May 2018, Ramallah

With the support of the European Union, Euromed Feminist Initiative (IFE-EFI) represented by its members in Palestine; the Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees and the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, organized a National Dialogue in Ramallah on the 8th and 9th of May, following up on the 4th Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial (UfM) Meeting in Cairo. Women rights and human rights civil society organizations, representatives of the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, academics, experts, legislators, representatives of parliamentary blocs, political parties, members of the Legislative Council, international development agencies and diplomatic bodies attended the roundtable discussion.

Ms. Majida AlMasri, member of the Board of the Euromed Feminist Initiative, opened the dialogue by referring to the feminist, developmental, and legal context of the UfM ministerial process on enhancing the role of women in society as a major regional tool for promoting gender equality throughout the Euro-Mediterranean region, and the role of the Euromed Feminist Initiative in following up on the Ministerial conclusions with the support of the European Union. That began in 2015 through a civil society-led dialogue process with legislators and policy makers, leading to the establishment of a Gender Regional Platform, with over 700 participants in 14 national dialogues, two regional dialogues, and two women rights conferences. The process aimed at promoting progressive social policies and legislation on gender equality through proposing concrete action and policies referring to priorities set by women within the socio-economic and political contexts in the Euro-Mediterranean region and in accordance with a vision of security and peace. On the 22nd and 23rd of November 2017, the Civil Society Conference was held on women's rights in Cairo to deliver the key messages of civil society to the 4th UfM Meeting that was later held on the 27th of November, as a final step in the process, which brought together more than 130 participants from 26 countries, representing 107 organizations and networks, where the recommendations and outcomes of the conference were based on the political priorities of the Gender Regional Platform, and the 4th UfM meeting came out with a strong ministerial declaration (November 2017, Cairo).

During the opening session, Ms. Dalal Salameh, member of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women and member of the Central Committee of the



Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fateh), pointed to the gap between the official and political perspectives of women's rights and their tangible implications on the ground. She cited the low participation of women in the Palestinian National and Central Councils, which was reflected in the recent meeting of the National Council and stressed the need to review the feminist movement working tools and mechanisms.

Dr. Nader Saeed, represented a comparison between the declaration of the Civil Society Conference in Cairo (22-23 November), and the official Ministerial declaration issued on November 27, in terms of language, terminology, and the expression of the political will to make a change towards the elimination of discrimination against women in private and public spaces. The official Ministerial declaration states the adoption of reform in accordance with the neo-liberal and liberal systems, while the Euromed Feminist Initiative calls for structural changes in the economic and cultural contexts to raise awareness towards deepening equality in discourse and behavior.

Ms. Randa Siniora, Director of the Women Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, stressed out the policies and procedures to be adopted by civil society regarding prioritizing legislations and programs to participate in the process of enacting laws in accordance with CEDAW, and the legislative and legal mechanisms to combat gender discrimination. The legal expert, Ms. Fatima Da'na presented a set of questions that need to be addressed by the feminist movement linked to the priorities in the field of policy making in relation to changing the cultural context, pointing to the importance of the formation of several committees such as the new Personal Status Law Committee approved by the Cabinet without consulting the feminist movement.

In the opening session of the dialogue between civil society and representatives of the government, parties and the Legislative Council, Mr. Bassam AlSalhi, member of the Legislative Council, pointed out the importance of the dialogue to implement the Ministerial conclusions and the need to learn from the Tunisian experience that relied on social movements and civil society, to amend the personal status law and achieve equal rights for women in inheritance, pointing to the importance of relying on the change of society horizontally on the basis of mobilizing the masses and not only the elites, which pressures the government to adopt gender equality policy.

Dr. Haifa AlAgha, Minister of Women Affairs, discussed the mechanisms required to follow up on the governmental commitments to implement gender equality policy in accordance with the 4th UfM declaration. She also discussed the Palestinian State recommendations on women's rights, taking into account the importance of women participation in the decision-making process and their political, economic and social participation. She highlighted the importance of implementing the Security Council Resolution 1325, referring to the Palestinian



women rights to end the occupation, siege on Gaza, and settlements, in order to enjoy the right to self-determination and state-building.

Ms. Fatima Radayda, the Communication and Advocacy Officer at the Ministry of Women's Affairs presented the ministerial declaration issued in Cairo and highlighted the working directions and recommendations. Ms. Suha Elayan, Director of the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Justice, presented the jurisdiction and philosophy of the legislations committee at the Ministry of Justice with reference to gender equality.

Mr. Dawoud AlDeek, Deputy of the Ministry of Social Development, referred to the mechanisms for the protection of women, particularly in that marginalized areas, who suffer from the policies of impoverishment by the Israeli occupation, women exposed to gender-based violence and women with special needs. He highlighted the importance of partnerships with civil society where there are many success stories of civil society who work for the advancement of women rights and protection, just as the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development, Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, and Mother's School, in defending women rights especially in Area C.

Mr. Qays Abdul Karim, member of the Legislative Council, highlighted the importance of supporting the feminist movement and the demands of women. He stressed the importance of the coordination among the feminist movement and the parliamentary blocs in the discussion and policy making process based on CEDAW and the necessity of having a joint action to ensure a minimum women participation of 30%, to build a civil secular state that grants full rights to women.

Ms. Amal Khreishe, Executive Council member of the Euromed Feminist Initiative, reviewed the recommendations made by the Euromed Feminist Initiative at its Cairo Conference on the 22nd and 23rd of November, with regard to women's rights to participate in the public life, economic participation, combating all forms of gender-based violence, standing against unjust cultural and social norms, particularly in education and the media.