

OUTCOME REPORT 2012
ENDING DISCRIMINATION AND REINFORCING WOMEN'S PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MENA REGION



**“WOMEN ARE BEARERS OF
THE REVOLUTIONS IN THE
MENA REGION, THEY ARE
THE ONES WHO HAVE THE
CAPACITY TO REACH THE
BASE OF SOCIETY”**

Participant



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is a non-profit peace organisation that brings women together to oppose war, violence and global militarisation.

**Womens International League
for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)**

1, Rue de Varembe
Case Postale 28
1211 Geneva 20 / Switzerland
T: +41 (0) 22 919 70 80
E: mena1325@wilpf.ch
www.wilpfinternational.org



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM



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Lead author:
Vanessa Farr

Edited by:
Barbro Svedberg and María Muñoz Maraver

Photos by:
Rowan Farrell, Antoinette Verbree, iStockphoto, SAAJS, Looking4poetry, Artem Nezvin and UN Photos

Graphic design by:
Fly Moskito

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“Now – not tomorrow.” This was the unified demand of women human rights defenders from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, Tunisia and Yemen in their statement from the 2012 International Conference in Geneva.

More than a year and a half has passed since we witnessed women at the forefront of demonstrations, demanding democratic change and respect for human rights in the MENA region. Knowing the number of active and strong women human rights activists, defenders and women's rights organisations in the region, this was not a surprise. However, major challenges and setbacks for women's rights have been encountered as new governments, political structures, laws and policies emerge in an extremely unstable and militarised environment.

The project we have called “Ending discrimination and Enforcing Women, Peace and Security in the MENA region” seeks to strengthen and challenge the role of women in determining and restoring peaceful transition and security in the region, through the use of the 1325 agenda and the international human rights frameworks. This process is only possible due to our strong team of national partners and the hundreds of women human rights activists engaged over the past year.

This report highlights some of the discussions that have been held in consultations and seminars and focuses in particular on the outcome of the three-day international conference, held in connection with the Human Rights Council's 20th session in Geneva, on June 2012.

The participants from the region have expressed their major concerns over the violent responses against women taking part in the uprisings and demonstrations, the increase of a more radical political Islam, the decline of women in government decision-making, and the non-existent representation of women influencing national policy making, especially with regards to peace and security. Now, they are taking a strong position on recommendations for strengthening women's participation and influence. I'll leave you with their concerns, their contributions and their hopes for the future. ■



BARBRO SVEDBERG
Project Coordinator

“NOW – NOT TOMORROW”

*Human rights defenders from
Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya,
Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen.*

Barbro Svedberg

Barbro Svedberg, Project Coordinator.

*Although we have not been able to include Palestine as part of our project, one of our participants from Lebanon is a Palestinian refugee.

**“WOMEN ARE FRIGHTENED TO TALK
ABOUT MILITARISM AND MILITARISATION ...
THE PROGRAM IS A WAKEUP CALL TO
ADDRESS THESE ISSUES”**

Participant Morocco



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“HOW CAN WE TALK ABOUT DEMOCRACY WHEN THERE IS NO EQUALITY” PARTICIPANT LEBANON



GENEVA, 22 JUNE 2012

Ending Discrimination and Enhancing Women Peace and Security in the MENA region

“Alaan walaysa gadan” – “Now – not tomorrow”

We, women human rights defenders from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen, met this week, June 20-22, in Geneva after a process of 8 national consultations. We reaffirm our commitment for women's equal rights throughout the Arab world to promote peace and security, and that UN Security Council Resolution 1325 be implemented in our region today.

We, women of Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, stand at the front line of peaceful protests in our countries and demand for peace, dignity and human rights. Violence in all its forms, including gender-based violence, threatens women's safety and security now more than ever. We condemn all assaults, arbitrary detention and military trials of civilian protestors and human rights defenders in our region. We condemn the impunity of human rights violators and call for them to be brought to justice in fair trials. We call for justice for Azza Hilal Soliman (Egypt), who is with us this week, and for all other women and men attacked as they peacefully exercise their rights. Our right to live in peace and dignity, which includes our right to access public spaces and decision-making positions, must be respected.

Militarisation, increased defence spending and the global arms trade, violate human rights and dignity, and create human insecurity across the region. Social and economic justice must be prioritised.

We stand in solidarity with women and men struggling against occupation and oppression in Palestine. We also express our solidarity with women and men struggling against dictatorships, oppression and violence in our region, and in all situations of conflict worldwide.

We remind our Governments, all States and international actors of obligations ratified in international human rights law, the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and SC Resolutions on women, peace and security. We urge the following:

- 1) Consult with women's civil society on all matters of state and regional security.
- 2) Refuse to fund or support any UN sponsored peace negotiations that do not have women as legitimate participants around the table.
- 3) Increase the numbers of representative women as part of all security reform processes and disarmament initiatives including national and UN efforts.
- 4) Harmonise national constitutions and legislation with international law (including CEDAW) to guarantee non-discrimination and promote women's rights and gender equality.
- 5) Develop 1325 National Action Plans, in partnership with civil society, with accountability mechanisms and ensure adequate and sustained funding for women's organisations.
- 6) Stop arms sales to any country that violates human rights. In this regard, support a criterion on preventing gender-based violence in the upcoming July 2012 Arms Trade Treaty negotiation. ■

“NOW – NOT TOMORROW”

ENDING DISCRIMINATION AND REINFORCING WOMEN'S PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MENA REGION

REPORT PHASE I

Background to the Program

In late 2011, WILPF began to develop a programme to enhance the collective capacities of women's rights organisations to respond to the unprecedented political events in the Middle East and North Africa: (MENA). Entitled Ending Discrimination and Reinforcing Women's Peace and Security in the MENA Region (MENA Agenda 1325), the programme focuses on enabling women human rights defenders, especially those well-versed in promoting women's rights through international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to more effectively resist violent backlashes against women protestors in the streets and in public roles as political Islam grows in strength.

This report analyses progress made in Phase One of the project, from November 2011 to August 2012. It focuses mainly on the International Conference held for women activists from across the MENA region in Geneva in late June 2012, and should be read alongside the Outcome Report from National Consultations published in early June (available at www.wilpfinternational.org)

NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS AND THEIR FINDINGS

In April and May 2012, supported by WILPF, almost four hundred civil society organisations and independent participants in eight MENA countries undertook flexible, locally-owned consultation processes with one lead NGO or organisation taking responsibility for deciding the scope of work and invitees.

The lead: national partners are: Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (Egypt); 1325 NGO Network (Iraq); Arab Women Organisation (Jordan); ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality (Lebanon); El Karama/Libya Women's Platform for Peace (Libya); Union de L'Action Feminine (Morocco); Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement (Tunisia); Human Rights Information & Training Center (Yemen).



Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT)

ACT was founded in 1990 as an Egyptian Non-Governmental Organization working in development, women's issues, and the field of advocacy, identifying concepts of violence and gender, and how to set a strategy to fight violence.

Website: www.actegypt.org



Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO)

AWO is a women's NGO founded in 1970. AWO has been carrying out developmental programs and projects to end discrimination and violence against Jordanian women and for increasing women's political participation, in line with the UN conventions and international and regional instruments.

Website: www.awo.org.jo



Resource Center for Gender Equality (ABAAD)

Established in June 2011, ABAAD is an NGO working towards gender equality. They work in policy development, legal reform, gender mainstreaming, engaging men, and empowering women to participate in their communities. ABAAD also collaborates with civil society organisations involved in gender equality programs and advocacy campaigns.

Website: www.abaadmena.org



Libyan Women's Peace Platform (LWPP)

LWPP was launched in October 2011 by 35 women from different cities and backgrounds in Libya to ensure that women remain a vital part of post-Gaddafi Libya, particularly with a focus on women's rights, advancement and security as related to women's political participation, constitutional reform, and education.

Website: www.lwpp.org



Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF)

Created in 1987, UAF is a national non-profit women's NGO. UAF published the first women's newspaper on 8 March. They also launched the One Million Signatures campaign to abolish discriminatory laws and mobilised public opinion to break the taboo around violence against women.

Website: www.uaf.ma



Association des Femmes Tunisiennes pour la Recherche sur le Développement (AFTURD)

AFTURD is a scientific association created in 1989. It engages women in the development of a gendered social, economic and political sphere in Tunisia. AFTURD organises cultural gatherings, workshops on gender and VAW, and has a hotline for women, providing legal and psychological assistance.

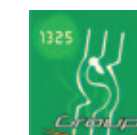
Website: www.afturd.org



Human Rights Information and Training Centre (HRITC)

HRITC has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Established in Yemen in 1995, the HRITC is politically neutral. It offers information services and spreads human rights conceptions through activism, training courses, forums, publications and periodic bulletins.

Websites: www.hritc.net and www.hritc.info



UNSCR 1325 group (1325 group)

1325 group is an Iraqi NGO, established in 2011. Their vision is to have greater women's participation in peace and security building operations in Iraq. They aim to enforce the Resolution on all levels and coordinate with the UN mission in Iraq, to provide technical support to facilitate the drafting of the National Action Plan.

