



The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global
Dialogue and Democracy

MIFTAH

2016 Annual Report

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1. Executive Summary

MIFTAH Vision: An independent, democratic and sovereign Palestinian state, which grants Palestinians their basic rights, preserves their freedom and dignity, and enjoys international recognition and respect.

MIFTAH Mission: Established in 1998, MIFTAH seeks to promote the principles of democracy and good governance within various components of Palestinian society; it further seeks to engage local and international public opinion and official circles on the Palestinian cause. To that end, MIFTAH adopts the mechanisms of an active and in-depth dialogue, the free flow of information and ideas, as well as local and international networking

MIFTAH Strategic Objectives:

1. Empower effective leadership within all components of Palestinian society in order to enhance democracy, good governance and security, and to raise public awareness concerning the rights and responsibilities of good citizenship.
2. Influence policy and legislation to ensure the safeguarding of civil and social rights for all sectors and their adherence to principles of good governance, especially in the establishment of Palestine as a post-conflict State.

This progress report presents MIFTAH's main achievements during the period 1 January – 31 December, 2016. This first section of the report highlights the key results in respect to the two Strategic Objectives that MIFTAH works towards achieving, however, a detailed description of outputs and activities are presented in Annex 1 of this report. Additionally, section two of the report provides a brief analysis of the political and social context during 2016.

1.1 In regard to Strategic Objective 1: Empower effective leadership within all components of the Palestinian society in order to enhance democracy and good governance and raise public awareness concerning the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship.

The key results were:

Enhance youth and women political participation in elections

MIFTAH worked on raising the public awareness including those of youth and women towards promoting the principles of democracy and active citizenship and to build the capacity of potential women candidates to run for the local council elections that were planned to take place in October 2016. A total of 2,964 citizens were reached out through the implementation of 98 town hall meetings in different locations in West Bank and Gaza Strip including east Jerusalem. Ninety eight percent of participants in these town hall meetings showed increase in their levels of awareness and knowledge in terms of elections law and procedures as voters and as candidates, including the Quota system and the electoral lists.

Moreover, MIFTAH worked on building capacities of 237 women and young women to enroll and run for the local elections that were planned to take place in October 2016. The capacity building program included a series of training workshops and informative sessions with a focus on local government rules and regulations, running media campaigns and on electoral programs. The results of the capacity building assessment showed that 88% of the targeted women candidates acquired the required the skills through the capacity building program.

Empower women leadership roles in Local Government Units

During 2016, MIFTAH continued supporting women council members to create a stable ground for lobbying at the policy making level to enforce formulating gender responsive policies and regulations. To that end, five round table discussions and policy meetings brought together women, youth and political parties representatives at the governorate level to hold political leaders and policy makers accountable for the continued reluctance and delay in supporting women representation in decision making positions to at least 30% and to supporting women and youth representation at the top positions of the electoral lists.

For a copy of the policy paper please follow the link below:

<http://www.miftah.org/Doc/PolicyPapers/Policy090416.pdf>

On November 20, MIFTAH's Seventh National Meeting of Women Leaders concluded simultaneously in both Ramallah and Gaza, as part of its program to promote dialogue on impacting public policies. The meeting included women leaders at the political and social levels to encourage them to participate in political decision-making circles. The participants stressed on amending the local elections law. The participants also agreed on

the importance of developing a social and national interest agenda for women to be included in any national dialogue. Furthermore, they stressed on the need for women's representation in official national reconciliation committees. A lengthy discussion also took place over the possibility of forming a Higher Women's Council to revive the status of women in Palestinian society.

