

REPORT

International Roundtable

Citizenship, Gender and Democracy Building

9th – 10th February 2015
American University of Beirut, Lebanon



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Reporting, Editing & Layout:
Syrian League for Citizenship and Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI
Publisher: Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI
Date of Publication: June 2015

The international roundtable was organized by Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, Syrian League for Citizenship in partnership with the Asfari Institute for Civil Society in the framework of the program “Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria by Supporting an Inclusive Constitution Process”, funded by Sweden. This report is intended to reflect the discussions during the roundtable. The content and opinions expressed within this publication are the sole responsibility of the participants and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the donors.

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSWD	Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy
ENVEFF	National Survey on Violence Against Women in France
Euro-Med	Euro Mediterranean
IDPs	Internally Displaced Person
INED	National Institute for Demographic Studies
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAP	National Action Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SL4C	Syrian League for Citizenship
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

Introduction

The international roundtable *Citizenship, Gender and Democracy Building* was organized by the Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, the Syrian League for Citizenship (SL4C) and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship on the 9-10th of February 2015 at the American University of Beirut. The roundtable took place in the frame of the program “*Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria through an Inclusive Constitution Building Process*” funded by Sweden. Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI and the Syrian partners have organized a series of events in the frame of this program promoting and supporting a democratic transition and to ensure that gender equality and women’s rights will be at the forefront of the transition process.

The roundtable *Citizenship, Gender and Democracy Building* widened and deepened this work. The event brought together over 100 participants representing numerous civil society organizations, women’s rights groups, academics, researchers, legal scholars and media representatives. It provided a platform to collectively think, theorize, share experiences and foster solutions to common challenges of gender-inequality, the on-going civil war and the universal domination of patriarchal mentality.

The roundtable had three major objectives:

- Provide space to women’s rights activists, human rights activists and researchers to discuss concepts and practices, share perspectives, broaden the concept of citizenship and come with recommendations to be adapted as a foundation for future work.
- Contribute to articulating the common obstacles to women’s full citizenship and opportunities that might enhance it in different contexts.
- Discuss methods and short-and long-term strategies aimed at ensuring equality of citizenship and provide policy recommendations.

Though the roundtable explicitly addressed the Syrian context, it also drew on the experiences of women from both the MENA region and Europe in its theoretical presentations and practical discussions. While the central focus was on broadening the concept of citizenship to include gender equality and democratic participation, it tackled a range of other related issues. The main themes that were addressed in the discussions included women’s common experiences of exclusion from full citizenship rights and discrimination in public and private life; challenges faced in their effective political participation; experiences of violence caused by the patriarchal domination; the rights of refugees and experiences of women during armed conflict. Challenges were articulated and solutions were proposed. The event provided the needed space to widen and strengthen national, regional and international networking and solidarity. It fostered groundbreaking perspectives and ideas.

This report includes a summary of the presentations, main discussion points, experiences and ideas that were developed during the roundtable. It also presents the main conclusions and recommendations that were the outcome of these discussions.

We would like to thank all the speakers and participants of this beautiful event who contributed to questioning the traditional concept of citizenship, to widen it by exploring its major components and to promote full citizenship for women and men as a basic request for democracy.

Lilian Halls French
Euromed Feminist Initiative

Hassan Abbas
Syrian League for Citizenship

Fateh Azzam
Asfari Institute for Civil Society

Opening Session: Welcome and introductions

Diana Janse – Ambassador of Sweden in Damascus, opened the session by discussing how the gender, democracy and citizenship are key elements to any successful society. She emphasized the importance of fostering positive habits of living amongst members of a community that prioritize the common welfare of society over individual self-interest. Sharing the Swedish experience, she showed how Swedish society depends heavily on trust to foster the contract of citizenship. Democracy, equality, and hard work are central tenants of citizenship in Sweden and all citizens (including new comers) are expected to contribute to the common good. The values of trust, equality and respect and the virtues of citizenship can be taught and fostered and we have the freedom to nurture the spirit of good values. In this regard, she quoted Nelson Mandela on freedom: “To be free is not merely to cast off ones chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others”.



Fateh Azzam – The Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, discussed the importance of having a vision for effective and active citizenship in order to direct the activities and goals of civil society actors and to ensure that real positive change follows. Speaking of citizenship in the Arab world, he emphasized that it is a deficient concept, as more than half of our societies don't have equal rights, based on a deficiency in understanding. The main aim of this gathering is to brainstorm ideas of how we can start moving towards realizing full or at least not deficient citizenship in our societies. Underlining the proliferation of international standards, conventions and agreements to safeguard and promote the rights of women, he argued that the main issue is that of implementation, which is ultimately pursued at the most local level. Setting the tone of the roundtable discussion, he called on participants to start thinking in more practical terms of implementation of international standards.

Lilian Halls French – Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, introduced the main objectives of the gathering, which brought together diverse groups and actors united in their common goals of realizing true equality for women, their freedom of movement and action in the public sphere and the protection of their rights. We realize these aspirations are tied to promoting a secular and democratic society that is based on the recognition of universal rights and the notion of “citizenship” lies at the center of this. However, classical conceptions of citizenship have preserved the status of women as ‘second-class citizens’ and what is required is a radical reformulation of citizenship. In this regard, she explained some implications of full citizenship for women, which include their ability to exercise their rights fully, equal treatment and respect of both their physical and psychological integrity and dignity. Moreover she added: “We claim that equality in the private sphere is a condition of full citizenship for all. That’s why we are here today”.

Hassan Abbas – Syrian League for Citizenship, presented the idea of citizenship as a culture, drawing on the concept of ‘habitus’ by Pierre Bourdieu, which is explained as a system of behaviors and concepts acquired through childhood and the effects of society to illustrate how citizenship is an active culture that controls and determines the behavior of citizens and defines the relations among them, and between citizens and the State, as well as the relations of citizens to the common space they share. He also spoke of insubstantial understanding of citizenship in the Arab world, often used by politicians as a ‘mobilizing metaphor’ or as a slogan to attract people. In this way politicians emphasize only the political dimension of citizenship, and thus exclude social and economic dimensions. On the issue of gender equality, he highlighted how it cannot be achieved purely through new legislation and laws, especially in the patriarchal societies we live in, but

rather requires through education and awareness raising, the birth of a new kind of citizen that has a culture of responsibility, participation, equality and freedom embedded within them. In other words, he stressed, a democratization of the whole society is needed.

Session 1: Citizenship, gender equality and power. Exclusion and discrimination

Objectives of the session

The session questioned the notion of citizenship in order to expand the denotation of the term and emphasized that gender equality is at the core of the term. It highlighted aspects of inequality in citizenship and elaborated how gender misbalance influences citizenship and access to human rights.

The following issues were discussed

- How does the concept of citizenship deal with power, inequality and difference?
- What are the different feminist and human rights approaches to holistic citizenship that address belonging to gender, class ethnicity, origin and belief?
- Which perspectives for countries that undergo political transitions?

Presentations

Dina Kiwan – the American University of Beirut, presented an examination of women’s status as citizens in the historical and contemporary Arab world setting, with particular focus on Lebanon’s nationality and refugee policies and their implications for women. Starting with an overview of the concept of citizenship from an intellectual historical perspective, she illustrated the exclusionary nature of classical models of citizenship and their repercussions on the status of women as ‘sub-citizens’. Furthermore, she highlighted how citizenship and the associated rights of citizens have been conceptually linked to the recognition of being a member of a political community. Drawing on examples from historical and contemporary experiences of women in the Arab world, she underlined the tenuous nature of gender and citizenship in the region and raised the question: What is it about this part of the world that makes women’s rights difficult to achieve? Furthermore, discussing the international law and the international human rights standards, she questioned the problematic relationship between legal entitlement to rights and absence of adequate guarantees to access them through traditional social structures. She argued that rights are not only a matter of legal entitlements, but depend also on social structures in which power, material resources, and meanings are created and circulated.

Birte Siim – Feminist Research Center in Aalborg Denmark, Department of Culture and Global Studies, presented the main argument that classical citizenship models must be reframed from the dual perspectives of ‘intersectionality’ and ‘transnationalism’ in the face of the challenges posed by globalization and global mobility. Problematising these classical notions for their common exclusionary dimension and the restrictions they pose to women’s citizenship by dividing public and private sphere, she presented an introduction to the different approaches feminist theorists have proposed in response to these challenges.



The importance of an intersectionality perspective was illustrated through challenges of equality and diversity in the experience of European welfare States which have many categories of people (such as national citizens, migrants, refugees and others) with complex, multiple and intersecting inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and disability. The argument for the transnational approach is based on the ever-diminishing relevance of the ‘nation-state’ in a context of increasing global interdependence. There is a trend towards transnational and post-national citizenship

because the homogeneity of the nation-state is challenged by migration, economic crisis and armed conflict. Women's position in entrenched post conflict societies calls for equality, rights and social justice. This highlights the growing need to create transnational public powers that are accountable to transnational public spheres. In this regard, the work of civil society across national boundaries is essential. Presenting the challenges and potentials that we are facing in regard to global citizenship, global governance and democracy, she raised the central question: What is possible and what is desirable: possible in the analytical sense and desirable in terms of goals we can agree about. Furthermore, recognizing that global interdependence calls for a globalization of social justice, she asked: How can we work towards this vision in practice?

Main Discussion Points

- The discussion focused on identifying attributes of the Arab world that make gender equality and full citizenship a goal still far from being reached. Religion as one of the explanatory factors was a topic of debate. Although religion has been used in the academic discourses of the West, it was argued in the discussion that it is not a sufficient explanation. Other factors that are particular to this region, such as patriarchal and political authoritarianism have also contributed. The point was repeatedly raised that the interconnections of religious, patriarchal and political authoritarianism, that have historically dominated the region, are key factors not only in depriving women from their rights, but in impeding the realization of full citizenship rights for both women and men.
- Nevertheless it was highlighted that the role religion plays in empowering these authoritarian systems must not be disregarded, especially in light of the fact that many Arab countries have refused to implement the Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for perceived contradictions with Islamic law. Furthermore, the personal status law, which is discriminatory against women, is formulated on the basis of religious references, and further discriminates between women of different religious denominations.
- It was argued that the pursuit of full citizenship is linked to the modern civil State. The separation of religion from State is claimed as necessary if true equality between citizens and between the genders is to be achieved.
- Other factors characterizing the Arab world include traditional stereotypes of women, difficult economic situations, lack of social justice and cultural ways of life.
- Furthermore, it was emphasized that the people and political leaders in the region lack a deep understanding of the concept of citizenship. When political leaders only seek power and are not interested in being accountable to their constituents they distort the standards of citizenship such as equality, participation and freedom.
- The issue of women's political participation and ability to exercise their political citizenship rights was also a major theme. In this regard, to have women seats in parliament guaranteed by the quota system was recognized as an important first step in enabling women to have some political visibility. However, it was also described as an attempt by political systems to present a façade of democracy to outside spectators. Furthermore, it was said that in Lebanon for example, women in parliament are not representatives of Lebanese women but are merely personal relatives (wives or sisters) of male members of the parliament. This superficial political engagement has many negative impacts as it deters from other citizenship rights and does not translate into real achievements in women equality.
- Having women in decision-making positions is not enough. The work of women activists needs to occur in the sphere of civil society and to take place at the most local level, in the community and in the family. This was linked to questions of how the concept of citizenship must be broadened to include

women and whether it is sufficient to include them in the current system, or whether it requires a radical reformulation of the nature of citizenship. In this regard, a point was raised regarding how Syrian women in parliament can represent women's struggle when even the men in the political forums don't represent all the people. It was stated that the real barrier for women's rights are undemocratic political institutions.