Website: www.iwli.com

Three main questions were addressed in the consultations:

- 1) Is there a critical mass of women and men trying to better understand the gendered aspects of militarisation and insecurity in the region who want to tackle the issue at this historic moment?
- 2) If the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPSA) is part of your current political work, do you want to share experiences, strategies, questions and knowledge? If so, what kind of organised response would you find useful?
- 3) Would you agree to send a small delegation to represent each country in an International Conference in Geneva to share lessons and to determine the best next steps not only for national, but also for regional responses?

The national consultations represented a significant process for all participants. Apart from Iraqi women, women who joined in this first round of consultations had not previously attempted to connect CEDAW (SCR) and the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions of the UN Security Council with broader security questions at home. Few national discussions had been held by civil society organisations or national government stakeholders on the issue, and little attention had been paid to the gendered impacts of the peace and security situation of the region as a whole. The discussions allowed for the identification of security concerns that they, as gender equality activists, might wish to respond to – not only from within national feminist movements, but also with a regional perspective.

The Outcome Report from National Consultations, includes a comparative analysis of the findings of the national consultations and was prepared for discussion with participants. While readers of this report are urged to consult the **Outcome Report**, they should know that it distills the eight country-level discussions and identifies several themes:

- 1) What does “women, peace and security” mean in the context of the MENA Region?
- 2) How can women challenge militarism and influence the security sector?
- 3) How can women participate in state-building and influence political and legal transformations in the MENA region?
- 4) How can national, regional and international women’s movement be (re)built and strengthened?

A fifth theme, on how SCR 1325 articulates with and enhances CEDAW by bringing new emphasis to the importance of women, peace and security for the achievement of women’s rights, emerged during the discussions in Geneva.

This report is a supplement to the Outcome Report. In keeping with WILPF’s belief that it is only when women themselves speak out about the insecurities they face that sustainable responses to that insecurity can begin to emerge, the report analyses the five themes while giving readers a clear sense of the voices of the participants and their perceptions of the national events they are participating in, and their regional effects.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

On 20-22 June 2012, an international conference was held in connection with the 20th session of the Human Rights Council: (HRC) in Geneva, Switzerland. Nineteen women attended the conference from seven of the eight participant countries in addition to a number of specially invited international representatives from WILPF, partner organisations, donors and the international human rights community in Geneva including representative from the CEDAW committee, and the HRC Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination Against Women in Law and in Practice. Unfortunately, Iraq’s delegation was unable to attend due to an outbreak of violence that made movement impossible. Iraq’s participants sent a statement outlining concerns and conclusions from their three geographic consultations which were shared with other delegates for discussion.

Discussions were held in English and Arabic, with translation provided throughout. Conference materials were available in English only, due to inadequate funds, a lack of time and the difficulties of translating terminology into Arabic.

The conference opening statement was delivered by Roderick van Schreven of the Netherlands, who expressed his country’s deep support for women’s human rights in the region. A further statement was made by the Chair of the Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination Against Women in Law and in Practice, Ms Kamala Chandrakirana. ■



“THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION LEADS TO FURTHER PROBLEMS SUCH AS LACK OF BASIC SERVICES AND LACK OF SECURITY” PARTICIPANT YEMEN

“WOMEN ARE FRIGHTENED TO TALK ABOUT MILITARISM AND MILITARISATION ... THE PROGRAM IS A WAKEUP CALL TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES”

Participant Morocco

THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE

The International Conference began with a review of the Outcome Report in which similarities between the eight different participating countries were briefly explored within a deeper discussion of why this theme is timely.

During their national consultations, partners had expressed doubts and even resistance to the idea that much of comparative value would be found between countries. This response was partly shaped by their belief that each nation is too unique to be compared. But it is also a result of the isolation imposed on women's movements in the MENA by national and regional media that either refuse to reflect seriously on women's political activities or misrepresent women in leadership roles altogether. While they initially remained firm in their conviction that there would be little common ground, discussions helped participants to see that what had initially seemed unique to each country were actually regional concerns. As a result, it may be possible and desirable to develop a regional women's movement response to insecurity and political change that goes beyond the particularities of each country to expose and resist a widespread new political, cultural and economic marginalisation of women. Explorations of this key insight became **a central topic** of the discussions, setting in motion a profoundly helpful process of learning to share insights and responses to the extraordinary events of the last two years.

THEME 1:

Concepts of peace and security in the MENA region

Shared regional security concerns include the Palestine question; small arms and light weapons flows; military spending and the regional arms race; the rise of extremism with corresponding declines in civilian, especially women's security; media misrepresentations and even attacks on women. Above all, participants were concerned about women's exclusion from all regional and national decision-making and structures on peace and security, and a lack of accountability for international promises to include diverse women's voices, clear gender analysis and anti-discrimination measures in decision-making and actions on all aspects of peace and security. CEDAW calls for monitoring and accountability mechanisms and the WPSA from SCR1325 onwards reiterate this call. Existing mechanisms intended to hold UN, regional bodies and national governments to account for their commitments/obligations must be activated; but effective monitoring mechanisms and methods for holding governments, institutions, international security corporations and other relevant entities accountable remain a challenge.

Different countries' **human rights** discourses and interpretation of the delivery of **gender justice**, including transitional justice, came up often. A comparative gender justice debate is urgently needed so that activists understand how different Arabic-speaking countries differently interpret colonial era, sharia, indigenous, security and common law, especially as they are applied to women. Participants wanted to extract common best practice in gender justice as well as warn against potential pitfalls when changing the law, especially Constitutional law, and monitoring the enforcement of these laws.

The difficulty lies in translating these terms so that **a shared Arabic-language meaning** is agreed on. Women need this language to give them **credibility** as agents producing their own knowledge to raise societal awareness of militarisation and to help build **platforms of action** to advance democratic reform of political institutions and the security sector.

Solidarity with men of all ages to share the public space, end violence, and create non-violent change was forged in street-level protests. Participants now want to focus on how to build on the personal and cultural changes they have set in motion.

In Libya, forty-two years of dictatorship led to the extreme marginalisation of women. Nonetheless, good laws are in place that used to successfully protect women's rights and status: these are now under threat. Libyans were surprised at the strong role played by women in the uprising: they rose up, supported their families and took to the streets with great courage. Now, women are alarmed by what's happening: the ultra-religious trend, the cultural influences, customs and traditions that are being invoked epitomise the conflict Libyans are facing in trying to build a new civil society. Women are ill-prepared to participate in the new state: while some women stood for election as MPs, they lack the right tools to work for women's advancement. Libyans do not have a clear sense of how to claim their rights and urgently need to create awareness. There are no functioning institutions in Libya so women have to be deeply involved in building them.

IN THEME 1, FIVE MAIN POINTS EMERGED:

1. What constitutes security, security governance, and the concept of human security and human rights all need more attention from women

The links between women's political representation and security quickly emerged as a major shared concern. The empowerment of women derives not only from external security, but also from the internal, psychological capacity to survive, from socio-economic structures, and from women claiming their rights to shape political reality. Participants observed that women need a long-term strategy in order to achieve security that goes beyond physical security: they need the skills for dialogue, decision-making and mediation; they need the patience to find internal as well as external peace and build solidarity across differences. Women have the right to communicate their heritage and culture, but this is largely unrecognised by men.

"RECONCILIATION MEANS DIALOGUE WITH ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY WITH PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN"

Participant Libya



"RECONCILIATION MEANS DIALOGUE WITH ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY WITH PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN"
PARTICIPANT LIBYA

People must have support to speak out against oppression, but this is extremely difficult in remote areas such as those in Morocco. Arab society has never overcome governance obstacles; failing to achieve development, democracy or independence. Young people have challenged this failure, encouraging Arab citizens to overthrow the 'eternal dictatorships' that they could never imagine removing. The young have proven their capacity and worth, achieving something which the older generation, even though they have always been militants and activists, could not. They have reminded older people that real democratic change has to be actively built: it is an internal, citizen-driven social project which will never be complete without women's full representation. Political Islam is born from people's individual experiences of oppression, but it has now become both the victim and the executioner, and from a feminist perspective, is anti-democratic. True democracy means women must be everywhere, especially in decision-making. Yet in reality, women are imprisoned for their opposition and are not participating in decision-making positions.

