



The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy

MIFTAH

2017 Annual Report

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1. Introduction

MIFTAH Vision: A sovereign, independent, democratic, tolerant and inclusive Palestinian state, which grants Palestinians their basic rights, preserves their 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's strategic objectives

1. To Enhance Good Governance in Palestine

- ❖ Specific Objective 1: To advance policy advocacy and lobbying to ensure social justice and equality;
- ❖ Specific Objective 2: To enhance women and youth participation in policy and decision-making within the public sector and local government organizations;

2. To Strengthen National Unity and International Awareness of the Palestinian Narrative

- ❖ Specific Objective 1: To enhance internal dialogue to reach consensus on key political positions imperative to the Palestinians;
- ❖ Specific Objective 2: To promote the Palestinian narrative as a just and fair cause;

In its 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, MIFTAH focuses its resources towards delivering on its mission and objectives in several interlinked policy areas. It will work towards mobilizing support to reform the policy framework to address gender inequalities and violence; to enhance good governance and decision-making towards citizens' rights; to improve the democratization of Palestinian society; to activate internal policy dialogue; and to support women and youth and rejuvenate efforts to enhance global dialogue. More specifically, MIFTAH works towards achieving the following policy priorities:

- Enhancing good governance and democracy within Palestinian society, to influence the legislation framework to ensure the safeguarding **of citizens' rights** and the contribution to the **democratization of Palestinian society**, through holding policy meetings with decision makers, as well as through addressing policy recommendations and policy proposals.
- Holding **policy dialogue** to **enhance multichannel communication** among all sectors of society, including political leaders, government, civil-society organizations, and the private sector, with the view of supporting policy formulation at one level and to follow up on upcoming political issues at the other. This will be carried out by engaging politicians, academics, ministers and decision-makers in open and candid exchanges of information and ideas.
- **Supporting women and youth** to be well prepared to take on political roles and to become involved in political and public spheres
- Promoting **gender equality and equity including protection against gender-based violence** within policy framework; addressing recommendations at different levels including policy and legislative, in addition to governmental and non-governmental organizations, to influence mechanisms and procedures that support **gender justice**.
- **Expansion of networks and alliances** at the local, regional and international levels through MIFTAH's active engagement in different relevant activities carried out by civil society organizations (public meetings, conferences, workshops etc.) at the local, regional and international levels.
- As a member of the AMAN coalition, MIFTAH will advocate towards reinforcing **adherence to the principles of Integrity, Transparency and Accountability (ITA)** in the various Palestinian sectors, with the aim of participating in the building of **a national integrity system**.
- Reactivating the **Media and Information unit (Web site)** to shed light on critical political opinions and increase awareness about the Palestinian narrative, through drafting opinion pieces, political statements, position papers, reports and studies and factsheets to bolster solidarity with the Palestinian cause.
- Contributing in **promoting the Palestinian narrative** at the global level (Global Dialogue) **through** hosting international delegations, conducting

briefings and discussion sessions and holding meetings with diplomatic missions.

- Reviving the **Palestinian (national) internal dialogue** on timely political issues

In line with the above policy priorities, MIFTAH was able to achieve the following results during 2017:

2. Results by Objective

I. To Enhance Good Governance in Palestine

1.1 Enhancing Women and Youth Participation in Decision Making and within the Political System

1.1.1 Fostering Dialogue on Activating the “General Union of Palestinian Students”

MIFTAH expanded its dialogue sessions on ways to support and promote the participation of women and youth in Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) bodies, namely the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). This took place through the participation of representatives from Palestinian universities’ student councils, student body officials and representatives of political factions. The representatives stressed that factions should respond to the aspirations of youth by representing them within these factions, as well as guaranteeing that democratic means are adopted within the factions. They stressed on the importance of continuing meetings aimed at reviewing GUPS bylaws; expanding the circle of dialogue between factions at all levels; introducing amendments to the bylaws of student union council elections to guarantee the representation of female students in these unions; and supporting a youth movement aimed at galvanizing GUPS, which they also said requires the formation of a preparatory committee to follow up on implementation of the recommendations in efforts to set a date for the GUPS General Conference which means new elections.

Additionally, the Youth Network members were part of the advocacy efforts and dialogue that call for reviving the GUPS in a democratic and transparent way. Moreover, the youth participated in the discussions that led to the formulation of clear amendments needed to be included to the GUPS bylaws that guarantee full ownership of Palestinian youth of the GUPS within the PLO. This was addressed

in a press conference that engaged media, political leaders and decision makers within the PLO and different political factions.

