

Promoting Nonviolent  
Transition Towards



# DEMOCRACY

Through Engendering  
Constitution Building  
Process



This program is supported by Sweden

**Promoting non-violent transition towards democracy through  
engendering a constitution building process**

**REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 10 -- 11 April, 2014**

Reporting Editing & Layout: European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI  
Publisher: European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI  
Date of Publication: June 2014

The international conference was organized by European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI and the Coalition of Syrian women for Democracy CSWD within the framework of the four years 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 conference. The content and opinions expressed within this publication are the sole responsibility of the speakers and participants and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of Sweden.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

---

FOREWORD .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	4
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS.....	5
SUMMARY DAY ONE – 10 April, 2014 .....	5
CONCLUSIONS DAY ONE .....	12
SUMMARY DAY TWO – 11 April, 2014 .....	13
TOWARDS A CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM .....	17
WORKING GROUP 1 .....	18
WORKING GROUP 2 .....	19
WORKING GROUP 3 .....	20
CONCLUSIONS DAY TWO .....	23
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS .....	24
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION.....	25
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY .....	25
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS.....	26
ANNEX A – Conference Agenda .....	27
ANNEX B – Speakers Biographies .....	30
ANNEX C – Moderators Biographies .....	33

## ACRONYMS

---

<b>ACT</b>	<b>Appropriate Communication Technologies</b>
<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</b>
<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>
<b>CSWD</b>	<b>Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy</b>
<b>EACPE</b>	<b>Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement</b>
<b>EEAS</b>	<b>European External Action Service</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>Euro-Med</b>	<b>Euro Mediterranean</b>
<b>IFE-EFI</b>	<b>European Feminist Initiative</b>
<b>INAP1325</b>	<b>Iraqi National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR1325</b>
<b>INAP1325 Initiative</b>	<b>Iraqi NAP1325 Initiative</b>
<b>MENA</b>	<b>Middle East &amp; North Africa</b>
<b>NAP</b>	<b>National Action Plan</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organizations</b>
<b>SIDA</b>	<b>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</b>
<b>SWL</b>	<b>Syrian Women's League</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNSC</b>	<b>United Nations Security Council</b>
<b>UNSCR</b>	<b>United Nations Security Council Resolution</b>
<b>US</b>	<b>United States</b>



## FOREWORD

---

In conflicts women's rights are never a priority. Usually it is explained by decision-makers and political leaders that national projects should be implemented first, security ensured or recovered, democracy built, and then women's rights would follow. In Syria women's rights activists claim from lessons learned that women's rights are inseparable from the national project and from the building of democracy. All developments in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have demonstrated that women's rights are at the core of political transition processes; they emerge in ongoing debates on constitutions when issues connected with discriminative legislation are addressed and this should in principle enable support for their implementation later on.

In MENA countries as well as elsewhere, cultural and social patterns, religion and tradition are used to justify and sustain women's oppression and inequality. Women are excluded from all decision-making bodies and have limited opportunities to have their rights constitutionalized unless they are prepared to assert them or unless they get social support.

In Syria, as a result of the long-term domination of a regime that has forbidden the establishment of independent civil organizations, civil society has had limited opportunities to fully realize its potential and play a meaningful role. On the other hand, in a highly controlled and repressive political climate, the women's rights movement has played an active part in the struggle for democracy and freedom, relying on international solidarity and building connections with women's organizations in the region and the rest of the world. The ongoing conflict has imposed new, severe restrictions on organizing; the high level of violence and social tensions have intensified oppression and repression and limited attempts to achieve basic freedoms. In spite of such obstacles and limitations, many human rights activists have set up organized groups. Those who have been forced to leave Syria have started mobilizing abroad, all seeking ways to stop the bloodshed and support non-violent methods of ending the conflict. Women's rights groups and activists are a significant part of such organizations in need of full international solidarity and support to be able to implement activities of resistance to tyranny and to prepare for a democratic future in Syria.

The Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy (CSWD), with the backing of European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, supports a future constitution based on democratic principles and values favouring women's rights and gender equality. They are building an inclusive process where women's rights activists have a space to express and share their ideas, widen their connections and vision, and assert their right to speak in order to make their ideas known.

European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, in partnership with civil society actors, provides forums for dialogue and discussion among Syrian civil society groups and organizations, with an international community of activists, and with decision-makers.

In April 2014, the European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, in partnership with the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy (CSWD) organized an international conference in Brussels in order to promote non-violent transition towards democracy in Syria. The event took place within the framework of the IFE-EFI program "Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria by Supporting an Inclusive Constitution Process," funded by Sweden.

The conference was characterized by an atmosphere of solidarity and an open, sincere exchange of expertise and experience. It built on previous achievements from the constitution-making process, initiated by the Syrian Women's League and Syrian Women for Democracy in 2012. The objectives were to highlight the crucial role of civil society as an independent actor for non-violent transition in Syria and to provide a solidarity space for Syrian activists to voice their analyses and demands for the needed substantive presence of women and women's rights in the transitional political processes.

The aim of the conference was also to discuss in a mutually beneficial way how the cooperation and common discourse among women's and human rights organizations in Syria could be strengthened and how civil society in the Euro-Med region could provide support for the widening of the ongoing constitution-building process and launch the basis of a civil society platform for mobilization towards democracy, with women's rights and gender equality as an indivisible part.

The participants were representatives of organizations advocating women's rights, human rights and civil society from 21 countries in the Euro-Med region and the Caucasus, all with extensive experience working on democracy-building and transitions. They came together to listen to the Syrian analyses, exchange experiences and lessons learned, support the Syrian activists' demands, and express their solidarity with the Syrian people.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to the participants for their contribution to the conference's lively debates. We would like to thank the speakers who presented their visions of Syria's future or shared their experiences and expressed their support of the Syrian activists. Needless to say, our gratitude goes also to the facilitators and moderators, who helped organize the discussions and debates, contributing to the warm and supportive atmosphere throughout the conference. We likewise extend our thanks to the representatives of European External Action Service (EEAS) and the United Nations for their participation, support and input. And last but not least we would like to extend our deep appreciation to Swedish International Development Agency whose support made this event possible.

**Lilian Halls French**  
**Co-President**  
**European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI**

**Nawal Yaziji**  
**President**  
**Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy**

## INTRODUCTION

---

The European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI has supported the work of women's rights activists in Syria for several years, promoting solidarity and cooperation and together with our colleagues from MENA has promoted and worked on building a common agenda for equality of women and men in the Euro-Med region. In 2013 IFE-EFI started implementing the long-term program "Towards a Democratic Transition in Syria through an Inclusive Constitution-Building Process" in partnership with the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy and other civil society organizations. The program is funded by Sweden. Its main objective is to contribute to a non-violent transition in Syria. Through this program IFE-EFI provides organizational, technical and financial support to different components of the civil movement in order to strengthen women's rights and participation, and enhance both dialogue and mutual understanding between CSOs and other social/political actors and stakeholders.

The international conference **"Promoting Non-violent Transition towards Democracy through Engendering a Constitution Building Process"** took place in Brussels, the heart of European Union political decision-making. It gathered Syrian activists from several organizations from inside and outside Syria and participants of civil society organizations of 21 countries from the Middle East, Mashreq, Maghreb, Europe and the Caucasus. Representatives of the United Nations and the European Union attended the conference to listen to the opinions and demands of Syrian civil society.