- The issue of psychological fear as a barrier to a healthy, egalitarian society was mentioned. This is the fear that is instilled by the political system and sectarian fragmentation which reiterates and reinforces the schisms between religious, ethnic and national groups. Politicians are often instrumentalizing this fear for their own interests. In this regard, the importance of the value of trust for the proper functioning of citizenship rights and duties was reflected upon.
- In the current situation in Syria, the question raised is what should we do? As one participant put it: "At the time where the sound of the gun is louder than anything, our options are currently limited towards supporting the affected and trying to build for the future on the basis of a theoretical foundation and vision".

Session 2: Citizenship, from normative representations, gender stereotypes, public private division to inclusive relations between citizens

Objectives of the session

This session examined the different approaches of citizenship from juridical and normative definition to inclusive notion of relations between citizens and social representations and practices. The problems of unequal sharing of duties within the familial, domestic space and unequal role and participation of women in the public space were unveiled. It also sought to uncover the tight connection between private/public division and inclusion/exclusion of women's interest and needs.

Presentations

Umut Erel – Faculty of Social Sciences, the Open University United Kingdom, presented some of the main issues regarding gender and citizenship, which stem from the public /private divide in classical conceptions and illustrated the problematic nature of this division through her research on migration, mothering and citizenship. Feminist scholars have critiqued the classical concept of citizenship outlined by T.H Marshall for the pernicious impact of the public/private divide on the rights of women. This is well illustrated by the right of protection from arbitrary violence not including



experiences of domestic violence under the pretext of its taking place in the private sphere. Other problems of this division relate to lack of recognition of women's employment and work in the domestic sphere as an important economic contribution. Beyond this, she argues that the public /private division is not complete in reality, as mothers play an important role in reproducing the nation, both biologically and through the emotional labor of 'nationalizing the family'. Focusing on migrant mothers positioned at the boundaries of society and conceptualizing citizenship as a 'lived experience', she illustrates what citizenship might mean from the point of view of the excluded. By doing so, she showed how the concept of citizenship, beyond its complex nature, is a practice and a struggle over belonging and social and political participation.

Ludmila Kostova – Head Department of English and American Studies and Gender Studies at University of Veliko Turnovo Bulgaria, discussed the gender dynamics in political life of the Bulgarian society and raised some important questions about the nature and scope of women's political participation in different phases of transition. The experience of Bulgaria highlights the persistent nature of the patriarchal substratum and strong essentializing denotations of gender and 'the feminine', which nullifies the impact of any reforms to include women into that system. Throughout Bulgaria's ongoing transition from socialism to a pluralistic market economy, there has been a characteristic gender imbalance in political leadership, illustrated for example by the fact that the president is always a male and vice president female. Women's formal representation in parliament has always been much less than men, currently at 25%. This reduced representation illuminates a contradiction between the theoretical notion of citizenship as a universal category independent of ethnic origin, gender and class and political realities. She argued that the gender imbalance in the political sphere is not only an issue of under representation of women, but broadly relates to some theoretical defects of democracy itself. While there is a wide consensus of participation being a democratic virtue, the idea that it is not possible for everyone to participate is also present and legitimated. Limited participation is not seen as problematic from a democratic point of view and the specific issue of general lack of women's participation - even less. Thus it is needed a reformulation of our understanding of both democracy and gender. She concluded on an optimistic note arguing that: "In a utopian way, democracy is seen as being forever in a process of formation rather than presented in its final and polished form. What remains is a type of nostalgia towards the future, which constitutes the woman and all other members of society without the binary and gendered dichotomy. This is not impossible".

Main Discussion Points

- The discussion was based on drawing comparisons and contrasts between the Arab world and the experiences of going through transition in Europe that were presented. One comparison spoke of the institution of the European Union and its role in monitoring progress on gender equality and citizenship rights. The question was raised whether such a supra-national institution can be developed in the Arab region.
- As different from the European experience, the point was raised that women's identity and status as citizens in the Arab countries is dependent on their male patrons, as without a male guardian a woman has no identity. This is linked to the fact that family, and not the individual, is the smallest unit of citizenship. Since men are traditionally the figure heads of the family, women's citizenship status lies in the shadow of male guardians.
- The issue of parliamentary quotas was raised once again and their limitations in both European and Arab parliaments were highlighted. The example of France was given to illustrate that women lack legitimacy in the political realm and their male counterparts often minimize or disregard their contribution. Further, the experience with quota in Bulgaria has shown that it is not as itself an effective means of empowering women. Quota needs to be accompanied with other measures as cooperation and support from women's rights organizations from the civil society, female politicians' empowerment on women's rights and gender equality, a broader awareness raising and change of the mentality that women are predisposed to domesticity.
- It was highlighted through the Bulgarian experience that the transition from socialism to liberal capitalism and free market does not guarantee women's rights automatically, as the disintegration of the socialist regime led to a resurfacing of patriarchal elements that had been temporarily submerged.

Session 3: Citizenship, patriarchal cultures and traditions: From cultural diversity to universality of women's rights in the legislative and constitutional frame

Objectives of the session

This session raised the need to start gendered citizenship education as early as primary schools. It illustrated how the concept of citizenship is degraded by the practices and discourses of the governments and institutions, as well as in the public opinion. The universality of women's rights as human rights was emphasized as a needed frame as cultural relativism supports not only the conservative streams, but also contributes further to human rights violations, in particular women's rights, in the name of "culture and tradition". Therefore legislation that favors equal and full citizenship for women and men based on their universal human rights in a constitutional reform was underlined as one of the main strategies in countries in political transition.

Presentations

Leila AL Ali – Association Najdeh, Palestine, Lebanon, presented an overview of the precarious situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Outlining some of the main particularities of Palestinian refugees, she went on to illustrate the various discriminatory laws and policies of the Lebanese government. These laws pose serious restrictions on Palestinian refugees' access to basic human rights: economic, social, civil and political rights. She argued that when Palestinian refugees make demands for their rights, such as the right to employment, it is seen as a call for naturalization and thus is used as a justification for their exclusion from social, economic and political life. One of the main shortcomings is the lack of an official definition of refugees in Lebanon and the fact that Lebanon does not abide by the international conventions on refugees (UNHCR 1951 Geneva Convention). This fuels further discrimination against already vulnerable communities. The situation of women refugees in a context where basic rights are denied is especially bleak, since human rights are an indivisible package. Leila el Ali illustrated how the current nationality law that prohibits women from passing their nationality to their kin - a subject around which women's groups in civil society have been mobilizing and campaigning - infringes on the right of Palestinian women married to Lebanese men to pass their nationality and ultimately violates the right of return guaranteed by UN Resolution 194.



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Kawa Hassan – Visiting Scholar at Carnegie Middle East Center Lebanon and Middle East Expert/Knowledge Officer at Hivos the Netherlands, presented the main vision of 'universalism' and the serious challenges of translating the vision into practice in the Arab world. The challenge posed by the cultural relativist approach is to be able to promote innovative and creative ideas preserving universalism while taking into account local contexts and realities. It is also needed to uncover and resist the instrumentalization of cultural specificities by institutions or different components of the society. He presented the argument that labels, including the labels of universalism and cultural relativism, have positive and unintended negative effects. Furthermore, he presented ways of transcending the negative effects of labels. The struggle of gender equality needs to be coupled with social justice in the wider sense. Of the dilemma between universalism and cultural relativism, he said that there is a need to reach out to groups who don't identify themselves as 'universal' but yet share common goals of gender equality and social justice. In this regard he shared Deniz Kandiyoti's vision of 'secular spaces', which can be based on non-religious doctrine but do not exclude religion if those who use it call for a more progressive reading of women's rights.

Main Discussion Points

- The importance of the universal human rights framework as a basis for the work of civil society groups on the ground and serving as a guiding framework for their actions has been widely acknowledged. The progress made on international level is an essential resource for mobilization.
- The challenge of implementing and interpreting this framework into the cultural context of the Arab world was a major point of discussion. It was recognized that it is precisely when the universality of rights is brought up that cultural relativism is promoted and that the implementation of universal rights faces a false opposition between cultures at the expenses of women's rights.
- The issue of instrumentalization and marginalization of women's rights by political decision-makers was raised and a broad consensus prevailed among the speakers that political leaders in general and in the Arab world in particular, don't have women's rights in mind when they speak of human rights. The example was given of the Muslim Brotherhood's recognition of human rights and disregard for women's rights. This reiterated the pressing need for more civil society actions in a context where political leaders are unwilling to progress.
- In this regard it was argued that cultural relativism – also hidden under the label of “cultural specificity” – is often used to justify and legitimize discriminatory laws against women. The example was given of the Syrian penal code where stipulations for crime are different from Sharia or Islamic law, except for the laws addressing women, in which all the standards exclusively refer to Sharia.
- It has been proposed that the main way to address cultural relativism is through transnational cooperation, networking and coalition building amongst human rights and women rights activists in the civil society, which will deconstruct the strong connection between culture and religion that hampers women's rights. Furthermore, the task of civil society organizations in this regard is to work in their respective national contexts to implement of the international conventions to which their States are signatories and to hold their respective governments accountable.
- Various proposals to address the patriarchal mentality which disadvantages women, for example by restricting their freedom of movement, have been highlighted. Among these was the call to focus on the local sphere and create a local dynamism at the level of cities and rural areas¹ (which involves working with groups that don't necessarily share your terminology) in order to instigate gradual change in the whole society; the need for greater mobilization around women's rights; addressing the balance of power; and building international solidarity.
- The issue of implementing the human rights framework for refugees was also raised. The challenges of uncooperative governments and the undermining of the various international institutions, including the United Nations, were recognized as barriers to developing strategies to promote and safeguard refugee rights and welfare. Experiences of refugees in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon illustrated the common problems of discriminatory laws, the lack of addressing the special needs of displaced women, lack of basic services and lack of access to health care, including psycho-social support. The increased burden of women refugees was underlined. Furthermore, challenges of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) efforts posed by lack of sufficient budgets were highlighted.
- The terrible living conditions of refugees were discussed. Numerous reports on the situation in the refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon have demonstrated this. In this regard research into the living

¹ The example of the women's rural cooperative Namliah, which catered the roundtable event, was highlighted to illustrate the type of local emphasis that is needed. The cooperative empowers women through a model of economic empowerment.

conditions (conducted by Mr. Fateh Azzam) was halted before completion due to fear of exposing the extent of basic human rights violations.

