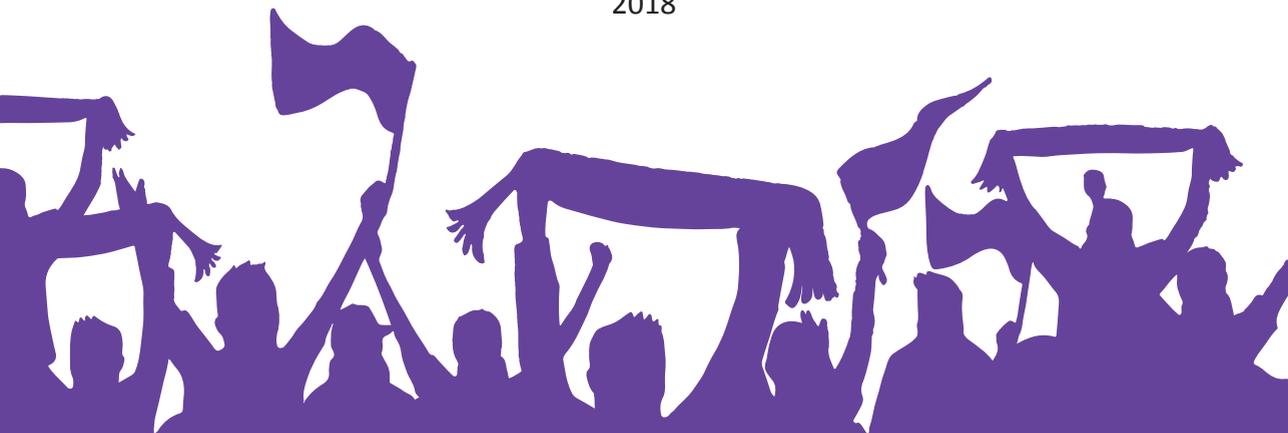**IFE - EFI**

CITIZENSHIP, GENDER AND DEMOCRACY BUILDING

PROCEEDINGS OF INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE

February 2015
Beirut, Lebanon

Euromed Feminist Initiative

2018

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INTRODUCTION: CITIZENSHIP, GENDER, AND DEMOCRACY BUILDING

Lilian Halls French

The three terms that make up the title of this round table constitute the three points of a triangular structure, interconnected by strong relations. Only by respecting these concepts will a society achieve equality for all its citizens, thereby deserving the name of a democracy.

The organizers of this event, the Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, the Syrian League for Citizenship, and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, are, despite their diversity, united by their common commitment to true equality, women's access to decision making in all spheres of life, as well as their freedom of movement and action in the public space. Believing in the universality of women's rights, their work promotes the development of democratic and secular societies based on the recognition of women's rights as universal human rights upon which no culture, tradition, or religion could infringe.

Today, the context of their action is, on one side, a Europe devastated by the consequences of the still recent financial crisis, the successive austerity plans, and the current rise of populisms and nationalisms, a Europe in which the rights that women have formerly acquired are threatened everywhere. On the other side, in the countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East, people, and above all women, are systematically deprived of the fruits of their fight for freedom, democracy and social justice.

The three organizers of the round table have agreed to hold an event on citizenship and to invite a number of experts from around the world in order to achieve the following main objectives:

- provision of a meeting space for activists championing human rights and women's rights in particular and researchers working in the fields of citizenship in order to facilitate the exchange of views and experiences in an effort to devise suitable conclusions that serve as a base for future work;
- exchange of views and experiences relating to major difficulties in the process of citizenship building, especially infringements of gender equality and the continuing exclusion of women from public participation on account of their presumed inferiority;
- identification and development of relevant concepts and strategies to be adopted in the short and long term in order to achieve sustainable citizenship equality;
- draft of recommendations to be presented at influential and effective forums in order to consolidate the principles of citizenship, especially those relating to gender equality.

The results of the round table have definitely gone beyond its initial goals insofar as all the themes approached and discussed at the event are still at the heart of major political debates. The picture of women's citizenship that this volume presents is by no means exhaustive but nevertheless highlights a number of significant issues. The texts included in the volume clearly show that numerous attempts at the improvement of women's chances for full citizenship and public participation are, to put it mildly, not supported but are rather either ignored or even thwarted, and that a long and difficult road still lies ahead of us. There are even more difficulties now as we are living in a time when so many factors are interplaying to prevent any kind of social progress, especially when it comes to equality between women and men. To face this regression, women are organizing, and this book is a beautiful illustration of their resistance.

CITIZENSHIP AS A CULTURE FIRST

Hassan Abbas

Abstract: This paper stems from the conviction that citizenship is the only framework capable of enabling different identities, whether natural or acquired, to live together in a reality that guarantees dignity, freedom, and equality for each individual. However, to accomplish this coexistence in reality, citizenship must transform from a political term into an effective culture that governs the behavior of the individual/citizen, and builds the foundation for their interaction with the three elements that determine the existence of a nation: territory, people, and institutions. The transformation of citizenship into a culture requires making its four principles, participation, freedom, responsibility, and equality, present in all relationships that join together the citizen on one side and each of these elements on the other. This paper aims at showing that actualizing real gender equality in society will not be possible until the transformation of citizenship into a culture is achieved.

"Citizenship" is a brilliant word positively treated in the political literature of the Arab world, especially after the "Arab Spring." However, does its positive connotation stem from the evidence of its effects and implications in the lives of the citizens of the region, or does it have a sacred connotation like that of the Eastern icons we believe in and seek blessings from, even when they are mere unexplainable legends? A reading of the limited intellectual production in the Arab world on the concept of citizenship makes me lean towards the second possibility. In the world of anthropology, the word "citizenship" has come to be a "*métaphore mobilisatrice*". The term is now used by politicians in speeches and declarations in order to win over people's hearts. The dominant oral culture has relayed the image of the term's sacred air without enlightening its essence. The term "citizenship" has transformed into a talisman, a tranquilizing concept, without a deeper look taken into its many potential meanings.

We choose to use the phrase "meanings of the term" in its plural instead of singular form out of our belief that the term does not have a unified and unilateral denotation, but instead changes and transforms according to life's context and circumstances. It differs depending on the time and place, or in other words, depending on geography and history. By saying this, we are not trying to define citizenship. Citizenship is alone in its search for the dignity in life and the equality of all. Yet what we mean is that citizenship is a castle that can be interpreted through a thousand different lenses, with each lens shedding its own bit of light. We choose to interpret citizenship through culture out of our conviction of the efficacy of this lens in actualizing citizenship and creating citizens.

What does it mean for citizenship to be a culture first?

It is necessary to point out that we do not view culture as intellectual production and creative activity (literature, art, music, etc.), but instead that the term encompasses all facets of human activity, be it intellectual, spiritual, emotional, or material, meaning thought, faith, emotion, and experience. These facets include all types of relationships entered into by individuals organized into a group with the rest of the world. This definition is of great value to the study of societies as it allows culture to be interpreted as an effective societal system; a collection of immaterial powers

and relationships that affect individuals and groups, driving them to take positions in life, espouse behaviors, and create (art, literature, music, etc.), thereby changing the way in which they live their lives as individuals or groups. We thus become able to understand many discernible phenomena and dynamics within society. In this framework, nationalism becomes a system of emotions and positions that provide an individual with her/his cultural direction in life, as do clannism, tribalism, and kinship. Within this framework, religiosity can also be viewed as an arsenal of governing principles and rules for the individual's cultural existence in the world, as can doctrinism, sectarianism, and even atheism. Finally, this line of interpretation treats the various positioning systems that guide an individual through society, such as ideology, doctrine, philosophy, and citizenship, as culture.

According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, culture under this meaning borders on the concept of habitus, which could be defined – with slight abridgment – as "the mindset that naturally and automatically guides behavior." In greater detail, habitus is a system of cognitive formation gained over the course of time, education, socialization, and social circumstances. Habitus is the effective energy that dictates the behavior of the individual or group, guided by a particular reference point that has solidified in the mental structure that governs the practices and behavioral events of both the individual and the group. Consistent with this vision, we believe that citizenship is a culture, an effective culture that governs the behavior of the individual/citizen and builds the foundation for their interaction with the nation.

Given that the existence of the nation/state is determined by three conditions: 1. territory or place, 2. people or citizens, 3. authority or institutions, then citizenship, when viewed as a culture that governs the behavior of the citizen and builds the foundation for their interaction with the nation, practically determines the nature of the relationships in place between the citizens as members of a political groups labeling themselves as a nation on one hand, and the conditions that make up this nation/state on the other. It is the individual's relationships with institutions that meet the condition of her/his legal existence, her/his relationships with the members of the society that meet the condition of his human existence, and her/his relationships with the elements of the space that meet the condition of her/his natural existence. Thus, to adopt this perspective in order to understand citizenship brings us closer to espousing an understanding of citizenship as determined by two types of relationships: a vertical relationship (citizen of a state) and a horizontal relationship (citizen of a society). We can also add a third element, which is the "perpendicular" relationship with two added elements – the citizen and the space s/he inhabits.

Citizenship is thereby "totality" in the philosophical sense of the word. It cannot be accelerated or abridged into a part of the whole which it constitutes, meaning that any partial comparison to citizenship actually detracts therefrom and sanctifies the insufficiency from which it suffers. A dignified life for the citizens of the world cannot be realized alongside a partial understanding of this concept.

This fragmented approach of citizenship is the platform on which "*la politique militante*" stands, i.e. those who base their expectations and visions for necessary countrywide change – a point whose urgency and necessity brought it to the forefront of the Arab revolutions – on nothing but the politician standpoint, focusing their work on the heart of the political system and access to power. They are the ones raising the banner of citizenship and the citizenship state while considering the matter a solely political one. They consider political authority to be in and of itself enough to

citizenship in the everyday life of citizens. The erroneous nature of this line of thinking is clear. All we must do to see through it is analyze the inefficiency of legal and legislative regulations in curbing dangerous practices like honor killings and environmental pollution. We will thus see that we cannot amend such problems until we transform the principles and values of citizenship into elements engrained into the cultural capital of citizens and succeed in rooting these values and principles into the collective subconscious.

In the same way, but in a completely different direction, we find this fragmented comparison in the work of many social do-gooders. Their overwhelming humanitarianism leads them to adopt a civil cleanup or Sufi mysticism that narrows the scope of their work in the general sense, and the breadth of their work for the sake of citizenship, to providing charity or humanitarian aid while refusing or neglecting to work on the level of political change, i.e. the level of relationships between the citizen and the state institutions. An example is the limit of a work that would provide aid to refugees, the victims of despotism, in order to keep them alive, while failing to spread awareness that would help them gain the citizen consciousness needed in order to understand how they can build for themselves the lives they wish to live.

We can verify the importance of treating citizenship as a culture under the aforementioned definition by analyzing the overall life issues that guide the social do-gooders along their path to achieve citizenship. The topic chosen for this meeting represents one of the most important of such issues. The issue of gender cannot achieve its objectives and establish the equal society it calls for by working solely on building relationships between citizens and institutions. Feminist movements may succeed in forcing legislators in a particular country to issue egalitarian laws, but this doesn't necessarily entail that women will obtain their citizenship. This especially holds true in states whose societies are dominated by an inherently masculine and patriarchal culture. It is thus necessary to work on ensuring that citizens represent the principles and values of citizenship, and that they begin understanding the concept of citizenship as a culture.

When we talk about the principles of citizenship, we absolutely mean the four principles combined by the explicit summarized definition: free participation for equal individuals i.e. the following principles: participation, freedom, responsibility, equality.

When we talk about the values of citizenship, we absolutely mean the following essential values: civility (general courtesy), solidarity, and civil and human consciousness.

The transformation of citizenship into a culture thus requires working on rooting these principles and values into people's mindsets and solidifying them as the basis for people's actions. Participation must become a principle in family life to the same extent that it is a principle in cases of political participation. Freedom must become a principle that allows women to enjoy their rights to the same extent as men, and the discrimination between women and men in regards to responsibilities must be eradicated. Men and women must be equal in custom (unwritten law) to the same extent, and even beyond, the level to which they are equal in formal written law.

Yet how can this transformation be accomplished? Is it even possible? Wouldn't it require creating a completely different and new kind of person, one that detaches herself/himself from any inherent cultures and bears, by virtue of having made this break, some or all of the moral losses? How is it

possible to convince the men wrapped in the velvety comfort of masculine patriarchy that women aren't vials and silks made for their use? That guardianship isn't an eternal law? And that women will not continue obeying their husbands like the Christians follow the Christ. How can the logic of honor be undone and scattered, a logic in which men assume the helm of authority over a network of female relations just as a spider nestles itself into the center of its web, its hairs quivering in anger at the slightest whisper, the most insignificant peep? On a wider scale, how can we deal with the collective mindset represented by kinship, sectarianism, tribalism, clannism, regionalism, doctrinism, to all the various "isms" present under the umbrella of nationalism?

It is self-evident that the matter won't be easy and is growing more difficult with time. The political failure from which the Arab states are suffering is a reflection of a societal failure. Gramsci's tactical instructions shudder ever so slightly when it appears that the mind is quickly sliding towards the shafts of a dark pessimism, while the will of the people loses its optimistic energy.

It is undoubtedly a visionary project. Some may even call it utopian. But we know that citizenship, as the French political sociologist Étienne Balibar states, is "a practice and process more than it is a fixed given. Citizenship is a process of completion that is never complete." However, to reach this objective, we cannot fragment the struggle for citizenship. Working on the level of society and individuals goes hand in hand with working on the level of the state and policies. As much as we have to work to make citizens aware of their citizenship, we must put pressure on institutions in order for them to prepare the ground for a global citizenship, which may be referred to under the name of democratization or democracy building. Thus, the terms citizenship, gender, and democracy building have been adopted as the title of today's meeting.

In other words, we are paving the road towards citizenship when we move in its direction. It is the strategy of paving a path which is well-known to rural dwellers, and which is defined as a succession of feet in one place clearing the path and getting closer to the final destination. It is this concept that was summarized by the poet Walt Whitman in his famous words: a path made by walking. As explained by the researcher in the anthropology of citizenship, Catherine Neveu, paving the path towards citizenship is a distinct act of citizenship by itself.

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REFRAMING NATIONALISM, CITIZENSHIP, AND GENDER: REFLECTIONS FROM SCANDINAVIA

Birte Siim and Pauline Stoltz

Abstract: The growth of nationalism and nativist parties and movements has raised political and scholarly debates about the future viability of European welfare states and democracies. These projects are sparked by reactions to the global war on terror and the economic and financial crises followed by austerity politics, growing securitization, unemployment and poverty across the continent. The nationalist trend has been visible in national elections and culminated in the European Parliamentary elections in 2014, in which rightwing populist parties increased their presence. European scholars have pointed towards the growth of exclusive welfare nationalism fuelled by global mobility and increased migration. Feminist scholars have started to analyze the articulation of welfare and citizenship in nationalist projects. The theoretical section of this paper revisits approaches to gender nationalism, arguing that in order to understand contemporary nationalist policies, gendered approaches need to evolve beyond notions premised on family values and motherhood. The paper's empirical section addresses the challenges from contemporary nationalisms in Europe focusing on the politics and rhetoric of rightwing nationalist parties in Scandinavia. It proposes that in order to overcome exclusive notions of nationalism and formulate more inclusive notions of justice, we ought to rethink citizenship beyond the nation state.

Keywords: nationalism, nativist parties, gender, global mobility, migration, citizenship.

Introduction

Empirical studies have started to address changes in the way gender equality is articulated as part of national narratives and nationalist claims in contemporary Europe and as part of the constructions of national and European identities. Increased migration to and internal mobility within Europe have inspired new nationalist projects which challenge previous concepts of nationalism focused on women's roles as mothers. It is a challenge for feminist approaches to understand new forms of welfare nationalism premised on exclusive notions of citizenship, equality and social justice.

The article aims to explore the intersections of nationalism, citizenship and gender by building on results from European research projects (cf. Siim and Mokre 2013; Lazaridis et. al. 2016; Lazaridis and Campone 2017) and recent Scandinavian studies (Meret and Siim 2013a, b; Siim and Meret 2016). The main argument is that the dominant theoretical approaches to gender, nations and nationalism, premised mainly on family values and on women's roles as "mothers of the nation," need to evolve in order to encompass the articulation of gender in contemporary versions of nationalism. The studies point towards analytical tensions between support for liberal values of gender equality and exclusive forms of nationalism.

The paper proposes that the reconstruction of nationalism and citizenship must be intersectional in order to address inclusionary and exclusionary notions of citizenship, focusing on differences between native born citizens and immigrant groups as well as differences within these groups (cf. Yuval-Davis 2011; Siim and Mokre 2013). It further discusses recent proposals to reframe citizenship, equality and social justice beyond national borders (cf. Yuval-Davis 2011; Fraser 2013).

The first section briefly revisits some of the main arguments in scholarship on gendered approaches to nationalism, focusing on two approaches that can contribute to a (re)thinking of gender and nationalism from intersectional and transnational perspectives (Yuval-Davis 1997; 2011; Özkirimly 2005; 2010). A review of recent global literature (cf. Thapar-Björkert 2013) demonstrates that scholarship on gendering nationalism needs to be situated in time, space and place. This paper addresses the articulations of gender with new forms of nationalism in contemporary Europe (Rosenberger and Sauer 2012; Siim and Mokre 2013; Lazaridis et. al. 2016). The main argument is that in order to understand the articulation of gender in contemporary European nationalisms, the role of the family and motherhood need to be scrutinized.

The second section elaborates on this point by focusing on the role of gender equality in the politics and rhetoric of contemporary rightwing nationalist parties in Scandinavia. Scholars have shown that Scandinavian welfare nationalism (Brochman and Hagelund 2010) is premised on particular meanings of welfare, democracy and gender equality (Borchorst and Siim 2002; Melby et. al. 2008). The relation between nationalism and gender equality is illustrated with reference to the three Scandinavian rightwing parties, (the Danish Peoples' Party, the Norwegian Progress Party and the Swedish Democrats), whose exclusive perceptions of citizenship are combined with support for the value of gender equality, but are often (mis)used to attack the immigrant minorities that live in patriarchal cultures subjected to male domination (Siim and Stoltz 2015; Siim and Borchorst 2016).

In the closing part of the paper its main arguments are summed up and it is pointed out that the liberal values of gender equality have come to play a new contested role in the discourse of right-wing nationalist parties. It is emphasised that analyses of the Scandinavian cases can contribute to the development of gendered approaches to contemporary European nationalisms. Finally, the paper presents Nancy Fraser's proposals to reframe (gender) equality, citizenship and social justice from transnational and global perspectives and discusses whether it is doable, desirable and theoretically justifiable.

Reframing Gender, Nation, and Nationalism: Theoretical Reflections
This section revisits existing theoretical approaches to gender, nation, and nationalism that in different ways have emphasised the importance of women's traditional family roles. Thapar-Björkert's review of the global body of literature (2013) gives a useful overview of feminist contributions to the engendering of nationalism, starting with Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias's seminal book *Woman-Nation-State* (1989). This influential approach has emphasised five ways through which women participate in ethnic and national processes: 1) as biological reproducers; 2) as reproducers of symbolic boundaries of ethnic and national identities; 3) as ideological reproducers of the collectivities; 4) as the symbolic signifiers of ethnic-national differences; and 5) as participants in nation-building, and economic, political and military struggles (808).

