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EuroMed Feminist Initiative  
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Initiative Féministe EuroMed

## NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

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### Reviewing the draft of Iraq second National Action Plan for United National Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

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3-4 February 2020 in Erbil

**OUTCOMES**

The National Civil Society Conference to discuss the draft of Iraq second National Action Plan (NAP) for United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security was held on 3-4 February 2020 in Erbil. It was organized by the Alliance 1325 in partnership with EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) in the framework of the 'Madad for Women' project funded by the European Union through the EU's Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the EU 'Madad Fund'. The conference was also supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

The conference aimed to provide space for a wide discussion on the second NAP for UNSCR 1325 and its coherence with the lessons learned and recommendations from the previous localization processes and the principles of Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA). The event gathered 108 representatives from 57 civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) as well as representatives from Alliance 1325, Sawtuha Alliance, and Iraqi Women Network. The conference reviewed the draft of the second NAP and issued recommendations to the relevant authorities for the improvement and localization of the second NAP in order to effectively and concretely meet the needs and aspirations of women in Iraq.

The conference was attended by H.E. Mr. Rebar Ahmed, Minister of Interior in the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, Director General of Women Empowerment Department at the Council of Ministers, Baghdad, H.E. Bakshan Zangana, Secretary General of the High Council of Women Affairs in KRG, and Mr. Mohamad Tahir Al-Timemi, Director General of the NGOs Department, Baghdad. Mr. Vincent-Guillaume Poupeau, Head of the Erbil Liaison Office at the EU Delegation to Iraq and Mr. Noel Kututwa, Senior Women Protection Adviser, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) also attended and were joined by diplomatic missions and international organisations.

The conference featured three sessions, five working groups and open discussions. During the first session participants reviewed the key recommendations of the National Report on Implementation of Iraq's first NAP for UNSCR 1325, the outcomes of the high-level consultations about the localization of Iraq's second NAP 1325 held in Erbil & Baghdad, and the recommendations for the second NAP by the Coordination Committee of the Cross Sector Task Force (CSTF). During the second session the pillars and logframe of the draft of Iraq's second NAP 1325 were presented. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan for the 2nd NAP, as well as an implementation mechanism were discussed. During the third session participants shed the light on the importance of developing a Media plan. The working groups focused on the four pillars of the UNSCR 1325 and the need of an additional pillar on legislation. They drafted recommendations for the second NAP and for the implementation of these pillars in Iraq.



*In the opening*, H.E. Mr. Rebar Ahmed praised the efforts and leadership of the civil society in the development of the first NAP, and reminded it was the first NAP in the whole Middle East and North Africa, paving the way for other NAPs in other neighbouring countries. He underlined that the NAP is a tool to strengthen women's participation at all levels of decision making in society and improve the status of women's rights. Mr. Vincent-Guillaume Poupeau, Head of the Erbil Liaison Office at the EU Delegation to Iraq, emphasized the commitment of the

European Union and the EUs Regional Trust Fund ‘Madad’ to support the development and implementation of Iraq’s second NAP, and the work of the women’s organisations, in order to support real changes in women’s lives. He encouraged Iraq to match its commitment to UNSCR 1325 with more resources for achieving better results. Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, Director General of Women Empowerment Department at the Council of Ministers, Baghdad, congratulated the civil society and the persistent work of the civil society since 2012. She stressed the governmental commitment to consider the recommendations from this conference. Ms. Bakshan Zangana, Secretary General of the High Council of Women Affairs in KRG, welcomed the participants in Erbil and reminded the hard work of the Cross-Sector Task Force (CSTF) since 2012. She noted that this work should continue and be improved, building on the achievements and lessons learned from the previous process. Mr. Mohamad Tahir Al-Timemi, Director General of the NGOs Department, Baghdad emphasized on the CSOs are one of the pillars of the NAP for the UNSCR 1325. He encouraged the civil society to intensify their efforts in supporting and monitoring the implementation of the NAP. Ms. Boriana Jonsson, Executive Director of EuroMed Feminist Initiative, underlined the support of EFI in the development, implementation and reporting of the first Iraq NAP since 2012. She stressed EFI commitment to continue supporting the development of the second NAP and the invaluable contribution of the civil society. Mr. Noel Kututwa, Senior Women Protection Adviser, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) emphasized the importance of allocating financial and human resources for the implementation of the second NAP, as well as having a monitoring mechanism in order to improve its implementation. Dr. Azhar Al-Sheikhly from the Alliance 1325, welcomed the participants and reminded the strong involvement of the Alliance in the development, implementation and monitoring of the first NAP. She underlined the importance of a wide cooperation of civil society organizations to act not only for the implementation of Iraq NAP 1325, but also in its development and monitoring. She noted that this conference represents a major event in this regard.