For a copy of the conference's proceeding, please follow the link

<http://miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26381&CategoryId=36>

Enhance youth role as Agents of Change and Leaders of Tomorrow

During 2016, and building on previous work with the Youth Network, MIFTAH initiated building the core team of "Leaders for Tomorrow": 15 (8 males and 7 females) young leaders as potential young Palestinian ambassadors were selected. The 15 selected young leaders were engaged in a four day planning workshop, strategic directions were identified and plan of action covering 2017-2018 was drafted including a variety of interventions that assist in building their leadership skills on the personal level and enhance their influential role as young Palestinian ambassadors on the national and regional levels. Moreover, the selected leaders participated in profound discussions with political and public figures on issues of importance to them; youth and the election law, and the Palestinian national identity amid the changing reality on the ground.

Moreover, 20 new young activists were selected to join MIFTAH's Youth Network (bringing the total number of members to around 60 committed members); these young activists came from different governorates from the West Bank including east Jerusalem. The newly added activists went through a capacity building program that enriched their knowledge and skills related to enhancing youth political participation, transformative leadership and promoting principles of democracy and good governance within the Palestinian society as expressed by 85% of the participants. Additionally, 62 members of the Youth Network participated in MIFTAH's *4th Youth Summer Camp*, which focused on utilizing Drama in developing collective youth identities, and enhance youth's motivation in building joint strategies and empower youth communication and team building skills.

Empowering Rural Women through Income Generating Small-Grants Projects in east Jerusalem governorate

Throughout 2016, MIFTAH continued providing support for rural women to improve their economic conditions and social status within their local communities in marginalized

areas in east Jerusalem governorate. MIFTAH supported a total of 50 women in 12 groups through small income generating projects. The projects vary according to the field of speciality to each group of women; embroidery, food productions, silver hand crafts, grocery/ herbs market and hair dresser business. Moreover, MIFTAH worked on promoting the role of women leaders in local councils, especially young women to act as active and influential role models to less fortunate women in their local communities.

Enhancing women access to security and social accountability in Palestine

The Palestinian Civil Police procedures and services were assessed by conducting a beneficiary-based-study, which measured and analyzed the PCP's services and procedures in the West Bank from the beneficiaries' point of view and from a gender perspective. It was aimed at developing responsive mechanisms and measures for the security needs of citizens and to discuss the challenges and gaps in the work procedures and applied polices of the civil police. The significance of this study is that it is the first of its kind, differing from those that preceded it in that it addresses of the opinions of citizens who interacted with the police's service sectors.

These challenges and gaps were addressed through **a policy meeting** organized with officials and stakeholders in the justice/security sector with representation of women activist, PLO and PLC members and CSOs. The policy meeting further provides practical policy recommendations for a desirable policy reform that highlights better access to PCP's **services by all citizens, especially women to enhance gender justice**. The recommendations highlighted the **need to promote the role of community policing; enhancing the outreach of police; and improving the facilities of the PCP in order to become more accessible to women in specific**. The PCP showed its readiness and willingness to cooperate with other partners to apply the policy recommendations starting from including most of them in the PCP's strategic plan. It is worth mentioning that the PCP adopted MIFTAH's recommendations that were reflected on the *Palestinian Police Gender Strategy 2016*.

For a copy of the policy paper, please visit the link below:

<http://miftah.org/Doc/PolicyPapers/Policy280416.pdf>

Moreover, MIFTAH conducted a competition targeting youth from age 18 – 35 years to tackle the issue of social accountability in Palestine. Young Palestinian activists from all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip participated in the competition through creating artwork of their choice, i.e. drawings, info-graphics, caricatures, acting, and short films, in

drawing the attention of the Palestinian public to social accountability in creative ways. MIFTAH received 5 contributions in total from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Two groups from Gaza won the first and third places – a rap song and a film about human rights, and the second place was won by a young woman from the West Bank – a caricature.

1.2 In regard to achieving Strategic Objective 2: Influence policy and legislation to ensure the safeguarding of civil and social rights for all sectors and their adherence to principles of good governance, especially in the establishment of Palestine as a post-conflict State.

The key results were:

Improve Governments' accountability and transparency in formulating inclusive and fair fiscal policies.