The dominant emphasis on women's cultural and ideological roles "as mothers" has been criticized by Sylvia Walby for neglecting the gendered division of labor, class, and the economic content of gender relations. The point is that women's contribution to nation building has not only been affected by their differences from men but also by the differences between women (Thapar-Björkert 809). Feminist contributions have gradually moved beyond a focus on culture towards emphasising the "politicization" of women's public and private lives (815-18). In spite of this criticism, the study of national symbolism and of women's roles as "mothers of the nation" is still important, also visible in recent studies of nationalism, religion, and violence.

One promising area for developing studies of gender and nationalism is the growing body of literature which highlights the meanings of gender in transnational migration processes (Yuval-Davis 2011). Studies show that women's transnational experiences are diverse and may sometimes sustain gender divisions, hierarchies, and inequalities, and other times, contribute to more equitable relations between men and women (Fouron and Glick Schiller 2010). Another area of growing importance is comparative studies of the framing of women and gender equality in the discourse and policies of rightwing nationalist parties across Europe (Rosenberg and Sauer 2012; Foerster 2014; Mulinari and Neergaard 2014; Lazaridis et. al. 2016; Lazaridis and Campone 2017).

Intersectional Approaches to Nationalism, Citizenship, and Gender
This section presents two recent approaches to nationalism that have inspired the rethinking of gender and nationalism (Yuval-Davis 2011; Özkirimli 2005; 2010). Yuval-Davis's approach understands nationalism as a "politics of belonging," concerned with the construction of boundaries of belonging, of a delineated collectivity that includes some people and excludes others (86-94). Özkirimly's approach defines nationalism as a meta-narrative or discourse, a particular way of seeing and integrating the world, a frame of reference which helps to make sense of and structure the reality surrounding us (163). These views supplement each other, since they are both concerned with borders and boundaries, with women's roles as mothers at the symbolic level (often embodying the homeland, i.e. "Mother India" or in a Swedish context, "Mother Svea") as well as with diversities among women. From this perspective, nationalism is defined as claims of community cohesion centered on "the nation" as a common frame of reference, a form of discourse that structures the reality around us. In this vein, it is nationalism that defines the nations and not the other way round.

Nira Yuval-Davis's influential work (1997; 2011) has documented the multiple ways in which constructions of gender and gender equality are embedded in national histories, institutions, and politics of belonging. Her seminal book *Gender and Nation* (1997) and her more recent book *The Politics of Belonging. Intersectional Contestations* (2011) elaborate this approach. In the latter, she proposes that an *intersectional analytical perspective* is crucial for any concrete analysis of belonging/s and political projects of belonging, since "different political projects of belonging have different effects on different members of collectivities who are differently located and/or have different identifications and normative value systems" (25).

We find that the intersectional approach is fruitful for the analysis of nationalist politics of belonging in contemporary Europe focusing on tensions between perceptions of gender equality and majority and minority groups of women (cf. Siim and Mokre 2013; Mokre and Siim 2018). It distinguishes between belonging, which refers to emotional attachment about "feeling at home," and the politics of belonging, which concerns both the construction of boundaries and the politics of in/exclusion of particular people, as well as social categories and groupings within these boundaries. The intersectional approach is still concerned with the symbols and imagery of a population emphasizing that it is not the figures of women/mothers alone that symbolize homelands, but rather the imaginary social relations and networks of belonging in which they are embedded (94-95). In addition, it addresses the rise of "autochthonic" or nativist politics of belonging premised on claims to territories and states made according to the logic of "we were here first", which is crucial for understanding exclusive nationalist politics in Europe and elsewhere.

Umut Özkirimli's (2005, 2010) approach to nationalism divides the nationalist discourse into different dimensions that refer to both public and private institutions. The discourse of nationalism operates in ways that divide the world into "us" and "them," producing hierarchies among actors, naturalizing and reproducing itself through private and public institutions, especially family, school, workplace, media, church, and the police (2005: 32-33). This holistic approach is useful for empirical analysis, since it encompasses both the *spatial dimension* associated with the territory – an actual or imagined homeland; the *temporal dimension* – the construction of national history; and the symbolic dimension – aiming to provide a grammar for the collective consciousness through its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals and its narratives. In addition, it is also concerned with the *everyday dimension*, whereby national identity is produced, reproduced and contested in the details of social actions and routines of everyday life that are taken for granted (179-194).

Özkirimli proposes that nationalist claims provide a communication strategy that (1) divides the world into homogeneous and fixed identity positions; (2) creates a temporal lineage from the past, through the present, and by way of extrapolation into the future to demonstrate the diachronic presence of the nation; and finally (3) is based on a preoccupation with the national territory, imagined or real. This emphasis on political communication is fruitful for the empirical analysis of contemporary nationalisms. In addition to this, we follow Michael Freeden (1998), who argues that nationalist claims rest on a positive valorization assigned to one's own nation, granting it specific claims for social cohesion. We thus interpret nationalist claims as a particular communication strategy that seeks to reify and naturalize the nation as something natural and commonsensical (Hellström, Nilsson and Stoltz 2012; Özkirimli 2010).

To sum up, scholars have demonstrated that nationalist discourses have a gender bias, which constructs men and women differently in public and private life, and studies show that relations between gender and nationalism are dynamic and contextual. In spite of the diversity of approaches, there has been a major focus on women's reproductive and symbolic role "as mothers" of the nation, on the idealization of motherhood and "the home." This is undoubtedly still an important element of global nationalisms, but the critical question is: to what extent can this be generalized? And whether the role of motherhood is still the dominant part of all contemporary forms of nationalism? In order to discuss this, the next section explores the articulation of gender in contemporary nationalisms in Europe where gender equality has become part of the dominant discourse and politics (cf. Siim and Mokre 2013). The framing of gender equality in contemporary nationalist parties in Scandinavia is used as a critical case for exploring the framing of gender equality in neo-nationalist projects.

Gender Equality, Citizenship, and Scandinavian Welfare Nationalism
This section employs Özkirimli's and Yuval-Davis's approaches as inspiration for analyzing the way gender equality is embedded in Scandinavian welfare nationalism. According to Özkirimli, the *temporal* dimension of nationalism concerns the construction of national history and the *symbolic* dimension aims at providing a grammar for the collective consciousness through its narratives. Scholars find that the image of the universal welfare state and gender regime is based upon equality, and that "women-friendly" social policies are part of the national narratives of the Scandinavian countries, praised by scholars from both inside and outside Scandinavia (e.g. Hernes 1987; Esping-Andersen 1990; Walby 2009).

Looking at the spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging in Scandinavia, it is worth noting that immigration from countries outside Europe and the West is a relatively recent phenomenon. Migration regulations and policies were not a focus of attention in welfare politics, or, for that matter, in research and public debates, until the 1990s (cf. Brochmann and Hagelund 2011). Since then, increased immigration has raised concerns about the limits of welfare - as disclosed by failed integration policies. This has created new forms of inequalities between the native born and third country nationals, and thus between native and ethnic minority women, which have inspired debates about the Scandinavian gender model's ability to accommodate increasing diversity among women (Siim and Skjeie 2008; Siim and Stoltz 2015).

Over the last 20 years, scholars have explored the specific version of Scandinavian "welfare nationalism" (Brochmann and Hagelund 2011), often labeled "social democratic," and the politics of gender equality (Melby, Ravn and Carlsson Wetterberg 2008; Hellström, Nilsson and Stoltz 2012; Meret and Siim 2013b). Scandinavian researchers have discussed the implications of the universal Scandinavian welfare model for the in/exclusion of immigrant minorities in the labor market and in politics. Studies show that Scandinavian welfare nationalism is increasingly exclusionist, premised on cases of differentiated citizenship, which do not assign equal rights to native citizens and immigrants from countries outside Europe and the West. One indication is the failure to integrate immigrant groups within the labor market and political society (cf. Bengtson, Strömblad and Bay 2010).

The symbolic dimension concerns intersections between immigration, the family, and gender equality. The universal Scandinavian welfare states are premised on citizens' rights and obligations to wage-work and relative extensive welfare rights financed by direct taxes. The high employment rate of the native populations exceeding the Lisbon target for both men and women – around 80 per cent for men and 70 per cent for women – contrasts with the low employment rates for immigrants. Women from non-western countries are thus perceived to present special challenges to Scandinavian welfare states, since the gap in employment rates between the native populations and these immigrant groups are among the highest in Europe (Siim and Borchorst 2010).

The marginalization of non-western immigrant groups on the labor market and in society represents challenges for equality and "integration," which have been addressed by both rightwing nationalist and mainstream parties. However, gender equality has come to play a key role in the discourse of integration, where the perceived gender equality in "ethnic majority families" is contrasted with the supposed patriarchal oppression of women in "immigrant families" (Siim and Skjeie 2008). Danish and Norwegian studies illustrate how mainstream and nationalist anti-immigration forces have used/misused gender equality against ethnic minority women, who are perceived to be oppressed by their 'patriarchal' culture (Meret and Siim 2013a).

The political developments have in turn inspired feminist scholars to scrutinize Scandinavian "women-friendly" social policies "from within," focusing on diversities of interests among women (Mulinari et. al. 2009). Research has compared the combined effects of Scandinavian migration/ integration and gender equality policies from the perspective of immigrant and refugee women (Borchorst and Teigen 2010). One central concern is the contrast between official gender equality norms and the cultural norms and practices in immigrant families, which have been politicized by rightwing anti-immigration forces (Meret and Siim 2013b). Another concern is the absence of

ethnic minority women from decision-making processes (Siim and Skjeie 2008), which influence gender equality policies, such as the proposed ban on veils.

Siim and Stoltz suggest that it is a pressing Scandinavian challenge to reformulate welfare, citizenship and gender equality in the face of increasing ethno-cultural and ethno-religious diversity (cf. Siim and Stoltz 2015). Up until the 1960s, immigrants came primarily from other Nordic or European countries. As their countries of origin have become increasingly diverse, inequalities have also been growing between more "culturally distant" migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia and the rest of the population. Culturalist explanations of inequalities feature public discourses regarding work, family, sexuality, and personal life. Gender equality has become a key marker in these contexts, delineating the boundary between Nordic and "minority" cultures by portraying immigrant men as more patriarchal than Nordic men, and immigrant women as more oppressed than Nordic women. From this perspective the strong "equality norm" is premised on an underlying "antipathy to difference" (Kabeer 2008).

Arguably, this focus on gender inequalities in terms of categorical differences between men and women, as these cut across the class-based categories of capital and labor, has led to "epistemological blind spots." Scandinavian gender research has for many years tended to take the perspective of the "autochthonic." Nordic women have ignored differences between women or between men from different social categories.

This has made it difficult to incorporate inequalities of race/ethnicity and particularly the intersections between gender, class, and race/ethnicity. While migration research has mainly focused on immigrant men, feminist research has often portrayed immigrant women as passive, victimized, and trapped in their cultures. This situation is rapidly changing, and feminist scholars increasingly question the basic assumptions of Nordic gender equality politics (Siim and Skjeie 2008; Multinari et. al. 2009).

To sum up, feminist scholarship generally agrees that the recent political developments of welfare nationalism, citizenship, and gender equality challenge the grand vision of a "women-friendly" society "where injustice on the basis of gender would be largely eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequality, such as among groups of women" (Hernes 15). These political changes have been interpreted as a Scandinavian "gender equality paradox" referring to a contrast between the relative inclusion of native majority women and the relative marginalization of migrant women from ethnic minorities (Siim and Skjeie 2008). The Scandinavian welfare model has until recently been relatively uncontested, but the evolution towards de facto multiethnic countries has changed both the research agenda and the political landscape in Scandinavia. The next section briefly examines claims made by these nationalist parties about the family and gender equality as part of exclusive forms of welfare and citizenship.

Claims About Citizenship, Family, and Gender Equality by Rightwing Nationalist Parties
This section addresses contested claims about citizenship and gender equality in the discourse and politics of nationalist parties in Scandinavia. The focus is on the tensions of in/exclusion of immigrant and native women. European gender research notes that rightwing parties across Europe have found new and creative ways to use/misuse gender equality as a liberal value which separates the modern majority from the oppressive, patriarchal immigrant Muslim minorities

(Rosenberger and Sauer eds. 2012; Sauer et. al. 2017; Farris 2017). Scholars have also noticed that in the Scandinavian context rightwing political parties have combined anti-immigration policies with support for the welfare state and defence of gender equality and women's rights (Meret and Siim 2013a, b).

Welfare nationalism enables various levels of inclusivity and exclusivity in relation to nationals and immigrant groups. Over the last several decades, Scandinavian countries have witnessed profound changes in their political landscape. The "social democratic" understanding of equality policies that dominated larger parts of the last century, focusing mainly on class and gender, have come under pressure from increased globalization and immigration processes, and the Scandinavian countries have witnessed a growth of neo-liberalism and new forms of social conservatism. One contested issue is the special links between rightwing populism, welfare politics, and the parties' close relations to social democracy. The Scandinavian populist rightwing parties have a strong working class profile, which has affected their position on welfare issues.

Nationalist Parties' Framing of Gender Equality and Women's Rights
This section shows that the three Scandinavian rightwing nationalist parties, the Danish Peoples' Party (DF), the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) and the Sweden Democrats (SD), have similar framings of gender equality and women's rights premised on support for liberal values such as freedom of expression, gender equality, and homosexual rights. Meret and Siim (2013a) have compared the framings of gender equality, women's rights, and family values in the party programs and manifestos of the Danish Peoples' Party and the Norwegian Progress Party with the Austrian Freedom Party (FFÖ). This study illustrates that all three parties hold exclusionary nationalist positions and combine nativist discourses with an increasing emphasis on liberal democratic values, including gender equality and women's rights, which is particularly important in Denmark and Norway. One explanation could be that gender equality discourses and policies have become important parts of national narratives and contemporary politics of belonging and thus resonate with the particular Scandinavian welfare and gender regimes (93).

The studies also find that there are tensions in the two Scandinavian parties' position to gender equality. Both parties oppose gender equality policies directed towards the native population, for example, "gender mainstreaming" policies, gender- based quotas, or positive action (Meret and Siim 2013: 85-90). DF and FrP mainly support gender equality issues directed towards the ethnic minorities, especially Muslim women, such as a ban on genital mutilation, enforced marriages, honor killings, or veiling (Siim and Skjeie 2008). In this way, the two parties reduce the issue of gender equality to an ethnic minority issue and are mainly concerned with the incompatibility of Islamic cultural values in the West.

In Sweden, gender equality is not given a specific place in the key policy documents of the Sweden Democrats, but is subordinated to its ideological framework. In a recent study Mulinari and Neergaard (2014) find that the construction of who is perceived to be a citizen that is at the core of social policy visions in a globalized world creates a contradiction in the definition of who deserves care. The ideology of the party illustrates a shift from universal care for all to care "for our own," connected to the ambition to expand the care for our own native born citizens. The study interprets this as a form of racist care with two variations. The first is related to the analysis of welfare chauvinism; whereas the second is linked to an ethno-pluralist understanding where caring

also extends to the racialized other, who is encouraged to return to their home country, for their own good. Care thus becomes salient for two reasons. Firstly, care plays a central role in the Nordic welfare states. Secondly, the informants explain their participation in the party by reference to the positive value of caring rather than to the negative value of racism. The SD informants in the study also construct their exclusion and separation from the racialized other, not only as caring for their own native born citizens, but as a way of preserving their purity from the "other." On this basis Mulinari and Neergaard argue that it is important to identify the role that care has historically played in legitimating relations of power. This point can for some nationalist parties, such as the Danish Peoples' Party, be expanded to include the move from 'Social Democratic 'welfare nationalism' to exclusionary welfare nationalism, which tend to support welfare but only for 'native born' citizens (Siim and Meret 2016).

Concluding Reflections: Reframing Approaches to Gender, Citizenship, and Nationalism
According to Özkirimli, nationalist parties create a lineage from the past through the present by referencing history and demonstrating by extrapolation into the future the diachronic presence of the nation. They also divide the world into homogeneous and fixed identity positions, notably in relation to women from ethnic minorities, especially those from a Muslim religious minority, on the one hand, and a positive valorization of the nation and identity, on the other hand. The theoretical points about women "as mothers" in nationalist discourses are still important; however, they need to be reframed in the Scandinavian context. Here, gender equality is not only embedded as part of national politics of belonging; in addition, welfare politics no longer primarily conceives women "as mothers," but as "working mothers." Formulations of Scandinavian nationalist parties' discourses of gender equality are symbolized by the positive valorization of native born citizens, who embody the dominant cultural values, and a negative valorization of Muslim migrants, who embody the patriarchal values of their culture and need to be assimilated into the majority version of gender equality, welfare and democracy.

The paper has used the Scandinavian cases to illustrate the changes in nationalist claims about gender equality, the family, and women's rights. Claims by rightwing populism in Scandinavia are deeply embedded in the national histories, political institutions, and cultures, including particular understandings of welfare, the family, and gender equality politics (Siim and Skjeie 2008; Meret and Siim, 2013a: 93; Siim and Stoltz, 2015). The support for the classical values of social democracy and the welfare state is connected to the particular Scandinavian versions of nationalism, which since the 1970s have included the belief in gender equality and women's wage-work. Despite the differences, the three nationalist parties all refer to the history of the working class and perceive themselves as heirs of social democracy (Meret and Siim, 2013b; Siim and Meret 2016). The right-wing parties' claim for exclusive national welfare and individual values of gender equality can also be identified in contemporary European nationalisms, although the support of Conservative family values and motherhood tends to be stronger in Continental European countries, such as Austria, with a more conservative gender regime (Mayer, Ajanovic and Sauer 2015).

One future research agenda would be to compare claims made by Scandinavian nationalists about gender equality and women's rights with claims made by other nationalist forces both across and outside Europe. The framings of nationalist parties tend to be based on exclusive understandings of welfare, care and gender equality, all premised on differentiated citizenship rights between native citizens and third country nationals (Siim and Mokre 2013; Mokre and Siim 2018). Arguably, the

Scandinavian nationalist parties are influenced by mainstream Scandinavian perceptions of welfare and the family, which are no longer premised on women's reproductive and caring role as mothers but on the universal mother-worker. Social rights are individualized and the welfare state has taken over (part of) the responsibility of caring for children, the sick, the elderly, and disabled. The Scandinavian examples thus represent a "critical case" for the claim to reframe gender and nationalism, although research indicates that similar framings are visible in other European countries (Sauer et al 2015; Farris 2017). The question remains whether the Scandinavian cases of exclusive welfare nationalism, premised on women's individual rights, working mothers, and public responsibility for care work, are unique for Scandinavia, or represent a new nationalist trend.