During *the first session* Judge Badraddin Barzanji, Chairman of the Advisory Board of Investigator, Organization for the Rule of Law, Ms. Suzan Aref, Coordinator of Alliance 1325, and Ms. Intissar Al-Mayali from Iraqi Women League and Alliance 1325 reminded the key recommendations of the National Report on Implementation of Iraq’s first NAP for UNSCR 1325. These included focus on localizing the second NAP, organising inclusive consultations and engaging local stakeholders, CSOs, CBOs, local self-governments, most vulnerable women. They also reviewed the outcomes of the high-level consultations about the localization of Iraq’s second NAP 1325 held in Erbil and Baghdad, and reminded that both consultations recommended five pillars for the second NAP. Furthermore, they presented the recommendations of the Coordination Committee of the CSTF for including separate pillars on legislation and economic empowerment. The presentations were followed by an open discussion during which participants voiced the support for the recommendations.



In *the second session*, Ms. Liza Hido, Executive Director of Baghdad Women Association and member of the Alliance 1325 presented the pillars and logframe of the draft of Iraq’s second NAP 1325, together with Ms. Narmin Hama Amin, Consultant and Dr. Ghaith Hamid, Researcher and M&E Consultant. Moderated by Ms. Amal Gbashi from Iraqi Women Network Coordinator, this session introduced the draft NAP and discussed the importance of M&E plan and an implementing mechanism for the second NAP. During the following

opened open debate many recommendations were shared. In general, the conference wanted a second NAP that does not start from a scratch, but is rather built on built lessons learned from the first NAP.

Participants were divided into five working groups on legislation, protection, participation prevention, and recovery. They presented their reports and recommendation at the end of the day.

During **the third session** after the opening of the second day, Dr. Nibras Al-Mamouri, Director of Iraqi Women Media Forum, Ms. Suzan Aref and Ms. Liza Hido discussed the needed to develop Media Plan for the 2nd NAP and mechanisms for its implementation. It was noted that this work should start very soon in order to address the recommendations of the National Report on the implementation of the first NAP. The open discussion emphasis was placed on the need to prepare a thorough monitoring & evaluation mechanisms for the second NAP Some suggestions included building a media committee, building a cross sector M&E committee, an independent M&E body.



## OUTCOMES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Five working groups were established during the Conference with the aim to review the draft of the second NAP in view of the recommendations of the national report, the national consultations and the Coordination Committee of the CSTF presented in the first two sessions. The working groups exchanged expertise, practices and examples of concrete work in the areas of participation, protection, prevention, recovery and legislation. Each working group identified gaps, and came with concrete recommendations for actions in each area, reaffirming that it is important to think of the 1325 as a tool and to approach it in connection with other international women's rights instruments.