Building on the success of the Budget Monitoring Program that was implemented in 2015 and in an effort to support the government in increasing transparency and accountability and ensure pro-poor fiscal policies, MIFTAH supported the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) in participatory budgeting to produce and publish the citizen budget for the years 2016 and 2017. Moreover, production of a position paper for the benefit of the MoSD was sent to President's Office, Ministry of Finance, Cabinet and Legislative Council demanding increased allocations in the general budget to MoSD, as well as allocation of finances only to the programs of the Ministry. Coordination with the Ministry of Education to support the budget team at the ministry in utilizing participatory budgeting processes and to produce a citizen budget for the year 2017 have taken place in 2016.

Moreover, and in support of the government to tackle tax evasion and avoidance, MIFTAH commenced the process of developing policy proposal to reform the income tax system based on the analytical study on the 2012 Tax Law and policy recommendations for reform of the Tax System that was produced in 2015. MIFTAH drafted a study review of the Income Tax law in principle to social justice and good governance including level of implementation, participation and dialogue on its implications, decentralization, transparency and access to information on revenue collection. Furthermore, the study looked into the effectiveness in revenue collection, progressiveness and potential impact on redistribution. The analytical report produced policy recommendations for influencing taxation legislation in principle to social justice and good governance.

Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment

During 2016, MIFTAH led a policy dialogue and advocacy to promote a unified Information Management System (MIS) and multi-sectoral response to Gender Based Violence (GBV). To that end, two policy dialogues were conducted with the participation of representatives of relevant organizations to discuss the feasibility of establishing an MIS related to GBV issues and that supports the National Referral System. A policy brief was developed including policy recommendations for enhancing communication and networking among partner organization and address means of verification for utilizing and activating an MIS system which will influence women's access to protection and justice through clear procedures and legislations.

For a copy of the policy papers, please visit the links below:

<http://miftah.org/Doc/PolicyPapers/Policy221215.pdf>

<http://miftah.org/Doc/PolicyPapers/Policy161215.pdf>

In collaboration with Ministry of Awqaf, MIFTAH supported the mobilization of community and religious leaders on reproductive health and rights, family planning, GBV and youth health. After completion of the intervention, a recommendation was raised towards appropriate engagement of imams and preaches in the national referral system due to their important role in dealing with GBV. The support was manifested in the targeting of 20 community and religious leaders (12 Males and 8 Females) from Nablus governorate, through a three days training workshop on gender equality and reproductive health and rights. The participants gained sufficient knowledge on gender equality and reproductive health to lead 100 awareness workshops in their own localities within Nablus governorate reaching to more than 800 citizens (375 females and 450 males). Moreover, 6 of the preachers and Imams that took similar trainings during 2015 in Tulkarem and Jenin governorates implemented 25 awareness sessions in their communities reaching to an additional 550 people (225 females' and 225 males).

Conflict and Fragility- Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda

During 2016, MIFTAH worked towards increasing capacities of Palestinian civil society to represent women in inclusive peace and security processes through the formulation of reconciliation Women Shadow Committee that included 25 women members from the Palestinian Women Coalition of UNSCR 1325 from both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Women Shadow Committee members are empowered and showed readiness to be engaged in dialogue and debates with representatives of reconciliation committees.

Moreover, and in order for Palestinian civil society organizations to have a greater influence on national and international decision makers, MIFTAH initiated the preparatory steps for carrying out an assessment on the impact of the political division on women in the West Bank and Gaza that will support the reconciliation shadow committee in providing evidence and women real life cases in the form of testimonials. The assessment will shed light on the effect of the division on women's social, political, and economical situation in Gaza and West Bank including east Jerusalem. Based on the assessment results and recommendations the reconciliation women shadow committee will be supported to develop a position paper to put their recommendations towards women integration in the original reconciliation committees and advocate towards ensuring the creation of an enabling environment that guarantee women rights in terms of protection and participation.¹

In an attempt to increase awareness of the international community of the specificity of Palestinian women's protection needs and participation in gender sensitive peace and security matters, MIFTAH commenced the preparation of an evidence based research to enhance Palestinian WPS agenda through conducting a Political Review of the Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 that was published in 2015 by the UN, to identify gaps that avoid shedding the light on the status of the Palestinian women under foreign occupation. The evidence based research will provide policy recommendation on enhancing WPS agenda with focus on two main pillars; protection for Palestinian women and girls and accountability of women rights violations in Palestine. This research will be followed by a regional meeting to be held during 2017 for building alliances among CSOs and international networks to support Palestinian women advocacy efforts at the international level for holding the Israeli occupation accountable for human rights violations.