Gender Equality, Women's Rights, and Social Justice
The paper has argued that theoretical approaches to gender and nationalism must be reframed in order to encompass the articulation of gender equality in contemporary neo-nationalisms, which are premised on exclusive notions of citizenship. The claims by Scandinavian nationalist parties, who often attack Muslim minorities "in the name of women's rights," have been used as a critical case to demonstrate that liberal values of gender equality and women's rights have increasingly replaced the previous conservative focus on the family and motherhood as the dominant values in (neo)nationalist politics of belonging (cf. Farris 2017). Notions of gender equality and individual rights have today become a key aspect of European discourses, policies, and belongings, and arguably, the particular Scandinavian cases under consideration in this article can contribute to more general debates of how gender equality and individual rights are embedded in contemporary nationalist projects.

The paper has argued that contemporary Scandinavian welfare nationalisms in both mainstream and rightwing variations rest on contradictions: they are associated with positive valuations of gender equality and women's rights, while at the same time, being premised on distinctions between citizenship rights reserved for native citizens and demands for gender equality directed primarily towards migrant minorities. Rightwing nationalist parties claim that gender equality is mainly an ethnic minority issue, since the majority has already achieved gender equality. It follows that ethnic minorities need to adapt and assimilate to the dominant gender model, premised on the obligation to wage work and to institutionalized care for infants.

On the basis of the Scandinavian cases, the paper has proposed that in order to understand the challenges posed by contemporary nationalisms, gendered approaches to nationalism need to evolve beyond notions emphasising women's traditional family roles and motherhood. Exclusive welfare nationalism is premised on liberal notions of gender equality, sexuality and women's individual rights, and arguably, this can also contribute to an understanding of certain new elements in the contemporary discourses of rightwing nationalism in other European countries, such the case of Marine le Pen's Front National in France (Meret and Siim 2016; Farris 2017).

These empirical and theoretical conclusions can also inspire normative reflections about the links between nationalism, citizenship, and (gender) equality policies. Tensions between an exclusive form of citizenship rights and solidarity limited to nationals only, as expressed by the nationalist parties, have been identified. We propose that exclusive perceptions of citizenship rights are crucial elements in contemporary democratic struggles over redistribution, recognition, representation, and participation.

Researchers investigating tensions between national and transnational versions of citizenship, equality and social justice beyond the national territory/borders have started to reframe social justice from intersectional (Yuval-Davis 2011) and transnational and global perspectives (see e.g. Fraser 2013).

From a normative perspective, it has been argued that the reconstruction of citizenship must be both multilayered and transnational in order to address inclusionary and exclusionary processes and framings of citizenship within and beyond the nation state (cf. Yuval-Davis 2011; Siim 2013). Nancy Fraser's approach to social justice is an example of a transnational model premised on universal principles of social equality, cultural diversity, and participatory democracy. Fraser (2013) claims that in order to reconstruct democratic theory in the current "post-national constellation," it is necessary to problematize the national frame and introduce the notion of "transnational public spheres." This approach rests on the analytical claim that the public spheres are increasingly transnational or post-national with respect to each of the constitutive elements of public opinion: the who of communication, the what of communication, the where of communication, the how of communication, and finally the addressee of communication, which is no longer Westphalian state power but a mix of public and private transnational powers. Fraser argues convincingly that a public sphere theory, understood as a critical theory in a post-national world, faces a dual challenge: to create new, transnational public powers and to make them accountable to new transnational public spheres (cf. Fraser 2007, 23).

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WOMEN, ETHNICITY, AND CITIZENSHIP

Umut Erel

Abstract: This contribution explores the position of ethnic minority women in debates on citizenship. In the first place, a view of citizenship beyond the individual-state relationship to a wider sociological understanding of belonging and participation is considered. Furthermore, the complex interrelation between public and private life is examined, arguing that women's citizenship spans both spheres. The ways in which ethnic minority women challenge and transform normative understandings of citizenship through three key moments are considered: 1) becoming subjects with agency who can articulate their own political and social concerns, 2) realizing their capacities in a range of social relations and sites, such as caring, work, sexual identities, and cultural identities and 3) by claiming new forms of rights in these sites, ethnic minority women can transform our understanding and practices of citizenship. This requires a serious consideration of the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and class in order to understand citizenship as a democratizing practice.

Keywords: gender, ethnicity, class, minority women, citizenship, agency, human rights.

Introduction

Citizenship is a contested concept that promises equality and inclusion, while also constructing inherent boundaries, exclusions, and hierarchies. Although formal citizenship is undoubtedly significant, a wider understanding of citizenship is necessary for making sense of the position of women and marginalized groups like ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and sexual minorities. I shall discuss citizenship in its wider meaning, as the British theorist T. H. Marshall introduced citizenship as "full membership in the community" (1953). This is an important and useful definition deepening liberal notions of citizenship, which focus on the relationship between individual and state, often conceived as contractual. Marshall proposes that citizenship has developed in steps from judicial rights (i.e. protecting citizens from arbitrary state violence), to political rights (i.e. voting rights), to social rights providing social security and solidarity between citizens in a welfare state.

Feminist scholars have critiqued the view that these rights have been realized in a sequential manner by all citizens (e.g. Lister 2003; Walby 1994). They have argued that Marshall's account of citizenship takes male experiences as the norm, while ignoring the pernicious effects of hegemonic conceptions of society as structured by a public/ private divide. For example, one of the rights Marshall considers as the first, judicial protection from arbitrary violence, has not been realized in substantive form for many women who are subjected to domestic violence. One of the reasons for this is the longstanding assumption that what happens in the home pertains to the private realm, and according to liberal, male-dominated views, needs to be protected from state intrusion.

Private/Public Divide

First of all, it should be clarified that there are different understandings of this divide of private and public, one relating to the division between state – as public, and markets – as private. However, here I will discuss the division between public, relating to economic life, the formal political arena, and state institutions, and private, relating to the domestic sphere, often thought of as a private domain. The ideal-typical liberal conception of this private - public divide originally was intended

to protect from state intrusion into the domestic sphere, regarding domestic matters as a haven from the business of public life. Yet, such a concept has been critiqued by feminist scholars and activists. Firstly, it misrepresents the private sphere as one of relaxation, and free from politics, hierarchies, and power relations. This means that women's oppression through gendered division of labor, in particular within the domestic sphere, is not recognized. The experiences, in particular of women, children and sexual minorities, of hierarchy, power, and violence within the domestic sphere must be taken seriously in order to afford them protection within this sphere. For many women the domestic sphere is not one of relaxation, but is the key arena of their economic caring and reproductive work, and though this work is often unpaid, it constitutes an important contribution to society. Similarly, many women work as part of family businesses or as homeworkers. More recently, even highly skilled jobs are being undertaken in the home as teleworkers or freelancers, reminding us that the physical location of the workplace in the home should not undermine the recognition of a woman's economic contribution. The location of their workplace in the home can also intensify the isolation they experience at work, and make it more difficult for women to organize in trade unions or other workplace associations, and to claim their formal working rights. However, women's reproductive work in the home can also be a factor differentiating between women, not just between men and women. Thus, with the increase of global inequality and global mobility, more women migrate to richer countries in the North, but also within the South, from rural to urban areas. For many of them, the domestic sphere becomes the workplace where they do cleaning, but also important caring work for children, the elderly, and the sick. As these tasks have traditionally been gendered female, it is often the women of the employing families who act as points of contact and managers for the paid domestic workers. In this sense, the domestic sphere is also increasingly an intra-gender diversified space of class, ethnicity, and power. In terms of citizenship, this shows how complex the notion of the public/private divide has become, even when we only look at the space of the home. Furthermore, while the ideal typical liberal position has aimed at keeping state intervention out of the private, familial, or domestic sphere, this has never quite been the reality. Indeed, the key role of the domestic sphere and of sexuality in reproducing the nation has often meant that the state has seen women as key actors of citizenship, in particular through their contribution to making new citizens through childbearing and childrearing (Pateman 1992).

Multilayered and Multidimensional Citizenship

Citizenship is an inclusionary process of redistribution of resources, yet it also involves exclusionary processes of boundary making. And although the criteria for inclusion and exclusion are legally regulated, these are not simply given but are subject to struggles, and indeed formal rights do not always lead to substantive rights (Isin and Woods 1999). While formal citizenship rights are important, especially for women and ethnic minorities, if we are looking at citizenship in relation to those who are marginalized, it is useful to think of "citizenship as a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging" (Lister 50). Such a perspective brings to the fore "struggles … to redefine, extend and transform 'given' ideas about rights, duties and citizenship" helping to "shed light on what inclusive citizenship might mean when it is viewed from the standpoint of the excluded" (Kabeer 1).

Citizenship is a multidimensional concept and theorists have pointed out different levels of citizenship such as legal, social, and political (Marshall 1953), different aspects of citizenship, i.e. like active/passive and public/private (Turner 1990), as well as different tiers of citizenship including

local, regional, national, and transnational (Yuval-Davis 1997). Despite the universalist claims of democracies, members of the community are positioned differentially with relation to all of these dimensions of citizenship, according to class, gender, ethnicity, "race," sexuality, ability, and legal residence status, as well as other social divisions.

Multiple levels of belonging and participation constitute the citizenship experiences and practices of women, from the intimate sphere of the family, to the local, to the national, transnational, and the supra-national, different sites and relationships are involved in conferring – or withholding – recognition, rights and entitlements. While the nation-state continues to be an important actor, especially in allowing migrants entry to the territory, conferring legal, social, and political rights, women themselves also contribute to producing notions of rights, community, and participation on these levels, and in the process become political subjects.

My focus has been to examine citizenship as a lived experience and to consider what insights about citizenship we can gain from taking seriously the contributions, experiences, and knowledge developed by ethnic minority women, who are often seen as not fully competent citizens, positioned at the boundaries of the nation. In my own work (Erel 2009), I have looked at citizenship as a practice and struggle over belonging and participation through migrant women's experiences of citizenship who are positioned at the boundaries of citizenship and are subjected in terms of gender, ethnicity, and often class. I have identified three key moments of citizenship:

1) Becoming subjects with agency – one of the key oppressions that ethnic minority women experience is the denial of agency. Indeed, in hegemonic citizenship discourses, ethnic minority women are mainly portrayed as passive, and they are seen as receiving social citizenship. So, first of all, there needs to be a reconstruction of ethnic minority women as capable of producing knowledge about themselves and acting in their own name.

2) Secondly, I argue that citizenship needs to be regarded as more than the relationship between the individual and the state. Instead, citizenship practices are about claiming and realizing participation in a range of social sites and relations. For the ethnic minority women I have worked with, it is important to be able to realize their capacities in multiple social sites and vis-à-vis a range of social actors. Thus, I argue that caring, forming intimate and sexual identities and relationships, working at a level that suits their skills, cultural identification, formal and informal political activism are all sites in which women struggle to realize their capacities for belonging and participation.

3) A final element of this is that ethnic minority women themselves also of course claim their rights. This rights claiming activity is important in raising social awareness of existing injustices, as often, the rights migrant women claim had not previously been recognized. In this sense, migrant women's rights claiming sensitizes and creates a social consciousness of justice, and so contributes to reflections about normative ideas of who should be a citizen, which rights should be accorded to citizens, and how citizens should be empowered to realize these rights. In the process, ethnic minority women challenge and transform our understanding of citizenship.

When the experiences of ethnic minority women, and how they affect our understandings of citizenship, are examined, it becomes clear that we require an approach to citizenship that looks simultaneously at social positioning and politics of gender, ethnicity, and class. While often such an

intersectional perspective is seen as a requirement only for those who are marginalized and oppressed, I suggest that an intersectional, taking into account the ways in which all subjects are positioned as advantaged or oppressed according to all these social locations, is vital if we are to further develop the democratizing potential of citizenship.

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MALE LEADERS AND FEMALE CARETAKERS: GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF A SOUTH EASTERN EUROPEAN SOCIETY IN PROTRACTED TRANSITION

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Abstract: This article considers aspects of gender dynamics in Bulgarian political life over the lengthy period of 29 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 reasons, such as 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. The article discusses some of the means of moving beyond such dichotomies.

Keywords: citizenship, democracy, gender, agency, participation, androcentrism, Bulgaria, political life, civil society.

The main point which this article makes is entirely straightforward: after eleven years as a member of the European Union, about 29 years of democratization and (partial) preparation for the above membership, and 45 years of state socialism under governments formally committed to "equality of the sexes," Bulgarian society (the society in protracted transition of my title) is characterized by predominantly male-centered gender dynamics. Instances of gender imbalance abound even in the upper echelons of the country's political life. Thus, it is generally assumed that the leader of a major political party must be a man, whereas even very active women ought to be content with secondary, supportive roles within the political hierarchy. The cultural belief underlying such arrangements is that women are "naturally" conditioned to take care of others and can best contribute to the effectiveness of a political party's mission by adopting a quasi-maternal role. Men are leaders and trail-blazers, whereas "good" women in politics are caretakers who smooth the way and make things easier for the men.

To illustrate the persistence of status inequalities in Bulgarian political life, I will briefly focus on two heavily gendered political dramas. The first one started over three years ago: following Bulgaria's parliamentary election in October 2014, the center-right political party, generally known by the acronym GERB ("*Grazhdani za evropeisko razvitie na Balgariya*," "Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria"), won the highest number of votes but still did not gain enough to form a government on its own and therefore had to opt for a coalition with other parties. The party is headed by Boyko Borisov, aptly described by one commentator as "a political maverick who combines Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's baroque political manner with an aptitude for German-style fiscal discipline" (Krastev). Three of GERB's highly noticeable women members were entrusted by Borisov with the task of conducting negotiations with prospective partners. Undeterred by considerations of (Western) "political correctness," a number of (male) politicians declared on key TV channels that Borisov had made a good choice in sending over a team of *women* to negotiate, since women were endowed (by nature?) with qualities such as tact, sensitivity, and

delicacy, making them good mediators. However, they likewise asked if the women in question had been *really* empowered by their leader to make decisions on behalf of "his" party. It appeared only too likely that Borisov might refuse to honor any of the political deals brokered by the female *troika*. Luckily, the negotiations contributed to the formation of a coalition government, and this could be interpreted as a mark of the success of the female mediators.

The second political drama is part of Bulgaria's last presidential election (first round: 6 November 2016; second round: 13 November 2016). The GERB party nominated the Speaker of the National Assembly[1] Tsetska Tsacheva for the largely ceremonial post of president, and its leader Borisov typically remarked: "It's time to have a *mother of the nation*, after so many fathers, for a change [my emphasis]" (Okov). Leaving aside Borisov's patronizing perception of the Bulgarian nation as a "child" needing paternal and/or maternal care, the emphasis was, yet again, on the image of a female politician as a *caretaker*. Tsacheva missed her chance of becoming Bulgaria's first woman president as she lost to the fighting jet ace and former commander of the Bulgarian Airforce Rumen Radev, supported by the opposition Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), heir to the Bulgarian Communist Party. Throughout her presidential campaign, Tsacheva was frequently the butt of sexist jokes as both men and women voters criticized her taste in dress and general social ineptness. The emphasis which she herself placed on her own "ordinariness" and her personal life as the mother of a growing son did not help her much. Her opponent won, despite his lack of political experience, and his victory provided positive proof of the continuing presence of a patriarchal strain in contemporary Bulgarian society. Added to that was Radev's populist stance as an opponent of Middle Eastern refugees' resettlement to Bulgaria and presumed pro-Russian sympathies, which appealed to the elderly and nostalgically minded base of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Bechev)[2].

Both political dramas illustrate a view of citizenship, which, in the words of the Greek political scientist Maro Pantelidou Maloutas, is "inherently androcentric [and is] combined with the traditional distinction between private [female] and public [male] spheres [my additions]" (xiii). The outcome of such a view is absence of gender parity, which manifests itself in the perception of "two differentiated and unequally valued types of citizens" (Maloutas xii). The androcentric view of citizenship and the political practices, which it engenders, are in direct contradiction to the generally accepted notion of democratic citizenship as being, in principle, "beyond any individual particularities and differences" (Maloutas 1). There can be no doubt that European societies in particular have been making efforts to increase women's participation in political processes, and thus diminish the impact of sexist assumptions about gender roles. Whereas such efforts have been crowned with moderate success in some North European contexts, traditional systems of gender relations have proved very resistant to change in the European South (Maloutas xvii). Maloutas's work will be used as a point of reference in this article insofar as a number of her pronouncements on Greek society and culture are relevant to the Bulgarian situation: despite certain historical differences, the two South Eastern European countries share a similar legacy of patriarchal assumptions about gender roles, which could be linked to, among other things, a common tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

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[1] The National Assembly is Bulgaria's unicameral parliament and the country's main legislative body.

[2] Radev subsequently made an effort to ease fears of his being too close to the Kremlin by declaring that he wanted Bulgaria to be "a loyal and predictable NATO partner." See "Bulgaria's Radev Seeks to Ease Fears He Is Too Close to the Kremlin," *Financial Times*, 28 December 2016.

Maloutas argues that the full realization of the socio-political project of democracy is hampered by the persistent dichotomous conceptualization of gender relations, which legitimizes discrimination (x). She analyses, at some length, the effect of the current conceptualization of gender on welfare policies and reforms in different European countries aiming to increase the participation of women in political life and concludes that it is not enough to merely *modernize* gender roles in society and, by implication, in political life, and that *deconstructing* them might be more in order. While a definition of the deconstruction of gender roles is difficult to provide, Maloutas's critique of existing EU gender policies and the emphasis which she places on the need to confront hitherto unquestioned assumptions about gender are relevant to any attempt to re-think the relationship between gender and democracy.

Maloutas's point about the modernization of gender roles as an insufficient prerequisite for the realization of a radical democratic agenda is borne out by developments in post-Second World War Bulgarian society. Partial modernization of gender roles occurred during the period of state socialism (1947 – 1989). Like other state-socialist countries in Europe, Bulgaria introduced and maintained a dual-earner household system as opposed to the traditional male breadwinner model. Women were encouraged to work, and their role in the workplace was formally recognized as primary whereas their role at home was assigned *second* place.[3] However, the privileged ranking of working women's *social* role in the workplace did not lighten the *double burden* with which most of them had to live on a day-to-day basis. Apart from fulfilling their duties in the workplace, women were assumed to be responsible for the housework and the upbringing of children. The double burden was also sanctioned by inherited patriarchal values, which the state socialist system never seriously attempted to eradicate, despite its formal proclamation of "equality of the sexes." As a result, the life of most working women in urban surroundings was not radically different from that of their grandmothers or great grandmothers in early twentieth-century Bulgarian villages, who similarly had had to split their time between doing their share of agricultural work and being homemakers.

Under such circumstances, most women showed little genuine interest in political involvement of any kind. There was a *mandatory quota* of female representatives in Bulgaria's National Assembly and in other administrative bodies but, by and large, few women questioned the unspoken patriarchal assumption that politics was "men's business" and that "good" women were not supposed to encroach upon the confines of this generally recognized male preserve. The minority of women who occupied relatively high positions within the political structures of the Bulgarian Communist Party owed their status to their proximity to men in positions of power. The most flagrant example was that of Lyudmila Zhivkova, the daughter of the Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov, who became a member of the Party's Polititbro and President of Bulgaria's Committee of Culture.