## WORKING GROUP 1: PARTICIPATION

### Recommendations

- Raise awareness and promote women's participation at all levels of decision making in accordance with the principle of quota in the electoral law and in the Constitution, increasing the quota in the Constitution to minimum of 40% of underrepresented gender.
- Protect the rights of women winners who receive votes outside the quota to ensure increased participation of women in elections.
- Increase women's empowerment and qualification programs and enhance their participation in the reconstruction and sustainable peace-building stages and speed up the enactment of laws protecting women such as the Anti-Domestic Violence Law.
- Apply a bottom up approach in engaging women to participate in various stages of the political process and beyond, and in the stage of reconstruction.
- Establishing a local civil peace council with the participation of at least 50% of women including government parties and civil society organizations.
- Establish specialized centers in all governorates to build the capacities of women and providing them with skills effectively participate in parties and local governments: focus on young women leaders and empower them politically by building their capacity on leadership, conflict resolution and negotiation.
- Provide training programs for political parties on women's rights and gender equality issues.
- Provide trainings for political parties on UNSCR 1325 and Iraq NAP for its implementation.
- Introduce the principle of women's rights and gender equality in the school curricula and universities.

The working group on "Participation" emphasized that women's participation is a key element of improving women's situation on the ground. Participants underscored that women are not only victims but active members of their society and community. The discussion pointed to a range of challenges and obstacles to the women's effective participation, from immediate and concrete factors as the ongoing conflicts, the presence of armed militias, other violence and division in the local communities, to absence of adequate legislation curbing violence against women and promoting women's participation and their political rights and concerns.

It was stated that participation in decision-making would be enhanced by empowering and encouraging women to fully participate in all political, administrative, security and decision-making bodies and positions within peace efforts and negotiating committees.

Participants underlined that the NAP should reinforce women's role in reconciliation and coexistence and support the voice of women affected by conflicts, identify their needs and meet them through concrete actions. It should be noted that each region has its own specificity. Thus, the causes and effects of conflicts vary from one region to another. However, what all regions have in common is women underrepresentation in decision making.

NAP 1325 should promote the building of civil peace and social cohesion in Iraq under UN Security Council Resolution 2178/P16 which emphasized the need to involve local

communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter extremist speech that promotes terrorism including the involvement of women, youth and other local leaders.

Furthermore, political parties should adopt mechanisms and measures to promote and enable women's participation as well as to promote women's rights and concerns in their party programs. Education was also considered as important tool to enhance women's participation.

## WORKING GROUP 2: PROTECTION

### Recommendations

- Increase the number of governmental and CSOs centers and shelters for women and girls survivors of violence and open specialized centers to receive complaints of violence and discrimination (hotline).
- Provide trainings to service providers and first respondents, gender equality issues and UNSCR 1325.
- Raise the number of women in the police and ensure the presence of civilian police in rural and suburban areas.
- Organize awareness campaigns on VAWG, including and highlighting gender stereotypes.
- Identify, address and improve legislation to curb discrimination and violence against women and improve their protection.
- Adopt a law against extremism to create a secure and supportive environment for women and girls based on social cohesion.
- Ensure compensation for GBV women and girls' survivals.
- Provide and improve judicial and security expertise developing reporting mechanisms and addressing the effects of conflict-related sexual violence.
- Develop national tools (Measures, mechanisms and procedures) to comprehensively that combat all forms of gender-based violence, increase women's access to justice, and enhance their security and safety in society.
- Develop codes of conduct for the security institution that limit violations of women's rights.
- Provide training on self-employment and formation of micro-enterprises.
- Provide a fund for compensation for women and girls survivors of GBV.

The working group on "Protection" underlined that the NAP should aim at enhancing an environment favouring women's rights and equality. Women's rights, which include political, legal, social and economic rights, should be legally protected in order to enable women's equal participation in negotiations and reconciliation, and in future reconstruction. The group underlined that there are still laws that hinder the implementation of UNSCR 1325, starting with Constitution, Election Law, Personal Status Law, Penal Code, Labour and Social Security Law, and the Nationality Law. There are articles that discriminate against women and deprive them from rights equal to those of men. Therefore the group pointed out the need to strengthen the means of security and protection of women and girls who faced gender-based violence (GBV) during and after conflicts (health, social, economic and legal) and respect their human rights through giving a priority to the development of the second NAP and development of legislation based on equality and non-discrimination in order to combat GBV, particularly sexual violence, as per the international conventions ratified by Iraq and the UN Security Council resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960.