Amplifying the voices of women in the MENA Region - Palestine

MIFTAH contributed in assessing public opinion perspective towards women's role in peace building processes and create a baseline of public opinion perspective towards women's involvement in peace building which will support solid reference information for national coalitions and stakeholders to develop strategic interventions to empower women and enhance public awareness towards women's involvement in peace building and civic peace.

¹ The assessment study was completed by the time of the preparation of this report.

The opinion poll targeted 1,200 Palestinian from across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The opinion poll indicators were reflected in a descriptive analytical study that was developed indicating a general acknowledgment of the role of women in social and familial and even public life, but this acknowledgment waned when it came to political participation, and the gap widened when it came to engaging women in achieving reconciliation and peace and on the subject of war. Similarly, people believe that men are more capable in filling decision-making positions. It should be noted that the study highlighted a number of conclusions that require follow-up in the future, such as: the many internal and external challenges on the Palestinian agenda including economic, social, institutional and political challenges.

A policy paper was produced and published including policy recommendations to support women influential roles in enhancing civic peace and national reconciliation processes raised during two round table meetings held in both Ramallah and Gaza with the participation of 27 women activists and representatives of civil society organizations in particular UNSCR 1325 coalition members.

For more details about the study and policy paper, please follow the link below

<http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=26332&CategoryId=36>

Enhance women political inclusiveness in reconciliation and peace processes

Building on the June 15th, 2015 National Conference “**Women's Call: One Country, One People, One Flag**” organized by MIFTAH and a group of civil society organizations, a **Human Chain with the participation of 1200 participants (98% females) was organized around the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) at both Ramallah and Gaza on 14 March 2016**. The participants included women and youth at the grassroots, women activists, in addition to female and male PLC members, Civil Society Organizations, and political parties’ representatives; including the Islamic movements. The Human chain was an advocacy initiative lead by women to voice their call for the urgent need to end the political division and immediately achieve national reconciliation, they also stressed for a comprehensive national dialogue that includes all political and social factions and movements in addition to formulating and publically announcing an executive framework for the Cairo Agreement and Shati’ document, which should be binding and time specific.

Moreover, a **policy paper** was produced and published including practical policy recommendations to reach **national reconciliation following a centralized meeting** that was organized simultaneously in Ramallah and Gaza Strip via video conference with the

participation of 94 participants representing Palestinian political bureau members of political factions, PLO members, PLC members, women activists and political leaders, the aim was to inform the Palestinian political faction's representatives about women position from the political division and to discuss the obstacles hindering the implementation of the agreements and understandings signed between Palestinian factions to achieve the national reconciliation.

For a copy of the policy paper please follow the link below:

<http://miftah.org/Doc/PolicyPapers/Policy200416.pdf>

Contribute in the dissemination of the Palestinian narrative

MIFTAH organized a tour targeting an American Congressional Delegation – 5 congressional members, who visited Palestine during the period 27 – 31 May 2016, with their spouses. The delegation members are pro Palestine and this was for most of them their first visit to Palestine. The delegation's aim was to closely investigate the situation of the Palestinian people under occupation. They toured Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Hebron, though they were banned from entering Gaza strip by the Israeli occupation forces. They observed the growth of the Separation Wall, the expansion of settlements and land confiscation. They met with the Palestinian President, other officials and politicians, Palestinian Knesset members, young activists, business people, as they heard about and witnessed the daily suffering and struggle of the Palestinian people under occupation. They concluded that they emphasize on the need to lead advocacy and lobbying campaigns in the US to support the Palestinians in attaining their rights and ending the occupation, as well as the need to organize more similar tours for pro-Palestinian congress members to Palestine to witness the Israeli occupation and Palestinian suffering.