The key notion of citizenship, meaning autonomy, dignity, security, and full equality was part of all sessions. Participants were reminded that recognition of equality between women and men in rights and duties is central to defining citizenship. Therefore affirming constitutional equality is making both women and men full citizens. Citizenship was also approached as a measure of democracy and an indicator of the level of discrimination, oppression and violence in a society.

The diversity of origins, culture and background of the participants was promoted as an asset, a shared source of cultural wealth and strength in the struggle for women's rights worldwide. The outcomes and conclusions of the conference will be followed up in a process-oriented way, always from the perspective of widening the inclusiveness of the process.

This report summarizes the presentations, major points of discussion, experiences, and ideas exchanged during the conference. It presents the conclusions and recommendations of the participants based on the analyses of the Syrian supporters of non-violent political solution and democracy.

IFE-EFI and its partners will continue advising that all conclusions and recommendations be taken into consideration by decision-makers in all multilateral and bilateral negotiations.

## SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

---

The two days of the conference included seven sessions based on in-depth discussions and exchange of experience following introductory presentations. Experiences of delegates from Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, and Palestine were shared. International NGOs and representatives of the UN and EEAS participated and gave due consideration to Syrian demands. During the second day three thematic workshops were held. Three working groups prepared recommendations for some further steps of the ongoing process and one session was organized with the representatives of the UN and the EU.

### The debates focused on the following major issues:

- The demand of full equality between women and men, participation of women in all political processes, and their recognition as equal actors for social change, not as a third part or category;
- The need to exert pressure on governments, international institutions and decision-making bodies to make Syrian women's voices heard;
- The demand and the right of the Syrian people to refuse to choose between two forms of tyranny;
- The crucial importance of separating religion from legislation and politics and having international women's rights instruments as a reference in any legal and constitutional reform;
- The importance of international solidarity in creating a balance of power to achieve women's demands for making women's rights a priority for the transitional and all political agendas.

## SUMMARY DAY ONE – 10 April 2014

---

**Mrs. Sawsan Zakzak, representing CSWD and Mrs. Lilian Halls French, representing IFE-EFI,** opened the conference and welcomed the participants. Mrs. Sawsan Zakzak stressed that the motivation for engendering the constitution is not just a desirable objective, but a necessity, and explained how in the present context of conflict, discrimination and violence against women have been exacerbated. At the beginning of the peaceful uprising in Syria women got involved; they demonstrated and demanded recognition as legitimate participants in the democratic process. They



They faced challenges and asked questions such as the following: Was this uprising going to lead to a regression in women's rights, like in Libya? Mrs. Zakzak reminded everyone that discrimination against women is a general pattern and concluded by saying that Syrians are referring to universal values for their constitution and are relying on international solidarity. The arbitrary parameter of location must not determine the fate of women.

Mrs. Lilian Halls-French emphasized that IFE-EFI is providing a space for the echo voice of the Syrian democratic movement as part of the international front for women’s rights, freedom, and dignity. This space provides Syrian women’s rights-and-human rights defenders with the frame to discuss and articulate their recommendations and demands to the international community and international decision-making bodies such as the UN and the EU. She underlined the importance of this space, where the voice of Syrian women’s human rights defenders relates to experiences from other contexts and contributes to a shared vision of improving the lives of women in the region and worldwide.

**SESSION 1: ANALYSES AND PRACTICES OF DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION BUILDING**

This session shed light on the efforts of women’s movements in the MENA region to institutionalize women’s rights and gender equality in constitutions and illustrated their central role in political transitions. The participants emphasized the importance of sharing experiences and lessons learned from transitions for the action of the Syrian women’s rights movement.

**Mr. Magdi Belal, President of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement EACPE,** declared that the constitution should reflect the spirit of the revolution and aspirations for freedom. He reminded all participants that the building of a democratic state in Egypt could only be founded on equality between women and men. He underlined the importance of having a constitutional guarantee of values such as citizenship and freedom,



pointing out that international human and women’s rights mechanisms should always be a reference for constitution- building. He also insisted that due attention be given to a gendered language, with the clear demand of equality between women and men.

**Mrs. Salwa Kennou, President of the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development,** described the Tunisian process before the election of the constitutional committee, during the drafting of the text, and after its adoption. A coalition of progressive women’s organizations was formed and cooperated with progressive political parties and labour unions. She highlighted the successful struggle of the women’s movement in Tunisia to ensure that the word “equality,” rather than “complementarity,” be included in the constitutional text.

**Mrs. Sabah Alhallak from the Syrian Women’s League SWL** presented the work done to promote an inclusive constitution building process for Syria with women’s rights and gender equality as founding principles. Women’s rights are fundamental human rights and cannot be separated from the general demand for equality. This principle is framing all the provisions of the future constitution.

## MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. During the constitution-building process, which should lead to defining the identity of the nation, a number of crucial points and objectives should be taken into account:
  - Balance of powers during the process;
  - Diversity of social components in the constitution drafting committee;
  - Inclusion of all categories of citizens within the demand for full and equal rights;
  - A clear statement of the principles of democracy and gender equality;
  - Criminalization of all forms of violence against women, the purchase of sexual services being an extreme form of violence and discrimination;
  - Separation of powers;
  - Separation between state and religion; religion and legislation;
  - The right of all citizens to appeal to the constitutional court;
  - The need to consider the process of implementation of the new constitution.
2. The role of grassroots and mass movements in the constitution building process. In this connection, it is essential to widen the base of the constitution and enable its recognition by social movements, rather than by the elite only (cf. the Tunisian experience).
3. The need to pressure and accumulate political will to include women's rights and gender equality into all agendas.
4. The urgent need to work on a grassroots level in order to advocate for secularism and combat cultural relativism when it comes to women's rights.
5. Respect and appreciation of both Tunisian and Egyptian experiences; extra caution and care - in view of the shaky and changeable circumstances in the period of transition.
6. The need to work with all categories of people inside Syria on gender equality and women's rights awareness; to be closer to the street, as experience shows that even leftists and progressives are reluctant to act when women's rights and equality are involved.
7. The need to develop mechanisms of work on citizenship and equality within the context of Syria.

## SESSION 2: CITIZENSHIP AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

This session stressed the importance of women's rights as a cornerstone of democracy and demonstrated that civic responsibility and empowerment should be priority goals on the way to consolidate citizenship values. The debate made the connection between citizenship, gender equality, development, culture, and secular values. The participants discussed strategies that would help to promote citizenship and implement international resolutions, such as UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security.

**Mrs. Suzan Aref, Coordinator of the INAP1325 Initiative in Iraq**, shared lessons learned from the process of development of the Iraqi National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and its adoption by the government in April 2014. She was happy to share Iraqi experiences as Iraq was the first country in the Middle East to adopt NAP 1325, together with a detailed budget for its implementation. She described how in Iraqi post-conflict areas women remained marginalized, especially in



the context of a rising lack of security. Members of women's organizations got together to form a specific Initiative to develop NAP 1325 as a way of promoting women's rights as universal human rights and the values of citizenship. With the support of IFE-EFI they were able to share the experiences of women from Nepal and Georgia, establish a dialogue with decision-makers from both Iraqi and Kurdish governments, and together with them developed in the course of two years the Action Plan and the budget which were adopted by the Iraqi government. She described the methodology of developing the Action Plan, stressing the importance of involvement in the process of both decision-makers and civil society, and drawing attention to the beneficial effect of international support upon the overall process.