Service providers and first respondents to victims of VAWG need to be aware of UNSCR 1325, and Iraq NAP for its implementation. Police needs to adopt procedures and allocate resources that address victims of VAWG, and hire more women as first respondents. The also discussion tackled the need to assist vulnerable groups of women, widows and orphans, provide training on self-employment and formation of micro-enterprises, as a way to make them

independent and counteract VAW. Compensation for women and girls survivors of GBV was also raised.

Regarding social protection, the group pointed out that the main challenges are related to gender based cultural stereotypes that undermine the role of women in society, which contributes to the broad social tolerance to VAWG. Other points raised include the need to reform the education sector and curricula, the freedom and independence of public media, the need to improve the quality of social and health support to women, including comprehensive services in all governorates for victims of GBV.

The group noted that impact for most indicators in the draft 2nd NAP could not be measured and media and civil society activities need to be added to more than one paragraph related to activities and indicators.

## WORKING GROUP 3: PREVENTION

### Recommendations

- Provide legal protection by cancelling discriminative laws and enact laws related to the empowerment of women in the post-conflict areas.
- Imposing penalties against perpetrators of sexual violence, harassment and abuse.
- Improve school curricular and introduce awareness sessions at schools on women's rights and the consequences of violence against women and girls and spreading a culture of tolerance at all education stages.
- Organize trainings of teaching staff on gender equality issues and gender sensitive teaching methods.
- Activating sports and social forums, especially for youths.
- Structure public awareness and education for both genders. Men, elders, religious and community leaders must know the rights of women and women must know their rights and demand them.
- Raise awareness and emphasize the rejection of discriminative religious discourse.
- Provide public education on peace and respect for human rights of women and men.
- Develop a contingency plan to prevent conflict-related violence before it occurs.
- Establish gender-sensitive systems and tools to monitor and respond to women's human rights violations during and after conflicts.
- Create a space for proactive dialogue on a local and national level by integrating women's issues and their role in peace-building. It should be based on the preparation of a comprehensive survey to monitor and collect information on the causes of conflicts, analysis, and finding solutions.
- Establish permanent consultation groups in cooperation with the relevant government institutions.
- Provide full support for women's participation in the security sector, in strategies and policy-making to develop the security sector and counter extremism and terrorism.
- Organize the weapons-collection from the citizens, limiting weapons to security forces only.

The working group on "Prevention" pointed out that separating preventive and protecting measures is challenging, as both could often be overlapping. They noted that prevention would focus on a permanent modification of legislation, education, policies and mechanisms that aim to prevent all forms of violence against women, in particular sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment.

Special attention was given to the education sector and teachers. There is a need to review and develop curricula to include women rights and gender equality. Teachers should receive trainings on both gender equality issues and teaching methods.

The working group pointed out the necessity to organize advocacy campaigns targeting decisionmakers in order to promote policies and measures for preventing all forms of violence against women on the one hand, on the other hand they emphasized the importance of raising awareness through campaigns using radio, TV and films for the broader population, women as well as men.

It was noted that civil society organizations had an important role in using the social media as channels for combatting stereotypes of women, promoting the values of gender equality and raising awareness about women's legal rights.

More women should be recruited in the security sector (army, police, security and civil defence). Security personnel should be also trained to understand the particular security concerns of women and girls and to perform professionally.

Forums for permanent dialogue and cooperation between civil society and relevant ministries and policy makers was seen as means to strengthen prevention.