- Since claiming rights is closely linked with being recognized as a member of a political community, a question was raised: Is calling for naturalization of refugees desirable? Specifically in the case of Palestinian refugees it was feared to affect their right of return.
- The role of the international community in intervening to stop armed conflicts and violations of the rights of refugees was raised as being problematic, as it is often based on the interests of these international actors and not on moral or ethical imperatives to assist. In this regard, the lack of sensitivity of the international community regarding gender issues, which are exacerbated in contexts of war and displacement, was underlined.
- In the current context of refugees and ongoing-armed conflict, the question of priorities in terms of dealing with symptoms or tackling the root causes was raised, and whether gender equality can be placed at the top of the agenda. It was emphasized that there is a pressing need to make women's rights the top priority especially in the context of war, as women are the most vulnerable in these situations. Furthermore, coupling equality between women and men with justice for society was reiterated.

Summary of Day One

The first day combined theoretical discussions on the multiple dimensions of citizenship with practical experiences of women's citizenship status in the Arab world and in Europe. Classical definitions of citizenship were thoroughly critiqued from a feminist perspective for their exclusionary nature and artificial division between public and private spheres. Various visions from the feminist scholars on widening the notion of citizenship were presented including theories on transnational and intersectional citizenship perspectives, as well as citizenship as a "lived experience", such as through struggles over participation and belonging, to shed a light on the meaning of citizenship from the point of view of the excluded.



The day covered a broad situation analysis of gender equality and citizenship in the Arab world and in Europe. It highlighted how inequality is rooted in the interconnected and mutually supportive systems of religious, patriarchal and political authoritarianism that have prevailed more heavily in the Arab countries but also unveiled common patterns with European countries. Other challenges as the continuation of the armed conflict, rise in fanaticism, persistent division between public and private spheres, conservative political systems based on marginalization, regression into nationalism, essentialism and the promotion of the feminine identity which has served to exclude women from public life in the whole Euromed region, were identified and discussed.

The notion of full citizenship was elaborated as being based on equal treatment, enjoyment of all basic rights, access to work, freedom to make decisions on issues that affect our bodies and the future of our countries, the right to live without fear, right to dignity and the right to live in freedom. Citizenship was discussed as a theoretical concept and what this means in practice; as a "culture of citizenship", and as a measure of democracy. There was a general consensus that only through a deep and solid understanding of

full citizenship amongst all members of society we can address issues of gender inequality and violations of rights.

The political participation of women in parliamentary positions that are guaranteed by quotas was among the major points of discussion as was the consensus that this participation is not sufficient in itself to improve women's rights on the ground.

Various solutions were proposed and discussed as well as the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to citizenship based on the universal values of human rights, gender equality, freedom, responsibility and dignity, and to ground this innovative approach to citizenship into the hearts and minds of citizens through civil education, enhancing the work of civil society groups and organizations on the ground.

Furthermore, changing the discriminatory legal systems and personal status laws which are founded on religious interpretation was highlighted as one of the priorities for achieving equal rights for women and men, as is the separation of religion and State. This legal pathway however was illuminated through the European way as being insufficient on its own, as legal rights do not automatically translate into substantive rights. It must be reinforced with activities on the ground to challenge existing structures, practices and norms, which solidify women's statuses as "second class citizens".

Recognizing the interconnection between the different dimensions of citizenship and the different obstacles that hinder it, the focus was put on the following three issues:

- The need to link between theoretical approaches of citizenship with the daily lives of women.
- Investing in the political sphere, among both men and women alike, with feminist and gender equality values and breaking the marginalization of the feminist analysis.
- Fighting against sexist stereotypes by raising awareness on the structure of patriarchal domination.

The importance of the international human rights framework as a basis of the work of civil society organizations and groups on the ground and the challenges in implementation created by the rising of cultural relativism were discussed. The proposed solutions emphasized transnational cooperation and networking and coalition building amongst human rights and women's rights activists.

The issue of implementing the human rights framework for refugees was addressed and common challenges as uncooperative governments, discriminatory laws and policies as well as lack of recognition as members of the civil society were outlined and discussed.

Finally, since nothing has been achieved solely by the will of the political leaders, the need to exert pressure on national governments and international institutions to promote and apply legal frameworks and to dedicate means allowing equal status of rights for women and men were emphasized. In this regard the magic words of mobilization and international solidarity are resounding their relevance.

Session 4: Citizenship and participation in public and political life

Objectives of the Session

This session emphasized how the political context in the MENA region opened space for democratizing political systems and laws, even if conservative and traditional trends and religious fundamentalist movements are confronting the right of women to be full citizens by limiting their access to political life and decision-making.

It aimed to examine the demands for true democracy, which requests equal political participation and role of women and gender equality at the top of the decision makers' agendas. The session addressed structural inequalities that hinder equal access of women and men to responsibilities, among others in the political sphere. It furthermore examined strategies to put gender equality and women's participation on the transitional agendas towards full citizenship for women and men.

Presentations

Lama Kanout – Syrian Feminist Lobby, provided a comprehensive presentation of the role of women in Syria's political struggle. She spoke of the opportunities for women's political engagement in the context of the Syrian National Coalition of opposition groups founded in November of 2012, as well as the major challenges women faced. Whilst the coalition has put women's participation at the cornerstone of their activities, the tyrannical heritage remains a serious burden on the political parties. Furthermore, the fragmented and disorganized nature of the opposition makes



progress difficult and contributes to strengthening the terrorists that have seized the country. Although all the parties had a common vision of democracy, equal citizenship without discrimination and respect to human rights, lifting the reservation on the CEDAW and criminalizing violence against women was lacking. The Syrian opposition conference held under the auspices of the Arab League in Cairo during June of 2012 had proposed amendments to the constitution to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women but these were resisted by the Islamists as well as undermined and compromised by secular parties. Reviewing the extent and effectiveness of women's political participation in the coalition, Lama Kanout argued that the Kurdish Democratic Party is the most progressive in pushing women's rights into the political agenda. Unfortunately even in this party women's leadership is limited to the position of vice president and a woman is still unable to become the president. Furthermore, she emphasized that the political culture in Syria is still a significant barrier hindering the full and effective participation of women. She explained that it is for this reason that female politicians prefer to work with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in order to build a democratic State that objectively commits to the Universal Charter of Human Rights, the CEDAW without reservations and criminalizes discrimination and violence against women.

Helena Popovic – Researcher and teaching assistant at the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Political Science University of Zagreb, presented the experience of Croatia during the transition and the role of civil society in promoting women's rights. The transition from secular authoritarian socialist regime to a religiously oriented regime and "re-traditionalization" of society has severely affected women's rights. After reviewing theoretical conceptions of civil society, as well as some of the theoretical critiques, she highlighted the important role civil society and women's rights activism played in the implementation of the institutional

and legal framework for safeguarding women's rights in Croatia. These milestones however have not been sufficient, as there is still a grave need for effective implementation. She argued that after the institutional legal framework has been set, the support for the feminist cause is declining as the argument that the "mission being accomplished" has taken this "as a point of closure, not as a point of departure". She explained some of the current challenges faced by civil society, including the withdrawal of the international community in the 1990s and funding for women's groups and CSOs, and the project-driven and institutional nature of civil society that didn't bring expected changes in participation. Without undermining the positive achievements in gender equality legislation, Helena Popovic argued that since in Croatia a rapid transformation of legislation was pursued only on paper and not in reality, this highlights the need to keep a critical approach towards the whole model of liberal democracy.

Main Discussion Points

- A major topic of discussion was elaborating the challenges to women's active participation in democracy and proposing ways to address them. In the Syrian context, among the identified challenges the most resounding were the various processes that reduce women's self-worth and hence their sense of agency, the tyrannical political culture and patriarchal heritage which have historically isolated women's engagement and prohibit women from reaching high positions of decision-making. Last but not least, the serious threat posed by the rise of extremism and restrictions of the Islamists parties on women's rights. What is required then is to educate individuals to act themselves as citizens, to empower women with agency through awareness raising, to pinpoint the repercussions of ineffective participation and women's formal political participation, in order to undo the marginalization they have suffered.
- It was widely agreed upon that women's movements are intimately linked to the broader civil movement of building a democratic State and radical political reform. Women's rights are at the center of the political cause because the experience of oppression is not only exclusive to women, but questions all the values of society. Therefore the priority given to a political solution and transition into democracy and promoting women's rights should be inseparable from that aim. In this regard placing the civil status in close alignment with the political function status is vital.
- The compromises regarding women's rights in Syria made at the Cairo 2012 conference by the secular parties were identified as a real problem. In this regard the question of how a secular State can be totalitarian was raised. The experience of Croatia's secular socialist State was also one of "soft-authoritarianism". It was agreed that secularism which guarantees the separation of religion from politics and legislation, must be coupled with the democratic principles of equality and participation.
- The need of a legal basis for women's empowerment through establishing the necessary institutional legal framework was emphasized. The Croatian experience was used to elaborate this point, as it provides a basis for further action and also highlights the limitations when legal reforms are not respected in practice. This echoes earlier discussion on the insufficiency of a purely legal approach and the need to challenge socially embedded stereotypes and structures of power.
- Experiences of the challenges faced by women in European societies were shared to highlight the point that feminist analyses are marginalized due to its social transformative nature. The feminist ideal subverts all the structures of the patriarchal society and thus poses a real challenge to sources of power. However, feminism faces the issue of fragmentation, which hinders its influence and needs to be constantly rehabilitated. It can also easily be co-opted and so needs to be linked with other components of the democratic movement.
- Further, the "elite" nature of feminist activists which structures the way activism plays out and orients activities was debated. It was agreed that "elitism" in this sense is not necessarily a negative term, as much of the work of activism lies in the intellectual realm of articulating problems, but this must be

concurrently happening at both the grass-roots and policy making levels, combining a bottom up and top down approach.

- The participants - researchers and activists together - underlined that this forum allowed the creation of needed connections to make important steps towards strengthening of international solidarity and to develop collectively the tools in order to voice the struggle towards a global vision of gender equality.

Session 5: Citizenship, dignity, autonomy and security - violence against women as a central issue

Objectives of the session

This session emphasized that the number of women victims of sexual violence, murders and mutilations is increasing and violence against women is still widely socially tolerated. In spite of this knowledge there is no binding legal frame to face this situation. The session aimed to share positive experiences and lessons learned and to unveil different faces of violence, as economic dependency, precariousness, poverty, prostitution, and social exclusion. Furthermore it addressed the issue of freedom and security of women that have been increasingly threatened by the spread of religious fundamentalisms and communitarianism, both misogynistic in nature.

The session examined the need of a comprehensive approach to the international tools (Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and the Beijing Platform for Action) with a permanent link between democracy, citizenship, peace, economic justice and social justice.

Presentations

Sylvie **Cromer** – **Sociologist, University of Lille France**, shared experiences of gender based violence in France and fostered some collective solutions. Gender based violence has been invisible in the traditional academic studies on violence and she argued that preconceived notions that gender violence is linked to economic conditions and cultural problems have contributed to this. This manifests a major limitation to the experience of violence faced by women. As an example she mentioned France, where sexual harassment had no language for articulation. Nevertheless the work of women's groups since the 1970s has put the spotlight on gender violence, exploring its form and manifestations. Subsequent surveys on gender violence, including the first National Survey on Violence Against Women in France (ENVEFF) in 2000, have revealed the following findings: the majority of victims had spoken of violence for the first time; all social categories are affected, young women are more often victims in both the domestic sphere and in the work place and the experience of violence has also accumulated over life. These findings have led to the formulation of policies to train and support the victims. A recently launched survey of the National Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) in France in 2015 aims to obtain detailed knowledge on violence whilst taking into account the nature, frequency, overall duration and the different types of violence. Sylvie Cromer emphasized the fact that gender is a social construction based on the biological difference of sex, which is imposed and internalized through a daily learning process starting at birth, as in the words of Simone de Beauvoir: "one is not born a woman, but becomes one". She argued that this highlights the importance of the feminist ideological struggle to de-construct this discriminatory difference and demonstrate that there is no fundamental difference between the sexes.

