



Press Release

10 March 2022

“NO to Violence against Women and Girls in Syria: From Constitution to Daily Life”, an on-line conference on the occasion of the International Women’s Day 2022,

To mark the International Women’s Day 2022 (IWD 2022) and in the frame of the campaign “*I will not keep silent*”, the Syrian Feminist Lobby (SFL), in partnership with EuroMed Feminist Initiative, organised on 9 March 2022 an on-line conference: “**NO to VAWG in Syria: From Constitution-building to daily life.**” The conference gathered around 100 participants and provided space for women’s rights organisations and networks as well as human rights activists to come together, strengthen a common discourse and enhance the common action to combat VAWG as the major barrier to women’s participation in decision making, from local to national and international levels.

Rima Flihan, the founder and an executive director of SFL called for finding a political solution to the Syrian conflict that fulfils the aspirations of the Syrian people, and enable a transition towards democracy in Syria, achieve transitional justice, equality, and laws that comply with the International Bill of Human Rights, through the implementation of United Nations Resolutions related to Syria, notably Resolution 2254 together with UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security. She also, explained that the aim of the SFL three-year campaign, *I will not keep silent*, is to raise awareness on women’s rights and shed light on the main challenges and violence that women and girls are subjected to. The campaign is supported by EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) and is conducted in the frame of the program “Supporting political transition in Syria through gender-sensitive social reconstruction”, funded by Sweden. The campaign is also a part of EFI regional campaign on *Zero Tolerance for VAWG* in the South Mediterranean region, funded by the European Union, which tackles common regional challenges, while addressing priorities specific to the different national contexts.

Ms. Ann Dismorr, ambassador of Sweden to Lebanon and chargée d’affaires to Syria, opened the event underlining that “Sweden is very proud to support the Syrian activists’ efforts, and the discussion here today. We will not keep silent.” Dr. Dan Stoenescu, chargée d’affaires of EU to Syria, followed up by mentioning that “Syrian women and girls continue facing the brunt of the crisis and numerous growing challenges from food insecurities to the loss of educational opportunities, health services or high rates of gender-based violence,” and commended the on-going work done by EuroMed Feminist Initiative and Syrian Feminist Lobby in engaging Syrian women and men from different backgrounds to speak up and gender-based violence and the need of women’s participation in the decision making and peace building processes in Syria.

Ms. Lilian Halls French, co-president of EuroMed Feminist Initiative, requested from the international community to “to prioritise women’s access to decision making as the only way to achieve sustainable peace and democracy, we put our faith in the ability of Syrian women to open another future for their country,” Ms. French continues, “our deep conviction is conveyed in the belief that without justice there cannot be peace or sustainable political solution to the conflict”.

Ms. Rima Flihan voiced the stance of all attendees by declaring “we will no longer accept all this shame, which is embodied in the killing of women under the pretext of honour or undermining their status through discriminatory laws, backward social heritage, and direct and indirect violence”. Mr. Hadi al-Bahra, Syrian Constitutional Committee co-chair and member of the Syrian Negotiations Commissions, committed to involve at least 30% of women in the constitutional committee.

Ms. Michelle Jarvis, deputy head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), reiterated the IIIM commitment to continue supporting Syrian women’s movement and shed light on the importance of working together for a gender sensitive transitional justice.

To reinforce the solidarity with Syrian women on International Women’s Day, the conference highlighted the reality of the current political context, the importance of eliminating all forms of oppression towards achieving a political solution, in line with the UN resolutions, which are essential to create a safe and favourable environment for women’s active participation in all places of decision making, as well as public and private life.