2. The Women, Peace and Security Agendain the MENA region and its transformative potential

Participants expressed concern that SCR1325 is already twelve years old, but its efficacy is limited because it lacks clear mechanisms for it to be made operational. Many continue to think it is not applicable because it lacks a legal framework for implementation (compared with CEDAW for instance). Women's voices have been silenced through forms of legal and cultural violatio in an onslaught greater than anything they have undergone before. They need to discuss and reach **a realistic vision for effective resistance.**

Participants reported on their fear of working on **militarism and militarisation**, which until now have been taboo subjects especially for women to discuss. They now wish to address peace and security as a priority equal in importance to issues like gender-based violence, legal reform and other concerns that women's movements have traditionally addressed. These these issues are integrally related and that women's rights cannot be advanced without a gendered approach to national and international peace and security. The Arab uprisings offer an opportunity **to set in motion a long-term programme focusing on increasing women's capacity, to improve their role in negotiations and peace talks, and to prevent armed violence, including that targetting women and girls, and all other challenges to women's security.**

Security must not become sectarian or seen as a new challenge. Regional security issues have been salient for a long time and did not begin with Tunisia or end with Syria. Organised women need to pay closer attention to the gap between NGOs and the popular base, which is also reflected in the relationship between donors and NGOs. As one participant said "What is needed is a different understanding of civil society that involves plural interests reaching from the grassroots and including the NGO sector but not exclusively."

3. Shared geo-strategic interests, especially the influence of the Israeli/Palestine conflict on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

Women need an analysis of broader structures in the region in order to make any real contributions to lasting change: what threatens regional peace? What are the geo-strategic interests of the big powers? How can women play important roles in regional discussion? Participants repeatedly argued that the central problem in the MENA is the Israeli occupation of Palestine. It is not possible to ignore this main threat to peace especially since the major powers appear to be encouraging extremist Islamic movements as a means to distract people's attention from this problem. Whenever anyone in any Arab nation stands up for democracy, they face threats from those who are committed to maintaining an unbearable status quo. Any Arab cause concerns all Arabs, and the Palestinian question remains the most significant common cause. Ending the occupation of Palestine remains a strategic, religious, problem which must be settled if peace is to take hold.

4. Civil society ability to address and monitor security institutions and increased militarism

Participants expressed serious concern as they realized there is little civil society control over security institutions such as the military. Official responses to the uprisings have traumatised women and men. Women are appalled about being publicly beaten, dragged, sexually harassed, and raped with impunity by the army and civilian men. Women are victims of national wars and violent transitions, and have now come to a terrible realisation: before, when they spoke of SCR1325 they saw it as something of concern only to women living in active conflicts. The Arab uprising, with its 'hurricanes and storms' has made them realise 'it is our Resolution too'. The preventive role of the resolution, particularly in women's participation is crucial also in "peaceful" transitions. Strengthen the role of women in political decision, especially related to security issues is a real guarantee for the prevention and conflict resolution. A serious concern in the region is also unrest and conflict at the bordering countries contributing to increased arms transfer and number of refugees. A major lesson is that **women need to begin work on the WPSA even if their country is not caught in conflict at present: the WPSA has important conflict-prevention aspects that they now realise they need to explore.**

In Yemen, women were latecomers to the need to implement SCR1325: the subject only became important after the armed conflict began, whereas it could have been used as a force for prevention if it had been better known. Women's situation is becoming worse, not only because of ongoing armed struggles but because already difficult humanitarian situations have deteriorated. Armed conflict and activities attributed to extremist groups such as Al Qaeda have destroyed civil society; there are dwindling services to protect women and few services at all. A chronic problem is that women perceive themselves, and are perceived by men to be unqualified to participate in any formal aspect of peace-making. Which women could become party to negotiations and how could feminist activists be better protected as they claim their right to engage in these discussions?

5. Women's potential contribution to peace, transition, and democratic space

In a region with a strong separation between democracy and equality, the notion of a "democratic transition" is seen as suspect: after all, women continue to face violence, repression and exclusion which are supported by prejudicial laws. Many Arab feminists are among the elite and have to do some soul searching about the extent to which they are contributing to the exclusionary nature and socio-economic structure of Arab societies. Social exclusion and the gap between elites and the poor often means a lack of alignment between feminist demands and those of the popular base. However, what they have in common is that both groups lack clear strategies, policies and approaches, leaving them vulnerable. ■

In Tunisia, as in other countries in the MENA, women's seventy years of achievements are being questioned. Yet when women are empowered to exchange views and approaches, new ideas about peace and security emerge. Tunisians have reached a difficult and critical stage, with a democratic transition unfolding and new constitutional structures being discussed. They hope for real democracy but fear regression. Women fear that promises of positive change will not be fulfilled despite the concrete contributions women made to depose Ben Ali. Women defied all stereotypes, working on the frontlines, using new capacities and exchanging information, but they have never tried to differentiate the struggle for women's rights from the struggle for democracy. Tunisian women have striven to maintain a connected perspective: the struggle against the occupation of Palestine, a key factor in attaining regional peace, has remained linked in their minds with women's struggle for equality. What happened in Tunisia in 2011 dates back to decolonisation, workers' struggles and a long history of resistance to oppression. Women have never been silent about the impacts of exclusion but still do not see the results of years of hard work – the reverse, in fact, as hard-won gains are increasingly threatened. The small number of women in the National Assembly has failed to make their presence felt, especially now that they face increased threats against their security. Women's rights should be embedded in everything including the conceptualisation of peace, security, and safety.

In Jordan, women's struggle for equality is a crucial aspect of democratisation. While Jordanian women have equal access to education and some have reached specialized positions in the professions, their economic participation remains exceptionally low and there are no systematic, targeted social policies support them entering the labour force. Political participation and women's political representation are also declining (from 5 to 1), although more women are entering parliament (from 6 to 12). Discriminatory laws persist, and Jordanian women are further hampered by international donor's priorities and spending patterns.



FIGHT RAPE



“PEACE BUILDING AND DIALOGUE WITH THE GRASSROOTS CANNOT BE DISCONNECTED”
PARTICIPANT LEBANON

“WOMEN ARE FACING MORE THREATS THAN
IN THE PAST – MORE SECURITY THREATS”

Participant Tunisia

THEME 2:

The transformational potential of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda

The next session focused on issues and lessons from other parts of the world that could be helpful to Arab women. The session explored where women are now, what they need from governments and the international community, and what we actions we need to take ourselves now.

The transformative potential of SCR1325 was discussed in detail. History has shown us that we need women at peace tables, in decision-making positions, because women bring a different perspective and raise new issues and approaches that can help prevent the stalling of peace processes. Women often talk about responsibility whereas men tend to focus on and respond to power.

In other parts of the world, women are victimised not only for their gender; for example, they are marginalised because of their ethnic identity. In the MENA, however, the ideologies of extremist religious groups of all types target women as women. The international challenge is to demand that women rights be on the agenda: western powers are unhelpful because they frequently repeat the rhetoric that the MENA is full of conservative societies incapable of change – an approach that ignores women's activism and hinders women's movements. Women appear to be a constituency that few will engage with.

The patriarchal male culture, which supports itself through religious interpretations that repress women, remains too powerful. There is a deep contradiction in Moroccan governance: while state seeks to build peace, it calls for increased military power and increased protection for the military, going so far as creating a law that will offer immunity to the military, their family and spouses; a law which is before parliament right now and must be vigilantly opposed by women.

A tendency towards ‘cynical pragmatism’ has emerged in applying gender within global peace making. This cynicism persists because most external observers are incapable of offering a gendered analysis of political events so they prefer to turn a blind eye to the injustices women face. There is plenty of rhetoric about women's importance but it is clear that there is little genuine commitment or intention to actually engage women. The international community has a responsibility to challenge their comfortable ‘us’ and ‘them’ discourse that justifies women's exclusion on the grounds of ‘culture.’ Iran provides a helpful example of this problem, because its sharia-based Constitution makes it increasingly hard to maintain a women's rights agenda, the implication is that women's rights in Iran is dropped form any international agenda.

However, the challenge for women's movements is how to bridge the disconnection between those calling for universal rights and common people who have little awareness of their rights. Secular progressive women's voices are being de-legitimised because they

appear to represent an elite minority. Women have to pay attention to how to connect to the popular base and ensure the relevance of women's rights claims to ordinary people.

Because Arab women have faced so much violence while participating and contributing to regime change, they have become aware of a central dilemma in transitional processes: if you are willing to use violence, at some point you will get invited to a peace or negotiations table. Yet, if you reject violence and are not a spoiler, if you express a moderate view, you will nonetheless be ignored. This suggests that women have to work harder on developing strategies to open public spaces to have their voices heard. Perhaps women have to find ways to be a threat to the excluding framework that currently shapes peace and transition processes?

Participants also noted that political Islam has gained power because it has offered people practical services, attended to material needs, and celebrated those who sacrificed to make changes that Islamists approve of. Arab women's rights activists can learn from this and act in a similar way. Moreover, they can learn from other countries in which women have refused exclusion from mainstream commemorations after political upheavals. Four lessons from the Philippines in the 1990s were discussed:

1) It is essential to memorialise, to recognise those who died and remember people's stories. Ordinary people need to be commemorated; they need access to the truth, reparations and recognition. Participants in the programme were offered a chance to do this when they listened to a powerful testimonial from Azza Hilal Suleiman, an Egyptian participant who had survived an attack in Tahrir Square. (see annex x).