Arguing that gender based violence is a major barrier to equal citizenship because it undermines the basic right to having control over one's own body, freedom of thought and financial autonomy, she went on to suggest some solutions: making international tools better known and fostering national legislation to implement these tools; reiterating the slogan of the 1993 Vienna conference that "women's rights are human rights"; developing qualitative and quantitative studies across regions and especially in regards to disadvantaged and marginalized groups who face intersecting inequalities; preventing violence through

education and eradication of sex stereotypes; building international alliances in fighting divisions between women and heightening the visibility of feminist objectives. In conclusion she emphasized that gender based violence is currently a social and political issue and the next step is to make it an international political issue.

Sabah Hallak – Syrian League for Citizenship, highlighted the violence against Syrian women experienced both during the current conflict and times of peace and the important role of international instruments in dealing with this issue. Following the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the adoption of a methodological framework to study and report on the status of women, the 2005 Syrian report showed the low status of women with regards to all the indicators. The major challenges in the Syrian context were identified as stemming from the religious division in the political and legal system, which divides between women of different religious denominations and legitimizes violence against women. She highlighted the various discriminatory elements in the penal code, which legitimize and do not sufficiently criminalize the murder of women by men in their family, known as “honor crimes”. Furthermore there are legal articles that justify marital rape by only recognizing and persecuting rapist who attack women “other than the spouse”, and the social insurance laws which refer to women as “minors” or “dependents”.



She emphasized that it is this type of discrimination, which is stipulated explicitly in legislation that is the greatest hindrance. It also suggests that implicit discrimination in social practices and mentalities are far worse when explicit discrimination, such as this, is so disempowering. The experience of gender-based violence has been exacerbated by the armed conflict, as rape crimes, kidnappings and torture proliferate in a context where the State legal system is already poorly equipped to criminalize violence against women in ordinary circumstances. This is in addition to what other presenters have previously described with regards to the disabilities and hindrances stemming from the overall context of totalitarianism and the limited scope of work of the civil society in such an environment. Women’s groups in Syria have approached the various political parties to ensure that women’s rights are included in their agendas but their actions have been greatly limited. In such a context, international instruments such as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women among others have been important guiding tools in the work of activists trying to elevate the status of women. Syrian civil society organizations have seized the opportunity to engage with these instruments. A shadow report submitted in 2007 has helped elaborate the founding principles for an engendered constitution. Sabah Hallak concluded with the vision of the Syrian League for Citizenship on how to link gender and citizenship based on four interrelated pillars: participation, freedom, responsibility and equality. Participation includes both women and men in developing a democratic State based on the principles of freedom and equality. Women must not only be empowered with knowledge about their rights but also, “breathe their rights day and night” in order to be empowered to participate in the male-dominated public sphere. She emphasized that entrenching a deep understanding of full citizenship is the only solution for equality in the democratic transition.

Main Discussion Points

- Participants in the discussion shared their experiences from their various types of work with vulnerable Syrian women displaced in Syria and in refugee camps in neighboring countries and highlighted the common problems and challenges they faced.
- It was noted that violence against women is not only perpetrated by men but takes many forms, even woman-on-woman violence. The psychological impact of rape crimes was illustrated by an example of

an inscription on the wall of a women's prison which read "this is day 325 after rape" as if the event robbed her of her previous life.

- The experiences of various activists working in camps highlighted the problems of translating ideas of gender equality to women who justify the inequality they face with religious ideology and scripture. Similar challenges arise when explicitly addressing issues of early marriages whose prevalence has increased since the beginning of the conflict. Furthermore it was said that some women accept gender-violence as natural or at least they believe that men have the right to physically and psychologically violate them.
- The discussion also led to a fruitful brainstorming on the types of solutions that would tackle these problems. Countering the argument that gender equality is a luxury in a conflict-ridden context, many agreed that despite the current challenges, the situation is ripe with potential for positive reform.
- Among the proposed solutions, education was strongly emphasized by many. Drawing parallels with the Croatian transition experience, the importance of civic education in molding future citizens was recognized. In this regard the negative impacts of education under the regime, which teaches children to be loyal to the paternal figure and instills a sense of guilt and shame in the children, was highlighted. Furthermore the Croatian experience underlined the significance of the fact that the immediate outcomes of the conflict will have inevitable consequences for the education system, as history is re-written by the conflict winners.
- In light of this it was agreed upon that the foundation of a healthy society begins with the children, including children in refugee camps who are more likely to be neglected. The educational groundwork should aim to foster the right attitudes of equality, participation, responsibility and freedom and build the necessary skills to promote social justice. This is a practical and local level proposal, which should be translated into action now during this transition period.
- In addressing the issue of women justifying or accepting violence the solution must include raising awareness among both women and men in an intensive and focused way. The need to educate men and raise awareness of women, including them both in activities promoting gender equality and women's rights at the local level, was reemphasized as crucial to ensure sustainability of this venture. Without the inclusion of men in the dialogue, the progress with women is ineffectual once they return to the home environment and fall into the same cycles of abuse.
- It was agreed that through addressing and raising awareness around the central issue of equal rights for women, other symptoms that arise when these rights are absent, such as justified violence and early marriages, will inevitably be addressed.
- The challenge remains of resistance to the terminology used by activists and how to enable women to have ownership over the ideas of gender equality and not view them as imposed or as western ideals. The language barrier was also highlighted by the fact that when notions as gender, violence and citizenship are brought up at the local level, they are often not understood.
- Furthermore, the need for transitional justice was emphasized repeatedly, as it was agreed that without the prosecution of war crimes and gender based violence during armed conflict, achieving equal rights is impossible. In this regard there is an urgent need to document and report on the violations against women during war times, as there are limited sources of data.
- The need for women's rights forums such as the current gathering was once again recognized as an important step forward, necessary in elevating women's experience of violence into the public sphere, whilst linking it with the various international frameworks.

Session 6: Citizenship under emerging challenges: Citizenship rights of displaced and refugee women and men

Objectives of the session

This session examined the challenges for citizenship under armed conflict especially the situation of refugee and displaced women who face double discrimination. It aimed to demonstrate the new challenges threatening citizenship, especially those emerging from the current changes in the Syrian conflict: A refugee loses the citizenship status in her/his native country as some laws in hosting countries deny citizenship rights to refugee women and men. Furthermore, the dramatic escalation of the political situation, including rising terrorism, is leading to the rise and expansion of religious fanaticism. The session tried to answer questions like: How to work on addressing the lack of basic citizenship rights of the current refugee crises? What is the impact of this situation on citizenship and how we can respond and prepare the future?

Presentations

Ibrahim Draji – Professor of Law at the University of Damascus. As Ibrahim Draji was not able to attend the conference, Hassan Abbas presented his paper. Ibrahim Draji aimed to enlighten the emerging challenges faced by citizenship in the context of war and the challenges of citizen rights faced by refugees. War and conflict, he argued may be a rare opportunity to reconstruct and critically reformulate what citizenship means. Giving a brief background on the status of Syrian internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region, he outlined the violations of rights they face in the places they seek refuge. According to recent estimates, there are approximately 5 million displaced Syrians, making Syria the country with the highest number of displaced for the first time. His paper argued that in order to properly evaluate the situation of IDPs we need to examine their rights beyond the stipulations in conventions and to make case study analysis to specifically pinpoint the extent and nature of the violations. The violations of rights are propagated by the policies of Arab countries, which treat them as foreigners and migrants and the non-ratification of international conventions protecting the rights of IDPs and refugees. However the rights of IDPs are human rights and in this regard, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which have been ratified by these States, serve as important instruments to pressure these governments into correcting their actions. He also presented the challenges posed by terrorism and religious extremism, which subvert the real meaning of citizenship and undermine human rights. Women as major victims of war find their burdens increased in the face of deteriorating economic conditions, the weakness of the State and its inability to interfere to ensure justice. Proposing some solutions in protecting the rights of IDPS, professor Draji argued there is a need to raise awareness among governments and politicize the issue; promote monitoring on the distribution of services; work with governments to protect the basic human rights of IDPs; and most importantly work on enhancing the values of citizenship. He emphasized that citizenship must be a prioritized topic and present at the very beginning of the negotiation on the transitional government in Syria.

Suzan Aref – Executive Director, Women Empowerment Organization Iraq, presented a comprehensive overview of the atrocious physical and psychological violations of human rights and human dignity suffered by Syrian women refugees in Iraq and Kurdistan. Her overview included the experiences of kidnapping, rape and torture, and the grievous injustices of stigmatizing sexual assaulted victims and threat of honor killings by their families. Women who suffer rape and sexual assault are made to feel ashamed and thus silenced rather than protected and supported. This increases their psychological



trauma and some have committed suicide as an escape from this painful aftermath. She outlined how living conditions within camps contribute to further violations including lack of sufficient security, rise in early marriages due to economic constraints, men deprived of their agency and channeling their frustration into domestic violence, poor girls school enrollment, to mention some. Aside from the context of conflict women still face the problem of honor killings, which are condoned by these States. Although the laws in Kurdistan have been amended to criminalize these murders, the implementation of the laws favors men. In light of all these violations and injustices, the need for a practical plan to implement UNSCR 1325, on Women, Peace and Security is more pressing than ever. The Iraqi women's groups and civil society organizations began this work in 2012 and with the support of Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI resulted in the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) that was adopted by Iraqi cabinet in April 2014. Despite this, the deletion of two pillars on economic empowerment and legislation and law enforcement, poses serious challenges. The work of women's groups through networking with national and international NGOs is pushing for the implementation of the NAP as it is an important way of addressing the needs of women and safeguarding their dignity as human beings.

Fateh Azzam – Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, provided a conclusive statement on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 including practical proposals to address each of its pillars. These four pillars of prevention, protection, participation and providing assistance constitute the discussions of the roundtable. He argued that prevention should include work both on culture and legislation and the latter should include explicit laws related to rape and honor crimes and eliminate laws that alleviate the causes of these violations, such as laws which sanction the marriage of rape victims as a way out of prosecuting criminals. There is a complete lack of protection for women in armed conflict and despite many voices protesting this no genuine attempts at guaranteeing protection have been made. Thus we need to think of strategies for protecting women in these contexts. Participation is an essential pillar as women cannot be protected if they don't participate in the negotiations and participate in developing strategies to protect themselves. Further, no one knows better than the victims themselves the challenges faced and solutions that are needed. Insufficient attention is given to the special needs of women in refugee communities, including situations for widows and single mothers. Furthermore no attention is given to the special circumstances of violence within the camps, including violence perpetrated by the camp guards that currently exists in some instances. He argued that the main responsibility of this implementation should be held by the State in the host countries, a responsibility which most Arab countries refuse to bear. Instead, these countries view it as the exclusive responsibility of United Nations organizations such as UNRWA and UNHCR to deal with refugees and they tend to approach the issue of refugees as a security issue rather than a humanitarian issue. Recognizing the rights of these refugees, such as the right to employment, would alleviate the burden of providing humanitarian assistance. But Fateh Azzam sadly reminded the audience that the political mentality of Arab States in dealing with refugees is one which forgets their humanity and denies their basic human rights. He argued that since the board of trustees of the UNHCR is made up of countries with diverse balance of power, decisions are often based on political reasons rather than humanitarian considerations. In this regard, it is the duty of civil society to pressure the UNHCR to bear its responsibilities and to hold it accountable to United Nations resolutions. The role of civil society as a watchdog to the United Nations and national governments, pressuring for the implementation of binding resolutions and legal obligations, is now more important than ever.