**Mr. Faek Hwejeh from the Centre for Equal Citizenship in Damascus** developed the history of the concept of citizenship, linking it to the class struggle and reminding all participants that women in all historical periods were excluded from full citizenship. He explained that as a result of over 40 years of tyranny and dictatorship in Syria, the notion of citizenship disappeared from all political discourses. Mr. Hwejeh stressed the importance of recreating the concepts of dignity and freedom, and the need to build the future Syrian state on the vision of full citizenship, separation of powers, equality of women and men, and of all citizens regardless of their religion, gender or ethnicity. He further remarked that all efforts should be focused on having equal citizenship rights for men and women and this should be a core notion in the future constitution. In view of this, the implementation of equal rights measures should be monitored.

## MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. All over the world women suffer from discrimination, mainly linked to their reproductive role and different types of oppression, which shows the universality of the problems women face and universality of the struggle for women's rights and gender equality.
2. Adopting gender equality laws is a major step, but is not enough: exercising pressure for their implementation is a permanent condition.
3. Political organizations that understand the practical implications of the notions of citizenship and gender equality are not fully developed in Syria yet.
4. There is an urgent need to find a solution for the Syrian people who don't want to choose between dictatorship and Al-Qaeda.
5. Related to NAP 1325 in Iraq, conditions differ from one country to another, and this has to be taken into account; nevertheless, all lessons learned from previous experience are sure to be helpful. The Georgian experience, for instance, was very valuable insofar as it showed how people had to resist the UN to implement their own NAP. A NAP 1325 is a national tool used to improve women's rights, according to international standards, that promote and protect them as universal human rights – both in terms of legislation and the raising of social awareness.
6. Citizenship is a purely ornamental attribute on the agendas of most Syrian parties rather than a material goal. Syrian women will have to fight to increase the importance of their role and have their rights and men should support them. Men have more power and privileges and should therefore assume the responsibility of combating discrimination against women, side by side with women themselves.
7. In times of war there is no democracy. War affects everyone and only a small minority of people in positions of power benefit from it.
8. No link between citizenship and human rights exists in traditional Arab culture; women are always expected to make sacrifices for the sake of their families.
9. Croatian experience shows the importance of being critical of existing models and the need to consider new ones.
10. Work on engendering the constitution should be done step by step; relevant activities should be planned first and then implemented. It is crucial to monitor the processes of planning and implementation.
11. The absence of a clear, consensual perspective on Syria's future that is shared by all democratic movements is a major problem at present.

### SESSION 3: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY BUILDING PROCESSES IN THE AFTERMATH OF GENEVA 2

This session examined women's participation in formal and informal peace and democracy- building processes in Syria. Participants discussed the challenges women face and the ways to turn them into opportunities.

The hard work of sustaining communities during armed conflicts falls upon the shoulders of women. Women also organize and take different peace promoting initiatives on the ground. However, they are always excluded from the formal peace building process that should take their countries out of the conflict.

**Mrs. Rima Flihan was one of the two women participants in the delegation of the Syrian National Coalition at the formal peace process at Geneva 2.** She

summarized the challenges faced by women in the political opposition, the way political forces tend to view women as inferior - with respect to their political performance and concrete roles, thus damaging their reputation, ridiculing their work and their personalities, looking down on women's rights, and refusing to view women's rights as universal human rights. Added to this is the actual daily threat to women's security, physical integrity and lives: detention, abuse and assassination.



to women's security, physical integrity and lives: detention, abuse and assassination.

**Mrs. Lama Kannout, a co-founder of the Initiative of Syrian Women for Democracy and Peace,** stressed the importance of women's roles during the revolution and the transition period. She explained that Syrian feminists are aware of the global pattern of exclusion of women from political processes. She gave examples of how women organized themselves with the support of IEF-EFI and Hivos prior to Geneva 2 and ensured there were defenders of women's rights at the negotiation table. Because of such efforts Mrs. Rima Flihan was accepted as a member of the opposition delegation. She gave an overview of how the Syrian Women Initiative for Peace and Democracy was launched by 47 Syrian women holding membership in different organizations and having different ideological agendas and backgrounds, who emphasized the need for a political solution, based on the Geneva 1 negotiations, as the solution of the Syrian crisis and the way towards a peaceful, democratic transition. She presented the demands of the Initiative as follows:

- Commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 and 2122, and all relevant resolutions concerning women in armed conflicts as well as commitment to the effective participation of women in all teams (at least 30 % of all team members should be women);
- Involvement of representatives of feminist movements and human rights movements in the whole formal process of negotiation and peace building;
- Participation of women in negotiations as observers;

- Appointment of a Syrian gender consultant within the mediation team who is to be in charge of building channels of communication with the international mediator and his team.

The follow-up committee of the Initiative had several meetings with representatives of the countries involved in the conflict and the UN delegation. They organized demonstrations of women's organizations in front of the UN building in Geneva with media coverage. As a result women got to participate in both negotiating teams, with two women in each and one woman in the technical opposition team. The Initiative issued a press release and sent a message to the UN mediator team with their demands to include women's rights and gender equality in the whole peace process.

### MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. Negotiation of peace requires democratization of the peace processes themselves. Feminist analyses of peace are essential for widening the format of the formal peace negotiations: women as half of humanity can't be merely a third party in the negotiations. Civil society may have this role.
2. Women are major agents of change. They are also primary victims of crises, military conflicts and wars.
3. Neither democracy nor equality can occur without peace, and these cannot be achieved without progressive political leaders who have a strong political will to implement the separation of religion from legislation and the state.
4. It is important to have transitional justice in all countries in conflict and war.
5. Whatever the regime or government may be, women face huge challenges to a c k n o w l e d g m e n t as political actors, even within progressive and democratic movements. While women in Syria are playing a huge role in trying to resolve the conflict, the opposition has yet to provide space for women's rights defenders.
6. The role of civil society is to raise awareness and generate pressure for change.
7. To ensure the participation of women is not enough; a feminist perspective is needed in the planning.
8. Gendered language is a primary requirement in all documents, especially in constitutional and legislative texts.