In Libya, women have not paid attention to the security agenda. Instead, they have been focusing on reconciliation, believing that they could arrive at a common accord through which to reach peace. The challenge is that women lack the confidence to speak. Illiteracy is rampant, the education system has failed, the judicial system is regressive and the good laws that do exist have not been implemented. Libya is falling prey to the rebels' narcissism: only their voices and grievances are heard. So now, how can Libyans remember everyone in society and the international community who played significant roles in the liberation struggle? Those who govern now have made no space for diversity. How can civil society challenge the new hegemony of the new government? There remains a particular role for women, since they are caretakers, they teach values, carry culture, and are able to build society to achieve progress – or indeed, to make it come to a standstill if they are kept in ignorance.

2) Institution-building does not mean simply rebuilding what has been destroyed, but implies building back better. For example, post-conflict reform offers an opportunity to make police forces into police services so that they focus on protecting citizens not the regime. To achieve this requires a significant conceptual shift. Transitions offer us the chance to ask if our institutions present the diversity of our society and are committed to social inclusion.

Participants were very interested in devising a national SCR1325 action plan for each country. A major concern is that international legal references such as those in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) also concentrate on women and mention the WPSA, but lack an implementation plan. This limitation is then replicated in SCR1325. The lack of implementation measures prevents accountability and also exaggerates gaps between women at the grassroots and urban women's movements. Women's shared priorities and concerns need to remain a focus and be heard. This is more relevant than ever because Islamic women's groups are now bringing in a new discourse that differs from the secular one. The only way to deal with this double discourse is to enter into discussions with religious women's groups and uncover shared needs, including the need for gendered transitional justice mechanisms.

3) Public engagement needs to be supported and prolonged. People need to stay engaged, which can be done if information keeps flowing within and across the region and if people are kept in the loop and if vigilance and engagement become entrenched.

4) Service provision needs to improve immediately because the very poorest need to experience the impact of change. If service delivery remains poor, the corruption of political patronage cannot disappear.

IN FURTHER DISCUSSIONS, THE FOLLOWING THEMES EMERGED:

1. Confidence building between citizens and state – impact of increased militarism

Participants discussed the question of how to build confidence between citizens and states, a question that is particularly resonant in the MENA where individuals have not been citizens, but subjects belonging to the state. Policies have been imposed not chosen, institutions fail to protect and discrimination against women is normative. Militarisation has played a significant part in repressing women since it is only men who get involved in the military: their soldiering gives them the power to be citizens.

Concern was expressed that new constitutions are being written in a state of confusion and disagreement, and with too much haste.

Women remain without a voice. Participants wanted to know more about how to connect future work on the WPSA with their existing work on exclusionary economic structures: many observed that these issues are intricately linked, because the cycle of violence begins with the entrenchment of poverty and illiteracy.

The women's movement should clearly announce their agenda to the authorities and maintain pressure on them rather than provide basic services: advocating for women's causes is the most important form of service to women. Women's movements have to be more sophisticated in channelling rights claims so that ordinary people recognise the work they are doing and support it. This will ensure that legislation proposed by the movement gets enacted. Cooperating with grassroots and speaking with their voices is crucial: advocacy has to be with women not for women. At the same time, women's movements have to focus on addressing new issues.

In Morocco, the salafists managed to reach the masses through social programming which they then turned into political capital. They ventured into political territory denied to women: if civil society discusses state budgets, women's institutions are not allowed to discuss anything to do with defence. This needs to be changed so that women's different views of security can also be heard.

2. Do women's movements represent 'ordinary women'?

Some participants observed that there have been many years of blame and endless arguments that women's movements are cut off from ordinary people. However, such arguments weaken organised activity and deny that there are many variations in women's movements and groups; women cannot follow a homogenous agenda and still respect diversity. Being too self-critical could also be a trap: mid-level and grassroots organisations are prone to attack feminist political platforms especially on preventing violence against women. Rather than questioning women's ways of working, more attention must be given to how to engage in wider feminist alliance-building: for example, by finding ways to build bridges with as well as challenge human rights groups and social movements that ignore women's rights. Women's movements need to find allies while identifying rivals and working to neutralise them.

In Lebanon, civil society organisations are not close to popular base. Unlike religious organisations, NGOs do not speak to, and are unable to mobilise the masses to promote change. How can the women's movement link back to the popular base in order to make women's rights a topic of popular concern?

“THERE IS A TOTAL LACK OF GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN MANY OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS”

Participant Egypt



“THE REVOLUTIONS STARTED WITH DEMANDS FROM WOMEN” PARTICIPANT MOROCCO



3. Making Security Council Resolution 1325 work for the MENA

Participants were interested in identifying how UNSCR1325 can be made operational. Some methods are: developing national action plans that integrate WPS into all other issues; encouraging democratic discussion on security to bring the human security lens into focus; and running a broad, integrated campaign to recognize the multiple aspects of what constitutes security. All of these approaches are available to women's movements to employ.

Practical questions, challenges and possibilities on this theme were the focus of lively discussion:

- 1) How does SCR1325 fit with on-going work on women's participation in legal decision-making and legal rights?
- 2) How does SCR1325 help with the problem of political representation: which women does it support best?
- 3) Is SCR1325 a bridge-building tool?
- 4) What are the best ways to take up and use SCR1325 in the MENA at this time?

Participants agreed that procedural issues need to be understood before further work happens. This includes knowing how to spread WPSA Resolutions through a MENA-devised executive plan using local mechanisms so that there is no risk of feeling that this agenda is being imposed. The WPSA can only be effective if it joins a long-term strategy to counter the negative impacts of the extremist agenda opposing women's rights; a focus on media and education remains crucial.

4. Can women care about 'peace and security' if their basic needs are not being met?

The Arab states face the double-edged problem of the absence of state and a lack of services and rights. Alternative service providers are a failure, replacing failed states but doing little to address rights violations. There are too many small entities competing for resources to replace services the state should provide. This polarises people and is actually shrinking the advocacy and legal roles played by NGOs. How can NGOs succeed at pressurising the authorities to deliver rather than stepping in as service providers? For example, women who have previously participated in preparing shadow reports for CEDAW want to work out how to more successfully respond to what states say they are doing to fulfil their obligations to advance such conventions.

Women's movements need to develop sophisticated responses to sophisticated machineries of exclusion. The lesson is to take high-level discourses to the people. In Sri Lanka, for example, a women's peace charter was written based on an inclusive community survey on 'security' which explored what ordinary people need to feel safe.

The gap between the popular base and the elites, and the question of service delivery, is an issue in many countries. In Palestinian refugee camps, the question is a very stark one: women care little about influencing peace and security decision-making when they are hungry and sick. For them, socio-economic security remains the dominant and elusive goal: if basic necessities are in place, this in itself feels like peace and security. Individual needs must be met first and this means continuing to educate women about their rights as human beings so they can make claims on the state and international system. Women need information, they need to understand their common challenges, and most important of all, women's economic needs have to be addressed. Morocco serves as a warning that providing services is not necessarily linked to political gains. Women have worked a lot for women's advancement, but at election time, the women still choose to vote for the religious right. The question remains of how to provide services that speak to people's needs to build effective political alliances rather than feed rivalries. Reconciliation remains the best path to conflict transformation and dialogue.

Other participants talked about the importance of women's movements **actively engaging with security concerns, not merely observing**. To be effective, women need to draw up strategies and follow up on issues that concern us, which requires us to be qualified and capable to comment on areas that women traditionally are not allowed to understand and analyse. Women's movements have to define the parameters of their engagement and then invite inputs, instead of waiting to be invited to comment on other people's strategies.

Participants agreed that progressive women are always a minority voice and constantly accused of being elitist. However, the evidence of women's progress, even if it is gradual, proves that progressive voices represent the future: things do change eventually. In Iran, for example, the lacuna between the rulers and the people is growing daily. Despite what repressive, authoritarian regimes want, people still continue to find ways to educate themselves; as women we need to remember this and continue to express our voices. Women's outreach needs to continue and ways have to be found to speak so that people can hear even if they are conservative. Whatever their political beliefs, many people have a sense of fairness and are aware of women's suffering. Women's movements can provide food for thought, if not actual food.

The question of how to strategise arose throughout the discussions. As Arab people move from subject-hood to increasingly claim and voice their citizenship, so the need for responsibility and persistence grows. It remains impossible to divide practical from strategic needs: they're inextricable so women need to be clear about what to set in motion now. MENA women can learn from others. Nowhere in the world have women been invited to participate in any political transformation. Women have to seize the moment for change before the doors shut.

5. Violence and political transformation

Another challenge for participants is the fact that while SCR1325 is already 12 years old, in the MENA it largely has the status of a new concern. It is important to remember SCR1325 comes from the Beijing Platform for Action because women in war zones demanded that their voices be heard. They were not the elite but ordinary women caught in extraordinary contexts who demanded a say: this is why SCR1325 is a useful organising tool to be used as women need it. Recent developments in the MENA are requiring women to talk about the WPSA a new way, from a new perspective in which they consider the wider security agenda. The violence associated with political transformation has made issues such as the killing of women in many contexts much more visible. Women openly fear the weapons that are in circulation; they are increasingly fearful of being in public. All of this creates an opportunity for women to **talk and do more, to seize the contemporary constitutional processes as an opportunity to create a dialogue about peace, security and justice**.