The life of women in the long-drawn post-socialist transition, a process of restructuring society's key sectors in the course of which reforms appear to have bred more reforms, has been marked by

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[3] The Bulgarian sociologist Dobrinka Kostova draws attention to the relationship between women's roles in the workplace and at home, without acknowledging the distinction between formal recognition at the level of ideology and social practices. See her article "Similar or Different? Women in Postcommunist Bulgaria" (1998).

both differences and continuities with the past. One of the factors affecting the lives of women has been the "re-traditionalization … [of] household practices and family values" (Pascall and Kwak 2), which in practice has meant a full-blown revival of Bulgarian society's patriarchal legacy. In addition, economic inequality in Bulgarian society has conditioned the emergence and stabilization of a consumer culture and the unabashed adoption of consumer values by a considerable number of girls and younger women (Stoycheva 7-8). While such factors have impacted the lives of women in general, they have also influenced gender relations within the political elite. As already illustrated by the examples above, a gender hierarchy that privileges men over women structures Bulgarian political life. Thus, all parties represented in the country's 43rd National Assembly (October 2014 – January 2017) were headed by men. Women accounted for 20,42% of the total number of Assembly members (Popov). This may be seen as sign of modest progress when compared with female representation in Bulgaria's Great (i. e. Constitutional) National Assembly of 1990-1991 (8.76%) and in the important 38th National Assembly (1997-2001), which paved the way for Bulgaria's accession to the European Union (9%) (Kostova 228). It is, however, less than the European average of 28.5% for the parliaments of member states, according to the EU publication *Women in the European Parliament* (8 March 2016). The percentage of women in the Bulgarian National Assembly also compares unfavorably with women's representation in the European Parliament: women make up 37% of the membership of that body, according to the same source. However, the percentage of women in Bulgarian regional decision-making bodies is even lower and totals 13 - 14 % ("*Zhenite*").

The weak representation of women in decision-making bodies is an example of their social subordination and marginalization. It may be argued that the re-introduction of gender quotas would change the situation. The change could be purely quantitative, though. Besides, it should not be forgotten that the introduction and maintenance of quotas under state socialism did not materially influence attitudes to women or, for that matter, women's self-perceptions of their social role and its significance. It may be argued that things are likely to be different in the context of democracy and that gender quotas can "deliver a fast track to more women in [political] office" (Kittilson 544). However, with quotas, there is also the danger of the reduction of female participation in the political process to mere *presence*.

Genuine political *participation* is a key to significant change in perceptions of democracy and gender roles. Maloutas has drawn attention to the educational effect of political participation: "it socializes its agents towards the attainment of self-knowledge, responsibility, and autonomy" (39). She further remarks that "participation *presupposes* that the subject possesses a sense of autonomy and self-worth, that s/he has an independent identity and the sense that s/he is worthy to participate in the political process" (39). Unfortunately, traditional models of socialization for feminine subjects, such as the ones that are still typical of South Eastern European contexts, do not prepare them for political participation of this kind. Such models are among the factors conditioning what has been termed women's "limited participatory 'predisposition'" (Maloutas 39).

The issue of women's limited participatory "predisposition" was part of a debate held at the *Red House* Center for Culture and Debate in Bulgaria's capital in 2014. The participants were the journalist Irina Nedeva, the sociologist Elena Staykova, the civic activists Daniela Bozhinova (Green Party) and Yuliana Nikolova (Reformist Bloc), and Zlatina Karova, a former member of Sofia's Municipal Council ("*Zhenite*"). All participants noted the relatively low percentage of women in Bulgaria's National Assembly and the country's regional decision-making bodies. They also commented on other

instances of inequality, such as the difference between men and women in the allocation of time to household tasks ("*Zhenite*"). Nikolova remarked upon the near absence of caregiver parity between male and female family partners ("*Zhenite*"). Bozhinova was in favor of what may be described as "positive discrimination": she supported gender quotas as a way of encouraging women to participate in the political process and suggested that political parties' subsidies should be determined by their willingness to place women in winnable positions on their election lists ("*Zhenite*"). Karova questioned Bozhinova's reasoning and rejected gender quotas as a solution to the problem of women's limited political involvement. While admitting that women activists were occasionally successful, she deplored the overall unattractiveness of Bulgarian political life and the fact that it provided such women with few opportunities for the expression of agency. She concluded by saying that she viewed her term as a member of Sofia's Municipal Council as a waste of time and energy ("*Zhenite*").

The exchange between the participants in the debate is in many ways indicative of the situation of Bulgarian women during the transition period. As was seen, one of the participants vacillated between the political practice of the past (gender quotas) and the demands of the present (providing a "cure" for limited female participation in the political process). Attention was drawn to the inequality between men and women but nothing was said about the prevailing traditional models of socialization. Nikolova commented on the lack of caregiver parity between women and men but did not attempt to link the issue to the persistence of traditional models of female and male socialization. Not a single one of the participating women discussed a very painful issue which must have been at the back of their minds: the fact that most political parties in post-socialist Bulgaria "share a distaste for active emancipation policies and [that] gender equality is not regarded as important for the legitimization of [political] regimes" (Brunnbauer 228). Awareness of this issue was (perhaps) behind Karova's statement about the *unattractiveness* of Bulgarian political life and her complaint that women in politics had few opportunities for the expression of agency. This tendency, which is one of the outcomes of the "re-tradionalization" mentioned above, testifies to the androcentric character of mainstream political life in Bulgaria. It also explains much in the gendered political dramas with which we started.

Can values, such as equality, liberty, autonomy, and self-realization, which are fundamental to the contemporary conception of democracy, affect the Bulgarian system of gender relations and change it for the better? Or have things gone too far already for egalitarian change of any kind? Despite the fact that women's participation in present-day Bulgarian political life is not on a par with that of men, there is hope. Above all, we need to take into account the fact that both gender relations and political life change over time; as this article's title suggests, we need to think about them in terms of *dynamics*. Besides, despite numerous contradictions, Bulgaria's present socio-political system provides women with a number of opportunities. For instance, the democratic state tends to dominate politics and ideology much less than the old state-socialist one. Women in present-day Bulgaria are not limited to their local or even national context only. If necessary, they can draw attention to their problems by using the Internet and its key social networks. Since Bulgarian women are citizens of the EU, they can likewise appeal to the European institutions. If women make adequate use of the opportunities provided by democracy, Bulgaria's membership in the European Union, and global communications, they may indeed be able to re-negotiate existing gender relations, strengthen civil institutions, and effect lasting changes in the country's political life. Bulgarian women can study the experience of women in other countries and use some of it to

resist patriarchal values at home and solve local problems. Needless to say, changing Bulgarian society's androcentric bias is not going to be easy and can only happen gradually over an extended period of time. However, numerous ways exist of demonstrating that Bulgarian women are not passive victims of models of socialization inherited from the past or opportunistic political strategies in the present.

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PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON

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Abstract: How do female Palestinian refugees in Lebanon define citizenship? How is citizenship applied to them? What is the relationship between citizenship and democracy, and between citizenship and refugee status, statelessness, and the inability of female refugees to exercise their human rights? Can citizenship be implemented in the absence of an independent state and the continuation of occupation? This article begins a discussion about these questions and the complexities faced by female Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Keywords: citizenship, democracy, Palestinian refugees, statelessness, human rights, gender, women's rights.

Introduction

The concept of citizenship is played out within a context linked to exercising a series of rights and duties, be they legal, democratic, cultural, or socio-economic. Within this context, relationships and needs are created and democracy manifests itself in a collection of practices, systems, and laws, in which rights, duties, and responsibilities are effectively embodied. The interaction of these elements facilitates the birth of similar concepts, systems, and laws on principles, values, norms, and behaviors, all of which contribute to the formation of the components of citizenship and grant it distinguishing characteristics. It can thus be said that the act of citizenship encompasses multiple dimensions – legal, cultural, social, behavioral, etc. If it is in fact true that the concept of citizenship is related to a certain extent to the political, civilizational, and cultural development of society, then it is also correct to say that exercising the act of citizenship, in all its aspects, cannot be achieved in a state of statelessness. Such is the case of female Palestinian refugees, who are legally classified as stateless or identity-less. It is necessary to add that the situation of statelessness of female and male Palestinian refugees is the longest such case in modern history and has been going on for approximately 68 years. Within this context, it is worth noting that, since their exile, female Palestinian refugees have been prevented from achieving the socio-economic dimension of citizenship, which aims to fulfill their basic material needs and provide them with the minimum required to maintain their dignity and humanity. This condition is a result of the three-dimensional discrimination they face in Lebanon, given their Palestinian identity, and the fact that that they are both refugees and women.

In addition to the above, citizenship cannot be achieved within the context of a foreign occupation and a state of oppression, discrimination, and violation of human rights laws in general, and of women's rights specifically. In other words, with the failure of an independent state to have materialized. Such is the case in the occupied Palestinian state, in which human rights, and particularly women's rights, are violated daily by the Israeli occupation, including the right to determine the fate of the Palestinian people and Palestinian women. This not only entails the denial of full citizenship rights, the values and content of the already flawed citizenship, the inability of residents to practice their citizenship, and the inability of the Palestinian authority to assume its role in implementing in a comprehensive framework the legal facets of citizenship.

We can thereby discern that practicing the act of citizenship from a legal perspective depends on the existence of a nation, independent state, homeland for the individual (his/her country), or place of residence in which the rights of citizenship are recognized. This is the opposite of what Palestinian women and female Palestinian refugees face, for citizenship is the relationship between the individual and his/her free, independent state, determined by the constitution and laws enacted by this state. These laws guarantee the equality of all citizens (be they female or male), equality between men and women, equal opportunities, and equal rights. They also entail equal participation in democracy building, the development of the nation, and the preservation of coexistence within the state of all minorities, sects, and belief systems. This legal dimension organizes the relationship between the rules and citizens, based on the social contract that balances the interests of the individual and those of society. It is this specific aspect that has not been granted to Palestinian women in general and female Palestinian refugees specifically.

On the other hand, citizenship implies that the citizen enjoys his/her rights and has duties imposed on him/her by virtue of his/her belonging to the nation. These rights include, among others, the right to education, the right to health care, and the right to work. Among the duties imposed on the citizen are the duty of loyalty to the nation and the defense of the nation, the exercise of the right to vote, and the right of representation on all local and national levels. It can thus be said that the legal implementation of citizenship is contingent on two primary conditions:

1. The existence of a nation-state and the resulting implications for the establishment of a nation-state founded on freedom of choice and the will of all of its citizens to coexist.
2. The existence of rule of law and a democratic system in terms of devolution of powers and their separation, equality between male and female citizens in rights and duties, the freedom of worship and belief, and the separation of religion and the state.

In short, it could be deduced that citizenship is a comprehensive, multidimensional, and diverse democratic concept to which female Palestinian refugees do not have access. As mentioned above, it is composed of legal, cultural, social, and behavioral dimensions and is exercised daily. Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by female refugees in the civilizational-cultural dimension is the lack of respect of the particularity of Palestinian cultural and civilizational identity, and the various forms and attempts at marginalization and profiling to which not only Palestinian women, but also the entire Palestinian people in Lebanon in general, are subjected. In addition to this point, there is the fact that their issues and needs are addressed from a security standpoint, for which they alone are not responsible.

Female Palestinian refugees aspire to achieve equal citizenship, even if imperfect, in the host societies in which they live. This would mean that all women living in Lebanon and the other host countries are treated equally instead of being discriminated against on the basis of arbitrary standards that include religion, sex, skin color, economic level, social class, political affiliation, intellectual stance, gender, or legal status. Exercising citizenship would thus require a chain of rights and duties founded on the following four pivotal values:

1. The value of equality
The value of equality is reflected in a series of rights. Primarily, the equality of women in the host country is measured in terms of opportunity and access to education, work, property ownership, equal treatment before the law and the judiciary, recourse to legal methods and tools, recourse to the judiciary, access to knowledge, access to information, etc.

2. The value of freedom

The value of freedom, particularly freedom of belief and religious rites, freedom of movement within the country and between the camps and Palestinian congregations, is contrary to the blockade imposed on the camps. This value also covers freedom of opinion and expression, which can translate into support or opposition to issues, stances, and policies, including opposition to the exclusion of female refugees from international agreements and the failure to implement international treaties and agreements related to women's rights and human social rights, etc.

3. The value of participation

Among the rights guaranteed by the value of participation is the right to participate in local and national political life. The political participation of female refugees is limited to their representation in Palestinian partisan and national frameworks, especially within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Taking into consideration the absence of national Palestinian democracy in regard to the periodicity of elections for leaders and professional entities, we can deduce that the representation of female Palestinian refugees is limited to some union frameworks and political parties. In this context, the most evident problem lies in the absence of internal democracy, the fact that a quota has not been adopted, and the fact that the principle of proportional representation, decreed by numerous agreements to end the Palestinian division and the Central Elections Committee, has not been implemented. What remains to mention is that the representation of female Palestinian refugees in the various national and partisan frameworks has not reached the extent of their struggles over the course of the previous decades.

4. Social responsibility

Despite the fact that female Palestinian refugees fulfill their socio-economic duties and responsibilities by paying taxes, social security fees, and other dues, they fail to benefit from the returns of these fees and taxes. This is the result of the discrimination they face and the denial of their right to access to human and social security.

Female Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are denied the experience and exercise of citizenship. There are specificities to their legal status for the following reasons:

- The link between the continued Palestinian refugee crisis in Lebanon and the bordering states and the continuation and future of the Israeli occupation and Arab-Israeli conflict. In a similar context, the continued occupation and failure of an independent Palestinian state to materialize facilitates the absence of national care for Palestinian refugees in host countries.
- The link between the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and UN General Assembly Resolution 194 constitutes an embodiment and international legal and moral responsibility towards Palestinian refugees pending the implementation of the aforementioned resolution.
- The authorities responsible for handling the conditions of the refugees as well as their rights and service affairs are represented by the international community, represented by UNRWA, host countries including the Lebanese state, and the Palestine Liberation Organization.
- The realities of refugees are affected by national and regional conflicts and wars. In certain countries, Palestinian refugees have been displaced more than twice, which has worsened their refugee status and suffering.

- After the Iraq-Kuwait war in 1990, over 400,000 Palestinians were displaced from Kuwait.
- During the Lebanese Civil War and the consecutive wars against the camps in Lebanon, over 200,000 Palestinians were displaced.
- During the currently ongoing Syrian crisis and war, 50% of the Palestinian refugees residing in Syria were internally displaced, in addition to the 80,000 Palestinian refugees that were displaced to host countries.
- With the political changes happening in Egypt, the Rafah Border Crossing that connects the Gaza Strip to Egypt was closed. Not only was the strip thus transformed into a large prison, but its residents that total 1,500,000 people (two-thirds of whom are refugees) became isolated from their surroundings, increasing the sorrow and marginalization they already suffered.

In order to supposedly preserve national singularity and deter resettlement to Lebanon, the Lebanese state espouses a policy that multiplies the discrimination and oppression of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The most evident traits of this discriminatory Lebanese policy are the following:

- The complete exclusion and isolation of Palestinians from the surrounding Lebanese areas in camps that were established in the early 1950s with a maximum capacity of only 100,000 refugees. Since then, the number has multiplied by four and a half, which has led to the deterioration of the state of the infrastructure throughout the camps.
- The fact that the Lebanese state has failed to adopt a definition for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, which prevents their subjugation to various types of discrimination and exploitation during the implementation of laws and procedures in regard to them. In the implementation of laws, they are sometimes considered as foreigners, at other times, as Arabs, and occasionally, as stateless persons. The double standards and discretionary procedures against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are becoming more apparent with time. While other laws and procedures, such as the personal status laws, do apply to them, this is in most cases undertaken with inhumane and inappropriate treatment by employees.
- The state of the denial of all human, economic, social, and other rights, including the denial of the right to employment, ownership, and the right to benefit from public services (including the services of municipalities).
- Following a policy of displacement and dispersal by constraining the camps, blockading them with checkpoints, and prohibiting the entry of construction materials, foreigners, and Arabs without valid permits, in addition to the destruction of numerous camps during the wars and the failure to rebuild them.
- The failure of Lebanon to apply the international agreements pertaining to human rights, and especially women's rights, including the CEDAW Convention.
- The absence of all forms of human, national, and international protection for Palestinian refugees.

Such features and practices have facilitated the birth of a reality that is defined by the marginalization and three-dimensional discrimination of female Palestinian refugees in Lebanon due to their status as women, refugees, and persons without an identity. For similar reasons Lebanese women married to foreigners are also denied the right to transfer their nationality to their husbands and children.

This method, meant to avoid granting the Palestinian husbands and children of Lebanese women the Lebanese nationality, ensures that resettlement is prohibited, as is claimed. It also ensures that Lebanon is not accused of issuing yet another discriminatory law against Palestinians in the event that it issues a law that excludes Palestinians only.

The following remains to be noted:

- Obtaining citizenship, regardless of the type, shall not overturn the right to return and UN General Assembly Resolution 194. It must thus not deny any refugee, whether female or male, the right to exercise their return in accordance with Resolution 194.
- The human rights of women and men, including refugee rights, are indivisible. They are comprehensive rights, and comprehensiveness must be equally applied to everyone without solicitation. International and regional agreements and charters cover all residents, not only citizens of states, and must thus be implemented and applied to all without discrimination.

THE FEMALE REBELS EXCLUDED FROM DECISION MAKING: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND THEIR ACCESS TO DECISION - MAKING ROLES IN SOME OF THE OPPOSITION FORCES SINCE 2011

Lama Kannout

Abstract: Women, who took part in the revolution of 2011, represented all the female citizens who dreamed of making radical social changes a reality. Women participated in the establishment of the groups behind revolutionary action, which were the main socio-political basis of the struggle. Once the revolution ended, female rebels focused mainly on relief activities as the regime escalated its savage war against defiant communities. With the regime's increasing militarization and violence, female rebels gradually disappeared from the organizational structures of local councils that had been established in regions beyond its control. As for female participation in the political blocs that were formed directly after the revolution, it decreased little by little until it became merely symbolic.

Keywords: Syria, female rebels, democracy, gender, agency, political participation.

My intention is to shed light on the political participation of Syrian women and their access to decision-making positions within nine political blocs that present themselves as a democratic alternative to the regime and how they have included or excluded a variety of women's causes from their vocabulary during their establishment. Have these political blocs implemented what they have claimed to be their aims? Have they worked on a method to promote democracy, equality, and a state of citizenship and human rights for both men and women?

Figures and results show the weakness of women's political participation. The democratic and secular elites that had a strong role in the creation of current political forces seemed uninterested in this issue, or we can say that these forces were satisfied with a mere symbolic representation of women. Despite all the texts and documents about democracy and a state based on citizenship that were formerly produced, at the first obstacle they compromised on women's rights and gave in to the Islamists during the opposition's first conference on July 2nd, 2012.

This makes us wonder and worry if during this momentous chapter of Syrian history, as the Syrian people, both men and women, endure a war for freedom from tyranny in all ways, if the democratic elites have resigned from their role? Do they stand indifferent to the cause of the liberation of women and society from the patriarchal hegemony?!?

The paper presents a series of recommendations regarding the role of parties in promoting the political participation of women and their responsibility to include gender equality on the agenda of decision makers.