Main Discussion Points

- The discussion highlighted some of the key potentials and challenges of the UNSCR 1325 and its implementation. It was also a topic of debate as some of the perceived shortcomings were highlighted as were its strengths and further discussion on potential solutions for overcoming the challenges in implementation were proposed.
- The debate further highlighted challenges of interpretation that arise in implementing the resolution. The deleted two pillars of the Iraqi NAP1325 have to find their way back into the agenda through the

work of civil society because of their importance to women's groups and the cross sector committee developing the NAP.

- Another challenge to the implementation of UNSCR1325 is that it does not have the weight of sanctions. Therefore it is up to civil society groups to pressure for the implementation of the resolution nationally.
- It was explained that "protection" of women relies on those who violate women, as the armies enlisted for protection are often perpetrators of crimes against women. Some concrete practical suggestions were made such as appointing women as guards in refugee camps, and the establishment of a hotline run by women to report crimes.
- The discussion also addressed challenges of implementing the provision of services, including common problems of distribution as well as shortcoming with the institution of the UNHCR.
- Methodology of distribution was questioned, as some refugees were not receiving any services or assistance. Participants involved in service provision highlighted further shortcomings they have faced on the ground like a dependence on criteria such as vulnerable women, pregnant women and married men having priority for allocation of resources since home visits are not possible. These criteria have unintended negative consequences such as keeping women in their traditional role of vulnerable victims. This has been seen as both unfair and disempowering.
- While most of the work is conducted by local associations on the ground there are inadequacies of UN officials in the local context of implementation. In this regard, it was highlighted that the UNHCR is open to reform and civil society can always hold it accountable.
- Other proposals regarding the promotion of rights of refugees in host countries addressed the need for an association to mediate between refugee camps and politicians in the host governments in order to alleviate the tensions that prohibit a humanitarian response from these actors. In Lebanon the historical presence of the Syrian army exacerbates this tension against the current presence of refugees and reinforces the need for such an association.
- Other broader proposals on the work that is needed included the need to clarify the duties and responsibilities of citizens as a means to ensure effective citizenship; enhancing the feminist culture and gaining the support of men, including male religious leaders and politicians for its agenda; working with the media to raise awareness and foster positive values and close collaboration with legal scholars in order to influence legislation.

Summary of Day Two

The second day of the conference continued with making connections between citizenship rights, the political participation of women, violence against women and the status of refugees as consequences of war. The challenges to women's active and effective political participation were elaborated, among which the tyrannical political culture and patriarchal heritage. The serious threat posed by the rise of extremists and restrictions of the Islamists parties on women's rights was emphasized.

Common patterns of the exclusion of women in the sphere of political decision-making were highlighted as universal rather than specific to the local context. These common patterns of exclusion were demonstrated in the recent Syrian political context and despite the political parties claim for democracy and citizenship, women's rights and gender equality were still absent from their agendas.

It was emphasized that violations of women's rights have occurred since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, both at the hand of the regime and by Islamic extremists. The discussion also focused on how violence against women is one of the biggest impediments to achieving citizenship and political participation. The importance of considering violence against women in its continuum as being rooted in the interrelations between cultural, individual and structural factors was also discussed.

In addition to all the other forms of violence experienced by women, it was stressed that legal violence is one of the largest barriers because it is institutionalized into the constitution and legitimized in the penal code. Having matters related to religion as the basis of the constitution was stressed as a serious barrier to citizenship.

A few proposals for removing the obstacles to the access to citizenship rights and fostering a culture of citizenship were given, including civil education and legislative reforms. It was widely agreed upon that women's movements are intimately linked to the broader civil movement towards building a democratic State and radical political reform.

Among the lessons learned was that the priority to institutionalize gender equality should not be the end goal but rather the point of departure for implementation.

The importance of being aware of the instrumentalization of women and terminology on the political level, level of civil society and on the international level was emphasized.

It was also mentioned that the slogan of "women's rights are human rights" raised in 1993 must to be constantly re-iterated in our articulation of women's issues.

The importance of having a reference for achieving positive change was continually reiterated and in this regard the various international instruments and conventions serve as a critical resource, especially if they are approached in one common framework. Further, reports produced by the women's rights organizations, such as shadow reports, can be used as a point of reference for researchers, the international community and political parties.

The discussion of refugees highlighted that they are the most marginalized group both in the context of Syria and globally. Women refugees are especially vulnerable and suffer the most violations of their rights during war times as a result of the intersecting inequalities and marginalization associated with being a refugee and a woman.

This discussion was supplemented with how refugee rights can be supported in contexts where host countries were not signatories to the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees. It was reminded that most of these countries are however signatories to all human rights conventions and therefore the civil society can mobilize around these tools to hold their governments accountable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Developing qualitative studies on national, regional and international levels, which assess the rights of women, the extent and nature of their violations and ways to monitor their situation.
- Opening support centers that can contribute to enriching the knowledge of violence against women, providing rehabilitative, psychosocial support to victims, and especially in the case of sexual assault, countering the stigma of victimization.
- Building international alliances and strong networking across local, national and regional contexts.
- Supporting cultural exchanges and learning from each other's experiences in mobilizing for the common vision of women's rights and social justice.
- Organizing follow-up sessions on the roundtable discussion to work on smaller and more specific issues.
- Raising awareness around the international human rights and women's rights frameworks to make them better known as important resources in mobilizations across all levels. In this regard, the importance of the use of language in transferring these international values into the local context was highlighted.
- Ensuring education of children and youth in refugee camps during Syria's transitional period in order to foster positive values of gender equality and full citizenship. This means that a vision of equal citizenship for both men and women based on the principles of justice, equality and non-discrimination, needs to be promoted.
- Filling the knowledge gap through constructing research and collaboration between CSOs and academics, as well as developing university courses that explicitly focus on gender equality and feminist scholarship.
- Organizing lobbying groups to achieve the necessary balance of power required to pressure national host governments of refugees to bear their responsibilities in safeguarding and protecting the rights of these populations within their borders.
- Developing international solidarity as a priority in the aim of achieving a political solution as well as in articulating the direction of this political solution towards democracy and full citizenship for both women and men. Broad awareness raising and the use of the civil society platform to ensure the participation of women in the transitional process from the very beginning.
- Engaging with other social groups, especially in fostering the positive participation of young women and men that were in the front line of the uprising for democracy and found their contributions marginalized in the following political developments. In the words of one young participant: "There is an opportunity here to rebuild what we have inherited".
- Engaging men in the projects of gender equality and gaining their support in protecting and promoting the universal rights of women. The increasing number of feminist men, the likes of which were present at the roundtable, is a necessary step in creating lasting and effective change.



Citizenship, Gender and Democracy Building

9th – 10th February 2015

American University of Beirut, Lebanon

College Hall - Auditorium B1

The objectives of the roundtable:

- Provide space to women’s rights activists, human rights activists and researchers to discuss concepts and practices, share perspectives, broaden the concept of citizenship and come with recommendations to be adapted as a base for future work.
- Contribute to articulating the common obstacles to women’s full citizenship and opportunities that might enhance it in different contexts.
- Discuss methods and short and long term strategies aiming at ensuring equality of citizenship and provide policy recommendations.

<p>DAY ONE 09/02/2015 9:00 – 10:00</p>	<p><u>Opening Session: Welcome and introduction</u></p>
<p>09:00 – 09:15 09:15 – 10:00</p>	<p>Registration</p> <p>Welcome and presentation of the objectives of the roundtable The concept of citizenship has mobilized feminists, women rights activists, scholars and progressive politicians in the Euro-Med region to articulate a wide range of questions and demands. The notions of economic, political, social, cultural citizenship, to mention some, have been developed; however the gap between their normative status and their actual realization remains huge. Widening the traditional notion of citizenship by incorporating gender perspective is a necessity for the countries claiming to be democratic or undergoing transitions towards democracy.</p> <p>Introduction Hassan Abbas – Syrian League for Citizenship Lilian Halls French - Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI Fateh Azzam - Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship Diana Janse – Ambassador of Sweden, Damascus</p>

Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria through an inclusive Constitution Building Process



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10:00 – 11:30	<u>Session 1: Citizenship, Gender Equality and Power. Exclusion and Discrimination</u>
10:00 – 10:30	<p>We hear the term citizenship very often but with very different denotations; which forms of citizenship do the States offer today and what are their normative limitations and practices of exclusion? What are the visions for a citizenship from a gender perspective in a globalizing context of migration, forced mobility and occupation, economic crisis? The predominance of patriarchal gender power structures that create and reproduce subordination of women deprives women of their full citizenship. How does the concept of citizenship deal with power, inequalities, and difference? What are the different feminist and human rights approaches to holistic citizenship that address belonging to gender, class, ethnicity, colour and belief? Which perspectives for countries that undergo political transitions?</p> <p>This session will question citizenship in order to expand the denotation of the term and emphasise that gender equality is at the core of the term and not a plus. It aims to enlighten aspects of inequality in citizenship based on the categories above and how gender power misbalance influences citizenship and the access to human rights.</p>
10:30 – 11:30	<p>Keynote speakers</p> <p>Dina Kiwan - Associate Professor at the American University of Beirut Birte Siim - Feminist Research Center in Aalborg Denmark, Department of Culture and Global Studies</p> <p>Chair: Lilian Halls French</p>
11:30 – 12:00	Open Discussion
12:00 – 13:30	Coffee Break
12:00 – 13:30	<u>Session 2: Citizenship, from normative representations, gender stereotypes, public private division to inclusive relations between citizens.</u>
10:00 – 11:30	<p>Deeply rooted social roles and general tolerance of discrimination and violence against women, pressure both women and men to perform socially accepted roles, as well as discriminatory laws and/or practices, all these are barriers to full citizenship for women.</p>