Transitional justice is so far showing itself to be gender blind, so a strong recommendation from participants is to ensure that women are active, effective, and loud. The new people in power need to know what women's diverse concerns are and respond to them.

There is no history in the MENA of accounting for gendered violence during political transition in part, because religion has been exploited to refuse women's rights in Arab societies. Those who interpret Islam in extreme ways pretend to guard people's dreams but they do not believe that women's views of the future need to be respected.

In Moroccan history, those who tortured, raped and killed women have never been punished: in fact, a draft law is currently being debated that will ensure impunity for political crimes, effectively denying Moroccans full democracy.

6. Religious and secular divisions between women

Divisions between religious and secular women may be an opportunity rather than an obstacle for even broader change: while this may not seem to be the right time for activists to try to engage political Islamist women, feminist alternatives remain important because even the most devoted political Islamist women will question whether their approach is a useful one when they reach "the glass ceiling". Iran's history is showing us that when they realise their progress is limited simply because they are women, they will come back to the secular, progressive women for help. Women's movements need a long-term, strategic view; they need to keep building the base because increasingly more women will want to explore common agendas that political, right-wing, religious discourses disrespect.

Key recommendations

- MENA countries need to develop national SCR 1325 action plans in close consultation with civil society organisations.
- The need for awareness-raising on how to use the women, peace and security agenda and the related international human rights framework remains crucial, especially when women are speaking across religious and secular divides.
- Constitution-writing processes have to be seized as an opportunity for women to discuss peace and security, including claims for transitional justice and claiming rights. ■



“WE SHOULD DEFEND EACH OTHER. WE SHOULD DEFEND OUR RIGHTS.” AZZA HILAL SOLIMAN, EGYPT



THEME 3:

How can women participate in State-Building?

A discussion of CEDAW and SCR1325 allowed women to focus closely on their legal rights including through practical, legally accessible national constitutions and personal status laws. A key concern was the threat of losing existing legal protections, especially when a cultural backlash is being used to build opposition to these laws. Representatives again raised the question of how to get progressive women into positions of authority, how to work with men while building up women's capacity and how to effectively connect to 'conservative' (oppositional) communities. The timing of such coalition-building was a significant subject for debate with women asking whether to build bridges now, whether to understand and wield religious discourse to connect to communities, and if so, how to anticipate consequences for the women's movement's traditional work.

1. How can women shape constitutional processes?

A discussion was held on how to build national constitutions that fully guarantee women's rights. Women's groups, activists and organisations need to build national, regional and international alliances and partnerships to develop strong advocacy strategies and shared content. A crucial challenge is to uphold the supremacy of international instruments and law over national laws and argue for CEDAW as a principle shaper of constitutions, because if equality is enshrined in the constitution, supported by national instruments, women can work to implement those guarantees. Discriminatory laws should be challenged through reference to international instruments in order to guarantee equality through the law. National advocacy should be undertaken with a broad spectrum of political and social groups

to raise awareness of women's goals, there should be a principled opposition (in fact, zero tolerance) to violations and constitutionalised measures that undermine women's rights. Aligning CEDAW and SCR1325, participants saw the value of constitutional guarantees on protection and on armed conflict, similar to those already in place to prevent organised crime and trafficking.

While CEDAW has recognised status in many MENA countries, except where there are reservations, women's rights activists do not see governments fulfilling their legal obligations. Lobbying remains a slow process and meanwhile, more contradictions come about and national constitution fail to align with what international instruments mandate. Few follow-up mechanisms are available for women to challenge this problem.

2. Potential contributions of the younger generation

The younger women in the group talked about the importance of internal dialogue processes to decide the nature of women's organisations: do they focus on women's issues alone, are they service-oriented? Political? And how should young women respond to being represented as a threat to governments if they claim their rights? How can they talk directly to governments that fear them? This group saw their participation in the meeting as a post-revolution conversation to which they were contributing as activists, not as members of charitable organisations. ■

In Tunisia, young women have found that offering some services (human rights education and training, and a centre for women surviving violence) gave them the legitimacy to do other – more politically visible – work such as lobbying decision-makers. Not being part a popular movement is an asset for Tunisia's young feminists, because it enables them to visit and lobby authorities and allows young women to hear women express their concerns all over the country, in all economic fields.

Young Tunisians are deeply concerned about the lack of discussion about accountability. This means there are silences about deaths that happened in the transition; even though people know who perpetrated violence no-one will officially respond, and indeed, the authorities deny that violence was used. Before February 14th, Tunisian women felt a lack of security when they practiced their political rights but now they experience a generalised sense of insecurity: they cannot choose how to dress or move in public. Fundamental freedoms are threatened. Even under Ben Ali, no-one said "you're a woman, go back to the kitchen," because people knew about the personal status laws which are women's strength. Now these laws are being debated, and because the 40 women in parliament are nominal, they are doing little to represent secular women's interest in preserving the laws.



THEME 4:

Building Women's Movements for Gender-Equal and Lasting Peace Change

The meeting ended with the beginning of a new discussion: having established that there are significant similarities between countries caught in political transitions across the MENA, participants were left wondering whether – and how – a more regional approach to women's movements should be attempted. This discussion was partly brought about by an often-recurring theme: that donors, and donor funding, could be contentious and divisive. Many participants expressed a concern that donors, especially from the West, are instrumentalising women for their own political ends. To counter this trend, women need to be careful of being muzzled, silenced and prevented from supporting another's agenda. Women must determine and present their own priorities and agendas and one way to do this is to share concerns and experiences across the region. In particular, women's movements must not fall into the service provision trap, which is not the only way of connecting to people's needs. Donors may like to fund women's groups to deliver services that governments cannot or will not attend to, but when they do so with explicit instructions that women should not engage in political work, activists should have the courage to walk away and find other means to fund their work.

Another reason to consider working together in a movement is that secular women have feared talking about religion; but because the Arab world is not secular and people remain mobilised by their religious background, not taking the power of religion seriously has been a major reason for the failure of the women's movement to connect itself with popular movements for change. This practice needs to be re-thought for the issues women raise to remain in view.

There remains a great deal to discuss, because establishing a regional women's peace movement is a daunting task for women who are already overwhelmed by the practical challenges they face daily in their national contexts. The next phase of MENA Agenda 1325 will look more closely at how this can be done.

In summary, the **key recommendations** of Outcome 4 were:

- Use the strength that lies in the multiplication of alliances to work within coordinated networks to draw common action plans for the implementation of the WPSA.
- Support a strategy for the advancement of women that takes into account the new changes, benefits from international experiences and emphasises support and that equally promotes a culture of equality, anti-discrimination and non-violence.
- Develop the use of the social media, including an interactive portal for the MENA with resources on SCR1325, CEDAW and the international mechanisms and regional frameworks in Arabic, French and English.
- Create learning opportunities and support workshops on concepts, notions, tools of analysis and best practices in the field of peace and security.
- Open spaces for further discussions on how to write a national action plans (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security.

"WE HOPE THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WOULD HELP EXPEDITE APPROVAL OF DRAFT NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 1325" PARTICIPANT JORDAN

"TODAY WE ARE EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE IN THE STREETS MERELY BECAUSE WE ARE WOMEN." PARTICIPANT TUNISIA

"WE NEED HELP, ESPECIALLY FOR DISPLACED PERSONS IN YEMEN"

Participant Yemen

STATEMENT FROM THE PARTICIPANTS IN IRAQ

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE BUILDING PROCESS IN IRAQ

The 1325 Agenda

Women in Iraq have faced and still face many challenges and difficulties resulting from the absence of security in both its public and private aspect.

Women in Iraq, for many decades, were forced to deal with wars and conflicts, including their aftermath. Despite Iraq's commitments to many international treaties and conventions, the issues of formalising and reiterating the importance of women's participation in political and economic reconstruction, and the necessity to protect women and girls from violence remains a major hurdle to women's and girls' participation in the development of their country. The Iraqi government is very slow in addressing these issues with slow developments in law, policy and service delivery.

Furthermore, there is no space for Iraqi women in the formal public arena. Despite playing important mediation and peace building roles behind the scenes, despite being able to facilitate communication and agreements across party lines and across ethnic and minority divides; women leaders have no access to or knowledge of formal and public meetings. Invitations are not forthcoming and accommodations for special needs for women are not made available. The women empowerment and participation agenda is further compounded by the fact that international stakeholders, including the UN, fall short in advocating for and supporting the implementation of relevant UNSCRs – and more specifically the SCR 1325. Women in Iraq today are still facing the problem of marginalisation. Women are being seen as victims rather than survivors, peace builders, and competent stakeholders within the development process.