Introduction

It never occurred to the female rebels, who rose against a tyrannical and despotic regime, that four years later their political role would be marginalized. The women who held up slogans stating that females were no longer silent in Syria and cried, "Oh men, always stay ready and do not hide on Fridays," are now excluded.

Syrian women had a pioneering role in the Syrian revolution that started in the middle of March 2011 and brought politics back into Syrian society. Women struggled by all peaceful means to bring about real change, progress towards democracy, and a state of citizenship. They founded and took part in all the councils and committees that laid the foundations of peaceful, organized, social and political participation. The regime deployed all its military and security capacities to destroy the revolution and distort its image and the reputations of all men and women who took part in it. The regime released jihadists from its prisons and replaced them with peaceful persons calling for freedom. The regime pushed towards armament, extremism, and fanaticism, and opened the country's borders for regional confessional militias to fight by its side. As the militarization started, the role of women changed as they got heavily involved in relief activities. The escalation of violence in the armed conflict and extremism led to the exclusion and marginalization of women within the local councils providing services to the people in the various regions that were beyond the control of the regime. In the absence of a political solution leading to democracy, Syria became a pool attracting terrorists from all over the world, and the authority of extremists expanded to include large Syrian areas as the country became submerged in an absurd war.

Positioned between the terrorism of the regime and the terrorism of extremist jihadist groups in an environment that is hostile to freedom of opinion and civil political work, and under a constitution violating the basics of democracy and consecrating tyranny and discrimination against women, women have to pay the highest price of marginalization and exclusion as their suffering increases on account of the violence to which they are subjected.

The Human Development Report of 2002 singled out the political participation of women as a necessary condition for the achievement of human freedom. The Report mentions three major obstacles blocking growth and progress in the Arab world: freedom, knowledge, and the status of women. It also affirms that the political participation of women is a major development issue as it allows them to influence public policies and the management of state affairs. It also gives women the opportunity to present their own issues and thus turn them into public, social causes.

The radical and authentic changes resulting in the establishment of a state of equal citizenship, for which the Syrian people fought, could not be achieved without the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women within society, politics, the economic sphere, and state legislation. The concept of democracy stems from a series of values, such as equal rights for men and women, freedom of opinion and belief, human dignity, the enablement of all citizens to participate equally in public affairs, rule of the people by the people, peaceful handover of power, a state of institutions and laws, separation of powers, and respect for human rights. The equal participation of men and women in decision-making organs is the embodiment of equality and one of the mechanisms of democratic change in a transition from a patriarchal structure.

This paper aims at examining the political participation of Syrian women and their access to decision-making positions within nine opposition blocs formed during the revolution. Some of them include parties and groups that were active for a long time before the revolution but formed coalitions in the course of it. How do their political documents present women's causes and have such documents been a factor in their work for the promotion of democracy, a state of citizenship, respect for human rights in general and women's rights in particular? Special attention will be paid to the number of female members in such parties and coalitions.

The Political Participation of Women

On account of several decades of tyranny, the political elites opposed to the regime have for the most part failed in their main task as an effective alternative to it. They have merely followed instead of leading and for this reason have lost their influence and have become fragmented. The result has been disappointment for Syrian men and women who expected radical change, unity, and a common vision for the salvation of the country. Some political groups have even made agreements with Islamist forces, thus protecting a social structure that puts women in the position of followers instead of leaders and stereotypes their roles. Importantly, some of these women took to the streets demanding and defending their right to equality as independent and responsible human beings and full citizens with full rights.

In a study entitled *Divided They Stand. An Overview of Syria's Opposition Factions*, Aron Lund describes the Syrian opposition before 2011 as "fragmented and disconnected," and explains that "[a]ll organized groups are small, and a prominent individual dissident's word will often carry greater weight than that of a political party with hundreds of members" (22). Unfortunately, as such personalities got busy forming their alliances, they neglected the equal participation and representation of men and women and did not try hard enough to attract female activists. The forces that adopted democratic discourses, including the Islamists, compromised, and the best example is the clause included in the National Compact, issued on July 3rd, 2012, by an opposition meeting held in Cairo under the patronage of the League of Arab States. According to this clause, "[t]he Constitution guarantees the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and seeks to create legislative and legal conditions that guarantee their political, economic, and social enablement in accordance with all relevant international conventions and community culture." The quote reveals a blatant contradiction in the clause and an attempt to empty it of its meaning through the phrase, "*in accordance with community culture*," which was not included in the initial draft of the document but the Islamists insisted on adding it.

The female rebels and some other politicians advocated the establishment of civil society organizations as part of their peaceful struggle for the building of a secular, democratic, and pluralist state. They envisioned a state of citizenship that would ensure impartial treatment of all its citizens and their ideologies, a state that respects and abides by all the documents of the human rights charter and criminalizes violence and discrimination against women.

The currently low level of women's political participation is a source of great concern because during this crucial stage of Syria's history the exclusion and marginalization of any sector of the population is counter-productive. The responsibility of increasing the political participation of women falls on both political parties and female activists. Unfortunately, the current political culture in Syria continues to hinder women's participation in politics seriously as it links the values of achievement in the political sphere to men above all, due to the cultural patriarchal and authoritarian heritage of Syrian politics.

The National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces

The National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces was formed in November 2012. It includes four political blocs as well as the leadership of the Free Army, the revolution movements, local councils, the national council, the Syrian Business Forum, the Syrian Scientists' Association, independent national personalities, the Syriac Assyrian component, the Turkmen component, and

the Kurdish National Council. The Coalition includes the General Commission, which is comprised of 117 members, with only six women among them, and the Political Commission, which includes 24 members of whom only three are women. Since the Coalition was formed, the position of General Secretary has always been filled by a woman.

One hundred and twenty countries recognized the Coalition during the conference of the "Friends of Syria" that convened in Marrakesh, Morocco, on December 12th, 2012. As the "sole representative" of the Syrian people, it represented the opposition delegation at the Geneva 2 negotiations whose first round was held on January 22nd, 2014, and its second round took place on February 10th, 2014. However, the delegation included fifteen persons of whom only two were women. The Coalition has eight representation offices in the Gulf, Europe, and America, and only its Norwegian office is headed by a woman.

The National Coordination Commission
The National Coordination Commission was established on June 25th, 2011, and includes ten parties; the Executive Office represents the highest level of decision making and consists of twenty-five members, including three women.

A woman was elected to the position of Vice General Coordinator in April 2012, and for the second time, in April 2014, with acclamation.

The Syrian Democratic Union
The Syrian Democratic Union held its founding conference on September 28-29, 2013; the Coalition has a total of 1 227 members including 145 females. Its Executive Committee is comprised of 11 members, including 3 women, and the General Secretariat has 41 members, with 4 women among them. The Supervisory Committee has 7 members, including one woman, and there are 80 education grants, with 22 of the beneficiaries being female students.

The Party of the Republic
The Party of the Republic was established on April 17th, 2014. It numbers 87 supporters, including 6 women. The General Secretariat is comprised of 4 members, including 2 women; the Executive Committee in charge of decision making includes 2 women out of 7 members.

The Democratic Union Party (PYD)
The PYD was established on June 16th, 2003. It is a Kurdish party and a founding member of the National Coordination Committee. The PYD has adopted the joint presidency principle (a man and a woman), and its female representation rate is 40%. The Party Council is comprised of 25 members, including 12 women. The Executive Committee includes eleven members, nine of whom are women. Its function is to set the ideology, politics, and diplomatic agenda of the party. The Province Command, which is a leadership body in charge of Kurdish-populated regions, is comprised of 9 to 5 members with a rate of women between 40 and 60%; the same goes for the area management unit and local directorates. The Council of Europe is comprised of 42 members, 24 of whom are women.

According to a 2013 study, conducted by the PYD, women account for 43% of its membership. A conference dedicated to women is held before each PYD general conference to discuss questions specifically relevant to women, and women elect their own representatives within the party organs.

Since 2012, the PYD has exercised control over three areas in Syria from which the regime has withdrawn: Afrin, Ain Arab, and Jazeera. In January 2014, the PYD established temporary leadership in these areas including local councils, tribunals, and police stations. The PYD has two armed wings: a people protection unit (YPG) and a women protection unit (YPJ).

The Syrian National Council

The Council's creation was announced in Istanbul on November 2nd, 2011. Its General Secretariat totals 42 members, three of whom are women. The Executive Office is comprised of 13 members with no women amongst them.

The Council includes various components: the Muslim Brotherhood, the Damascus Declaration, the Kurdish Bloc, the Assyrian Bloc, the Independent Liberal Bloc, the Revolutionary Movement, the National Bloc, and national personalities. The Syrian National Council is one of the components of the National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces.

The Forum of the National Call

The Forum is the result of the merger of two political factions on March 4th, 2014: the Syrian Democratic Forum, which was created in April 2012, and the National Call Movement, which was launched in July 2013. The General Secretariat has 17 members, including 2 women; the Organizational Office has 7 members, including 2 women; the Media Office is comprised of 5 members with no women amongst them; the Transparency Committee is comprised of 3 members, including one woman, and the Political Office includes one woman out of 5 members.

The Kurdish National Council

The Kurdish National Council was established on October 26th, 2011 after the national Kurdish conference in the city of Al-Qamishli with the participation of 11 Kurdish parties, some youth groups, and cultural/social personalities.

The Kurdish National Council joined the National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces on August 27th, 2013. At the first founding round of the Council, women amounted to 7% out of 250 members. At the second round, which was held on August 14th, 2012, the women's representation rate increased to 14% out of 200 members and a woman was elected Vice President of the command body, which consists of a President and two Vice Presidents.

Building the Syrian State Movement

The Movement was established in Damascus on October 9th, 2011. Its creation was based on the agreement of a group of Syrians that did not necessarily share the same theoretical or ideological background, but they reached an agreement on the founding documents that were published as the Movement came into existence.

The group started with 24 members, and that number included 4 women. A woman was elected to the position of President from the start, and the Movement currently has 28 female members.

When considering the political documents published by these forces upon their creation, we mustn't forget that the National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces, the National Coordination Commission, the Syrian National Council, and the Kurdish National Council comprise

a wide array of parties and groups, including some that are of very long standing and others which have been constituted recently. Overall, the documents that these political associations have published comprise ideas which they generally accept.

An examination of the agendas of these political associations reveals that most of them are in principle in favor of democracy and equality in citizenship and support rights and obligations, which are free from discrimination based on gender, race, religion, or sect, and which conform to international conventions and the Human Rights Charter.

The Syrian Democratic Union, the Party of the Republic, and the Forum of the National Call have used gender sensitive language.

Equality between men and women regarding rights and obligations is mentioned in the political documents of the National Coordination Commission and the National Coalition of the Revolution and Opposition Forces. It is also part of the closing political document of the Kurdish National Council that was created following the first Kurdish conference for the equality of all citizens in rights and obligations.

Women's empowerment and the need for them to exercise their full rights and use their capacities in the service of social development as well as the removal of all obstacles preventing them from doing so are all mentioned in the founding document of the National Coordination Commission.

The issue of women's freedom is also part of the founding declaration of the Party of the Republic. The criminalization of all forms of persecution, exclusion, oppression, and discrimination on account of national or religious difference or because of gender bias and the guaranteeing of the full rights of women, including their participation in politics and all other fields, are stated in the political project of the Syrian National Council.

According to the political project of the Kurdish National Council and the proceedings of the Kurdish National Conference, it is essential to "[enable] women to exercise their rights to work, property ownership, the highest levels of education, expression of opinion … all within the rule of law and the protection of the family."

As for Building the Syrian State Movement, in one of its founding documents special emphasis is laid on "achieving sustainable development … and pushing forward towards the adoption of economic democracy that takes into consideration the policy of social justice."

At an extraordinary conference, which was held on June 16th, 2012, the Democratic Union Party (PYD) launched a political program entitled "The Social Environment of Syrian Society" in which the party addressed "the dark dramatic situation of the Syrian people, the Syrian family, and the Syrian woman in particular, who is often the victim of the clannish mentality, religious fanaticism, or the amoral abuse of the capitalist mentality." Attention was also drawn to "the absence of effective participation in social and political life." According to the program,

> [t]he freedom of the Syrian people and its democratization start by recognizing the freedom of the Kurdish people and the liberty of women. If the Kurdish cause represents the heart of the democratization process of Syrian society, then the cause of women represents the core of the cause of freedom.

In addition, the party included the following objectives in its program:

- amendment of the personal statute and civil laws so that women's rights can be guaranteed;
- eradication of gender discrimination and inequality in order to ensure women's participation in all spheres of life;
- countering all forms of violence and signs of the objectification of women;
- criminalizing and combating prostitution by legal and administrative means;
- developing an educational system for society and raising its awareness of gender issues in order to overcome the authoritarian mentality and gender-based discrimination and thus strengthen and develop women's freedom as part of society's overall democratization;
- organizing women's institutions to support and strengthen women's freedom and thus oppose the power of the regime.

On the other hand, most of the political parties and blocs under discussion did not address a number of issues which obstruct women's political participation and which would be essential to the building of a new democratic Syria. Such issues include:

- commitment to work for the removal of all reservations concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- criminalization of violence and discrimination against women in the new Syria (only the Syrian National Council has included this);
- adoption of a constitution that guarantees full gender equality and the compliance of all the personal status laws and sanctions with it (only the Democratic Union Party mentions the amendment of the personal status law).

The forces that emerged after the regime's militarization did not mention UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 1206, 2122 in their political documents. All these resolutions are relevant to women in times of armed conflict and stress their role in peace-building processes. The agendas of these political forces also omit the crimes that have been committed against women and particularly the fact that the bodies of some women have been used as a means of revenge in order to humiliate "the other". There is also an absence of quotas as a form of temporary positive discrimination; the only exception to this is the PYD.

No woman presented herself as a candidate for the position of President in any of the political parties and coalitions under discussion. We note that the political organizations that elected women as Vice Presidents, such as the National Coalition, the Coordination Commission, and the Building the Syrian State Movement, made a point of preventing women from running for the presidency.

Insofar as the National Coalition was recognized as the "sole representative" of the Syrian people by 120 countries at the "Friends of Syria" conference and received a lot of support afterwards, it should bear the greatest share of the responsibility for the neglect of women's issues and the omission of their rights from its goals and agenda. The neglect could be attributed to the Coalition's general failure to live up to its image as the representative of the Syrian people. Significantly, it has chosen to focus on women as voters above all rather than to encourage them to be an active, impactful force.

Women did not benefit much from the establishment of the Coalition's institutions. For example, in the provisional cabinet, which comprised ten ministries, only one woman was given the position of Minister of Culture, and the Ministry of Local Administration was not bothered by the utter absence of women from local councils. The worst part was complying with organizations that stemmed from the heart of Al Qaeda and defending groups that were classified as terrorist. Such organizations and groups have perpetrated acts of systematic violence against women.

Since the Syrian National Council is controlled by Islamists, there has been a complete absence of women from its Executive Office, despite the fact that it has criminalized all forms of gender-based persecution, exclusion, oppression, and discrimination in a document entitled "The Political Project." In elections conducted a year after the Council's foundation, no woman was elected to the General Secretariat, which forced Abdel Baset Sida, the then President of the Council, to nominate four women in a decree that he issued.

By recording the number of politically active women and tracking the documents of parties and coalitions we cannot arrive at a full understanding of the situation or assess the role played by women in politics properly. We can only say that these are indicators shedding light on the functional part of the policies that play an important part in achieving radical democratic change and strengthening the principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

The freedom of society is linked to the freedom of women. Parties and political elites that believe in a state based on the values of citizenship and wish to present themselves as democratic alternatives to the regime have to play a major role in pushing Syrian society towards real and radical changes. Women's issues cannot be separated from the general democratic struggle because women have no rights without democracy, and conversely, there can be no democracy without women's rights. Citizenship and democracy will remain meaningless words if no serious effort is made to lift up the marginalized half of society. The struggle for women's causes has its particularities and this should be taken into account. The low level of women's political participation at the grassroots level and in decision-making bodies especially during the revolution indicates that they deal with their symbolic political representation as an addition which has practically nothing to do with their roles in real life.

The Role of Parties and Political Forces in Enhancing the Political Participation of Women
Parties and political forces have a major responsibility in bringing about real changes; it is not enough to make speeches about full equality without turning it into a goal of the struggle and work towards removing all obstacles that limit the political participation of women and prevent them from occupying decision-making positions.

Democracy can only be achieved through a real partnership between men and women in managing public affairs within the framework of a constitution that guarantees complete equality between them and criminalizes all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

The parties and political forces that believe in democracy express it by:

- stressing the importance of discussing women's issues in the public sphere;
- including women's causes in their political agendas and seriously working to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women;
- breaking the monopoly of men over political work by making efforts to attract competent women and empowering them by removing all obstacles that prevent them from reaching decision-making positions;
- adopting quotas as a temporary form of positive discrimination to enable competent women to reach decision-making positions;
- adopting programs to inform men and women about international agreements and conventions relevant to women's rights, and, particularly, the UN Security Council Resolutions linked to the role of women in peace building;
- networking with feminist organizations and adopting joint programs to raise awareness levels about women's causes amongst party members and the general public.

The Role of Women in Bringing Gender Equality to the Agenda of Decision Makers

The feminist movement has the responsibility to prepare female activists for positions of leadership and launch campaigns that aim at informing society about the importance of women's political work. In addition, the movement should support:

- the drafting of a constitution that guarantees full gender equality;
- the spreading of a culture of universal human rights and the representation of women's rights as an integral part of them;
- the introduction of CEDAW and UNSCR 1325 – 2122 and all the other resolutions relevant to the role of women in armed conflicts;
- contacting all active forces to provide legal protection mechanisms, support, and justice for women survivors of crimes of violence during armed conflicts and preventing all forms of female abuse during and after such conflicts;
- the setting up of a monetary fund to support small projects for women that may have lost their jobs, family providers, or property;
- collaboration with political parties and coalitions to enhance the political participation of women and provide equal opportunities for them to have access to decision-making processes;
- the inclusion of women's rights in the political documents of parties and coalitions and the deployment of serious efforts to implement those documents;
- work on overcoming gender-based bias and stereotyping;
- continuous pressure and advocacy campaigns involving all active forces in Syria in order to revive negotiations and ensure a democratic transition, with women participating in every phase of the democratizing process;
- collaboration with Arab and international organizations and bodies relevant to women's affairs.

*** The article is a summary of a large amount of material discussing the political participation of women since the beginning of the revolution. ***

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THE GENDER EQUALITY STRUGGLE IN CROATIA: POTENTIALS AND CONSTRAINTS IN DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESSES

Helena Popović

Abstract: Over the last few decades, the importance of civil society has been resurrected, both as a theoretical concept linked to democracy and as a social practice. Even though civil society implies different definitions in the course of history, it is defined, in the contemporary sociopolitical systems of the West, as a part of the institutional framework of the democratic constitutional state. This type of institutionalized civil society started developing in South Eastern Europe with the abrupt structural changes that occurred in the aftermath of the fall of socialism - a process in which feminist CSOs played an important role. Needless to say, they were the main actors to introduce social changes favorable to gender equality. However, a contemporary assessment of gender equality shows that institutional change and the implementation of mechanisms for gender mainstreaming have proven to be insufficient. In addition to the lack of the implementation of gender policies and an appropriate legal framework, the "re-traditionalization" trend in Croatia has intensified over the last few years. Such negative developments can be linked to broader neo-liberal tendencies that have swept across the West over the last few decades: the retreat of the welfare state and cuts in the public sector, the crisis of representative democracy, economic crisis, and disruption of all social domains. In this context, feminist CSOs seem to be between a rock - the reactionary local context, and a hard place - the neo-liberal hegemony in Western democracies.