## CONCLUSIONS DAY ONE

---

Debates on the first day were characterized by a high quality and diversity of topics; sharing of experiences and expressions of international solidarity, discussion of the lessons to be learned. The following major conclusions were drawn:

- 1. The constitution-building process in Syria appears to be a crucial element and a major part of the fight for a democratic future.**
- 2. Feminist analyses of peace are essential for widening the structure of formal peace negotiations. Women as half of humanity can't be merely a third party in the negotiations. Therefore there is an urgent need for democratization of the peace processes allowing women's representation and participation on equal footing with men's.**
- 3. Universality of the exclusion of women: political and security fields are at stake here, both equally difficult for women to access.**
- 4. Women are not a homogenous category. There is a need not only to have women participants in the process of democratic change but to have women as well as men with a feminist perspective in all assemblies. In this sense it is important to develop links between women's rights organizations and all other components of the democratic movement.**
- 5. Civil society is paying a high price in the conflict. Women are at the forefront of the movement and have to face terrorism from both sides.**
- 6. The common agenda is to promote gender equality as an absolute necessity, with reference to international women's rights instruments and separation between religion, legislation and politics.**
- 7. Men, no less than women, should be involved in this process of supporting women's rights and therefore social justice.**

**SESSION 4: HOW CAN THE UN AND THE EU SUPPORT AN INDEPENDENT CIVIL SOCIETY IN SYRIA AS A PROMOTER OF NON VIOLENT TRANSITION?**

**Mr. Mokhtar Lamani, a former Head of the Office of the UN Joint Special Representative for Syria in Damascus,**

explained how the UN was trying to keep in touch with all parties involved in the Syrian crisis and provided his own take on the situation. During his 20-month stay inside Syria he tried to help keep the country unified and guarantee the right of Syrians to determine their own future. He reminded all participants that the Syrian crisis started



as an internal issue and a national uprising, and then turned into a regional and international crisis, leading to the fragmentation of the Syrian population. He underlined the daily changes on the ground and in the political sphere, especially within the opposition. One of those was an increased lack of trust among members of the opposition. In this situation, he remarked that women are being oppressed by all parties even though women's rights should be a decisive element in the re-building of Syria.

**MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION**

1. The tragic issue of the massacre of the Syrian population and the way the regime forced the opposition into exile. Not all want military intervention as a price for their return to their own country but some members of the opposition have been calling strongly for a military strike. In every operation and counter-operation there is a confessional dimension.
2. The Syrian opposition must share the responsibility for the bloodshed in Syria. Relying on foreign intervention is dangerous.
3. What is the UN offering as an alternative vision and how can civil society contribute to the solution? In this regard, gendering the next phase is very important in order to reach sustainable democracy and peace.
4. The resolution of the Syrian crisis cannot be military. How can civil society in Syria, the Arab countries and the rest of the world influence all parties so that they can start thinking about a political solution, and which international/regional institutions can civil society resort to?
5. The experience of military intervention in Iraq and specifically its negative effects on the

development of civil society. The price that Syrians are paying at present is very high. 95% of the victims affected by the conflict are civilians.

6. The killing of minorities is carried out by all parties in the conflict and there is a fear of a rise of sectarianism.
7. The Syrian regime has lost its legitimacy; it is principally responsible for reaching this point of the conflict and its crimes are much worse than those of the opposition.
8. All opposition factions in Syria, not only the National Coalition, but all other democratic and progressive movements, should come to the negotiation table to clarify local and regional responsibilities for the conflict in Syria.
9. How can civil society and UN bodies use the existing UN tools to protect Syrian women from violence, rape and murder? By promoting and applying UNSCR 1325 preventively, during the peace negotiations and the reconstruction phase.
10. The length of the conflict has led to a deep economic crisis in Syria, and hence the need to survive has compelled people to join extremist groups as they are providing money.

**Mrs. Beatriz Salvador Garcia, European External Action Service, Desk Officer Syria Middle East I- Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan**

explained how the EU tried to adopt a comprehensive political approach, along with providing not only humanitarian aid but also protection to refugees, with the implementation of 2159 (humanitarian access) as a priority. Mrs. Garcia stressed the importance of enabling continuous



education during the crisis and the role the EU plays in this regard. She emphasized that the EU supported the efforts of the UN and that they kept regular contacts with all major actors. The EU has supported the actions of the Syrian National Coalition, and has demanded accountability for crimes committed during the ongoing conflict. The EU has imposed sanctions and restrictive measures on people and entities that are part of the regime and has focused on justice and accountability, trying to identify a process that enables both. Silent diplomacy is used in order to find the best solutions. By the end of the session Mrs. Beatriz Salvador Garcia underlined that the EU would continue to support the participation of women at the peace negotiations and would highlight the visa issue with their partners. The EU will continue to provide financial assistance inside Syria and in the neighbouring countries.

## MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. The Syrian participants were divided over the sanctions imposed by the EU. Some considered that the sanctions are having a negative effect on Syrians as such measures tend to affect civilians rather than the regime.
2. The National Coalition is not the only opposition; other political groups and movements should be acknowledged and included in the process as well.
3. Visas were refused by Belgium authorities to a lot of Syrian participants to the conference. This creates serious problems for Syrian human rights activists to make their voices heard.
4. The Syrian participants called for all democratic and secular forces to unite and asked the EU to provide them with a space for meetings and discussions.
5. There was an impression that the EU lacks a clear vision and a longterm strategy to find a solution for Syria. Many participants expressed the idea that the EU was following USA policies when it came to conflict-resolution. The EU could do much better in their appeal for a non-violent solution for the Syrian conflict and advocate staunchly in favor of women's rights, notifying the global community of gender discrimination, rape and other forms of violence.
6. Attention was drawn to the tragic humanitarian situation in zones controlled by extremist factions and the intensification of women's suffering at the hands of such groups.
7. It was noted that the EU could exercise pressure to stop supply of arms to all parties in the conflict and to provide protection for civilians. Again, UNSCR 1325 was seen as an important tool to pressure the opposition to implement it and put women's rights on their agendas.
8. In general there were high expectations from the EU to play a more visible role as a strong agent of peace.

## SESSION 5: PRESENTING THE FIRST DRAFT REPORT ON THE PROCESS OF ENGENDERING A CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRACY BUILDING

This session was dedicated to the efforts of CSWD to present the methodology and main ideas of the common report on engendering constitution.

**Mrs. Lilian Halls-French** opened the session and presented the background elaboration of this document and underlined its importance, as it is a huge challenge to make the voices of Syrian women heard. The reference group that supported the development of the draft was composed of representatives of CSWD, some of who are lawyers, and representatives of IFE-EFI, together with constitutionalist experts and women's rights defenders from Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. The reference group had several meetings and included all the previous achievements from the widening of the constitution building process.



**Mrs. Sawzan Zakzak** presented the draft report, its objectives, methodology and major elements. In her presentation she offered an analysis of the current political situation and its rising complexity. Furthermore, she gave an overview of the different phases of the process in which the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy has been engaged and emphasized the main entry points to a gender sensitive constitution that have been discussed and proposed by the activists, academics, lawyers and constitutionalists involved in this common work. She underlined the importance of having a broad, participatory process, as well as the crucial need to spread wider the analyses of the women's movement in this work.

### MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. The need to consider the political and economic context during the constitution building process and to focus on the committee who will be writing the constitutional text, knowing that the state is never neutral.
2. The need to take into consideration not only how women's rights and equality can be included in the constitution but also how they will be implemented; consequently, producing strategies that are to harmonize the constitution with other sources of law, such as the penal code and family laws, on the one hand, and international women's rights conventions on the other.
3. The importance of involving grassroots movements in the drafting of the text and

mobilizing them to exert pressure and monitor the process; the need to open up the constitutional courts to the people, with a focus on the separation of powers, with less power to the executive and higher powers to the legislative and judicial authorities.