1.1.2 Presentation of Proposed Reforms within PLO Structures

To advance women and youth representation at decision making positions, the proposed reforms are built on the first of its kind specialized research titled *"Obstacles which hinder the Equal Representation of Women and the Youth inside the various bodies of the PLO and Limit their Access to Decision-Making Positions"*. The research study includes a number of practical and focused recommendations aimed at lobbying decision makers towards "integrating women and youth in the national dialogue including on-going discussions for national reconciliation and for reforming PLO bodies" and "adopting a youth and women's quota that ensures a 30% representation as minimal each for youth and women in PLO bodies".

The research addresses the gaps in the current political order, especially within the PLO structures. The research study sheds the light on the underrepresentation of women and youth in leadership positions within the PLO structures and within all its sub-entities, such as; political factions, popular unions and the Palestinian National Council (PNC). The study was followed by a press statement prepared and shared among media outlets which addressed the gaps of the political order, and suggested a number of concrete actions and interventions directed to politicians and civil society organizations namely the adaptation of CEDAW and the youth fair representation. The statement also pointed to the need of an integral national plan to support women and youth efforts towards equal representation at all decision-making levels.

1.1.3 The Development of a "Youth Political Agenda"

Building on MIFTAH's research work on identifying reasons behind the underrepresentation of youth in the PLO, a clear one stands on the absence of a documented national political agenda for Palestinian youth to revive their socio-political role. Thus, MIFTAH provided a platform for discussion which enabled different parties and youth representatives to build consensus, on developing a *Youth Political Agenda* that represents a youth shared practical political vision. This document is the first of its kind and aims to develop a socio-political framework towards promoting youth participation in decision-making. The agenda includes the vision of youth on the nature of the Palestinian polity, including the foundations of citizenship, rights and duties.

Thirty six members of the MIFTAH-endorsed Youth Network participated in drafting the Youth Optical Agenda through engaging in intensive dialogue sessions over the course of three days using the Weekend Solution methodology. Later, the draft agenda was used as a basis to open the dialogue among a wider group of youth, representatives of political bureau members and youth organizations including the High Council of Youth and Sports. The intensive dialogue sessions aimed to reach consensus on the Youth Political Agenda which reflects the youth joint practical vision and youth addressed strategic dimensions towards the Palestinian future independent state with a full sovereignty over the occupied land, as well as identifying youth's leading role in reforming the national and public institutions and addressing youth's positions and role in national dialogue and peace building efforts.

1.2 Enhancing Capacity Development of the Youth Network Members

The capacity of 26 members of the Youth Network members was enhanced in good governance, democracy and youth political participation. The training aimed to strength the capacity of youth and youth leaders in various political factions to participate more meaningfully and continuously in governance and sustains their engagement in political order. More specifically, 87% of participants became aware of political context and emerging issue for youth participation, 90% of the participants gained key skills in lobbying and advocacy for political accountability and 88% of them became aware of the importance of youth participation in governance.

The capacity of fourteen of the leaders for tomorrow members in leading dialogue were enhanced through their engagement in open dialogue sessions that were conducted by MIFTAH. These sessions seeked to improve the youth political participation at various levels of decision-making positions. Moreover, the capacity of these leaders on International diplomacy and protocol were enhanced; 87% of leaders became aware of main international issues and 82% of them gained the necessary skills to manage press conferences, public debate sessions, and deliver political speeches.

Three book reviews were conducted and facilitated by qualified members of the "Leaders for Tomorrow" targeting youth groups from MIFTAH's Youth Network by providing them with the necessary information about the Palestinian national identity and relevant political and structural issues. The discussions aimed to widen the youth scope of analytical thinking and creating critical political positions. More specifically, 95% of youth network members who participated in book review sessions believe that political knowledge is seen as a functional and indispensable

element of a viable democracy in Palestinian and 86% of them gained analytical skills and critical thinking.

Youth activists (members of MIFTAH's Youth Network) were mobilized to take leading roles in community and advocacy events through the active utilization of social media. Around 21 youth activists gained developed skills in social media usage and managing social media campaigning supporting youth political document... Six members of the Youth Network were selected to join MIFTAH and partner organizations joint campaign (Money for Medicine), which is advocating and lobbying to narrow the deficiency in medications in public health entities and to hold the government accountable for the shortage in budget allocations for the Ministry of Health. The young activists are also taking lead in mobilizing and encouraging people to sign online and offline petition. The campaign was launched on 12 of July, 2017.