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12:00 – 12:30	<p>This session will examine the different approaches of citizenship from juridical and normative definition to inclusive notion of relations between citizens and social representations and practices. It will also make the link between unequal sharing of duties within the familial and domestic space and unequal role and participation of women in the public space. It will uncover the link between private/public division and inclusion/exclusion of women's interest and needs.</p> <p>Keynote speakers</p> <p>Umut Erel - Faculty of Social Sciences, the Open University United Kingdom Ludmila Kostova – Head Department of English and American Studies and Gender Studies at University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria</p> <p>Chair: Omar al-Shaar</p>
12:30 – 13:30	Open discussion
13:30 - 15:00	Lunch
15:00– 16:30	Session 3: Citizenship, patriarchal cultures and traditions: From cultural diversity to universality of women's rights in the legislative and constitutional frame
15:00 – 15:30	<p>The concept of citizenship is not only degraded by the practices and discourses of the governments and institutions, but also in the public opinion, including among youth. Cultural relativism is coming as a support to the conservative streams, contributing further to human rights violations- and first women's rights - in the name of "culture and tradition". It is needed to start citizenship education as early as in primary classes; education with gender equality and human rights for both women and men as a pillar for true citizenship. Legislating equal and full citizenship in a constitutional reform and raising awareness are needed strategies in countries in political transition.</p> <p>Keynote speakers</p> <p>Leila AL Ali – Association Najdeh, Palestine, Lebanon Kawa Hassan – Visiting Scholar, Carnegie Middle East Center, Lebanon and Middle East Expert/Knowledge Officer, Hivos, the Netherlands</p> <p>Chair: Hassan Abbas</p>
15:30 – 16:30	Open discussion
16:30 – 17:15	Wrap up and conclusions first day
19.30 -	Dinner at the hotel

Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria through an inclusive Constitution Building Process



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DAY TWO 10/02/2015 09:00 – 10:30	Session 4: Citizenship and Participation in public and political life
09:00 – 09:30	<p>The political context opened in the MENA region opened space for democratizing political systems and laws. However, conservative and traditional trends together with religious fundamentalist movements are confronting the right of women to be full citizens by limiting their access to political life and decision making. To achieve democracy requests equal political participation and role of women and gender equality at the top of the decision makers’ agendas. This means addressing structural inequalities that hinder equal access to responsibilities among others in the political sphere. This session will examine strategies to put gender equality and women’s participation on the transitional agendas towards full citizenship for women and men.</p> <p>Keynote speakers</p> <p>Lama Kanout – Syrian Feminist Lobby Helena Popovic –Researcher and a teaching assistant at the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb</p> <p>Chair: Salam Kawakibi</p>
09:30 – 10:30	<p>Open discussion</p>
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break
11:00 – 12:30	Session 5: Citizenship, Dignity, Autonomy and Security - Violence against women as a central issue
	<p>The number of women victims of sexual violence, murders, and mutilations is considerable and widely socially tolerated. In spite of this knowledge there is no binding legal frame to face this situation. This violence has also for faces economic dependency, precariousness, poverty, prostitution, social exclusion. Freedom and security of women, where such exist; are threatened in many countries in Euro-Med, like all over the world the increasing of religious fundamentalisms and communitarianism both misogynists, is leading to limiting women’s rights. This session will examine the need of a comprehensive approach of the international tools (CEDAW, the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and the Beijing Platform for Action) with a permanent link between democracy, citizenship, peace, economic and social justice.</p>

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11:00 –11:30	<p>Key note speakers</p> <p>Sylvie Cromer – Sociologie, Sociologue Université de Lille, France Sabah Hallak – Syrian League for Citizenship</p> <p>Chair: Khaled Bitar</p>
11:30 – 12:30	Open discussion
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:30	<p>Session 6: Citizenship under Emerging Challenges: Citizenship rights of displaced and refugee women and men</p> <p>This session will examine the challenges for citizenship under armed conflict especially the situation of refugee and displaced women who face double discrimination. It aims to demonstrate the new challenges threatening citizenship, especially those emerging from the structural changes that our societies are experiencing. Most importantly:</p> <p>Displaced: Refugee loses the citizenship status in her/his native country. Some laws in hosting countries deny citizenship rights to refugee women and men. Is it possible to work on making any difference to grant the refugee his/her basic citizenship right?</p> <p>Terrorism: the dramatic escalation of the political situation in the Middle East is leading to the rise and expansion of the religious fanaticism and terrorism. What is the impact of this situation on citizenship and how we can respond and prepare the future?</p>
14:00 –14:30	<p>Keynote Speakers</p> <p>Ibrahim Draji - Professor of Law at the University of Damascus Suzan Aref – Executive Director, Women Empowerment Organization, Iraq</p> <p>Chair: Faek Hweijeh</p>
14:30 - 15:30	Open Discussion
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee break
16:00 – 17:00	<p>Open discussion: Conclusions and Recommendations Boriana Jonsson and Sabah AL Hallak</p>

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Mr. Hassan Abbas

Mr. Hassan Abbas obtained a Ph.D. in literary criticism at the University of Sorbonne Nouvelle in France in 1992, after which he returned to Syria as a professor at the French Institute for the Near East. Until 2006 he has held periodic cultural activities at the Institute under the name of "Gathering cultural forum" organizing more than four hundred events. He managed two cinema clubs and contributed to the establishment of a number of civil associations in the field of culture, citizenship and human rights.

Mr. Abbas has published many articles in universities magazines and in scientific journals. He has written four books, including a "Citizenship manual" in collaboration with the artist Ahmed Mualla and "Syria, the vision of heaven" in collaboration with the photographer Hisham Zauwayt. Mr. Abbas has also translated a number of studies from French, including "The Vision Machine" by Paul Virillio. He has been invited as a lecturer at a number of universities and institutes in Arab and European countries and has participated in more than forty international scientific conferences on the issues of citizenship, culture and cultural exchange in the Euro-Mediterranean space.

Mr. Abbas is a founder and a president of the Syrian League for Citizenship.

Presentation: "Citizenship is a culture in the first place"

Abstract

The political and media publications, which have dealt with issues of the Arab Work since the start of the so-called Arab Spring until the disastrous conditions we face today, have backed with the term "citizenship". However, the greater part of these publications deals with the term in mono-political indication that places the academic researcher and the civil activist at the same time before the issue of meaning as to the prior (researcher) and the issue of objective as to the latter (activist).

What does "citizenship" mean? Should we engage wholly in the state of intellectual laziness that fascinates us by the positive halo of the term "citizenship" and then to use it as oratorical anesthetic like the repeated case in the Arab political discourse, without focusing on its real meaning? The citizenship is the objective of the civil action, what does this mean? Is it a ready formula to be understood and implemented to change the situations?

These questions are raised by the researcher in order to probe for characteristics of the citizenship that suits the Middle East communities; a citizenship that cannot be far from the politician, but it is not confined to its limits. A citizenship that permeates into all channels of human activity in which the man feels engaged as long as he considers himself a citizen. In other words, a citizenship that has transformed into a culture that organizes all relationships of a person in the world in which he lives.



Ms. Lilian Hals French

Ms. Lilian Halls-French is a French sociologist. She worked the largest part of her professional life as researcher in different institutions, public firms and public administrations on the issues of work, mobility and security from a gender perspective. She has been teaching sociology for some years and has been professionally involved in the political sphere as adviser on women's rights to different Ministers and as a Head of Ministerial Cabinet. Lilian Halls-French has been permanently involved on political and associative level for women's rights. She is now the co-President of the Euromed

Feminist Initiative IFE-IFE.

Presentation: "Women full citizenship is a decisive challenge for democracy"

Abstract

In spite of all the speeches, declarations and resolutions, equality between women and men seems to remain an unreachable goal, both in the private and public spheres. Can we talk about women's citizenship while their fundamental rights are not ensured, are constantly violated, threatened or denied all over? Level of access for women to full citizenship is not only a measure of democracy but it also unveils the close relationships between power and domination that structure our societies.



Mr. Fateh Azzam

Mr. Fateh Azzam is Director of the Asfari Institute for Civil Society at the American University of Beirut. He was previously the Regional Representative for the Middle East of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Director of the Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Program at the American University in Cairo, Program Officer for Human Rights at the Ford Foundation's Offices in Lagos and Cairo, and Director of the Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq. Mr. Azzam has authored numerous articles and studies in Arabic and English on human rights, Arab states and UN human rights mechanisms, the right to development, civil and political rights in Arab constitutions, the

Responsibility to Protect, and other topics. He holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex. His volunteer activities regionally and internationally include leading the process of establishing the Arab Human Rights Fund, the first Arab funding organization focused on support for human rights activities. He is currently a member of the Independent Commission for Human Rights, the Palestinian national human rights institution. Mr. Azzam is also active in the theater world and has published two plays, *Ansar* and *Baggage*, which continue to be performed.



Ms. Dina Kiwan

Dr. Dina Kiwan is Associate Professor at the American University of Beirut, since September 2012. Educated at the Universities of Oxford, Harvard and London, she was previously Senior Lecturer in Citizenship Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Co-Director of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship. Publications include *Kiwan (2008). Education for Inclusive Citizenship (Routledge)*, and *Kiwan, D. (ed). (2013) Naturalization Policies, Education and Citizenship: Multicultural and Multination Societies in International Perspective (Palgrave Macmillan)*. Policy and consulting experience includes appointment to the UK's Home Office 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group advising on citizenship policy, consulting the Lebanese government on teacher-training for religious diversity management (2013), and she

is currently conducting research for an Oxfam-funded project on women's participation and leadership in Lebanon, Jordan and Northern Iraq.

Presentation: "Women as 'sub-citizens': nationality and refugee policies in the Arab world"

Abstract

We have witnessed widespread revolts across the Arab world, since December 2010, with a heightened focus on 'human rights', 'citizenship' and democracy. Discourses on women's inclusion as equal citizens in the Arab world are positioned in this context. In addition, this region is now facing the largest refugee crisis in recent history, with the exodus of refugees from Syria. 78% of registered refugees are women and children, thereby having significant implications with regards to emerging contestations of 'citizenship', 'gender' and 'human rights'. Dominant conceptions of citizenship in the Arab world are patriarchal, resulting in women's sub-status as citizens. This is evident for example, whereby women cannot pass on their nationality to their children (as is the case in Lebanon), and humanitarian discourses emphasize the 'vulnerability' of refugees, especially the sexual vulnerability of female refugees. This presentation reviews current policies in the domain of nationality law, immigration and the treatment of refugees with respect to gender.



Ms. Birte Siim

Ms. Birte Siim is political scientist and Professor in Gender Research in the Social Sciences, Dept. of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University (AAU), Denmark: She is the Danish coordinator of bEUcitizen: All Rights Reserved? Constraints and Contradictions of European Citizenship, EC, 7. FW (2013-2017), RAGE: Hate Speech and Populist Othering in Europe through the Racism Gender, Age Looking Glass, EC Directorate of Justice (2013-2015). She has published extensively on gender and politics, democracy, citizenship and the welfare state from comparative European perspectives. Recent publications include: "Gender Diversities – Practicing Intersectionality in the European Union. Ethnicities. 2014 (14) 4: 539-555 (with L. Rolandsen Agustin); "Conflicts and Negotiations about Framings of Gender and Ethnicity by Political Actors in the European Public Sphere", Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy, 2014 (30) 01; "Political Intersectionality and Democratic Politics in the European Public Sphere", Politics & Gender, 2014 (10) 01: 117-124; The Intersections of

Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere (with M. Mokre), Palgrave/Macmillan 2013, and "Citizenship" in K. Celis, V. Waylen (eds.), The Oxford Handbook on Gender and Politics, Oxford University Press, 2013. Her current research include intersectionality, democratic diversity, populism, nationalism, and post-national solidarity.