Women activists, focusing on engendering the security issues in the country, face many challenges. There are no laws that secure freedom of speech for both men and women. However, within a more conservative social environment problems for women exceed those of men. Also women become direct targets of security measures such as security checkpoints with no recourse to complain.

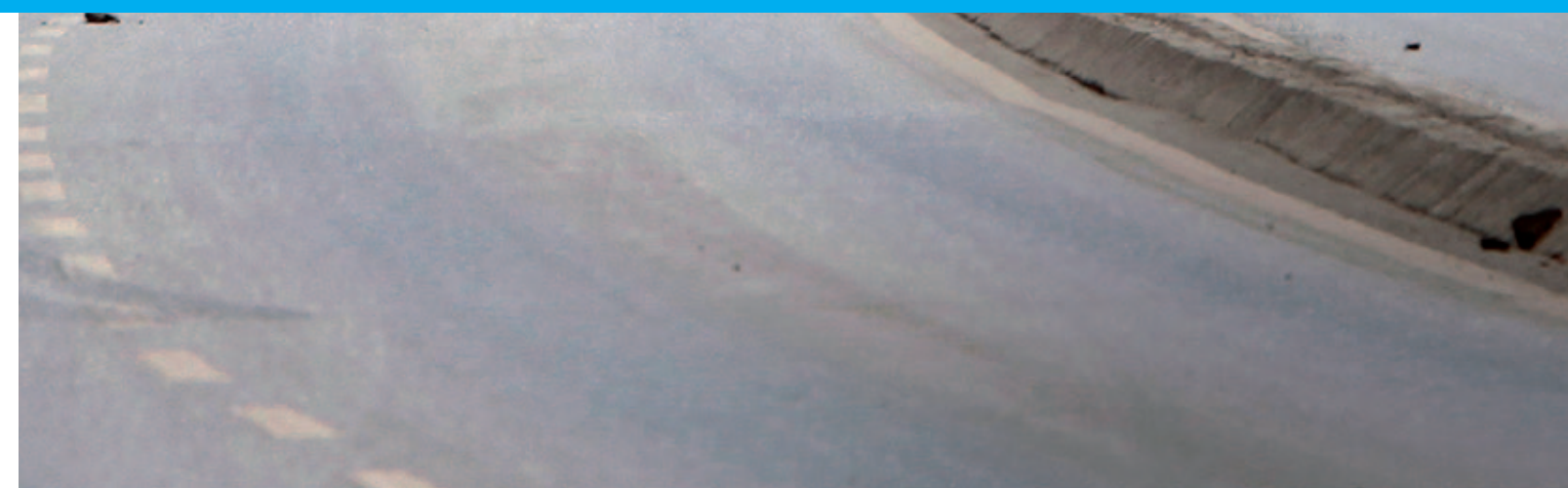
Recommendations for **immediate** action;

1. Identify women champions to represent women in peace processes and provide professional support and guidance to further expand their skills;
2. Iraqi Government shall promote, recruit and train women to take on positions in mid –and senior level positions;
3. Make available in depth assessments as to how and on what issues female quotas have contributed to advance and inform the participation of women in decision making processes and have secured gender differential issues within peace processes and agreements;
4. Establish a network of women who have received training in dialogue, mediation and negotiation to provide ongoing support and train other women and girls leaders. Leverage gender considerations by demonstrating how gender priorities directly affect other components of the peace agreements and peace building process;
5. Guarantee the allocation of specific funding to support women's participation throughout the peace processes;
6. Full participation of women should be a prerequisite, established by the UN Security Council for UN led negotiation and support to peace processes; and
7. In principle UN member state should refuse to fund or support any UN sponsored peace negotiations that do not have women as leading participants around the table.



“HOW CAN WE TALK ABOUT DEMOCRACY WHEN THERE IS NO EQUALITY”

Participant Lebanon



WILPF AND WOMEN FROM THE MENA REGION PRESENTS:

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MENA REGION



SIDE EVENT ON FRIDAY THE 22ND JUNE

The uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region brought a promise of equality and freedom.

BUT today, the women in the region find themselves more excluded from formal decision-making in a region where there is an INCREASE IN MILITARISM, ARMS FLOWS AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.

Meet the women and hear their experiences.

Find out how they want to improve the SECURITY OF WOMEN in the region.

SIDE EVENT

FRIDAY THE 22ND JUNE

12.00 – 14.00, ROOM XXVII

MODERATOR: MADELEINE REES

SPEAKERS:

WOMEN FROM THE MENA REGION



MENA AGENDA 1325



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

ANNEX 1 HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL SIDE EVENT

ANNEX 1:

Human Rights Council side event

The public Human Rights Council side event was the climax of the three-day meeting in Geneva. One representative from each of the MENA countries was selected to sit on the podium and present the recommendations of the group for the international community present. One of the participants opened the event on behalf of the delegation of women by saying: “We are also calling for the rights of women. We are against any exclusion. Women are committed to all human rights norms and values.”

A packed auditorium was invited to watch a brief CNN film documenting the courage of Azza Hilal Suleiman from Egypt who was brutally beaten by police during a peaceful protest in Tahrir Square in which she attempted to defend a fellow protester. Many were moved to tears and Suleiman received prolonged applause. She responded with characteristic humility: “I don’t deserve this applause. Women have the right to defend ourselves. We have the right to defend men. We should not give up. We need to demand our rights. We were treated inhumanely by police during our protest. What I saw I never thought I could see. Those who were supposed to protect us assaulted us. I couldn’t bear to see it. I couldn’t bear to endure what I did. We want to live in a world where there is accountability. Instead, we live in a country where the Supreme Military Council is both party and judge, and is above the law. I need justice, either inside my country, or outside. I need you to help to ensure that I get justice.”

Below follows a summary of the key areas presented by the participants during the event.

1. The security of women in the MENA region

The participants offered detailed accounts of the many challenges and dangers they are facing and, while applauding the political changes taking place – that they helped fight for – they challenged those areas of the transitions that may not be profound enough. In particular, they took issue with the backlash against women’s rights that is happening in so many Arab countries.

One of the challenges that Arab women continue to regard as a central concern is the occupation of Palestine and the rights of Palestinians. A Palestinian refugee in Lebanon had this to say: “What we experience as Palestinian refugees is manifold: firstly, our rights are violated as human beings; secondly, the State of Israel violates all the rights of Palestinian people. Palestinian people living in refugee camps in Lebanon, or in our own country, or elsewhere in the diaspora, are deprived of our simplest rights: the right

to identity documents, the right to work. We have social problems, we have psychological repercussions from not having an identity. Women with no documents cannot marry as they have no papers to prove who they are. Women face a third violence: more than the violence arising from the Israeli occupation, we suffer from male dominance that deprives women of basic rights. We are not permitted to determine our role, we lack legal protection, we are cut off from awareness of Palestinian women’s history and role. We suffer from physical torture inside Palestine and psychological torture outside. Palestinians need solutions: we need to go back to our homeland so that we can have social, psychological and economic stability.”

The participants explained their perception of security, its linkages with economic and social rights and its impact on the political participation of women. A Yemeni participant explained that women continue to suffer greatly, particularly at the economic level. “We suffer from poverty. Many of us are on the verge of catastrophe – we’ve been deprived of our \$30 a month subsidy and have no food security. Women suffer from high levels of illiteracy: 68% of us cannot read or write. The constitution makes no provisions for equality between the sexes. The laws are discriminatory, as are customary practices. Children are forced to marry old men and women cannot give our consent for marriage. Killings in the name of honour are justified by fathers, brothers and all men who murder women.”

The lack of separation between religion and state was a general concern. This is particularly true in Lebanon. A participant pointed out that “the reality on the ground in Lebanon remains incompatible with international provisions. There are discriminatory laws in force. Women do not enjoy protection from violence. We are excluded from participating in drafting national strategies and from decision-making. We suffer from stereotyping that marginalises women in Lebanon. The political system forces a double identity: we are Lebanese but are also forced to endorse a confessional [religious] identity. We do have parliaments and institutions but these are run by the various confessions; they are run by patriarchal culture. We lack a culture of dialogue. The Israeli attacks have taken their toll on our economic and social life. We are trying hard to pressurize the Lebanese government to protect the rights of women and create opportunities for gender equality, for women to enjoy dignity.”

2. The backlash against women’s rights

The general message brought was that, while some advancement for democracy had taken place, women’s rights have been the first to be forgotten.

Many participants from those countries where women’s rights were more advanced expressed their fear that the new wave of political Islam, in many cases not connected to the social reality of the countries, may result in a backlash against women’s rights. A Tunisian participant said: “We were activists before the revolution, but after the revolution we see Islamisation and a move away from human

rights. In the past our political engagement was met with violence; today we’re exposed to violence because we’re women. The source of this violence is the salafists – Islamic extremists who target us as women. Women candidates for parliament were exposed to libel and there was a campaign against them. On 9th April we demonstrated to affirm our right to demonstrate. But on that day women of all ages were the targets of attack.