## WORKING GROUP 4: LEGISLATION

### Recommendations

- Amend Article 49 in Iraqi Constitution, specifying a quota of minimum 40% representation of women in the Parliament, Executive authority and the Provincial Councils, to enhance women's representation and access to decision making in political, economic and social life.
- Identify appropriate legislation that responds to the implementation of the objectives of the NAP to enable changing practices and behavior.
- Harmonize national legislation with international law and standard for women's rights and criminalize all crimes such as genocide, sexual violence, sexual slavery as crimes against humanity.
- Amend the political party law and 40% representation of women in the leadership seats of the parties.
- Amend the Federal Penal Code and abolish discriminatory articles against women.
- Amend the Electoral law and the electoral commission, adopt proportional electoral system, combined with legally and constitutionally binding gender quota of minimum 40% representation of women.
- Implement the Compensation Law for Victims of Terroristic Operations and Military Mistakes No. (20) for 2009 that applies for women victims of violence.
- Amend the Terrorism Law No. (13) of 2005.
- Prepare a gender responsive federal budget that includes allocations to women affected by the conflict (payment according to Article (10) B of the Amended Financial Management Act regarding the commitment of the Ministries of Planning and Labor) .
- Adopt law on protection of women against domestic violence.
- Activate ISIS Victims Compensation Law. No 81/2017, and terrorist operations Law No 20/2009 .
- Activate Anti-Trafficking Law No. (28)/2012. In KR-I, 2018.

The working group reminded that the first NAP had a specific pillar on Legislation that was cancelled in the final draft. It also reminded the work of the Legal Committee of the CSTF. Participants underlined the importance of re-installing a legislation pillar in the second NAP in order to enable the implementation of UNSCR 1325 itself. They noted that existing discriminative laws present a threat to women's security and integrity.

Furthermore, discriminative legislation sustain and reproduce patriarchal structures, practices and procedures as well as social and cultural attitudes, and hinders women's full participation in social, political and economic life. Therefore, legislating quota of no less than 40% women's representation was seen as the most efficient mechanism towards ensuring women's equal participation in decision making, policy-making and their implementation.

Moreover, violence used against women to limit their participation is an extreme form of control and discrimination. Therefore, violence against women in general, and sexual violence and trafficking as an extreme form of violence in particular, were raised as major barriers to implementation of UNSCR 1325. Therefore, different legislation was recommended: from the adoption of the law on domestic violence to global harmonizing of the national legislation with international law and standard for women's rights, and criminalizing all forms of violence against women, in particular crimes as genocide, sexual violence, sexual slavery, seen as crimes against humanity.

## WORKING GROUP 5: RECOVERY

### Recommendations

- Create transitional justice mechanisms for women survivors of violence. Open, support and institutionalize centers that provide health, psychosocial and legal support, and other services to women survivors of VAW, to address the effects of violence and post-traumatic stress, ensure fair reparation system.
- Ensure prosecution of perpetrators and address violations and abuses women suffer from due to inequality and discrimination.
- Support women led small and medium businesses with funds, and capacity building.
- Support job creation in the private sector.
- Provide vocational trainings and building capacity on entrepreneurship for women in local communities, and provide women directly or indirectly affected by the conflict with livelihoods and life skills.
- Ensure budget allocation for small projects led by women.
- Provide consultations for companies and public sector institutions to HR gender sensitive policies.
- Facilitate the procedures for birth registrations, marriages, divorces and ID documents.
- Raise awareness among judges and police so they could be more responsive to issues of gender-based violence and an understanding of women's rights
- Adopt specific laws for compensations of victims of VAWG.
- Criminalize all forms of VAWG and prosecute perpetrators, while ensuring transparency during legal trials.
- Organize campaigns enhancing peace-building and coexistence campaigns, that promote women's participation.
- Take administrative measures to ensure women participation in all positions in reconstruction committees.

The working group discussed that Recovery would have several aspects: health and psychosocial services, legal services, economic empowerment, compensation, actively involving women in peacebuilding, negotiation and coexistence committees, and women participation in reconstruction committees. Addressing the situation of families linked to terrorism and integrating them into society was seen as important.