Keywords: civil society, civil society organizations (CSOs), feminist groups, gender equality.

Introduction: Civil Society in Liberal Democracies

Over the last few decades, the importance of civil society has been resurrected, both as a theoretical concept linked to democracy and as a social practice. The centrality of the concept is explained by historical periods of crisis: the crisis of family, the economic crisis, and the crisis of the legitimization of state power, among others. The economy and the market have "outrun the functional capacities of the State" with the "newly globalized, neo-liberal form of capitalism" (Comaroff and Comaroff 12-13). In these processes, governments mainly operate as services to corporate power while relinquishing their control over symbols, information, and ideologies.

Even though civil society implies different definitions in the course of history, it is defined, in the contemporary sociopolitical systems of the West, as an institutionalized part of liberal democracy. In the context of democratic theory, Habermas (1992) defines it as a sphere enabled through the constitution, but which is not formally organized, since the function of it is "discovery and problem resolution" (451). Compared to the past, the meaning of "civil society" has changed and does not include the sphere of economy any more. Habermas points out that

> [the] institutional core of "civil society" is constituted by voluntary unions outside the realm of the State and the economy and rang[es]…from churches, cultural associations, and academies to independent media, sport and leisure clubs, debating societies, groups of concerned citizens, and grass-roots petitioning drives, all the way to occupational associations, political parties, labor unions and "alternative institutions" (453-454)

In the context of a democratic theory, civil society is discursively constructed as something that should be assisted and positively evaluated since it is connected to signifiers constitutive of democracies such as "participation," "activism," "grass-roots organizing from below," "diversity," etc.

However, civil society is also critically assessed: it is viewed as an ideal-typical concept of the West that does not exist in reality but serves as a frame for a negative evaluation of non-western socio-political systems, whereas the same criteria are not applied to those who introduce the concept in "new" democracies (Comaroff and Comaroff 16); it is also viewed as a domain in the service of the neo-liberal state and global capital: the niches of poor, deprived and excluded groups are the target of NGO activities, through which they aim to "deflect the discontent away from direct attacks on corporate/banking power structures and profits and towards local micro-projects, apolitical 'grass roots'" activities in order to move the focus away from the class analysis of capitalist supremacy (Petras and Veltmeyer 128).

The Context of South Eastern Europe

Habermas (1992) distinguishes between civil society in state socialist societies and in western democracies. In the former, civil society, organized against the state, created an "infrastructure of a new order" through voluntary associations (455). In contrast to that, in western democracies, the voluntary associations are a part of the institutional framework of the democratic constitutional state (Habermas 1992).

In the 1980s, civil society appeared as a framework for the struggle against the authoritarian regimes in the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe. In socialist states, civil society groups emerged as a *reaction* against the state that had overextended control over social institutions, which reached most segments of the society. However, in South Eastern Europe, the situation was a bit different, firstly because of the specificities of socialism in Yugoslavia, and secondly, because of the ethnic war and the nationalist authoritarian regimes that came to power in the early1990s. In the post-war states that emerged from the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the activities of a considerable part of the CSOs were targeted at the nationalist authoritarian regimes that emerged in the 1990s.

The abrupt structural changes that occurred over the last two and a half decades in South Eastern 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 by war and authoritarian regimes. The collectivist ideology of both the socialist and nationalist authoritarian regimes, as well as the extensive activities of the state affected the sense of "self" in these societies and resulted in the suppression of various forms of agency (at least as defined and understood in liberal democratic theory), mostly visible in marginalized grass-roots activism, and an overall weak civil society. During the period in which Croatia was part of the Socialist Federate Republic of Yugoslavia, the secular authoritarian political system nurtured the cohabitation of diverse ethnic and religious groups in the respective republics and autonomous counties comprising the state.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, as a consequence of the political, cultural, and economic fragmentation of Yugoslavia, civil turmoil spread across the state culminating in 1989-1991. As a result, tension between Croatia and Serbia grew, which ultimately led to the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995). The war was characterized by intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic

controversies that were "interpreted in contradictory ways by different communities" (Bjelajac and Žunec 236). Franjo Tudjman, who was elected president of Croatia in 1990, was partially responsible for the exacerbation of the crisis (Ramet 2005). His authoritarian style of governance had a negative impact on the political climate in Croatia during and after the war. The nationalist movement, led by Tudjman and his political party HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community), had a broad acceptance among the citizens due to the "external enemy threats," discursively produced at the time. In the second half of the 1990s, after the war, the nationalist authoritarian regime operating in an ethnically "cleaned" Croatia began the processes of identity construction on all institutional levels. In this respect, Catholicism as the dominant religion became an important identity trait in order to distinguish Croatia from the neighboring "Others": Orthodox Serbia and the predominantly Islamic Bosnia and Herzegovina. The demand for linguistic "purism" in public discourse emerged, even though the languages in the newly established states were the same, or to be more precise, the newly established states share a polycentric standard language (Kordić 2010).[4] The reconstruction of national identity was encompassed by political conservatism, defamation of the previous secular socialist regime, and the rewriting of history. Needless to say, the unification of the national body hardly allowed for alternative voices to be heard. At the time, civil society was viewed as dangerous, especially if not in accordance with state politics. A framework of control was established with restrictive legislation: the registration process of CSOs remained in the domain of the Ministry of Public Affairs, taxation policies were discouraging, subsidies and state budget financing of the civil society sector were not available. The information channels mainly controlled by the state were not interested in the activities that occurred in the sphere of civil society. CSOs financed by international donations that dealt with human rights issues and the democratization of society and were critical of the regime (like Open Society or the Croatian Helsinki Committee), were an exception. These CSOs were obstructed, and were proclaimed to be enemies of the state by the state controlled media (Bežovan 2003). This type of repression was ongoing during the 1990s, and it aimed at marginalizing the actors who were engaged in civil society activities outside of institutional politics and who opposed the nationalist authoritarian government. Finally, under the pressure of international actors, the Croatian government established the Office for Cooperation with NGOs in 1998, and this marked the beginning of a dialogue between the state and CSOs that were not an extension of its politics or were completely apolitical. This was also the beginning of a more transparent and better-organized state subsidy support that reached a larger number of CSOs. However, the crucial change occurred after the death of the President Franjo Tuđman in 1999 and the first democratic elections in 2000. A leftwing coalition came to power, and this marked the beginning of a period in which the relationship between the state and civil society in Croatia changed. A new Association Act was introduced in 2001 that ensured a simpler registration process, as well as a more favorable tax system related to CSOs (Bežovan 2003b).

Women's Activism in Croatia

The development of CSOs in Croatia, as part of the institutional framework of the democratic constitutional state, started in the early 1990s. However, it should be borne in mind that citizens' organizations existed, in some form, in socialist Yugoslavia. In this respect women played an important role. During the Second World War, the *Women's Antifascist* Front was active, and

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[4] 'Polycentrism means that one language is spoken in more than one state and that all the states have their own national variants of it, with codified norms differing from one variant to another. (Clyne/Fernandez/Muhr 95, quoted in Kordić 47).

towards the end of the war, in 1944, women were granted the right to vote. Đurđa Knežević places the first phase of feminism in Croatia in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The first formally registered feminist group *Women and Society* emerged in the late 1970s, within the Sociological Association in Croatia (Knežević 249, quoted in Broz 151). While this group was theoretically oriented, the women's group *Trešnjevka*, founded in 1986, was formed by activists offering concrete help to victims of violence via SOS telephone lines. The mid-1980s witnessed the foundation of *Svarun*, a group which focused on ecology, peace, and women's spiritual life, whereas the first Lesbian initiative *Lila* was established in the late 1980s (Barilar et al. 2001). In this period the main civil society actors were women, youth, and sections of the urban population, unconnected with the centers of power. They also played a key role in the formation of CSOs in Croatia after it had gained independence in the early 1990s (Stubbs 2001).

The first CSOs, which were founded in the 1990s, were the *Autonomous Women's House Zagreb,* which was mostly concerned with issues of violence, and *Green Action*, a CSO engaged in environmental protection. When the war started, *Antiwar Campaign Croatia* was established; it advocated peace and non-violence. It was first organized as a network of individuals and later as a network of organizations. This was followed by an explosion of CSOs during the war. Such organizations were predominantly oriented towards humanitarian aid, refugee protection, and human rights. Naturally, the war determined the issues that were on the agenda.

Feminist activism was oriented towards peace. The CSOs were largely founded as a reaction to the socio-political changes in the country which were unfavorable to women. Such changes reflected the overall orientation of the authoritarian nationalist regime, which had strong ties with the conservative Catholic Church. Alongside with feminist activists who were dissidents and were for this reason branded as "traitors" by the regime, women who favored the regime formed their own associations which advocated patriotism and nationalism and placed national identity above gender identity (Stubbs 2001).

The post-war period was characterized by trauma, destroyed families, poverty, refugees, and instances of brain-drain. In this period, the financial support from international donors ensured the stability of CSOs – in the face of massive opposition from the state which obstructed the activities of organizations challenging its political and economic power structures or attempting to change the dominant order. The help of international donors was naturally welcomed in an economically unstable environment in which the unemployment rate was very high. The positive outcome was that a space was provided for the public engagement and initiatives of women. Besides, the CSOs that emerged had a horizontal structure, which made them different from organizations in other sectors. However, there was a major flaw: under the circumstances, civil society was mostly created "from above" by external actors, with donors defining the "priorities" of CSOs and imposing certain project-oriented practices.

The development of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in Croatia started in 1996. The first state institution, which was founded exclusively for the enhancement of women's status in society and was assigned an advisory role, was the *Croatian Government Committee for Equality Issues*, which emerged as part of the government's obligations following the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration of 1995 (Zore 91). The first *National Policy for the Promotion of Equality* (1997-2000) was designed at the same time.

In 2000, when a leftwing coalition came to power, the relationship between state and civil society in Croatia began to change. In 2001, the *Office for Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia* (2000) changed its name to *Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia*. The change was important for feminist activism and marked a new concern with women's rights (Bijelić 2006).

The legislative framework was enhanced to support gender equality: the first Gender Equality Act was passed in 2003 to be followed by a revised version in 2008. Besides, the Croatian Parliament established a Committee on Gender Equality in 2001, the Ombudsman set up an Office for Gender Equality in 2003, while the Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was established in 2004 (Zore 2013). However, this was also a period in which the support of international donors was drastically decreased, and feminist organizations, and CSOs in general, had to reorganize in order to secure financial sustainability. In this respect the state started to play a more important role.

Biljana Bijelić (2006) identifies two major phases of feminist activism in the aftermath of Croatia's independence: a nationalist phase and an integrative phase. In her view, the former was characterized by the re-traditionalization of moral values and measures undertaken in response to war and social insecurity, such as peace initiatives. In this phase, feminist activism occurred outside institutional frames, and civil society building was a space of emancipatory articulation. The integrative phase has been linked to EU accession processes, the Stabilization and Accession Agreement as part of Croatia's EU accession, the beginning of the democratization of society, and the start of neo-liberal policies, including infringement of workers' rights and social rights, individualism as a hegemonic discourse instead of a concern with the community and social responsibilities (Bijelić 2006).

In the evaluation of the past decade and the institutional mechanisms implemented in order to enhance gender equality, there is an agreement among feminist theorists and activists that the results are insufficient. Vesna Kesić (2007) claims that feminist activism has changed from an *oppositional activism* against the state to an *advocacy activism* marked by cooperation with state institutions. The latter form of activism has been dominant over the last ten years. There is a shared opinion that implementation of legal provisions is lacking and funding is insufficient, and that such factors reduce the prospects for real change. In addition, the system is bureaucratized and feminist groups are competing with each other. Such groups are specialized and highly professional, and in some of them there is a tendency to personalized leadership, which further decreases the chances for cooperation and unity (Kesić 92).

These findings are complemented with national indicators on the status of women in Croatia – they show a negative trend with regard to employment, violence, and women's participation in politics, while there is some progress in the media coverage of gender issues, and connected to that, a rising awareness among Croatians of gender inequalities (Kesić 92).

Gender mainstreaming, as a strategy of implementing gendered perspectives at all levels in public policies, has led to a closer cooperation between feminist CSOs and the government and has in practice engendered a depoliticized form of activism. Regardless of the proclaimed positive intention of gender mainstreaming, it has produced a number of adverse effects, such as the "hypernormativization and hyperinstitutionalization of the policies of gender equality [which

have no connection] with the real content of substantial equality or the idea of social change" (Kašić 2011). Biljana Kašić has drawn attention to the depoliticization and neutralization of several problems that touch upon women and gender issues (170). Gender mainstreaming is therefore perceived as a process that has, regardless of its initial aim, produced "de-gendering" (Jalušić 60, quoted in Kašić 171).

In an evaluation of the current state of political participation, Paula Zore (2013) points out that voices on gender equality in the public sphere are silenced; in political party programs women are mainly linked to the context of family, social politics, and health, which indicates a very traditional view of the role of women in society (92). While there have been some positive steps as far as the political participation of women is concerned, more needs to be done (Broz 2013). Research shows that gender stereotypes in election campaigns are present both in media reporting and in the discourse strategies of female candidates (Popović and Šipić 2013).

The financial aspect is also unfavorable. The withdrawal of donations from international organizations has been supplemented by subsidies mainly given by the state or the public *National Foundation for Civil Society Development*. Additionally, EU funding is available; however, a high level of expertise is needed in order to gain access to it, and only a small professional minority appears to have it. The dependence of CSOs on a limited number of resources and the difficulty of creating a sustainable environment have had negative consequences. As Sanja Potkonjak et al. (2008) point out, this has led to the marketization of the CSO sector and has had a negative impact on cooperation and solidarity. It has also created project-driven strategies, with all activities being guided solely by what is financed.

Conclusion

Regardless of the pessimistic evaluations of the current state of gender equality, the importance of feminist activist groups in Croatia has been considerable. Such groups have enhanced the position of women in a very androcentric and patriarchal environment. Feminist activist groups have managed to introduce topics on the public agenda which were previously completely marginal to public debates, such as the relationship between the public and the private sphere, inequalities in the sphere of production and employment, political representation, reproductive rights, violence, and access to education, to name just a few.

Feminist activists have also played an important role in the development of civil society in Croatia. Along with international organizations, feminist CSOs have been the main actors to initiate institutional changes favorable to gender equality. The EU accession processes included a strong external pressure on the Croatian government with respect to human rights and anti-discrimination policies. However, institutional change and the implementation of mechanisms for gender mainstreaming have proven to be insufficient insofar as substantial change is still lacking. The weakness of the seemingly completed institutional frame for gender equality is that there is a false notion that the battle is over and the main aims have been achieved. Feminist CSOs that form part of the institutionalized civil society have become predominantly depoliticized. Their main activities are limited to project-driven counseling, workshops, and education. In the wider social context, there is an overall lack of an appropriate legal framework. The state institutions and the government do not function adequately. Civil society is fragmented and there is a lack of solidarity among activists.

What is even more worrying is that the trend to the re-traditionalization of Croatian society has not stopped. If anything, it has intensified: in contemporary Croatia militant discourses are loud, war veterans are mobilized in protest by conservative nationalist factions, and civil society groups with reactionary and conservative ideas have emerged. Such groups successfully appropriate human rights discourses and place them on their own agendas, with damaging consequences.[5] The Catholic Church is not only an important social institution, but is also a significant political actor promoting reactionary agendas. Needless to say, all this has affected the position of women in a very negative way.

These negative trends could partially be linked to the socio-cultural peculiarities of South Eastern Europe and the effects of the destructive war in the 1990s, but are in fact also part of much broader trends that have swept across the West over the last few decades: the retreat of the welfare state and cuts in the public sector, economic crisis, commodification, concentration of power, lack of political participation, and the crisis of representative democracy.

Thus, in the attempt to explain the relatively unfavorable situation of Croatian women, we need to situate CSOs in a wider socio-political context. In this respect there is a need to distinguish between non-institutionalized civil society as the "local self-organization of citizens from 'below' for the purpose of initiating social change" (Popović 171) and institutionalized civil society, which forms part of the liberal constitutional state. The latter should be critically assessed because this institutionalized domain works (covertly or openly) to sustain the current order:

- It involves, but also pacifies and depoliticizes, different actors that could potentially challenge the system;
- It facilitates the activities of fragmented groups that are financially weak, often unsustainable, and dependent on different power structures;
- It contributes to the fragmentation of different social groups that are mobilized around identity politics, in particular, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality, and diverts attention from class and economic inequalities, thus hindering solidarity;
- CSOs are the "outsourced state" - in this way they facilitate negative trends, such as the withdrawal of the welfare state and the diminishing of citizens' social rights;
- The idea that civil society engagement creates emancipated citizens that are actively involved in social and political processes supports individualism as one of the main values of liberalism in the domain of politics and capitalism in the domain of economy;
- It plays an important role in the overthrow of political regimes in alternative, "non-western" socio-political systems, to which the model is applied without taking into consideration certain socio-cultural specificities, in order to perpetuate the hegemonic order.

Yet, the institutionalized cannot be unequivocally assessed: it necessarily fluctuates between affirmative and negative evaluations, depending on the level of analysis. At the micro-level of the

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[5] One such is the civil society initiative, *In the Name of the Family*, that initiated a referendum with an aim to change the Constitution so that marriage is defined solely as cohabitation between men and women (excluding gay marriages). They succeeded with it.

analysis of feminist CSOs, there is no doubt that their actions and aims have been valuable - they have enhanced gender equality in the region and have challenged the dominant patriarchal, conservative, and reactionary order. However, a macro-analysis of the structural determinants, which guide the actions of institutionalized CSO, reveals worrying results. As a result, feminist groups seem to be between a rock - the reactionary local context - and a hard place - the neo-liberal hegemony in Western democracies.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE?

Sylvie Cromer

Abstract: This article provides a brief outline of the way gender-based violence has been addressed in France by activists and researchers, before giving an overview of a new French survey, called *VIRAGE*, which aims at fostering collective strategies for the elimination of gender-based violence.

For centuries, scholars of the most prestigious academic disciplines, such as political science and philosophy, have theorized the multifaceted phenomenon of violence, exploring its nature, forms, and roots. Despite an extensive conceptualization of violence in general, gender-based violence in particular has hardly been examined. Ostracism against feminist approaches, which emphasize this theme, and most generally, resistance in the sciences to the category of gender, are the main causes for this "omission." Therefore, gender-based violence is not visible on any stage, be it political, social, or academic. Moreover, acts of aggression, such as domestic violence, rape, genital mutilation, sexual harassment, trafficking, or prostitution, are fragmented, and often organized following a hierarchy. Tragically, they are regarded as private sorrows, psychological problems, cultural issues, or ethnic variables.