Our objectives in the revolution were clear. We still have two demands: that women’s rights are clearly provided for in the Constitution by affirming the precedence of international conventions over national laws; and that civil status laws be preserved. Our opponents want to abolish our achievements, but we continue to demand that a constitution be completed in a year. Ben Ali stayed for 20 years and now we find new legislators who think being in a seat is comfortable. They do not want to finish the work of re-writing the constitution. We want women’s rights protected and we want a constitutional court so there won’t be a gap between text and practice.”

The same fear is felt in Yemen, as another participant explained: “The Islamic extremist groups who are targeting women represent another new threat. They use weapons against women, especially during the revolution. Religious fatwas against women are published by local religious scholars.

The participants were united in agreement about the roles women are playing and can play in peace building and state reconstruction. A participant from Libya said: “The regime itself destroyed Libya’s official institutions. The organisations that claimed to represent women represented the wives and daughters of the regime alone. We started our revolution. We are starting from less than Square 1 to build institutions. We do not have military institutions or educational ones; we have rampant judicial corruption. We are trying – within our abilities, within a government that does not represent us and makes excuses for inaction – to do our work. We rely on ourselves alone, we want to contribute to a civil state in which we can exercise our human rights. I don’t know how we will do this: all I can say is we are working together and we’re building solidarity to bring about a constitution based on elections. We’re fighting against the extremist current that I, as a Muslim, don’t consider religious but as checking progress and development. It’s a struggle that lies ahead of us and we need all your material and moral support.”

Another participant explained: “I come from the Yemeni Republic where the usual image is that women live in total deprivation of our rights, but the reality is that women played a leading role in the revolution. Twenty-three women lost their lives at the hands of security forces, due to their activism. Yet women continue to demonstrate and demand that our dreams of equality and rights be realised.”

Women in the region are eager to contribute to democratic processes, as another participant narrates: “I’ve come here from

Libya to talk about the role of women in laying the foundations of democracy in Libya. I used to work in Tripoli and we managed to establish for a forum for dialogue calling for acceptance of the other, with the ultimate objective to achieve national unity. We worked to build bridges with ethnic and tribal groups to bring understanding, not violence. We managed to establish a community that works for reconciliation and fact-finding in order to examine claims and counter-claims, to establish justice. Libyan women have been active, we have worked in solidarity with women candidates for parliament so we could have a role in drafting the new constitution which we hope will bring a truly civic society. We call on the international community to support us as women in our political struggle, whether through providing us with experience or with good examples.”

Yet the claims made by women and by civil society are frequently ignored. A participant from Morocco says: “I stand before you as a survivor of torture and a human rights activist. Morocco has reforms, yes; but it also experiences ongoing violations. The 20th February movement campaigns against corruption and puts men and women on an equal footing. We are concerned by a draft law for the protection of the military. As Moroccan activists, we consider this as a betrayal of the collective memory of all those whose rights have been violated by the military in the past. This law runs contrary to all democratic laws. A great part of Morocco has boycotted the constitution because the military is not subjected to parliamentary oversight. We have also noted something suspicious: the collusion between those who are exploiting religion for political purposes, those who abuse religion for oppression – who are now tied to the state. We need to end this relationship between religion and state.”

The group of women claimed that, because of their important role during the uprisings and the important contributions they can bring to state building, some sectors of society who defend the old patriarchal system feel threatened. “I have a question: if women are not capable and competent, why are we being subjected to violence? We are threatened because we are competent.”

Women’s initiatives are being blocked in many of the countries represented at the side event. For instance, in Tunisia: “We women prepared a file of our demands and distributed it to the constitutional assembly, but we heard later our files never reached any member. We feel there should be pressure not only from within but also from without to make our demands heard.”

The Iraqi participants, even though they could not be present, also sent an unambiguous message for the international society to hear: “No decision on Iraq should be taken without the women of Iraq.”

The group of participants grasped this opportunity in front of an audience of Member State delegates, human rights experts and high representatives of the international civil society to send their message to the international community.

They explained that they did not come to Geneva to ask for a military intervention of any kind. They came to demand strict compliance with the international obligations of states, and in particular those enshrined in CEDAW and the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

For example, in Jordan, “We have a UNSCR1325 action plan that has gone to parliament, but hasn’t been approved yet. We hope the international community will expedite us in its approval.”

“We’re here to discuss Security Council Resolutions. We’re victims of conflict and exclusion so we’re here to discuss these matters and think of joint strategies. For me, UNSCRs are the international intervention we’re interested in.”

The participants also demanded that donors be responsible. There is a great need for financial help for women. As a Yemeni participant put it: “In this transitional period during which we hope to achieve equality, we lack technical help. We also need support to protect the two hundred and fifty thousand IDPs who have now moved to Aden.”

The international community was firmly requested to ensure the right to access to justice for women and the accountability for those who have been perpetrators of violence against women. “At this very moment that we meet, public squares in Egypt are full of millions of people calling for peaceful change. We are calling on the Human Rights Council to hold the Egyptian Military and Security Council to account for all the crimes it has committed, whether murders, assaults, or virginity tests.”

Participants were clear that the responsibility of donors does not stop at financing initiatives for women’s rights: no initiative that does not include women in the decision-taking process should be funded and no government excluding women or violating women’s rights should be financed, let alone sold arms. “We think that countries should stop providing regimes with support and should stop supplying arms. We think they should pressure them to hold trials, to determine the responsibility of those who committed murder.

We need your help to bring our cases before international courts, cases such as that of Azza Hilal Suleiman, to achieve justice for those who can no longer speak.” ■

ANNEX 2

TESTIMONY OF AZZA HILAL SULEIMAN, AN UNARMED PROTESTOR



Azza Hilal Suleiman

ANNEX 2:

Testimony Azza Hilal Suleiman, an unarmed protestor

Testimony of Azza Hilal Suleiman, an unarmed protestor attacked after trying to stop army officers from beating another unarmed female protestor on December 17, 2011 in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt.

"I grew up in an environment that respected the army: my father was a general. Two of my uncles are generals. Two of my brothers are also generals. We were raised up respecting the army and strongly believing in the nobility of our national army. The day I helped this veiled girl I never thought of what they would do to me. All I thought was that another human being needed help. I ran to her and asked the officers, 'why this violence? She's not armed; she's not a criminal, she's just a girl.' Their answer was to push me back and beat me without mercy. I lost consciousness. I was in hospital for a full week in a coma. My doctor told my family and friends to pray God to have mercy on me and my sufferings as they believed I was going to die. When I regained consciousness I had a fractured skull, bruises. I was in agonising pain. I still suffer the consequences of their savage beating. I have blood clots and deep bruises that have still not healed.

My brother who was interviewed by CNN said, 'yes we come from a family of officers and yes, the army was once a source of pride for us. I am so thankful my father died before seeing my sister in this condition. It would have hurt him a great deal, having been part of this organisation that attacked her". My family stood by me. They told me they were very proud of me. They told me they would stand by me, that I would be vindicated.

I don't regret anything I did. I'm happy I was able to do something although I was unable to prevent this girl from being harmed. I tried to do my best. This is something any of us would do, we would always give help if we had the chance. We are all in solidarity with each other. We need each other and want to help each other.

Then I received another shock. I was engaged with a fellow revolutionary. We stood together in Tahrir Square. He was killed. Shot last month by the thugs of the army, people the army uses to do their dirty work. Now I am committed to avenge his life through legal recourse.

When you go through hard times, solidarity is strongest. These attacks have proven to me the love between us, the strength we share. I never imagined my family, my friends, would stand by me to this extent. People visited me in hospital, friends, colleagues. They cried. I used to say, 'I'm fine! We're much stronger than they are. The attacker is much weaker than us. They're weak, we must ensure we get our rights back, that we hold these people accountable.' Visitors would say we came here feeling weak but now we leave stronger.

I hope I'll feel better so I can go back to Tahrir Square. I used to say to my fiancé, 'I'm so sorry I can't be part of these demonstrations.' He'd say, 'you've done what you can, let others also carry your torch.' He reminded me of the saying, 'what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.' Now, I am stronger than ever and I will receive justice, I will be vindicated, also for his death. I will find legal accountability. My assailants must be held accountable before the law. Ending impunity is the only thing that will end these violations.

I have legal representation. I have taken my case before the courts but it keeps being pushed out and so far I haven't been able to prosecute the perpetrators. The army which stood against us is a supreme power and we can take no legal action against them. But I know such acts would not be repeated if they were brought to justice; if there were fair trials.