Contribute to increasing women participation in Labor Market

MIFTAH succeeded in building the network and engaging Tawasol centers “Tawasol - Labor market orientation points (T-LMOP)” with influential bodies which work on enhancing women's economic participation and women's access to labour market, which are the LET council and the NCWE. This partnership should enhance Tawasol's outreach in the communities and contribute to providing more jobs and opportunities and TVET trainings to women. This partnership also contributes to enhancing networking between

Tawasol and CSO members, the private and public sectors in regards to women economic empowerment.

Moreover, MIFTAH developed an assessment report on the Role of Institutions in Facilitating Access of Women to the Labour market was published. It analyzed and assessed the services and procedures of the public, private and NGO sectors follow and provide. The findings of the assessment report were based on more than 1000 questionnaires distributed throughout the West Bank, as women seeking economic opportunities had the chance to assess their access to labour market, and different sector organizations' services and procedures were assessed from a gender perspective. The assessment looked into the procedures and services of these sectors which would enhance or challenge women's access to labour market. A final workshop was conducted to launch the findings of the report, as organizations from all sectors participated effectively; i.e. ministries, CSOs, private companies, and Tawasol centers assistants.

Fostering policy and social dialogue to create a stable ground for lobbying at the policy making level

In MIFTAH's efforts in fostering policy and social dialogue to create a stable ground for lobbying at the policy making level to enforce formulating protective responsive policies, regulations and legislation improvements, MIFTAH conducted seven policy dialogues on various policy issues;

- 1. Fortifying the internal front to address the ramifications of the Central Council Decisions.***
- 2. Higher Palestinian Women's Council –Visions and Challenges***
- 3. Support the leadership of women inside the Local Government Units.***
- 4. Ending the Political Division and Achieving National Reconciliation***
- 5. Enhancing Women Access to Security services and Social Accountability in Palestine***
- 6. Enhancing the level of commitment of the political parties towards promoting women political participation in the local council elections 2016, according to the chart of honour and the Palestinian Central Council recommendations 2015.***
- 7. Policy recommendation for activating an MIS that supports the Referral System.***

Copies of these policy papers can be found on the link below:

<http://miftah.org/PolicyPapers.cfm>

Representing Palestine in International Forums and Conferences:

In February, 2016 MIFTAH as a member in the **National High Committee for the UNSCR1325** (NHC) developed the **National Action Plan (NAP)** which took into consideration the 3 pillars of the UNSCR1325; Participation, Protection and accountability, Prevention and human security, in a workshop held in Amman Jordan. MIFTAH was represented by the Project Manager. The NHC members set a number of activities to be implemented during the coming two years, the NAP is now in the process of endorsement by all the committee members.

Moreover, and on 17 March, MIFTAH represented by its Chief Executive Officer, participated in **the 60th annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** in New York. During the session, participating Arab women highlighted the need to include women not only in politics, but also in peace processes in conflict nations. Especially that in conflict, women continue to bear the brunt of casualties, gender-based violence and livelihood insecurity. It is worth mentioning that during this session, **the CSW approved a draft resolution entitled "The situation of Palestinian women and providing assistance to them."** The resolution was adopted by a vote of 20-2 with 11 abstentions. The United States and Israel voted against it and European Union members abstained. The resolution reiterated that the Israeli occupation continues to constitute a major obstacle to the Palestinian women and their advancement, self-reliance and participation in their community development.