1.3 Reforming the Electoral System in Palestine

1.3.1 Practical Recommendations to Reform the Electoral System

MIFTAH addressed practical recommendations towards reforming the elections system with the view of promoting a democratic environment for supporting the election process in Palestine. These recommendations came out of a panel discussion that was organized in cooperation with the Central Elections Committee (CEC), and participation from the Independent Commission for Human Rights and civil society organizations such as the Arab World Democracy and Electoral Monitor (Al Marsad), as well as experts in elections affairs and women activists. The recommendations were addressed through two main dimensions; 1) an enabling legal framework to reform the electoral system, including the challenges to introducing amendments to the electoral system in Palestine, including the Local Elections Law No. 10 of 2005 and 2) the 2017 local elections results and the setback in women's representation."

Recommendations to Reform the Electoral System

- **One:** To continue discussions towards identifying the shape of the electoral system which will guarantee a democratic, pluralistic and participatory atmosphere for Palestinians and which coincides with the electoral environment in Palestine.
- **Two:** To work towards addressing the shortcomings of the legal framework regulating elections, including the absence of laws and procedures such as the partisan law, private media and funding for parties and candidates.
- **Three:** To have true determination for the participation of the various social sectors including women, youth and special needs persons.
- **Four:** To pressure for the restoration of the democratic climate in PLO bodies and to move away from the policy of partisan allocations.
- **Five:** To develop monitoring tools for dealing with the media and social media by preparing youth and women to become more involved in the democratic process
- **Six:** Expanding the participation of youth and women in public bodies of civil society, in the framework of preparing youth and women cadres to engage in the democratic process.
- **Seven:** To renew the commitment of political parties to the honor code in regards to women's representation of at least 30%
- **Eight:** To call on the women's movement to press for improving policies that will guarantee actual equality and participation and not view the quota as a goal in and of itself
- **Nine:** To reconsider the early voting of the security services.

1.3.2 Articulation of Policy Proposals on the Local Elections Law

MIFTAH continued leading policy dialogue on proposed policy recommendations included: increasing women representation to at least 30%, decreasing candidacy age to 21 years and lowering the threshold to 5%. The policy recommendations were discussed in policy meetings and presented in an Info-graphic which highlights in numbers and graphs the impact and social and political benefits of the adoption of the proposed policy amendments within the electoral system. The info-graphic also highlights the impact of the proposed changes on women and youth political participation and their representation at decision making levels. These proposed recommendations are considered as a continuation on advocacy efforts exerted by several CSOs. The info graphic was distributed widely to female local council members in West Bank, the relevant stakeholders, CSOs, women and youth activists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Additionally, the info-graphic was published on MIFTAH's webpage and its social media accounts.

1.4 Supporting Women in Local Government

1.4.1 Raising Awareness among Citizens on Local Elections

The level of awareness among 1,278 reached out citizens (1,117 females; 161 males) showed a 20% increase on the importance of registration for local elections as voters and on women's enrolment in election as candidates, and women's capabilities to become local council members. These citizens were reached out through 76 town hall meetings conducted in different locations in 8 districts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The result of the evaluations following the meetings showed that 70% of the participants agreed that the tribes must not interfere in preparing the electoral lists and that the political parties are to be transparent and accountable when preparing their electoral lists.

1.4.2 Capacity Building of Potential and Newly Elected Female Council Members

MIFTAH supported building the leadership capacities for newly local elected female local council members through delivering an intensive capacity building program for 58 new female local council members, out of which 33 were elected and 25 won by acclamation. MIFTAH's guidelines "*Guidebooks for the Female and Male Local Council Members*" were used as the main training source alongside some case studies and focus group discussions. MIFTAH's goal is to target female LGU members so that these guidelines could serve as easy and simple tools that provide them with information that would allow them to carry out their duties, in addition to encouraging their involvement in decision-making circles within LGUs. The workshops also provided a detailed evidence-based explanation of subjects pertaining to developmental strategic planning, structural urban planning and infrastructure services planning.

93 women out of 112 targeted women candidates won seats in Local Councils elections conducted on the 13th of May 2017 in the West Bank. These women were targeted through MIFTAH's capacity building program and orientation sessions that focus on women leadership roles, election programs, election campaign, Local Elections Law, local councils' laws and regulations, dialogue and debate.