The army is meant to defend and protect, not to assault and kill us civilians. But I know in my own country I cannot achieve justice. If not inside my country then maybe I can claim my rights outside my country. I call on you to stand with me." ■

ANNEX 3 CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



PROGRAMME

Wednesday 20th June 2012

Venue: Palais des Nations, Room XXII

10:00 - 11:00 Opening of the Conference
Opening statements

11:00 - 12:00 Briefing on the outcomes of the national consultations
Moderator: Vanessa Farr

12:00 - 14:00 Lunch

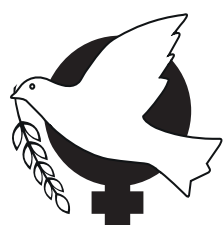
14:00 - 15:30 Thematic One: What does “women, peace and security”
mean in the context of the MENA Region?
Moderator: Sanam Anerlini

15:30 - 16:00 Break

16:00 - 17:30 Thematic Two: How can women challenge militarism and influence
the security sector?
Moderator: Vanessa Farr

17:30 - 18:00 Summing up and Recommendations of the day

18:30 - 22:00 Evening event hosted by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM



PROGRAMME

Thursday 21st June 2012

Venue: Palais des Nations, Room XXII

10:00 - 10:30 Summary and reflections

10:30 - 12:00 Thematic Three: Political and legal transformation in
the MENA region – how can women participate in state building?
Moderator: Sussan Tahmaseb

12:00 - 14:00 Lunch

14:00 - 16:00 Thematic Four: How can the national, regional and international women's
movement be (re)built and strengthened?
Moderator: Madeleine Rees

16:00 - 16:30 Break

16:30 - 17:30 How can international mechanisms, such as CEDAW and UNSCR 1325,
be used to strengthen peace and security and women's rights?
Moderator: Madeleine Rees

17:30 - 18:00 Recommendations - Summing up of the Conference

18:30 - 20:00 Reception at the Restaurant des Délégués, Palais des Nations



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM

ANNEX 4

PRESENTATION OF FACILITATORS



ANNEX 4:

Presentation of facilitators

Madeleine Rees

Madeleine Rees is the Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the oldest women's peace organisation in the world.

Madeleine Rees qualified as a lawyer in 1990 and was cited as one of the leading lawyers in the field of discrimination in the Chambers directory of British lawyers. In 1998 she began working for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as the gender expert and Head of Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From September 2006 to April 2010 she was the Head of the Women's Rights and Gender Unit for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Barbro Svedberg

Barbro Svedberg is the Project Coordinator of the MENA Agenda 1325 project at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom International Secretariat in Geneva.

Barbro Svedberg holds a LL.M. from the London School of Economics, UK, in human rights law, and has been working as a human rights and development practitioner for more than 10 years. Before joining WILPF in 2011, she was the director for SIPU International Training Department, with responsibility for several international programs on gender, capacity building and human rights. She has extensive experience as program manager, facilitator and trainer and has working experience from more than 20 countries including six in the MENA region.

Vanessa Farr

Vanessa Farr is an independent consultant. She holds a PhD from the School of Women's Studies at York University, Toronto. She was the first global Gender and Conflict Advisor at UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention (2007-08) and then Social Development and Gender Advisor at UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP; 2008-2012). She works on the gendered impacts of conflict, women in peace-building and women and governance in conflict and post-conflict settings, specialising in Africa and the Middle East.

She has published widely on issues related to gender and armed conflict, including on Palestinian women and the peace process. She is the co-editor of two books: *Back to the Roots: Security Sector Reform and Development* (Münster: LIT, 2012) and *Sexed Pistols: The Gendered Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons* (UNU Press, 2009).

Sanam Anderlini

Sanam Anderlini is the co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), a US-based NGO supporting civil society involvement in peace and security in conflict, transitional states, with current programming in the broader MENA region.

For over a decade she has been a leading international advocate, researcher, practitioner, writer and trainer on gender dimensions of peace and security. In 2000 she was among civil society drafters of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and contributor to SCR 1820. Between 2002-2005 as Director of the Women Waging Peace Policy Commission Ms. Anderlini led ground breaking field research on women's contributions to conflict prevention, security and peacemaking in twelve countries.

Between 2009-2010 Ms. Anderlini was Lead Consultant for UNDP's global initiative on the "Men and the Gendered Dimensions of Violence in Crisis Contexts". She has served on the Advisory Board of the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF), the PBS documentary series on Women, War and Peace and was appointed to the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) on Resolution 1325, chaired by Mary Robinson in 2010. She has written extensively on women and conflict issues.

Sussan Tahmasebi

Sussan Tahmasebi co-funder and MENA regional program director of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) and her work focus on promoting women's rights, peace and security in the Middle East and North Africa Region.

Between 1999 and 2010 Tahmasebi worked to promote women's rights and strengthen civil society in Iran. Tahmasebi is a founding member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, and she has played an important role in strengthening the capacity of Iranian civil society to effect positive change, by co-founding the Iran Civil Society Training and Research Center (ICTRC).

Ms. Tahmasebi has extensive experience in providing training sessions on leadership and peace-building, developed training materials on women's and children's rights, and women's health and is widely published. In 2010 and 2011 Tahmasebi was honored by Human Rights Watch with the Alison Des Forges Award for extraordinary activism, HRW's highest honor.

ANNEX 5

COMMUNICATION MATERIALS



Poster and flyer



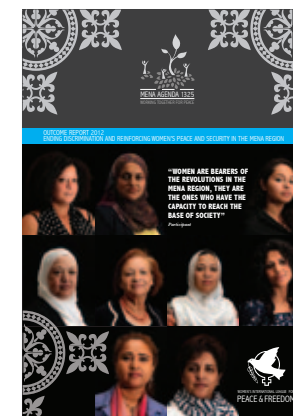
Hand-out postcard
for side event



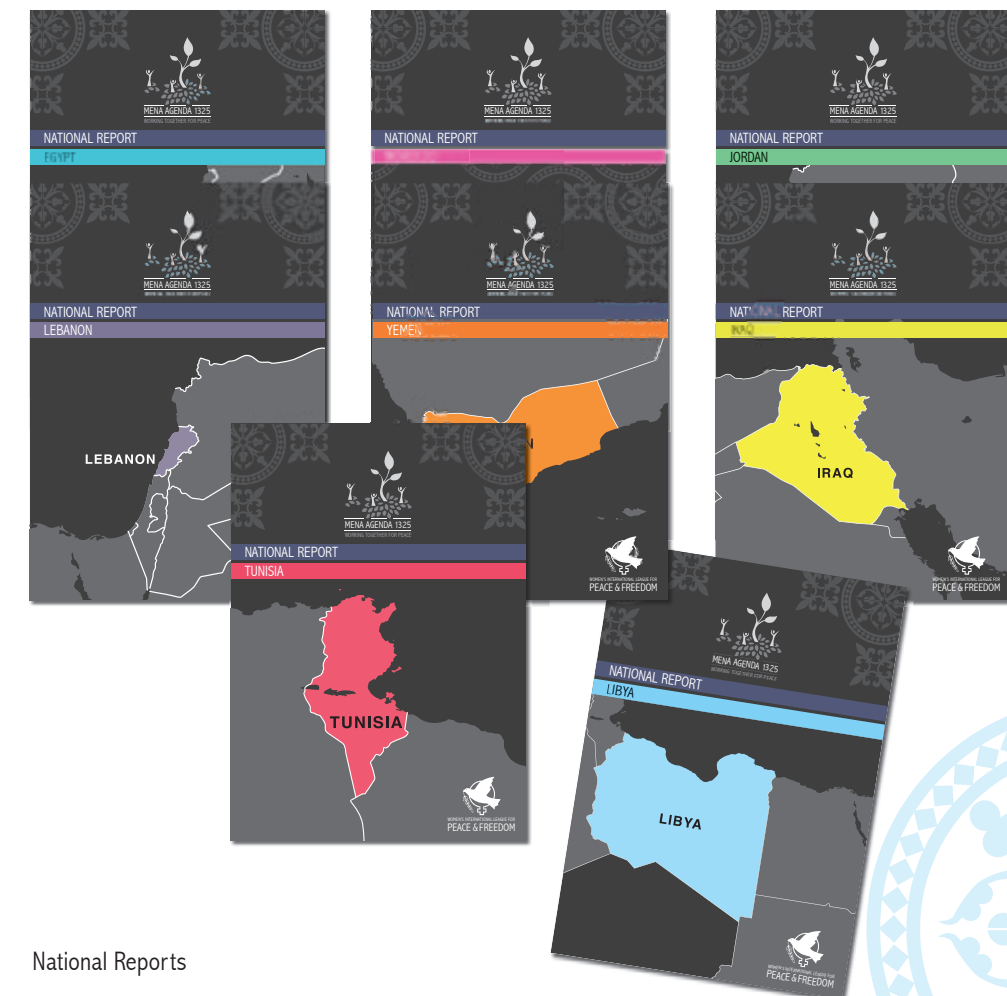
Brochure



Outcome Report from national
consultations



Outcome Report



National Reports



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Read more on www.mena1325.org or
contact: Barbro Svedberg, Project Coordinator

MENA Agenda 1325

T: +41 (0) 22 919 70 80

F: +41 (0) 22 919 70 81

M: +33 678 7902 37

E: bsvedberg@wilpf.ch