<http://vbn.aau.dk/da/searchall.html?searchall=Birte+Siim+>

Presentation: "Reframing Citizenship and Gender Justice – transnational and intersectional perspectives"

Abstract

Marshall's classical formulation of citizenship was associated with equal rights and duties of citizens within the nation state (Marshall 1950). It was at the same time based upon inequality within the category citizen, i.e. based on gender and ethnicity, as well between citizens and non-citizens. During the last 20 years processes of globalization, European integration and immigration have increased inequalities within the nation state as well as inequalities between nationals for example between European citizens and third country nationals. These developments have contributed to challenge the classical understanding and have inspired scholarly debates about reframing of the classical model.

The notion of citizenship is contextual depending on national histories and the particularity of places and spaces. This presentation will explore the theoretical and normative problems and potentials to reframe the concept of citizenship to include visions of gender equality and gender justice within and beyond the nation states (Siim 2013). One crucial issue is how to expand the understanding of citizenship to include cultural diversity within the nation state. Scholars have proposed a *multicultural citizenship* (Kymlicka 1995), which recognizes the diversity and accommodate the cultural difference of minority groups within the nation states. Another crucial issue is how to expand citizenship to the *transnational/global level*. Scholars have proposed a notion of *rooted cosmopolitan citizenship* (Benhabib 2006) beyond the national state. The recent political and economic crisis has inspired debates about gender equality and gender justice within and beyond the nation state. Feminist scholarship has started to explore intersections of gender, class and diversity at local, national and transnational levels (Lombardo, Meier & Verloo 2009; Siim & Mokre 2013) and to reframe theoretical approaches to citizenship from intersectional and transnational perspectives (Yuval-Davis 2011; Fraser 2013).

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- Yuval-Davis, N. (2011). *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*, London: Sage Publications.



Ms. Umut Erel

Dr. Umut Erel is a Sociologist at the Open University, UK. She has widely published on migration, ethnicity, gender and class. She is interested in how these issues play out in practices of citizenship, differentiated along gender and ethnic lines. Currently she is exploring migrant women's mothering practices as citizenship practices in their own right and with respect to shaping their children's ethnic, cultural, political identities and modes of citizenship. She has undertaken a study on Polish and Kurdish mothers and one on European Union citizens migrant mothers in

London. She is Principal Investigator, with Prof. Tracey Reynolds (CI) of an AHRC networking activity on migrant mothers' citizenship and participatory theatre 'Migrant Mothers Caring for the Future'. <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/migrant-mothers/index.php> She acted chaired the Commission on Ethnic Diversity of Milton Keynes Council's Children's and Families Partnership (2012-14). Recent publications include: a Special Issue of Social Politics March 2012 (coedited with Fiona Williams and Deborah Brennan) 'Transnational Care: Changing Formations of Citizenship, Family and Generation'; a Special Issue of European Journal of Women's Studies (co-edited with Helma Lutz) on 'Gender and Transnationalism' November 2012. A monograph on Migrant Women Transforming Citizenship. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009; 'Reframing Migrant Mothers as Citizens', Citizenship Studies Nov. 2011, 'Complex belongings: Racialization and migration in a small English city', Ethnic and Racial Studies Dec 2012, 'Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies' Sociology 2010 vol. 44:4 (642-660); 'Gendering Transnational Cultural Capital', Special Issue on Gender and Transnationalism of European Journal of Women's Studies, November

2012; 'Kurdish Mothers in London Enacting Citizenship' Citizenship Studies Special Issue on Reproducing Citizens, December 2013.

Presentation: "Gender and Citizenship: crossing the public/ private divide - beyond difference or equality"

Abstract

Citizenship is an increasingly popular concept in academia but also in policy circles. While we often encounter celebratory uses of the concept of citizenship, it is important to keep in mind that it encompasses struggles over who can legitimately claim and substantiate rights, who can be included into the community of citizens. My talk looks at citizenship as encompassing issues of belonging and participation, as much as formal rights. In the context of gender, citizenship has held the promise of equality, yet, in its very conception, citizenship has been formulated as the right of men as representatives of their families. Women's role as citizens has been conceptualized as chiefly the social, biological and cultural reproduction of a citizen body. While this contribution to citizenship has been valued, it has been seen as located within the private realm of the home. This in turn has been seen as separate from public political engagement, which has been seen as the corollary of citizenship. Feminist theorists and activists in turn have challenged the private/ public divide and argued that citizenship, to be increasingly inclusive needs to address both demands for equality and respect differences of gender but also different experiences of gender including those of ethnicity, class and ability and the inequalities associated with these.



Ms. Ludmila Kostova

Ms. Ludmilla K. Kostova is Professor of British literature and gender studies at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria. She has published on gender issues in travel and intercultural encounters as well as on gender relations in present-day Bulgarian society. Her book *Tales of the Periphery: the Balkans in Nineteenth-Century British Writing* (1997) has been frequently cited by specialists in the field. Together with Charles Forsdick and Corinne Fowler, Kostova is editor of *Travel Writing and Ethics. Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2013). Kostova is a member of the editorial boards of *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, the Internet journal *TRANS*, *Word and Text* (A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics, University of Ploiesti, Romania) and the *Annals of Ovidius University, Constanta, Romania*.

Presentation: "Male Leaders and Female "Caretakers": Gender Dynamics in the Political Life of a South Eastern European Society in Transition"

Abstract

The issue of citizenship has long been of interest to both gender studies theorists and social activists. While it is generally assumed that in contemporary democracy citizenship is a universal category functioning independently of gender, race and class and that in EU countries, such as Bulgaria, gender equality is legally guaranteed, there are numerous cases of the subordination and marginalization of women.

My talk focuses on gender dynamics in Bulgarian political life over the lengthy period of 25 years commonly recognized as the country's long-drawn transition from a one-party state socialist system with a command economy to pluralistic democracy and a market economy. The period in question has been characterized by gender imbalance in political decision-making bodies. The imbalance is due to a variety of factors including the survival of the notion of separate spheres, the weakness of civil society, and the absence of participatory predisposition among women. In the political sphere, the essentialist structuring of gender identities has repeatedly manifested itself in the simplistic distinction between powerful male leaders and subservient

female “caretakers.” In the concluding part of my talk, I dwell on the possibility of moving beyond such dichotomies through a rethinking of both gender and democratic citizenship.



Ms. Leila AL Ali

Ms. Leila Al Ali is a Palestinian feminist and Political activist since 1982. She is a promoter Palestinian national and Human rights, with a particular focus on women. She was the vice- President of the General Union of Palestinian Students in Lebanon (1990-2004). She has been the Executive Director of Association Najdeh Since 2004 and also become its Vice- President in 2008. Najdah is a development NGO that works with women and children in refugee camps and gathering in Lebanon.

Abstract

In many cases, and specifically among minorities and marginalized groups, human rights are violated in general, and the rights of women in special, under the pretext of privacy, not only for the cultural privacy, but also for the National Privacy and /or in order to preserve national rights. This is what happened and is currently happening in the Palestinian case, and among the circles of Palestinian refugees of women and men in Lebanon, whereas a violation is applied systematically and continuously on all human rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Also violation affects some legal rights of Lebanese women in general because of the privacy situation of Palestinian women, as is the case for the non-adoption of the Nationality Law of Lebanese women.



Mr. Kawa Hassan

Mr. Kawa Hassan works as a Middle East expert/Knowledge Officer at the Dutch INGO Hivos where he coordinates the Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asia and a Visiting Scholar at Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut. His research focuses on civil society, democratization, donor assistance, Middle East and Kurdish politics. Prior to these assignments, he worked for UNDP and INGOs in Sri Lanka, Iraq and the Netherlands. He holds a Master’s degree in political sciences (specialisation international relations) from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands and studied English and German at Almustansyria University in Bagdad, Iraq.

Abstract

Given contemporary and historic cases of instrumentalisation and marginalisation of women's rights during and after transitions and revolutionary changes (e.g: Iran after 1979, Egypt, Libya, Syria after 2011), to name a few) there is an absolute and urgent need for prioritizing full and equal citizenship rights of Syrian women as stipulated in international conventions. At the same time it is crucial to bear in mind that we have to be aware of unintended negative impacts of labels such as universalism and cultural relativism on the struggle for gender equality in Syria. These labels can have positive and negative impacts. Therefore I it would be essential to couple our struggle for full and equal citizenship rights for Syrian women with serious attempts to think and act beyond binaries of universalism and cultural relativism. This way we ensure our engagement is sustainable and reaches large segments of society.



Ms. Lama Kannout

Ms. Lama Kannout is a Syrian political and women rights activist. She holds a BA in interior design and owns and directs Lama Advertising Agency since 1992. She was a member of the political office of The Arab Socialists Movement between 2000 and 2008. Mrs. Kannout cofounded several civil society organizations such as Musawa Organization, which is part of the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy (CSWD); she also cofounded the Syrian Center for Citizenship, and The Syrian Feminist Lobby of which she is the coordinator of the Studies Committee. In addition, Mrs. Kannout is a member of the follow up committee of the Syrian Women Initiative for

Peace and Democracy (SWIPD).

Abstract

How do the political opposition forces which believe in democracy and the state of citizenship present the women's rights in their literature? And does this reflect on ratios of women's access to in the decision-making positions? I will talk about 10 political opposition forces that have been established since March 2011, and how they deal with issues of the women's rights in their literature.

Further, what are the roles entrusted to the parties to reinforce the women's political participation access to the decision-making positions in a critical stage of history of Syria.

What is the role of women in listing the gender equality in agendas of the decision makers so that their rights are present in the next transition period?



Ms. Helena Popović

Ms. Helena Popović is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She teaches classes on media and communication theory and research methods. Helena received her PhD in Communication Studies, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where she defended her thesis on media audiences and television genres. She completed her MA at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Budapest where she wrote her thesis on media and civil society in Croatia. She also studied Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb and completed a one-year program at the Centre for Women's Studies in Zagreb. She has published articles on media and civil society, media systems, media audiences, gender and political participation... and has taken part in numerous research projects in Croatia

such as The public, elites, *media* and *communication strategy* of accession to the EU; Media Culture in Contemporary Croatia: Media Pluralism and Media Policy; Cultural Diversity, Intercultural Communication and Digital Culture; Media, Communication and Culture Aspects of Civil Society. She has also participated in international projects dedicated to the advancement of undergraduate and graduate teaching (OSI-HESP Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching: «*Alternative Culture Beyond Borders: Past and Present of the Arts and Media in the Context of Globalization*») as well as policy oriented projects regarding the media in post-socialist countries (EU/IPA/CSF, EU FP7, COST A30). Her current projects include media and civic participation, media audiences, policy and regulation in Croatia.

Presentation: "Gender Equality Struggle: Potentials and Constraints in Democratization Processes"

Abstract

The abrupt structural changes that occurred in the last two and a half decades in South East Europe created a peculiar setting in which elements of the former socialist system and elements of the early stage of liberal

democracy were additionally complicated with war and the authoritarian regimes of the nineties. The collectivist ideology of both the socialist and nationalist/authoritarian regimes, as well as the extensive state affected the sense of 'self' in these societies that resulted in the suppression of various forms of individual action, mostly visible in marginalized grass-root activism and an overall weak civil society. In addition, in the past two and a half decades, retraditionalization of society has been undergoing, i.e. the role of women has mainly been reduced to the 'proper private sphere', or alternatively - in public life - to guardians of traditional values. Regardless of the fact that strong institutional and financial support was ensured by the international community during this period, the impact has been weak in terms of implementation of gender equality. This can partially be tied to the peculiarities of the post-socialist region, but also to much broader neoliberal trends that have swept across the West in the last few decades: the retreat of the welfare state and cutbacks in the public sector, commodification, concentration of power, lack of political participation and the crises of representative democracy as a model. Thus, the presentation will outline the broader structural constraints that needs to be taken into consideration in gender equality struggle as a part of democracy building. In addition, it will point at some of the strategies of women's activist groups in Croatia that have, to a certain extent, enhanced gender equality in a quite unfavorable social setting.