4. The need of mobilization of the democratic and progressive forces to create the requested balance of power.
5. The need to solve the issue of the 150,000 Syrian women deprived of nationality and thus of their basic rights. This means the inclusion of Kurdish people in the constitution-building process in order to promote their rights as fullrank citizens.
6. Building the constitution is based on continuous negotiations and debates, which may involve compromises.

## **TOWARDS A CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TRANSITION AND CONSTITUTION BUILDING PROCESS**

---

### **WORKING GROUPS**

The participants worked in three workshops focusing on the following issues:

1. How are we to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are placed on the agendas of all components of civil society?
2. How is a broader civil society to be engaged in a gender sensitive constitution building process? Strategies and alliances
3. How is the participation and role of women's rights defenders to be promoted and ensured in the transitional political processes?

The recommendations and conclusions reached by each working group were presented at the plenary session and were further discussed and approved by all.

All participants focused on one overall goal: to stop the bloodshed and to keep Syria united in territory and people. The implementation of UNSCR1325 on women, peace, security, and all related resolutions that protect women in armed conflict was raised as an absolute must. Special focus was placed on mental health of women who have all the responsibility for the families. Education, health and social protections were raised as priority sectors. The plenary discussed that the nonviolent transition design and planning should include the Developmental Goals as well in all issues relating to gender equality, such as violence against women, women's unequal opportunities and access to labour and resources, unpaid home care, reproductive health and rights, and participation for women on an equal footing in all decision-making levels. All the dimensions of gender inequality shall be on the transitional agenda.

All participants shared the view that the crisis is no longer an internal one but has acquired global dimensions, leading to a fragmentation of Syrian society. In this situation dialogue is a great

challenge. All sectarian movements in Syria are built on the security dimension rather than on the popular one. Added to this is the issue of the Syrian opposition, which is not one single block, but comprises a number of different factions, and thus in effect there are several oppositions. One of the major questions to be raised was how to unite the opposition, despite differences between its factions, in a context characterized by “a lack of responsibility”. How is the opposition to coordinate its actions vis-à-vis the Syrian regime and how is it to react to any intervention from the outside?

Women were excluded from public and political life before and were not in a position to play any significant role. The participants agreed that the issue of women’s rights was indivisible from the opposition’s aspirations for change which would result in the re-building of Syria. Therefore the support of women in all social spheres was seen as essential and a precondition for women’s participation in the process of political decision-making.

The plenary debate affirmed the opinion that the international community must exert pressure for change of the format of the peace negotiations in order to enable women’s participation in all formal and informal peace processes and in all political processes throughout the transitional period towards democracy building.

Solidarity and support of the international community was highlighted as essential for strengthening the work and voice of civil society. One opportunity was joining the Malmö Conference in June 2014 to pressure for Syrian issues and find partners and solidarity within the women’s movement and other political movements aiming to promote equality all over the world.

**WORKING GROUP 1**

---

**How are we to ensure that women’s rights and gender equality are placed on the agendas of all components of civil society?**

**Moderator: Mrs. Sabah Alhallak, Syrian Women’s League**

**SUMMARY OF THE GROUP DISCUSSION**

The working group discussed the importance of making an assessment of civil society based on a comprehensive analysis of the political context in Syria. The discussion showed that civil society exists within a political reality and therefore its analysis is just as important as analyses of existing political parties and formations. This implies thorough assessment of the goals and programs of both political parties and CSOs, in order to promote the integration of women's



rights and gender equality in their programs. A possible approach would be to map out Syrian civil society in order to acquire knowledge of different goals and strategies. It was noted that working with human rights organizations should be a priority. The workshop has unanimously agreed that all

international instruments relating to women’s rights should be a crucial reference in the process of engendering a new constitution and national legislation – CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, 22/2. The important role of the media was emphasized. The following priorities were identified:

### **Priorities and Actions**

1. Design awareness raising activities on the importance of the integration of women's rights and gender equality in agendas and actions of all CSOs and political parties.
2. Develop a detailed plan and identify target groups, including decision-makers.
3. Use the media, and especially television, to promote the rights of women and develop strategies that would strengthen the cooperation between CSOs and media institutions.
4. Strengthen networking among feminist organizations and promote regular sharing of information, as well as strengthen the feminist organizations themselves and their functioning.
5. Build common strategies to reach out to grassroots level to debate women's rights in constitution making and build alliances.

## **WORKING GROUP 2**

---

### **How are we to engage the broader civil society in the process of building a gender-sensitive constitution: strategies and alliances?**

**Moderator: Mrs. Samira Zaeir, Syrian Women’s Network**

#### **SUMMARY OF THE GROUP DISCUSSION**

The group discussion affirmed that civil society has a major role to play in key debates concerning the building of a gender-sensitive constitution as well as in the discussion of strategies and the formation of strategic alliances. Some major steps were identified, such as the creation of a reference bloc; communication through studies of public attitudes and opinion polls; strategizing; advocacy and mobilization; connection and mediation; resources



and mobilization. It was noted that events enabling exchange of experiences, information and knowledge about the Syrian crisis are beneficial for all and help with the promotion of the role of women as key partners in the formal and informal processes of peace and democracy building.

#### **Priorities, Strategies and Alliances**

The role of the women’s rights organizations and the broader civil society in the engendering of a constitution was emphasized; the group’s priority is to support the building of a network called **“Alliance for Engendering a Constitution.”**

## Alliances

1. The CSWD and other CSOs should make alliances with experts and lawyers and ensure their advocacy of women's rights and gender equality in the constitution-building process.
2. Strong links should be made with grassroots organizations and local decision-makers, reaching out to involve them in public debates and discussions.
3. Developing a sustainable plan to integrate young people and communicate with them by, *inter alia*, social networks.
4. Finding a common ground between civil society organizations and Syrian coalitions and initiatives working on peace and non-violent transition.
5. Building *ad hoc* coalitions and cooperation with progressive and democratic movements, human rights organizations and movements, and political leaders/actors inside Syria and at international level.

## Strategies

1. Lobbying the international community to support Syrian women's rights organizations which are engaged in the constitution-building process.
2. Developing mechanisms for women's social and economic empowerment and for enabling their political participation; involving refugees and displaced women in particular.
3. Pressuring the international community and decision-makers to make use of all mechanisms and guarantees (especially UNSCR 1325) for the protection of women in armed conflicts and crises, in order to stop the bloodshed, killing and the sexual violence against women.
4. Pressuring the international community to change the pattern of its negotiations to open the way for the participation of women's rights activists and civil society actors in them.
5. Organizing hearing sessions at the European Parliament and the UNSC about Syria in cooperation with international organizations in order to stop arms selling in Syria.

## WORKING GROUP 3

---

### How are we to promote and ensure the participation and key role of women's rights defenders in the transitional political processes?