In September, MIFTAH, represented by its Chief Executive Officer, participated in the **First High-Level Ministerial Meeting on Women and Achieving Peace and Security in the Arab Region** held in Cairo, Egypt. The Women, Family and Childhood Department (WFCD) within League of Arab States and UN Women Regional Office for Arab States jointly organized the Conference focusing on: Raising awareness of member states on the global mechanisms and normative commitments on women, peace and security; Providing technical assistance to member states to develop national action plans (NAPs) to implement Women, Peace and Security United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions up till the latest resolution 2242 (2015), Confirming policy and action related commitments leading to the implementation of the WPS at the national level; Providing a platform for sharing best practices and challenges during implementation while harnessing "buy in" for women, peace and security commitments to be taken forward at the national level, and Developing a roadmap to implement women, peace, and security related security council resolutions.

During October, MIFTAH, represented by its Chief Executive Officer and Project Coordinator, participated in **the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), in Quito, Ecuador**. In that conference, MIFTAH held two side events highlighting gender-sensitive urban development in fragile contexts and addressing achievements and lessons learned from Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan in the light of the New Urban Agenda. Speakers from Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan showcase achievements and innovative methodologies to strengthen the skills and resilience of women in vulnerable settings and to enable women to take an active role in urban development and decision making, resource management, migration policy and peace negotiations. A particular focus was given to the multiple challenges faced by communities highly impacted by refugee crisis and women's role in stabilizing hosting refugee communities.

During November and on behalf of MIFTAH, Director of Policy Dialogue and Good Governance program participated in the **Consultation Meeting of the Follow-up Committee on the Progress of the Reconciliation Efforts** in Larnaca, Cyprus which includes representation of different political factions, CSOs and youth activists from West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians of 1948 and Palestinians from Lebanon and Jordan. The aim of the meeting was to launch a Lobbying and Advocacy Plan to support the National Reconciliation Processes in accordance to the developed National Unity Document lead by MASARAT that included a Palestinian inclusive and unified vision towards achieving national reconciliation.

During the months of November and December, MIFTAH's Chief Executive Officer and Director of Policy Dialogue and Good Governance program participated in consultative meetings with the **Swedish Government through the Swedish diplomatic mission in the Palestinian Territories in bilateral talks regarding the Paris Peace Initiative** and the role of civil society organizations in advancing democracy and state building in addition to enhancing youth and women participation.

2. Situation Analysis:

Throughout 2016, the political situation in Palestine has become increasingly complicated, the Israeli military occupation has escalated violence against Palestinians in Gaza Strip and West Bank including east Jerusalem, and in areas that are under its own control including Area C; the expansion of the Israeli settlement, demolishing the Palestinians' homes, the continuation of the blockade of Gaza Strip since 2007, and increasing the imposition of checkpoints inside Jerusalem and across the West Bank has made the daily life of the

Palestinian people harder; in particular women and children. Moreover, throughout the past year Palestinian human rights groups have raised concerns about occupation forces' willingness to deploy lethal force against unarmed, lightly armed or wounded Palestinians. These concerns are confirmed by the testimonials of witnesses and videos of extrajudicial killings of Palestinians by Israeli occupation forces. This escalation of violence, in violation of the human rights of Palestinians, is affecting all aspects of the life, in particular access to justice and security.

Furthermore, the current political situation in Palestinian is characterised as one of instability, thereby constricting prospects for peace and welfare. This comes within the context of the decreasing viability of the two-state solution in light of the deteriorating status quo in terms of final status issues relevant to the peace process. The exclusion of key sectors of the Palestinian society namely women and youth from the peace process and failure to reach a lasting peace, coupled with its consequences on the building of a viable Palestinian economy has perpetuated and intensified the Palestinian people's despair and apathy. The ramification of this are magnified in light of the perception that the final-status negotiations constitute the very core of the Palestinian cause and the embodiment of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and are the critical elements of the settlement process.

However, the French-led initiative for holding a peace conference was a platform towards achieving international commitments to ending the occupation that began in 1967 and to support the creation of a Palestinian state by 2018. The initiative called for a restart in the bilateral negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Palestinian leadership was welcoming of the initiative and stressed a number of stipulations in order to guarantee the effectiveness of bilateral negotiations. However, Israel has ruled out participating in the French-led initiative, effectively killing a plan that was advanced by Paris as an alternative to the indefinitely stalled, US-led bilateral negotiation process.