Ms. Sylvie Cromer

Ms. Sylvie Cromer is a French sociologist teaching in the University of Lille 2 and research associate to the National Institute of Demography Studies. She works on violence against women since the late 1980 years and especially on violence at work place. Since 2011 she is part of the coordination team of the national enquiry VIRAGE (violence and gender) that will be launched beginning of 2015 towards 35 000 women and men in France. Besides she works on sexualized representations in the vehicles for socialization approached as cultural productions and learning tools such as youth illustrated albums and books, magazines, school books, shows for young audience.

Abstract

The most prestigious academic disciplines, such as political science and philosophy, have theorized for centuries the multifaceted phenomenon of violence, exploring its nature, its forms, its roots...Despite an extensive conceptualization, gender based violence has never been examined: ostracism against feminist approaches, which emphasize this theme, and most generally, resistance to take in account gender in sciences are the main cause of this "omission". Since the 70's, Women liberation movements have highlighted these violences, and established them as a public issue. They imposed the transnational concept of "violence against women" as a "manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men" (Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 20 December 1993).This definition represents an international consensus on how to conceptualize the dynamics of gender-based violence and encompasses child sexual abuse, coercive sex, rape, stalking, and intimate partner violence... We provide a brief 'story' how gender-based violence was taken in account in France by activists and researchers (often the same), before giving an overview of a new French survey, VIRAGE (Violence and Gender Relations), in order to share an inventory and foster collective strategies for the elimination of gender-based violence.



Ms. Sabah Alhallak

Ms. Sabah Alhallak is a board member of the Syrian Women's League and a founding member of Syrian League for Citizenship. She is a women's rights activist, CEDAW expert with focus on women's citizenship equal rights. She is a certified gender trainer and has been involved in many training workshops across the Arab region. Mrs. Alhallak is active in both international and national processes related to women's representation in peace building and transition for a new democratic Syria. She has recently participated in a UN General Assembly event on Syria,

meetings with the office of the Commission of Inquiry to Syria, Syrian civil society meetings in Geneva and Amman hosted by UN Women, events in the Human Rights Council and the CEDAW pre-session, in addition to other key meetings in the region. In her work in the frame of the Syrian League for Citizenship, Mrs. Sabah Alhallak reviews all the gender aspect of the organization, on citizenship values, the relation between the citizens and the state, the involvement of the citizen in the building of the state. Sabah Alhallak also works with Syrian women refugees with women's rights NGO KAFA Lebanon. From 2013 Sabah Alhallak was Director international campaign woman and peace in Syria and from 1999-2002, Sabah Alhallak was member in administrative board at national dialog (NGO).

Abstract

The number of female victims of sexual abuse, homicide and deformations is very large. At large, these crimes are socially tolerated and overlooked. However, there is no binding legal framework to deal with this situation. This violence is shown in forms of economic dependence, fragility, poverty, harlotry and social exclusion. The women's freedom and security (if they exist) are threatened in several Euro-Mediterranean countries as is the case in many countries in the world. The growing religious and popular fundamentalism that opposes women will lead to limit women's rights. This session will discuss the necessity of holistic approach of the international tools (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, UN Security Council's resolutions: 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889, and Beijing Platform for Action), and the continuing connection of democracy, citizenship, peace, economic and social justice.

My interposition includes the following points:

- To talk briefly on the international resolutions related to the protection of women in the armed conflicts.
- Articles and recommendations (29-30) of CEDAW agreement.
- To display what Syrian women have done by using these tools.
- Fundamental principles of the constitution "Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy".
- Shadow report on CEDAW, Initiative of Syrian Women for Peace and Democracy.
- The effect of the growing religious fundamentalism on rights of Syrian women (ISIS and Al-Nusra).

Conclusion: the Syrian women's look for Syria as a state of citizenship, to ensure all rights of Syrian women.



Mr. Ibrahim Draji

Dr. Ibrahim Darajji is a Syrian academic, holding PhD in the International Law. He worked as an instructor in Department of Law in University of Damascus. For ten years, he worked on issues of trafficking in persons and refugees in Syrian and the Arab World by virtue of his previous work with the International Organization for Migration, and his current work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He produced several publications issued by the international organizations on these issues. Since 2011, he has worked on legal protection issues within mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Syria.

Presentation: "Emerging Challenges Faced by Citizenship: Citizenship Rights of Male and Female IDPs and Refugees"

Abstract

If the concept of citizenship faces, in the peacetime, significant challenges and several obstacles that hinder it from being activated, applied and available to all, these challenges magnify as the obstacles increase at the time of "wars and conflicts" where the basic human rights are violated and infringed; the right to life and all other basic rights. This damages and limits the essence of citizenship.

Unfortunately, the current Syrian situation shows that we retreat to the "pre-citizenship" stage, where the narrower belonging (religious, sectarian, tribal or geographical) has become the dominant belonging neglecting the sense of citizenship.

In this theme, we will answer a set of fundamental questions:

1. How is the concept of citizenship affected in cases of internal displacement?

Here, we will discuss fundamental issues that emphasize that the case of displacement should not be an excuse to derogate or limit rights, rather it is a realistic and legal case that requires maintaining all basic rights and supporting them with additional rights to be granted and secured.

We will examine the legal reference that should govern the cases of internal displacement, and whether the state is plenipotentiary in this case. We will also present the enforceable intentional standards including the guidelines concerning the internal displacement issued by the United Nations General Assembly.

We will focus on explaining:

1. What should be the reality?
2. How is reality in fact, what are its reasons?
3. How could we change the reality?

2. Refugees and issues of citizenship

We will deal with the relation of refugees with their homeland and how the citizenship relation could be maintained.

Further, we will explain situation of refugees in the host country, and whether they deserve "citizenship rights" or basic "human and refugee rights" in these countries. In this context, we will briefly explain status of the Syrian refugees in these countries, whether the neighboring countries or the host European countries.

We will show difference in legal references in the host countries and the implications of this on the refugees.

Also, we will deal with situation of the countries hosting Syrian refugees that don't adopt any legal reference concerning the refugees (like, for example, Jordan and Lebanon). We will discuss what may be made to grant them the minimum basic rights.

3. Citizenship and the challenges faced by the female displaced persons and refugees including increased phenomena of violence and extremism:

Here, we will deal with basic issues found in the Syrian reality especially those related to child marriage and trafficking in female refugees and implications of this on the values of citizenship. In this context, we will suggest actions to avoid these phenomena that will have extremely dangerous future implications on both the women (the current victim) and the children produced from these relationships (future victims).



Ms. Suzan Aref

Ms. Suzan Aref is a Kurdish graduate of the technical Institute Department of Management. She completed the executive program for private enterprise Development at the Harvard University's Kennedy School of the Government. She is the Founding Director of the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) and the Deputy Chairperson of the Kurdistan Women Business Association. She was the Assistant Advisor for Sustainable Development to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), office of the Prime Minister. Currently Mrs. Aref is a consultant in organizational development, capacity building and activities that strengthen disadvantaged women. Among her achievement is the establishment of a business center to support start-ups in developing business and training

women from government in drafting the Iraq Constitution.

Presentation: "Iraqi Women, Peace and Security"

Abstract

Discussing the difficult stage of which Iraq is witnessing nowadays is more profound for those who are involved in the political affairs and certainly much more profound when women discuss it. Armed terrorist groups are trying to sabotage our cities and our institutions attacking Iraq through spreading fear and intimidation in several provinces that had been exposing daily to consecutive security breaches, and this has forced the residents to depart from their houses where their cities have been destroyed. The deterioration in the security situation has restricted the movement of civilians, especially women and it affected their performance due to challenges.

Annex C - Moderators biographies



Mr. Omar Al-Shaar

Mr. Omar Al-Shaar is a journalist and translator and a human rights defender. He has served as editor in chief of the English language section of the DP-Press News website since 2011. Mr. Al-Shaar also wrote and participated at some TV and Online outlets of National, Regional & International Media agencies. He has been involved in many activities and campaigns related to human rights, civil rights and citizenship, CEDAW and freedom of media.

Mr. Al-Shaar is a co-founder of the NGO “Maratous for Citizenship and Human Rights” which is a member of many national, regional and international initiatives and coalitions. He was detained twice between November 2013 and January 2015 after being involved in peaceful activities.

Mr. Al-Shaar is presently a communication officer for Maratous NGO.



Mr. Salam Kawakibi

Mr. Salam Kawakibi is Deputy Director of Arab Reform Initiative and President of Initiative for a New Syria, Senior Fellow with the Centre for Syrian Studies at the University of St Andrews. Between 2009 and 2011, he was principal researcher at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam and between 2000 and 2006, he was director of the Institut Français du Proche Orient (IFPO) in Aleppo, Syria. Salam has published numerous essays in edited volumes and specialized journals in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and German. His last publication: “Syrian Voices from Pre-Revolution Syria: Civil Society Against all Odds” (Hivos, 2013).
<http://www.arab-reform.net/salam-kawakibi-0>



Mr. Khaled Bitar

Mr. Khaled Al Bitar was born 1974 in Syrian. He studied economics at Damascus University and holds an MBA from Arab Academy for Science Technology and Maritime Transport with focus on Strategic Management. In 2008 he joined UNDP as National Project Director for the project of "NGO platform in Syria". From the beginning of the Syrian crisis he started working on peace initiatives on local community level and on political level. Mr. Khaled Al Bitar managed a project to establish peace building blocks in different locations and areas in Syria and the Syrian Network for Peace. Now he is member at the Peace Advisory Unit which aims to support the mission of the UN Special Envoy to Syria and a member at the management board of Tamas (The Syrian Civil Coalition). He also works as team leader at ESCWA for the project on the National Agenda for Future Syria.

Mr. Faek Hwaijeh



Mr. Faek Hwaijeh is a Founding member of Equal Citizenship Center, which is a human rights center focusing on human rights, legal and constitutional studies. He's a lawyer at the law firm Damascus branch of the Bar Association in Syria. He participated in several conferences discussing the constitution building in Syria, the Constitution and the transitional phase in Syria, civil society and democratic state, the constitution building from gender perspective, transitional justice in Syria and transitional justice and civil peace. He has different publications tackling the analysis of the Syrian Constitution of 1973 and 2012, the civil society, the political money, and the constitutional principles.

Ms. Boriana Jönsson



Ms. Boriana Jönsson is a women's rights and peace advocate with a long and extensive experience in development and solidarity cooperation work in Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. For over a decade she has been working with women's empowerment in areas of military conflicts. She is actively engaged in the global feminist movement promoting women's rights as universal human rights, nonviolence and democracy.