The role of the Media in the implementation of the NAP was discussed as well. There were recommendations to build a special media team to promote the NAP for UNSCR 1325 with the participation of public and private media institutions in its all forms. Creating media cadres with a high level of understanding of the contents of the women's, security and peace agenda was seen as a means.

Furthermore, the group discussed the need of development of long-term qualitative indicators such as changes in behaviour, cultures and practices) and quantitative indicators such as percentages and figures and combine them to measure progress in the implementation of the plan.

It is important, according to the working group, that research and studies be conducted in order to act on the basis of a reliable data and to ensure that the right groups with the greatest needs are assisted. Women should be associated with all reconstruction operations to achieve more acceptance in the communities as well as to ensure that the need of all the women are met.

The working group argued that before entering with the funding for reconstruction and development, a major condition must first be met: an end to armed conflict/disarmament, safe return of displaced persons and refugees, fair distribution of funds and planning women participation.

## CLOSING REMARKS AND GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS



The closing panel featured Dr. Ibtisam Aziz, the Gender Director of Women Empowerment Department Council of Ministers Baghdad, Ms. Amal Jalal from High Council of Women in KR-I, Ms Liza Hido and Ms. Suzan Aref.

Women face numerous obstacles due to military violence, and a combination of patriarchal structures, practices and procedures as well as social and cultural attitudes, as well as discriminative legislation. Moreover, violence used against women limits their participation and is an extreme form of control and discrimination. NAP 1325 is a toll to raise a broader debate in the whole country, mobilize the communities for transformative changes and place women's rights at the highest priorities for State action, political parties and civil society.

Peace, social co-existence and reconstruction was unidentified as one of the main goals of the civil society, in particular after the defeat of ISIS and the need of reconstruction of the country. As this is a focus of Iraq government as well, the conference concluded that the reconstruction period will only be complete with the participation of women on local and national level. Their participation will ensure that the needs of women are considered in the reconstruction plans and budgets, such as in rebuilding of infrastructure, transport, schooling etc. Localization of the second NAP as well implies recognizing the role of women in peace building and building social cohesion in the local communities.

Stabilization has been recognized as a long-term process and therefore it was linked with women economic empowerment: stability is linked with women economic independence and empowerment. NAP 1325 should play a major role in enhancing and supporting the inclusion of women's rights and needs in the processes of stabilization and reconstruction, as these are processes on both local to national levels.

The conference concluded with a set of general recommendations to improve the draft for second NAP 1325, to incorporate the recommendations of the recommendations of the National Report on Implementation of Iraq's first NAP for UNSCR 1325, the outcomes of the high-level consultations and the recommendations of the Coordination Committee of the CSTF.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Review the final draft of the second NAP for UNSCR 1325 taking into account all the recommendations that came out of the national civil society conference held on 3-4 February 2020 in Erbil.
- Combine the pillars on Protection and Prevention into one pillar: these two are deeply interconnected and all unanimously recommended to putting them together.
- Add a separate pillar on Legislation, putting all legal propositions under it. The pillar of Legislation has also been identified by the Legal Committee of the CSTF, recommended by the Coordination Committee of the CSTF, recommended through the national consultations and in the national report on the first NAP. This pillar will stress the need to change laws discriminating against women, and the need of implementation of good existing legislation.
- Add the pillar on Recovery and Economic Empowerment that will include Peaceful Coexistence, Reconstruction and Sustainable Peace.
- Review the proposed budget for the NAP by a specialized committee from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning in the Federal and Regional governments.
- Accelerate the implementation of workshops to prepare the Media plan and Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms, with the participation of ministerial teams and women's organizations working on 1325 file.
- Review the administrative structure of the NAP implementing agencies in light of the incoming changes and define the national machinery for women in Iraq.