The "discovery" and then the recognition of violence could be attributed to three major developments. First, ever since the 1970s, a historic point in time, women's liberation movements have highlighted gender-based violence and enabled the understanding of violence through new initiatives, such as the establishment of consciousness-raising groups and the opening of centers, particularly centers for women. Women's experiences and activist practices illuminate the persistence of gender-based violence, committed in extraordinary situations, linked to political and historical contexts, but also occurring in "ordinary" situations, in all spheres of life, but especially in the private sphere. In a number of cases, women have been shut down and not spoken of, pushed into the background, or their suffering has been represented as an inevitable risk of war, marital life, etc. Knowledge of gender-based violence has been constructed by women inspired by international practices and theory. Women's liberation movements have 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).

International and European leverage has been the second step: gender-based violence has been turned into a public issue. Since the 1985 UN Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, international organizations and European institutions have developed recommendations and implemented action plans to eradicate violence of this kind. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness of these action plans has become a key concern for national governments. There are numerous reports, resolutions, and recommendations, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted in 1993 by the UN General Assembly, and the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted by the Council of Europe on 7 April 2011, which entered into force on 1 August 2011. Such texts adopt a consensual definition and moreover a consensual interpretative framework. They "[r]ecognize the structural nature of violence against women as gender-based violence, and [maintain] that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men" (Istanbul Convention, Preamble).

The third step was the recognition of violence as an academic issue. Research into violence against women is mostly advanced in the English-speaking countries and is a recent and relatively undeveloped field in France, already benefitting from a vast corpus of knowledge. In France, the first national survey on violence against women with regard to gender relations was conducted in 2000 by the Institute of Demography at the Université Paris-1. The survey involved telephone interviews with 7 000 women, aged between 20 and 59, residing in private households. The most important results from the ENVEFF survey (National Survey on Violence Against Women in France) were:

- For the majority of victims interviewed, this was the first time they had ever talked about the violence they had suffered (except in cases where a serious injury had forced them to go to the hospital or see a doctor);
- All social categories were found to have been affected by violence in all spheres of life;
- Based on their statements, young women were more often victims of abuse of all kinds than older women, in all spheres, including the workplace;
- Whether the abuse in question was verbal, psychological, physical, or sexual, rates of violence were almost always higher within intimate relationships than in any other sphere;
- Acts of violence were found to proliferate throughout life.

These findings have led to new policies aiming at the improvement of measures of prevention as well as at providing specialized sensitivity training for doctors, policemen, lawyers, and other members of the public dealing with victims of violence.

In 2010, a new large-scale survey was launched based on the work already undertaken by the National Institute for Demographic Studies [INED]: *Violence and Gender Relations: Contexts and Consequences of Violence Against Women and Men (VIRAGE)*. The primary objective of the *VIRAGE* survey was to investigate the diverse types of gender-based violence suffered by women and men, in different life spaces (school or university, workplace, public places, partner, ex-partner, family and social circle), over the last 12 months and throughout their lifetime, as well as the outcomes for the victims. The *VIRAGE* survey enabled us to examine in detail the types of violence experienced and to link these types to the existing legal categories. Violence can only be studied through detailed descriptions and therefore all the following characteristics were taken into consideration:

- the nature of violence (verbal, psychological, physical, financial, sexual, etc.);
- the frequency and overall duration of acts of violence;
- how long ago the events took place;
- their severity as perceived and reported by the victims;
- the contexts and circumstances in which they occurred (family, workplace, public spaces);
- the relationships between perpetrators and victims (family, acquaintance, unknown);
- and the consequences in terms of the victims' future lives (injuries, fear, disruption of educational, occupational, or family trajectories, etc.).

In 2015, data were collected in metropolitan France. The survey involved two complementary components: a main survey conducted by telephone on a large sample of respondents representative of the French population aged between 20 and 69 (28,000 people, almost 16,000 women and

12,000 men), *VIRAGE-Main*; and a parallel survey conducted online, using the same questionnaire, targeting specific populations (*VIRAGE-Web*: LGBT, Associations, Universities).

The first results regarding rape, attempted rape, and other forms of sexual assault were presented in November (see References). The *VIRAGE* survey gave a clearer idea of the multiple forms of sexual violence and of the various contexts in which violence was experienced by women of different ages. The proportion of women reporting experiences of rape or sexual assault was much higher than that of men. An estimated 62,000 women and 2,700 men, aged between 20 and 69, were found to have been victims of at least one rape or attempted rape each year. For women, sexual violence took place within the family during childhood and adolescence, but was also committed by partners and ex-partners. It was also experienced in various life spaces (workplace, public spaces, etc.) throughout life. The researchers concluded that "public policies to sanction and prevent sexual violence [had to] take into account this multi-faceted reality" (Hamel C., Debauche A., Brown E., et al. 2016).

In conclusion, I suggest the implementation of the following measures:

- make international tools better known to foster national legislation with binding texts which integrate a gender perspective;
- develop quantitative and qualitative studies, country by country, region by region, in particular concerning minority groups, migrants, the displaced, and refugees;
- develop support centers to enrich our understanding and knowledge of violence;
- prevent violence through education and the eradication of gender stereotypes;
- build international alliances to fight the divisions between women (by continent, race, religion, etc.).

The main objective is to establish gender-based violence as an *international issue*.

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THE LEGAL BACKGROUND OF THE DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST SYRIAN WOMEN

Sabah Al-Halak

Abstract: The article deals with the difficulty of preventing gender-based discrimination and violence against Syrian women in the conditions of military conflict. It examines UN documents providing a basis for the prevention of discrimination and violence against women and girls, and particularly focuses on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The article regards key UN documents as important mechanisms that can contribute to the elimination of violence against women in peace and during war. It also draws attention to the dialectical relationship between citizenship, gender, and democracy-building. The author maintains that only a state based on citizenship can ensure equality between Syrian women and men and prohibit discrimination on any basis.

Keywords: gender-based discrimination, gender-based violence, UN documents, CEDAW, Syria, citizenship, democracy.

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights formed a general framework to ensure that humankind was protected from all forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex. However, this declaration was unable to ensure that women have the same rights as men because of the historical legacy of discrimination based on the patriarchal culture that has prevailed since the end of the era of motherhood. Despite the adoption of special agreements designed to guarantee the rights of women, gender discrimination against women has continued in all corners of the world. Due to this situation, the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted in 1967. Then the United Nations declared the years from 1975 to 1985 a "Decade for Women," during which three world conferences for women were held that witnessed meaningful actions by non-governmental feminist organizations, which catalyzed the recommendations of these conferences to put pressure on governments to improve the situation of women and help them to achieve full equality. This formed a motive to hold the Fourth Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), which adopted a Platform for Action including twelve pillars covering the rights of women in all fields.

Since the first conference in 1975, there has been an urgent need for a comprehensive convention on the rights of women, including mechanisms to prevent discrimination against women in various fields and in the two spheres of public and family life. Accordingly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was announced in 1979, and became effective in 1981.

The definition of discrimination against women in the Convention, as well as the subsequent fifteen articles, which covered all the areas of women's lives, helped to overcome the taboo about discrimination against women, particularly within the family, and made the task of removing discrimination against women in all national legislations as much a public governmental responsibility as a social responsibility.

However, it is difficult to say that there is a society in the world which is entirely free of discrimination against women. Discrimination intensifies in the societies in which a patriarchal mindset prevails and is protected by ideological systems based on the sacred, making discrimination against women a "destiny" from which there is no escape.

Discrimination against women is intensive in Arab societies because Arab governments in particular abdicate their responsibility to regulate the rights of individuals within the family (private space) and forward this responsibility to the various religious authorities under the pretext of "sacred" customs and traditions, and the preservation of "cultural identity." Accordingly, the rights of women become a hostage to the arbitrary and coercive family rules that have no relevance to the present. Women's suffering continues and deepens as they are victims of "the unequal power relations between men and women throughout history, which [have] led to men's domination and discrimination against women and [have] prevented women from full improvement." Also, this is supported by the majority of Arab countries, which have ratified CEDAW while also expressing reservations on all materials related to the prevention of discrimination against women in the family space. In general, the situation in Syria is not so different from other Arab countries.

Syria has ratified the two International Covenants on Political, Economic, and Social Rights and 17 international conventions related to the protection of women's rights to work, paid leave, social security, and health insurance, in addition to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Syria also adopted the Beijing Platform for Action, and in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals, vowing to promote gender equality and empower women.

It also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), on September 25, 2003, while having reservations about Article 2, the second paragraph of Article 9, the fourth item of Article 15, paragraphs / c-d-z-f / of the first item of Article 16, and the second item of Article 16 on the impact of child betrothal.

The new Constitution of 2012 did not guarantee the right to equality between women and men, nor did it prohibit discrimination and violence against women or criminalize them. On the contrary, the Constitution gave priority, for the first time since independence, to religious communities over the rights of women, according to Article 3 (paragraph 4), which stipulates: "Personal status protects and cherishes all communities!". This same Article states that the religion of the President is Islam and Islamic jurisprudence is the main source of legislation. This means nothing else than the "constitutionalization" of discrimination against women, which is reflected in the eight personal status laws of the different communities, the Penal Code, the Nationality Act, and some other laws and legislations. The discriminatory effects of these laws are reflected in the civil legislation. This confirms that there is a legal vacuum in the field of the legal protection of women. Thus, the government continues to neglect its responsibilities in the protection of the rights of family members, especially women, and instead makes them dependent on religious references. This contradicts the statements made on more than one occasion by the President of Syria on the "secular character of the Syrian State."

Besides, the Constitution did not include any clear article addressing the relation between international conventions and national laws, thus depriving women of legal opportunities to hope that the amendment of discriminatory laws might be possible.

Regardless of the nuances in the laws and their connections with God, and whether these laws were created directly by God or by humankind, the laws that determine the absolute rights of men in the family remain based on religious values in the old and new cultures, and this is a living embodiment of the values of the patriarchal community. Despite the provisions related to the right to equality in numerous laws governing civil and political life, not much has changed on issues of discrimination and violence and their manifestations in a number of texts, such as the Penal Code, the Nationality Act, and particularly the personal status laws, which seem resistant to change because of their (allegedly) close connection to "the sacred."

Nowadays eight personal status laws govern family relations in Syria, and they form the basis of the discrimination against all Syrian women. These laws are not likely to change, due to their connection to "the sacred," as mentioned above. They clearly reflect the prevailing ideological systems and concepts of religious heritage as well as traditional cultural and social legacies.

The Penal Code contains a number of provisions that enact violence against women and justify it as is illustrated by the mitigation of punishment for the perpetrator of the murder of a woman under the pretext of honor and the exemption of a woman's rapist from punishment if he marries his victim. All this drastically impacts women's sense of safety and hinders their ability to make free decisions about their destinies. The Penal Code does not criminalize marital rape, and we can refer here to the national report on population which states that "most women were infected with AIDS by their husbands" and that "a woman is unable to ask her husband to use a condom if she feels that it is unsafe to have sex without contraception."

The Syrian Nationality Act is based on the right of the father to grant his nationality to his children in accordance with a concept of "descent" which is patrilineal. Consequently, Syrian mothers are deprived of their right to give their nationality to their children.

Labor laws, agricultural relations, and social insurances exclude from their provisions everyone who works within the family. Accordingly, the affected groups are women in particular as well as children.

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Syrian Women
The bloody armed conflict in Syria has entered its fourth year, and the country is split into the so-called areas under the control of the regime and areas outside its control. Syrian people of all social groups and formations are paying a cruel price because of the continuation of military operations across the country. Women bear the brunt of such conflicts, as confirmed by various United Nations reports and local and international human rights bodies, as well as by the experiences of women in other countries that have experienced similar conflicts.

When Syrian men and women went out into the streets in early 2011 in peaceful demonstrations to demand democratic reforms, the regime responded with repression, including military operations on civilians, which forced millions of Syrians to seek asylum in neighboring countries like Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Libya, and Egypt. The Syrian refugees' crisis is one of the worst humanitarian crises since the Second World War. Since 2011 the number of refugees to neighboring countries has reached 3.8 million.

Most refugees are women and children. Whereas half a million Syrian women were displaced to Jordan, the Jordanian government announced the existence of 600,000 Syrians displaced on its territory. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that 78% of the displaced people are women. However, the number of Syrian women refugees is still unconfirmed and the estimations differ from time to time, as there is no constant formal statistical reference because of the non-registration of all refugees by the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition, one must consider the presence of families illegally displaced inside Jordanian territory, who remain unregistered by Jordanian official bodies.

By the end of 2014, Lebanon had received 1.5 million refugees, with women and children accounting for 70-80% of the total number (based on UNHCR statistics).

Forms of Violence Against Women During Military Conflicts and the UN Security Council Resolutions, Especially Resolution No. 1325

From 2000 to 2013, the United Nations issued Resolutions 1325, 1880, 1888, 1960, 2160, 2122, which show sensitivity to gender issues during peace operations conducted in areas of conflict. As these resolutions regard rape as a "war crime" that cannot be lapsed, perpetrators should be taken to court and punished accordingly. This rule should apply to all governmental and non-governmental entities.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, issued in October 2000, stipulates that women are active members in peace and security operations. It is the first resolution that considers the situation of women in armed conflicts. Moreover, it confirms the importance of women's full and equal participation as active members in preventing conflicts and finding appropriate solutions in peace negotiations and peace building. According to its provisions, all member states ensure the equal contribution of women and their full participation in all efforts that seek the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of these efforts. It urges all actors to increase the participation of women and to include a gender perspective in all areas of peace-building.

This resolution stresses the need to:

- take into account the specific needs of women and involve them in maintaining operations of security and peace-building, particularly in areas affected by conflicts;
- educate peacekeeping forces, police, and the judicial authority about the specific needs of women during military conflicts, and take measures to ensure their protection as well as demonstrate commitment to the human rights of women and girls;
- secure the special needs of women and girls during military conflict;
- support the role of women as military observers, humanitarian and civilian police members, and human rights monitors;
- represent women from communities that have experienced armed conflict and make sure that their voices are heard in conflict resolution and peace building processes.

The absence of a clear distinction between female and male refugees in the United Nations Refugee Convention has enabled the persecution of female refugees. The Convention must include an explicit reference to cases of persecution based on gender and the specific problems faced by women during displacement or asylum seeking.

Syrian refugee women in Lebanon and Jordan, like most women who have experienced armed conflict in numerous countries in the world, are facing different forms of violence based on gender, such as gender discrimination, sexual violence, human trafficking, problems of maternal and reproductive health, rape, and intimate partner violence in addition to street harassment, the coercion to work in prostitution, begging, labor exploitation, and the imposition of forced marriages on young girls. Women exposed to armed conflict also face rape, forced prostitution, and forced pregnancy. According to the Geneva Convention, any form of sexual violence is considered a war crime and an intended infringement in both internal or foreign conflicts.

Gender-based violence is accompanied by other forms of violence: forced disappearances, arrests, kidnappings, and internal displacement. The need to start working on Resolution 1325 is urgent in Syria where women pay a high price for the ongoing conflict and for the oppressive policies used by the regime to retaliate against the Syrian Revolution, not to mention the emergence of military battalions that fight the regime forces, such as ISIS and Al-Nusra, who attack civil movements and women in particular under the pretext of religion.

Since the start of the armed conflict, women's bodies have been used as an arena to humiliate the other party. Rapes of women and girls have increased on both sides in varying degrees as confirmed by international and national reports. According to international law, these crimes cannot be considered as ordinary crimes of rape, but they are war crimes under the Security Council Resolution 1325.

One of the phenomena that emerged from the war is that women suddenly became heads of their families. There are an estimated 145 000 Syrian families headed by women in the refugee areas of Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan, and a lot of women were not prepared for this task but still managed to handle the burden.

We believe that shedding light on violence against women during armed conflicts is important because it is one of the issues with a profound impact on the process of war. Such violence also fuels feelings of revenge. We recall the words of a woman, who said: " All kinds of bad things have happened, but – thank God - no girl has been touched!". This is a clear indication that touching girls is the biggest nightmare of local communities.

There is a great embarrassment in disclosing sexual abuse against women within the family. Cases of such sexual abuse have increased in refugee families because members of the extended family have been compelled to live together in close proximity. However, there is considerable difficulty in assessing the true scale of this problem. Confronting and reducing this type of violence requires a significant change in the culture of the community and the culture of women in particular through their empowerment and the restoration of their confidence in their own capacities. In addition, significant changes are needed in women's individual relationships with their society on the basis of citizenship. Because we cannot wait for such changes to happen gradually, a series of emergency actions must be taken to provide protection for victims of sexual violence and ensure the involvement of civil society and international organizations in developing, following up, and implementing such actions.

The reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry in Syria indicate that "in the refugee camps, women and girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and human

trafficking." According to the Commission, there was one case at least in which armed actors arranged a marriage for a woman in order "to protect her honor" after she had been raped at a checkpoint. Although data are limited, there are indications that early marriage ratios have increased as a result of the conflict. The Deputy Representative of UNICEF in Jordan informed the media that in 2012, 18% of Syrian marriages registered in Jordan involved individuals under the age of 18, and an increase of 12% was recorded a year later.

A UN study has revealed that the rate of early "forced" marriages among Syrian refugees in Jordan is relatively high on account of the conflict, but such marriages are also the outcome of "traditional rural practices … that originate in Syria." The report has also found that difficult economic conditions are an important factor which affects the rate of early "forced" marriages between Syrian refugees. According to the same study, the ratio of early marriages between Syrian refugees, covered by the survey in Jordan, involved 51.3% of female refugees, making the average underage marriage rate 33.2%. In addition to the above, special attention should be paid to the exploitation of girls in the current circumstances and its long-term impact on their lives. The study has shed light on various forms of violence against Syrian refugee women, including:

- prostitution linked to the harsh conditions of asylum;

- customary marriages, especially with men of the Gulf. Many women have testified that Syrian women are subject to exploitation through "customary marriages," which are concluded without court registration. In such cases the husband usually remains with his Syrian wife for a short time and then abandons her and never comes back;

- uncountable marriages of little girls. In Jordan, for example, the personal status law prevents girls from marrying under the age of 18. However, Syrian families resort to customary marriages of underage girls to Jordanians or Syrians who are living outside the camps, in order to get a chance to leave the camp. Although Jordanian law does not recognize such marriages, the family usually waits until the girl gets pregnant and then they initiate a lawsuit for the recognition of the marriage. The host government often claims that such marriages are "habitual among Syrians;"

- growth of domestic violence. Syrian women attribute the intensification of domestic violence to "dramatic changes in their family life, caused by displacement and internal migration in Syria, and then flight to Jordan." Some of the women who participated in the discussion noted that the perpetrators of violence were frequently the people closest to the victims. Whereas 71% of the women facing violence claimed to have been abused by their husbands, 72% maintained that the violence was committed by their fathers, and 50% reported violence by their brothers.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW
CEDAW is the international instrument that women depend on. Article 6 stipulates that all appropriate measures, including legislation, should be taken to suppress all forms of female trafficking and the exploitation of women through prostitution.