Moreover, the international community, including the European Union, United States and the Quartet are not exerting sufficient pressure towards achieving just and lasting peace for the Palestinian cause. Moreover, the approach and discourse of the new United States Administration and the most right-wing government witnessed in Israeli history are making prospects to reaching a just two state solution farfetched at this stage. Additionally, regional disorder has also been used by Israel to justify the lack of progress on the Palestinian issue and lessen criticism over its behaviour in Palestine. Violent conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Yemen have crowded out the foreign policy

agenda of the donor community, which means that many now see the Palestinian issue as less strategically consequential than it once was for the region, further decreasing the rank of Palestine in the pecking order. Against this backdrop, Israeli leaders argue that the current regional turmoil proves that the non-resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no longer the main driver of instability and grievance in the region.

On the other hand, efforts for reconciliation between the two largest Palestinian political parties; Fateh and Hamas have failed. Disagreements have resulted in the split of authorities since 2007 between Gaza Strip and the West Bank. However, Gaza remains more vulnerable to the split that is coupled with the imposition of the Israeli military siege which created a gap between women activists in Gaza and the West Bank. The cost of intra-Palestinian political division that has effectively paralysed the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) and is further extended by its infringement on all aspects of Palestinian livelihood at the political, economic and social levels.

The economic situation in Palestine is no different from the political situation. The Paris Protocol in its current form hinders economic prosperity and development in Palestine. This lack of prosperity and development is manifested in the high unemployment rate and thus in increased levels of poverty among Palestinians. The neoliberal economic policy that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has adopted since 2007 which is characterized by open markets, insufficient minimum wages and no upper limits on income, has played an important role in increasing the gap between the different segments of the Palestinian society and thus diminishing the middle class. Moreover, the taxation policies lack progression; and the principles of differentiation in income tax is not appropriately used. Consequently, the Value Added Tax's (VAT) contribution to the tax revenues exceeds 26% while income tax constitutes less than 5% of the total tax revenues. The income tax must achieve fairness and contribute to the realization of socioeconomic justice through the progressive income tax system; meanwhile the VAT is fixed and therefore does not achieve justice, especially for the poor.

However, and despite of the frustrating political atmosphere; the PNA, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) presented the first draft of national report of (CEDAW). The civil society organizations from Gaza and the West Bank had the opportunity to submit their notes and recommendation to the (MoFA) and to provide them with supportive data and information. On the other hand, The General Union of the Palestinian Women (GUPW) is still leading the process of drafting CEDAW shadow report which will focus on the women political participation, the Personal

Status, the economic empowerment and the violence against women (i.e the articles 7,16,11,19).

The National High Committee for Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Palestine chaired by the minister of MoWA launched the NAP (National Action plan for implementing UNSCR 1325) on August 24, 2016. The Palestinian Women's Coalition for Implementing UNSCR 1325 (PWC) considered this as an achievement especially that the advocacy strategic plan of the Palestinian Women Coalition of UNSCR 1325 was included in the NAP. Funding the NAP is still a challenge especially after an Israeli newspaper criticized UN and UNWOMEN for recruiting money to fund Palestine in holding Israel accountable for the discrimination of the international Human right and the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the International Human Rights law (IHRL).

The women representation in the latest Local Elections that were planned to take place in October 2016 showed was much better than in 2012. The rate of women representation in the registered electoral lists increased from 20% in 2012 to 26% in 2016. The percentage of women in the most recent registry was good, reaching 50%. Moreover, the candidacy rate of women in these elections was 26%. In 36 lists, women were in the number two position; in 156 lists they were in spot three and in 162 lists they were in fourth position. However, some factions and parties did not commit to nominating women for at least 30% of its lists.

Annex 1: Detailed Description of Outputs and Activities *(please find in a separate file)*