**Mrs. Azza Kamel, Appropriate Communication Technologies ACT**

#### SUMMARY OF THE GROUP DISCUSSION

The group discussed the importance of advocating and pressuring both internal and external actors who have power to influence the promotion of women's participation and women's rights in the transitional period. This group also highlighted the responsibility of the international community in observing the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and other resolutions in order to stop the bloodshed



and protect women, and stressed the importance of focusing on health, education and antiviolenace measures. **The discussion confirmed that putting the issue of women's rights on all agendas was a priority. For this purpose, raising women's issues in an organized way, through building alliances, unions, and forums to influence all negotiating processes was recognized as a prime concern.**

### Strategies

1. Pressure the Syrian regime and the EU to support women's rights projects in Syria.
2. Pressure the Syrian regime, the Syrian opposition and the EU to support women's participation in political life and decision making and to place women's rights and gender equality on all planning agendas during the transitional period.
3. Open channels for cooperation with female politicians and pressure them to place women's rights and gender equality on their political agendas.
4. Pay attention to the educational process and invest in rights-based education in when investing in the areas outside the control of the regime.
5. Strengthen the connections with regional and international organizations which promote and support women's rights in particular and human rights in general and coordinate with them to pressure the international community to protect women from violence and exclusion from political participation in the process of Syrian selfdetermination. Pressure them to enable female politicians and lawyers to participate in any forthcoming negotiations and to sit on constitutional committees.

### Actions

1. Conduct media campaigns inside and outside Syria to support the entry of women's rights defenders, women's rights and gender equality into the political field.
2. Help Syrian feminists determine what they should prioritize and include their priorities in the political process.
3. Organize awareness raising activities on women's rights issues for human rights defenders and enable them to promote them in their respective field of work (training, workshops, seminars, participation in international conferences).
4. Organize awareness raising activities on women's rights issues in refugee camps in order to promote gender equality.
5. Establish a Commission of Women's Rights to monitor and protect the rights of all women in Syria, regardless of their identity or affiliations.

## **SESSION 7: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COOPERATION**

The session focused on the need to re-install international solidarity and build strong international feminist support for Syria's developing civil society. We should take into account the fact that gender equality is among the UN Millennium development goals, both as a goal in its own right and as a means towards other goals. Moreover, it is now generally accepted that resources invested in women's rights and economic independence lead to further development and increased prosperity in society as a whole.

The session had two presenters: **Mrs. Azza Kamel, Director of Appropriate Communication Technologies (ACT), Egypt**, and **Mrs. Amal Khreisha, General Director of Palestinian Working Women's Association, Palestine**. The session was moderated by Mrs. Borianna Jonsson.

**Mrs. Azza Kamel** shed light on the importance of using international cooperation to bring urgent issues to the global arena and thus achieve greater changes. For example, in Egypt women activists were subjected to virginity tests after the Revolution, but Swedish NGOs put pressure on the civil authorities to free women from jail as well as on the military to change the way they dealt with women. International solidarity has placed women's issues on a number of different agendas and also changed the way the media dealt with the subject.



**Mrs. Amal Khreisha** shared her experience of the situation of women in Palestine and stressed the important role that international solidarity played in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality. She likewise drew attention to the need to change Palestinian society's patriarchal structure as well as the way the UN functions. When it comes to Palestine, there have been more than 300 peace accords. International solidarity made it possible for Palestinian women to demand accountability measures. Without the powerful influence of international solidarity the struggle of Palestinian women would have been much more difficult.

#### MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

1. Change can only happen if a strong link is forged between women's rights and international solidarity. National independence is an important factor but gender equality can only be achieved through solidarity.
2. Without international solidarity it would have been impossible to talk about human rights, equality, security, etc.
3. Women's rights activists should make gender equality a key principle in every strategy for political change. Gendered language should be used in all important documents. Women's rights activists must make sure the above conditions are met and inform the international community of any deficiencies.
4. It is crucial to involve young people in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality, such as the young activists who started the Syrian revolution. Young people should participate in the struggle for women's rights at grassroots and all levels alike.

## CONCLUSIONS DAY TWO

---

The second day, as the whole conference, was characterized by active participation and richness of discussion around Syria and women's rights issues by all participants from the 21 countries. The strong commitment of the participants and the respect which they showed each other contributed to the success of this event and to the high quality of its results. The major conclusions and keywords are the following:

- 1. Importance of international solidarity in exerting pressure on international bodies to make women's voices heard.**
- 2. Demand of full equality for women in political processes and recognition of women as political actors.**
- 3. The need to lobby for the universality of women's rights; The struggles women have to face are rooted in universal issues.**
- 4. Constant reference to the needed balance of power to achieve women's demands.**
- 5. Need for solidarity to strengthen women's voices and put women's rights on all agendas.**
- 6. Universal gap between formal declarations and the reality of women's daily lives.**
- 7. Crucial importance of having international women's rights instruments and resolutions as permanent references in all transitional processes.**
- 8. Central notion of citizenship, meaning autonomy, dignity and equality, as a measure of democracy.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS TOWARDS A CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM

### PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE TRANSITION AND CONSTITUTION BUILDING PROCESS

The participants agreed that resolution of the Syrian crisis cannot be military. The UN, the EU and the international community should make all efforts to examine non-violent, political ways of resolving the Syrian crisis.

The international powers should also recognize that in the context of tragedy and massacre of the Syrian population, it is not possible to consider the opposition in Syria as ONE single body. All democratic and progressive movements in addition to the National Coalition should have access to the negotiation table and should be provided with opportunities to express their views.

What are the UN, the EU and the international community offering as an alternative vision and how can civil society contribute to the resolution of the Syrian crisis? In this regard, the engendering of the next phase was seen as being of utmost importance for the establishment of sustainable democracy and lasting peace. The efforts and demands of civil society organizations in Syria that have gathered to promote women's rights as universal human rights and gender equality in the transitional phase of constitution-and–democracy building should be acknowledged, promoted and used as a basis for UN analyses and actions.

The participants issued the following recommendations to the UN, the EU, the international community, and Syrian civil society:

#### I. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO DEMOCRATIZE THE FORMAT OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE PLANNING OF THE SYRIAN TRANSITION

1. To demand and ensure that civil society activists, representing both women's rights and human rights organizations, are enabled to maintain a dialogue with international and regional institutions with decision-making power and that their analyses are taken into account in the process of resolving the Syrian crisis in a political, non-violent way.
2. To admit representatives of women's rights and human rights organizations to the negotiation table as independent participants in the overall process of peace building.
3. To use all existing UN tools (and especially UNSCR 1325) to protect Syrian women from violence, rape and murder; to promote women's participation in all decision-making bodies, throughout the peace negotiations, the reconstruction phase, and after a peace accord has been reached.
4. To support, in word and deed, the principle of substantive equality for women in all political processes and recognize women as full-rank political actors; to demand and ensure the participation of 50% women in all negotiation teams and introduce a women's rights and gender equality perspective into the overall transition process.
5. To appoint a Syrian gender consultant within the mediation team, and build channels of communication with the international mediator and his/her team.
6. To discuss and research, in a broad participatory manner, all means of ensuring a non-violent resolution of the crisis and a peaceful transition towards democracy.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EU TO PLAY A MORE VISIBLE ROLE AS AN AGENT OF PEACE, GENDER EQUALITY, HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND MEN**

1. To reconsider the economic blockade on Syria and find a different strategy of putting pressure on the regime without impacting civilians.
2. To recognize as representatives of the opposition all progressive and democratic groups and movements and not only those belonging to the National Coalition; such groups and movements should be given support and included in the peace negotiations and the political transition process.
3. To support the issuing of EU visas to Syrian activists who fight for a non-violent transition towards democracy in order to enable their participation in different international forums and make their voices heard.
4. To support the creation of a space where all democratic and progressive forces have the chance to meet and discuss key issues on their own.
5. To develop one clear vision and a long-term strategic solution for Syria, facilitating nonviolent conflict resolution.
6. To protect refugees and provide humanitarian aid as well as pay special attention to the protection of women from discrimination, rape and other forms of violence.
7. To use UNSCR 1325 more effectively as a tool of pressure on the opposition to implement it and include women in their negotiation teams as well as to place women's rights and gender equality on their agendas.
8. To exercise pressure to stop the supply of arms to all parties in the conflict and to provide protection for civilians.

## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR INCLUSION INTO ALL PARTIES' AGENDAS**

1. To encourage solidarity and support civil society organizations struggling for women's rights as universal human rights.
2. To support Syrian feminists and help them define their priorities which are then to be included in the overall political process.
3. To exert pressure on governments to push for a political and non-violent solution and for the recognition of the validity of a women's rights perspective throughout all phases of the transitional process.
4. To use their powers effectively to put pressure on all parties to start thinking about a political solution; to provide forums and a supportive environment for that purpose.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BUILDING OF A BROADER DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM SUPPORTIVE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND TO "KEEP SYRIA UNITED IN TERRITORY AND PEOPLE"

1. To design awareness-raising activities focusing on the importance of the integration of women's rights and gender equality into the agendas and actions of all CSOs and political parties.
2. To use the media, and especially television, to promote women's rights as universal human rights and develop strategies for strengthening the cooperation between CSOs and media institutions.
3. To strengthen feminist organizations, develop networking and mutual information sharing among coalitions and initiatives working on peace and non-violent transition.
4. To build common strategies to reach out to grassroots level to debate women's rights and democracy building; to build alliances at local level, using the constitution building process to debate women's rights and gender equality.
5. To develop a sustainable plan for the integration of young people and to communicate with them by, inter alia, social networks.
6. To seek cooperation with progressive and democratic movements and organizations, political leaders and activists both inside Syria and internationally.
7. To develop mechanisms for women's empowerment with regard to their participation in political, economic and social activities; to involve especially refugees and displaced women in this process.
8. To organize hearing sessions at the European Parliament and the UNSC in cooperation with international organizations; such sessions are to focus on the need of a non-violent resolution of the crisis.
9. To organize awareness-raising activities on women's rights and other related issues in refugee camps and other temporary settlements in order to promote gender equality.
10. To include the Kurdish minority in the constitution-building process in order to promote their needs and rights as full-rank citizens.
11. To support the building of a broad network to expand the constitution-making process under the name of **Alliance for the Engendering of the Constitution**.



<b>Session 2</b> <b>11:30 – 13:30</b>	<b>Citizenship and Women's Rights</b>
<b>11:30 – 12:15</b>	<p>Women's rights are a corner stone for democracy. Consolidating citizenship values, civic responsibility and empowerment remains an overreaching goal. How to discuss the connections between citizenship, gender equality, development, culture, secular values? How to promote and preserve the international women's rights mechanisms as a reference? What strategies help to implement international law, as UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security?</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b>     <b>Faek Hwejeh</b>    Equal Citizenship Center Syria                       <b>Suzan Aref</b>       Coordinator of INAP1325 Initiative Iraq</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b>   <b>Roula Rokbi</b>    Musawa</p>
<b>12:15– 13:30</b>	<b>Open Discussion</b>
<b>13:30 – 15:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>Session 3</b> <b>15:00 – 17:00</b>	<b>After Geneva 2 Women's participation in peace and democracy building processes</b>
<b>15:00 – 15:30</b>	<p>Women sustain their communities during crises, but are excluded in the peace building processes taking their countries out of crises. This session will examine women's participation in formal and informal peace- and democracy building processes in Syria. It will discuss the challenges women face and ways to overcome them and turn them into opportunities.</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b>     <b>Rima Flehan</b>        Syrian actor in the formal peace process                       <b>Lama Kannout</b>    Co-founder of the Initiative of Syrian Women for Democracy and Peace</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b>   <b>Nasser ALGhazali</b> Director Damascus Centre for Laws Studies</p>
<b>15:30 – 16:30</b>	<b>Open Discussion</b>
<b>16:30 – 17:00</b>	<b>Wrap up of day one</b>
<b>DAY TWO</b> <b>09:00 – 17:00</b>	<b>Towards a broader democracy and civil society platform</b>
<b>Session 4</b> <b>09:00– 11:00</b>	<b>Presenting the first draft of a report writing process on Engendering Constitution and Democracy Building</b>
<b>09:00 – 09:30</b>	<p>Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy present the method and main ideas of report on Engendering Constitution</p> <p><b>Presenters:</b>   <b>Sawsan Zakzak</b>    Coalition Syrian Women for Democracy                       <b>Lilian Halls French</b> European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b>   <b>Leila Al Ali</b>        Association Najdeh, Lebanon</p>
<b>09:30 – 10:30</b>	<b>Open Discussion</b>
<b>10:30 – 11:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>



**ANNEX B – Speakers Biographies**

---



**Mrs. Amal Khreishe** is a grassroots feminist and political leader who has served as the general director of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development since 1995. PWWSD is a feminist, national, and development organizations that focus on women’s empowerment in private and public life. Mrs. Khreishe has led many campaigns to advance women’s roles in society, including the first program in Palestine to support the international community’s focus on ending violence against women. She has been involved in strategizing around women's rights and the transition to democracy in the Arab World from a feminist ent regional forums. In 2004, Mrs. Khreishe served as a member of the cal Elections and advocated for the establishment of a national quota for electoral laws. In 2005, she helped found the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace to help resolve the conflict in accordance with international law and UN resolutions related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In 2006, she ran for the Palestinian Legislative Council elections on the Palestine Independent List. Mrs. Khreishe is a trustee of the Jerusalem Center for Women and a member of the International Women’s Commission. She has experiences in training on gender equality, human resources development, advocacy and lobbying and interpersonal and leadership skills, locally and regionally.



**Mrs. Azza Kamel** is the director of Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT) and the founder of Women Research Centre. Over the past couple of decades she has involved in the fight against violence against women and an advocate for equality between men and women. She is a social development and gender expert, conceptualizing, planning, implementing and evaluating projects in the social development field and women's projects for various public, private and non-governmental organizations, in the area of building the c heir political participation. Mrs. Kamel holds a Ph.D. in Civic Education on " on practices in Egypt in the light of contemporary international experience, a comparative study". She is the coordinator of "Women Mock Parliament" which aims at building the capacity of young women members of local and national legislatures (local councils, the People’s Assembly, and the Shura Council), and activating the role of women in power and decision-making and legislation. Mrs. Kamel is a founding member of the Feminist Coalition which is established after Revolution of January 25.