Syrian women are exposed to all forms of violence in the private and public sphere, as shown in field studies conducted over the last ten years, including governmental studies. Nevertheless, successive governments apparently have no intention of adopting laws that would criminalize violence against women in general and domestic violence, in particular.

Cases of human trafficking certainly existed in Syrian society before the start of the armed conflict, but despite the absence of official statistics, we know that there has been a dramatic increase in the rate of their occurrence during that conflict.

Recommendation 30 of CEDAW
According to Recommendation 30 of CEDAW, the Syrian government failed to ensure the right of women to public protection and private limited protection, such as protection from rape, forced prostitution, and any form of indecent exposure. This is borne out by the rising number of rapes in areas under government control as well as outside such areas.

Recommendations 19 & 30 on Violence Against Women
Syrian law does not take into account the specific actions mentioned in recommendations 19 & 30, which aim at protecting women from violence and discrimination, since they are often subject to sexual harassment, arrests , or even rape during raids or when crossing checkpoints.

The recommendation of the CEDAW Committee came after the second and third reports of the Syrian Government and is the following:

> The Committee considers that the ongoing armed conflict and the extent of violence against women constitute a challenge to the implementation of the Convention. However, it also believes that the implementation of the Convention, especially in times of conflict, is the more effective safeguard to ensure full respect for women's rights and the possibility to enjoy them. Therefore, the Committee urges the State to implement the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations as a matter of high priority for the national mobilization and international support. Moreover, the Committee urges the State to take into account, upon implementation of these concluding observations, the due consideration for the general recommendation No. 30, concerning the status of women in the context of conflict prevention and conflict and post-conflict situations. Special coordination mechanisms [should be established] in which all concerned governmental institutions are to be involved, at all levels, in addition to the Parliament, provincial councils, the judiciary, and stakeholders, including international stakeholders who currently support the State in the process towards a lasting and comprehensive peace." (The recommendations of the CEDAW Committee to the Syrian Government, July 2014).

The Committee is concerned about steady reports of attacks on civilians, the use of aerial bombardment, explosive barrels, and the deprivation of humanitarian aid such as food and medical care, in the areas under siege. The Committee is also concerned about the perpetration of many other acts of violence, such as sexual violence, child marriage, forced marriage, torture, arbitrary detentions, and cases of abduction of women and girls by all parties in the conflict. Furthermore, the Committee expresses its regret that the Syrian state has failed to recognize its special responsibility

for such actions according to the international humanitarian law and international human rights law. On the other hand, the Committee notes the recognition by the government that women and girls are extremely affected by the conflict, and is worried by the general recession in the efforts of eliminating entrenched discrimination against women and girls.

International instruments such as conventions, treaties, and declarations of the United Nations, which were issued for the protection of women in armed conflicts, especially UNSCR 1325 and the decisions thereto, constitute mechanisms that can contribute to the elimination of violence against women in peace and during war. The government and all the parties in the conflict should abide by them.

The Dialectical Relationship Between Citizenship, Gender, and Democracy Building
The Syrian League for Citizenship started up from the concept of citizenship itself, by adopting it and seeking to develop and deepen it through discussions. Citizenship is a status that determines the nature of the relations between the citizen and the homeland whereas these relations are classified under human rights and function on three levels: (1) The Citizen's relationship with the State; (2) The Citizen's relationship with other Citizens (community); (3) The Citizen's relationship with the co-existence space.

Citizenship is founded on the active conscious participation of each person, without exception, and without any kind of custody within the social, political, and cultural framework of the state. The freedom granted to the citizens is associated with their commitment to the community's obligations, and their work under these obligations. Freedom in this sense is not given to human beings naturally, and is not a feeling or a state of mind, but a manifestation of the social contract, which means that it is also a civil entity. Responsibility, which is the necessary duty of all citizens, is regarded as a social value.

Violence against women in situations of war and peace contrasts with the values of citizenship because of its influence on women's participation in the comprehensive and sustainable development of our country, Syria, and women's desire and their ability to stop fighting and make peace. We need a state based on citizenship that ensures equality between Syrian women and men and prohibits discrimination on any basis. The dreams of peace, development, and democracy cannot be achieved without the active participation of women.

THE CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS OF DISPLACED PERSONS AND REFUGEES: A SUMMARY

Ibrahim Draji

Discussing issues related to citizenship in reference to displaced persons and refugees is incredibly difficult. This especially holds true for societies and countries that already face existing citizenship-related challenges during times of peace, let alone during war and crisis. During such times, rights are squandered and it becomes easier to commit violations and transgressions without accountability or punishment.

It is important to note that times of war and crisis may serve as unique opportunities to reinforce and activate citizenship values. If all citizens are treated equally and participate in a disaster or crisis, the burdens and challenges are divided among them. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation has demonstrated that this unique opportunity is often squandered due to a number of reasons and considerations.

Displaced persons are those who are forced to leave their homes and places of usual residence without leaving the territory of the home country. The home country remains responsible for its nationals and citizens, and is supposed to provide them with all available means to exercise their citizenship rights and perform their duties. But the authority of the state is not absolute, nor is it free from the limitation and oversight imposed by a number of international charters that stipulate and ensure the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The guiding principles of displacement issued by the United Nations General Assembly is the most evident of these international charters. In theory, it should be sufficient to ensure the continued ability of citizens to exercise all of their citizenship rights, even during the stages of internal displacement.

Unfortunately, the reality of the situation does not reflect this theoretical purity. During times of both war and peace, state practices reveal that multiple countries and state actors apply themselves assiduously to mistreating the citizens, dividing them, and discriminating amongst them on narrow political, national, and sectarian bases and considerations that are in contradiction to the essence and content of the concept of citizenship.

This is the sad reality of many countries and occasions. A portion of the state's citizens are viewed as enemies that must be faced and suppressed, instead of citizens that need to be provided with all of the rights and accessories available to all the other citizens, in a just way, without exclusion or discrimination.

This is precisely what leads to dangerous conclusions that prejudice the core and foundations of citizenship, such as:

1. the destruction of the concept of citizenship and sovereignty of knowledge, and the acceptance of discrimination, targeting, and exclusion;
2. the return to the pre-state period and search for a more narrow sense of belonging (to a sect, a tribe, or a geographical entity);
3. the appeal for aid and protection from others;
4. the denial of the right to get documents as a starting point of the rights and benefits of citizenship.

Refugees are persons that cross the borders of their countries to request protection and aid in a different country. In their case, we do not talk about citizenship rights in the narrow classical definition of the concept, in which the individual is linked to a particular state through ties of nationality. This is what asylum seekers lack, at least during the initial stages of their status as refugees.

The current situation has shown that the rights available for asylum seekers differ on the basis of the country from which asylum is being requested. The situation ranges from states that offer refugees the maximum extent of their rights, in which case they practically reach, and often do reach, the level of full citizenship rights. Meanwhile, other countries do not offer asylum seekers the minimal necessary level of human rights adopted for asylum seekers. The primary reason for this distinction is the extent that national legislation or national or regional agreements exist that pertain to refugees and are binding on states.

The effect of refugee status on citizenship is also according to the status of the refugee: temporary or permanent, in which case the refugee is resettled in the asylum country as a prelude to being considered a new citizen in her/his country, thereby cutting their ties to their home country. This facilitates the challenges of integration in their new countries.

The situation in our region reveals new challenges that now accompany the phenomena of displacement and asylum seeking. The growth in terrorism and religious intolerance affect the foundations and core of citizenship, and these practices undoubtedly have dangerous consequences for citizenship. The most apparent of these consequences are the following:

1. Terrorism disrupts the ability to exercise a series of rights that comprise the core of the concept of citizenship.
2. Terrorism serves as an excuse for anti-terrorism proponents to deny rights and infringe on the principle of citizenship under the pretext of combatting terror.
3. Religious intolerance disrupts the ability to exercise certain rights that, in the opinion of the intolerant people, are at odds with their understanding of religion.
4. Religious intolerance leads to religious affiliation as the standard for affiliation, instead of citizenship.
5. Religious intolerance leads to dealing with citizens of different religions by
    • treating them as second-class citizens with less rights;
    • fully denying their citizenship characteristics;
    • depriving them from their right to life.

The question remains: How does the aforementioned affect the situation of women?
The aforementioned has especially severe consequences for displaced and refugee women by:

1. denying granting them certain rights requested to exercise citizenship rights (education, identification documents);
2. exposing them to a number of violations and leading them to accept practices that violate their basic human rights (stoning, forced early marriage, female trafficking);
3. placing women's rights and the issues of gender and citizenship at the end of political agendas.

This situation means that we all have urgent obligations to exert our utmost efforts in order to:

1. spread awareness to home governments on the dangers of politicization and selectivity in dealing with the issues of displacement; pressure them through the available means;
2. oppose oversight on the mechanism of distributing aid in order to ensure justice and equality in distribution and the principle of citizenship (through the equal ability to exercise rights and benefits) and the lack of infringement thereon;
3. work with governments that host refugees temporarily to provide them with rights derived from the basic human rights agreements ratified by these governments;
4. work in countries in which refugees are resettled on issues related to the qualification of refugees and their reintegration to increase their ability to benefit from citizenship rights and perform their duties in the new country;
5. explain the values of citizenship and spread its culture amongst current displaced persons and refugees;
6. design projects and activities that ensure the provision of support and protection for those who are currently being harmed by not having citizenship rights and what this entails in terms of future repercussions;
7. propose citizenship values as key aspects of state-building operations for states trying to rebuild from crises, whether through discussion, settlement, or future constitutions.

It is important to point out yet again that the current state of our region shows multiple countries retreating to a pre-state stage in terms of granting allegiance and feelings of affiliation. In other words, in terms of citizenship, we haven't progressed from point zero, from the Badia, but rather retreated, revealing the extent of the catastrophe and challenges.

Background: The Reality of Asylum Seeking and Displacement in the Region and the World
With the outbreak of wars across the Middle East and Africa and other places throughout the world, the first six months of 2014 witnessed approximately 5.5 million displaced persons. These crises have also led to an increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons.

According to a new report issued by the UNHCR in January 2015 under the title "Mid-Year Trends 2014," 1.4 million out of the total 5.5 million newly displaced persons fled and crossed state borders to join the ranks of refugees. The remainder were displaced inside of their countries (IDPs). Taking into consideration the number of current refugees and displaced persons, a review of the information, voluntary return movements, and resettlement, has revealed that the number of people receiving aid from the UNHCR (mentioned in the report as "persons for whom the UNHCR cares") reached by mid-2014 a total of 46.3 million people. This represents an increase of approximately 3.4 million people compared with the number registered in late 2013, thus signifying a new record.

The most important conclusions reached by the report are as follows:

1. For the first time, Syrians have come to make up the largest refugee group within the jurisdiction of the UNHCR. They have thereby surpassed the Afghans, who held this rank for over three decades. With the number of Syrian refugees surpassing 3 million people as of June 2014, they now constitute 23% of the total number of refugees that receive assistance from the UNHCR throughout the world.

2. Despite their retreat to second place, Afghani refugees are spread throughout the world; they total 2.7 million people and still constitute the largest protracted refugee group under the care of the UNHCR (the UNHCR defines "cases of protracted refugee situations" as those that have continued to be in exile for five or more years).

3. After Syria and Afghanistan, the main countries producing refugees are as follows: Somalia (1.1 million), Sudan (670,000), South Sudan (509,000), the Democratic Republic of Congo (493,000), Myanmar (480,000), and Iraq (426,000).

4. Pakistan, which hosts 1.6 million Afghani refugees, remains at the forefront of the host countries without dispute.

5. Among the other countries that host large groups of refugee populations are the following: Lebanon (1.1 million), Iran (982,000), Turkey (824,000), Jordan (737,000), Ethiopia (588,000), Kenya (537,000), and Chad (455,000).

6. Through a comparison of the number of refugees with the size of the country's population or its economy, the UNHCR report puts the contributions of countries into context:

   a. Compared to their population, Lebanon and Jordan host the largest number of refugees.

   b. Meanwhile, the burdens placed on Ethiopia and Pakistan in comparison with their economies is the largest.

7. The total number of IDPs that benefit from the protection or assistance of the UNHCR constitutes a new record, reaching 26 million people. Given that the UNHCR provides assistance for IDPs only in countries that request their intervention, this number does not comprise all IDPs in the world.

8. Another important conclusion reached by the report is the transformation that has occurred in the regional distribution of refugees. Up until last year, the region of Asia and the Pacific Ocean was the region that hosted the largest number of refugees. But now, as a result of the Syrian crisis, the Middle East and North Africa region is at the first rank.

IRAQI WOMEN AND THE WPS AGENDA

Suzan Aref

Abstract: This short paper articulates the fact that human rights should be respected, reinforced, and applied equally to all, without any discrimination based on gender, language, origin or religion, ideology or beliefs. Any violation of these rights or disregard thereof, and any use of violence against women contradicts these principles and human values of equality, and endangers society as a whole, as well as its capacity to live in peace and achieve progress and development. Such violations lead to suffering and arbitrary coercion, depriving women of their individual freedoms, fundamental rights, and dignity. Thus, societies and governments should condemn and prohibit in every possible way such violations, be it within the realm of family or the community.

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, October 2000, has been issued to put an end to all violations perpetrated against women during and after armed conflicts and wars, in conformity with other international women's rights instruments and treaties and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women should be protected against any violation of their rights and they shall be enabled to have a full participation in decision-making processes that shape their lives.

Keywords: armed groups, women, violence, political participation, peace, security, conflicts, sexual violence, honor, Resolution 1325.

Introduction

The situation of Iraq nowadays is difficult for those who are involved in political affairs, and certainly much more difficult when it comes to women. Armed terrorist groups are trying to sabotage our cities and our institutions, attacking Iraq by spreading fear and intimidation in several provinces that have been exposed to daily security breaches, forcing residents to flee from their houses as their cities are being destroyed. The deteriorating security situation has restricted the movement of civilians, especially women, and they have to face many severe challenges. During wars and armed conflicts women are the most victimized. In addition to having to flee with their children, they bear the sorrows of war, armed groups target them. Violence against women in the contexts of conflicts is considered one of the deadliest and most horrifying forms of violence; women suffer from dangerous unbearable situations, especially now in the war with Daesh. It is axiomatic that gender-based violence will restrict women's movement outside their homes even to get health services, to study, or to participate in any public activity. Moreover, kidnapping women constitutes the biggest issue that raises anxiety and concern among families and in the community. Women are subject to severe assaults and human trafficking, they are forced to prostitution, exploited, raped, and tortured. Forced pregnancy, and consequently illegitimate motherhood, is imposed on some of them. They are also exposed to dangers of infection with serious diseases. Most of the time girls' parents depend on their own efforts in dealing with kidnappers.

1 807 women and girls are estimated to have been kidnapped between 2003 and 2010, and the estimated number for 2014 and 2015 is 4 500. The kidnapped women are mostly Yezidis, Turkmen, Shia Muslims, and Christians. Women face additional difficulties such as the shame suffered by the survivors of sexual violence and the harsh conditions in refugee camps, which do not guarantee their safety or security. Wars cause lasting psychological damages that are difficult to be treated.

The life conditions in the camps and the frustration that they generate lead to an increase of violence against women and of domestic violence, especially in underage marriages.

Besides, the number of widows and women separated from their husbands has gone up on account of the proliferation of armed conflicts and the growth of violence in Iraq. This has had a significant impact on women's lives insofar as the death or displacement of the family breadwinner has brought about various changes in their social and economic roles, has robbed them of a sense of personal security and may have even caused identity crises.

Moreover, the illiteracy rate among Iraqi women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24 years has reached more than 80 percent, especially after a number of parents have refused to send their girls to school due to lack of security, the spread of violence, and sexual and verbal harassment. According to the report of Iraq's Interior Ministry for the period between 2003 and 2010, 873 women were raped and 3 238 murdered.

It should be noted that women in various parts of Iraq are subjected to various types of violence on a daily basis due to the political situation and ongoing armed conflicts. In fact, conflicts seem to increase the risk of violence against women. It has been observed that the number of women who were victims of intentional abuse within the family in the period between 2003 and 2010 reached 11 167 cases.

Apart from military operations, armed groups, and random killing, women are still murdered in the name of honor, as the Iraqi law, which is similar to many laws in other Arab countries, considers killing women in defending honor a mitigating condition. According to Article 409, the punishment of those who commit such crimes should be imprisonment for a maximum of three years. However, this law has been amended in Kurdistan where honor killings have become a common crime. According to Iraqi Interior Ministry statistics, the number of women killed under the pretext of honor between 2003 and 2010 amounts to 283.

We know that women are the backbone of any society, and when women are in danger, the whole community is exposed to suffering. For this reason, we must ensure women's protection from all forms of gender-based violence in times of war and peace as well as their access to full rights without discrimination. We must enhance their role in a society of justice and equality that guarantees their participation at all levels, and work hard to protect them from any suffering in times of war, occupation, and armed conflict. Iraqi women need to have a National Action Plan to activate UN Security Council Resolution No. 1325. A number of women have started initiatives and have set up networks and non-governmental organizations whose aim is to raise the level of general awareness of the importance of UNSCR 1325 as well as to stimulate governmental sectors, the media, and the international community at large to support the implementation of the Resolution.

In 2012, a project towards the establishment of a National Plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 in Iraq was initiated in collaboration with the European Feminist Initiative (now Euromed Feminist Initiative) and with the support of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. The Government of Iraq adopted the plan in April 2014.

The formulation and launching of an Action Plan is the first step towards the bringing of international resolutions into practice. Such a plan will include programs, projects, and activities developed in the light of strategic objectives, the allocation of resources, budget monitoring, and the mobilization of

national and international support. The plan will highlight key issues of women's rights and will play a role in the development of standards of national and international protection. Special emphasis will be laid on dialogue and operational practices contributing to the prioritization of the issues of women in conflict zones. The Action Plan is not a final or comprehensive document, and it may be changed, modified, and improved on the basis of regular reports on achieved progress. The preparation of an Action Plan addresses the strategic pillars which make it possible to analyze the situation and bring about consultations with involved entities.

The Iraqi plan includes several important pillars:

- Pillar 1 - Participation - Objective: to increase the impact of women in the negotiations, civil peace, and political decision making;
- Pillar 2 - Protection and Prevention - Objective: to improve the living conditions of women and ensure their rights, the services they need, and their access to these services;
- Pillar 3 - Promotion of the Decision - Objective: the enhancement of awareness of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 at the national level;
- Pillar 4 - Social and Economic Empowerment - Objective: women in Iraq should enjoy better economic conditions and more autonomy;
- Pillar 5 - Legislation and Law Enforcement - Objective: harmonization of national legislation with the international standards and treaties on women's rights, including UNSCR 1325, the repeal of laws that violate women's rights, and the implementation of legislation that protects and enhances their living conditions.

However, considering these new circumstances and the government's attempt to restrict work on the Action Plan within an artificial framework, the government - and more specifically the Ministry of Women - has deleted important pillars of the draft plan, cancelled the budget, and approved three pillars of the plan without any budget. To face this painful reality, we are currently working with a large coalition of local organizations on advocacy campaigns to gain the right to monitor the budget plan and get approval for the draft of the original plan in order to respond to the needs of women in Iraq.

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