**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.



**Mrs. Lama Kannout** is a Syrian women activist. She holds a BA in Interior design and owns and direct Lama Advertising Agency since 1992. She directed different documentary films and TV commercials. She was a member in the political office of the Arab Socialists Movement between 2000 and 2008. Mrs. Kannout is an establishing member in the Transparency Organization in the Anti-Corruption Committee, the Citizenship & Civil Peace Committees, Musawa Organization, the Syrian Democratic Platform and the Syrian Center for Citizenship. She's a member of the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy (CSWD) and a member in the follow-up committee of Syrian Initiative for Peace & Democracy.



**Mrs. Lilian Halls French** is a researcher and a feminist activist, the Co-founder and Co-president the European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI. She holds a PHD in Sociology. She has held high level positions in the French government including advisor on women's rights to the minister of Youth and Sports. She was the recipient of "Chevalier de la legion d'Honneur" for long term involvement in the field of women's rights and gender equality. Mrs. French is currently a lecturer and a consultant on women's rights in the Euro-Med region.



**Mr. Magdy Abdel-Hamid** holds a PHD in Construction Economics, Organization and Management. For over a decade he has worked as a consultant on political development polices, civil society and human rights policies and training programs. He is a consultant to UN agencies, IDEA, DRI, EPD and EU. He has coordinated and edited monthly and annual analytical reports on the status of democracy in Egypt and has participated in developing a number of studies, papers and training manuals on educational, citizenship, participatory democracy and monitoring elections. He is a Co-founder of many networks and coalition

ts, democracy and development on both national and regional level. Dr. Abdel-Hamid is a coordinator of the Egyptian Euro-Med Civil Platform (EEMCP), a president of the Coalition on Child's Rights in Egypt (CCR) and of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement (EACPE).



**Mrs. Rima Flihan** is a Syrian women activists and scenarist. She wrote different TV series and films scripts. She worked with the UN Women's Commission on their media campaign about honor crimes in 2010 and with UN Population Fund to raise awareness about women, population and poverty. She participated in a national Syrian campaign against honor crimes in 2005, and worked until 2008 with the Women of Syria Observatory. Mrs. Rima Flihan wrote many articles and investigative pieces on the topic of domestic violence, homelessness, disability, childhood, adolescence and environment. She was a member of the negotiating delegation with the

Syrian opposition in Geneva 2, a member in the National Coalition of Syrian revolution and opposition forces, and a member in the Syrian women Network. She was participating in the preparatory committee in the Cairo Conference for Civil Reconciliation Initiative.



**Mrs. 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).



**Mrs. Sawsan Zakzak** is Member in the board of Syrian Women League (SWL), civil and political activist, gender trainer and consultant. She is the coordinator of gender issues in "National Agenda for Future of Syria" (ESCWA). Mrs. Zakzak has participated in writing of many national social and economic reports and studies: "Non-paid women's house work", "Shadow report about Istanbul Platform", Comparative research on "Discrimination against Women in Personal Status Laws in Syria", "The issues of rural women in Syria", "CEDAW in Syrians courts", "Women's political participation in Syria". She has also published individual papers: "Social Movements in Syria", "The Challenges facing the Democratic movement in Syria".



**Mrs. 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 and capacity building. Among her achievements is the establishment of a business center to support start-ups in developing business and training women from government in drafting the Iraqi Constitution. She played a leading role in 2012- 2014 in development of the National Action Plan for implementation of UNSCR1325 in Iraq.

## ANNEX C – Moderators Biographies

---



**Mrs. Boriana Jönsson** is a women’s rights and peace advocate with 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 and war, in particular in the Balkans and Middle East. She is the Euro-Med Director of European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI. She is a member of the Board of Directors of Global Fund for Women and a member of steering committees and consultative bodies of regional MENA projects on violence against women, peace and security. During 2012–2014 she facilitated the development of the Iraqi National Action Plan (NAP) for implementation of UNSCR1325.



**Mrs. 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’s rights.

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. Najdeh is a development NGO that works with women and children in refugee camps and gathering in Lebanon.



**Mr. Nasser AlGhazali** is a Syrian researcher in human rights and international law. He participated in several researches including but not limited to legal research on the Syrian Constitution and the international law and human rights in 2001, a research on women political empowerment and CEDAW in 2008 and a research on sectarianism in Syria in 2012. He has contributed to different reports including “Syrian women between the reality and ambition” in 2007, a report on the Syrian Parliament elections in 2007, a report on the Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, and monitoring elections in Sudan and Mauritania. He is the director of Damascus Center for theoretical studies and civil rights and the Media responsible in the Arab Commission for Human Rights. He is a member in the International peace Initiative for Syria.



**Mrs. Rola Roukbi** is a Syrian women’s rights activist, the daughter of a political leader, Rola grew up in an engaged atmosphere against social injustice and dictatorship. She organized the first women’s demonstration at the high school of Hama. Mrs. Roukbi received her bachelor’s degree from Damascus University and master’s degree of history from Sorbonne university of Paris. She leaved abroad for a while and in 1990 she moved back to Damascus and become involved with tenant organizing and various socialist causes. With the beginning of kbi became involved in women cause and was a founding member of civil society organization for gender equality, dedicated to advancing

equality and women's right and a member organization in the Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy. She is member of the board of the Syrian Women's Network. Mrs. Roukbi was nominated for "chevalier dans l'ordre des palmes academic" from the French government for her role to support art and culture.



**Mr. Wael Sawah** is Executive Director of The Day after Association (TDA) and Editor-in-chief of *The Syrian Observer*. He is a Syrian researcher on issues of civil society in Syria, author of a number of research papers, and co-author of a number of books in Arabic and English. He is a member of the Annual Middle East Legal Studies Seminar (MELSS, Yale University), Board member of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, Damascus, founding member of the Syrian League for Citizenship, founding member of the Arab Rationalists League, Paris and Editor of Al Awan Website for Laic Studies ([www.alawan.org](http://www.alawan.org)). Mr. Sawah is co-author of "Issues of secularism in the Levant" and "A tale entitled Syria" in Arabic; co-author of "Le Printemps arab: un premier bilan," Centre Tricontinental, Belgique, 2012, in French; and "Taking to the Streets: Activism, Uprisings and Democratization in the Arab World," in English. He is a regular columnist at al Hayat Newspaper in London. Mr. Sawah has participated in a number of academic and political conferences organized by reputed universities in Europe and the United States and has written dozens of papers and policy briefs both in English and Arabic for international and regional institutions. He has worked as a Political Analyst at the U.S. Embassy in Damascus.



**Mr. Zedoun Alzoubi** is a university professor and quality manager at Arab International University in Syria. After the Syrian revolution he became an activist defending human rights of the Syrian people. He has frequently spoken to Arab and western media to advocate for the Syrian people struggle towards freedom, democracy, gender equality, and citizenship. He has been active in the medical field and has helped in the establishment of field hospitals in Homs, Daraa, and Damascus. He was detained twice for three months (two months of them solitary confinement) and then was forced to leave the country. He has also helped in establishing several Syrian civil society organizations in the in the establishment of the biggest civil society organizations coalition (Tamas). Due to his peaceful activism, he served as focal point and contact for the Special Envoy of UN to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi's team in Damascus and supported the office in designing and implementing local level mediation projects in Syria. Mr. Alzoubi holds a Ph.D. in management from the Arab Academy for Finance and Banking Sciences and is currently pursuing his post-doctoral studies at the Technical University in Berlin.