1.4.3 Formulation of 6 "Gender Defenders" Groups in 5 clusters in the West Bank (including east Jerusalem) and Gaza strip.

These groups consist of 110 community activists (63 men and young men) who led 12 community initiatives in support of gender equality and women political participation in local government. These groups include political leaders, public

figures, social activists, women local council members and youth mobilizers. The gender defenders passed through a series of consultation meetings and workshops which resulted in unifying practical community agendas and action plans for mobilizing men and youth to promoting gender equality and support women leadership roles in leading local government issues.

1.4.4 Women Council Members Supported to Addressed Gender Equality Agenda in Urban Planning- Participation in the Second Palestinian Urban Forum Entitled: 'Gender Equality in Urban Development: Women's Impact on Developing Urban Plans'

MIFTAH supported nine women members of local and village councils from various West Bank governorates to exercise their leadership role in the planning process of the communities they represent, through enhancing women council members engagement and participation in the development of a structural plan that illustrates the changes and additions that occurred in the master plan reflecting women's intervenes in the planning process. This came with the view of reflecting the different needs of the community groups from a gender perspective, with the town of Aseera Shamaliya serving as a model for this intervention.

These changes were presented in a side-event during the Second Palestinian Urban Forum, which was held in Birzeit University, in which a comparative presentation was made of the structural plans of the town before and after the women council members intervened, highlighting the women's contributions and suggested solutions to address some problems in the town. Through this intervention, MIFTAH stressed the need to build on these experiences, which promote the participation and interaction of women in public field, including in urban planning. MIFTAH also pushed for policy formulators to adopt the recommendations and translate them into practical steps with the view of mainstreaming just policies that support women's participation in decision making, especially in the local government sector with focus on adoption of gender equality in urban planning...

1.5 Advocating for the realization of the Palestinian Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda at the National and International Level

1.5.1 Development of a Women Political and Social Agenda

MIFTAH organized a series of dialogue sessions to draft a Women Political and Social Agenda with the participation of independent women and women representatives of all political factions including Islamic movements. This comes in

line with the efforts of the women's movement to place the issues of Palestinian women as an urgent priority at the Palestinian political decision-making level, and in accordance with numerous national references, including the Declaration of Independence, the Rights Document for Palestinian Women and international agreements, keeping in mind the diversity of Palestinian women and the multiplicity of political ideologies. The women in West Bank and Gaza Strip have unanimously agreed upon the legal frame of the political and social agenda. This consensus was reached through a number of meetings with independent women activists, representatives from political factions and women organizations.

MIFTAH continues to widen the dialogue platform to include the participation of Palestinian women in historic Palestine and diaspora including Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon to reach a consensus on the drafted Agenda and to promote the participation and integration of Palestinian women in the Palestinian political decision circles and the inevitable political decisions of the Palestinians.

1.5.2 Preparing Women Potential Leaders to Participate in Reconciliation Meetings

MIFTAH continued to support the "Wifaq" Committee, which includes young women and feminist leaders from various West Bank governorates, including Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. The support provided to "Wifaq" was through three main channels; the first was through building their leadership capacities, and their skills in mediation, peace building and on transformative leadership. The second channel was providing them with information on reconciliation files and developments in the efforts of ending the Palestinian division. This was achieved through engaging in several meetings with the formal national reconciliation committees; one meeting was organized with Mr. Azzam Al –Ahmad (Fateh Central Committee member in charge of the reconciliation files), another meeting brought them together with Dr. Mustapha Barghouthi the head of the freedom reconciliation committee and other meetings to share some relevant information regarding the Swiss Peace document and the data on the employees file.

However, the third channel focused on use of Shadowing as one of the transformative leadership tools. Eight women from Wifaq shadowed political and a community leaders to gain experience and knowledge to further build their capacities. The women shadowing experiences was documented and published on MIFTAH's Webpage.

MIFTAH also supported "Wifaq" Committee by sending letters to the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip to represent women at the factional meetings held in

Cairo on 21 November, which led to the participation of four women leaders in these meetings.

1.5.3 Building Consensus on Palestinian Women's Position towards the Political Division

A position paper addressing women's demands for their representation in the national reconciliation efforts and national dialogue was developed by the formulated Women Shadow Committee "Wifaq" to advocate for prioritizing women's issues within the Palestinian political agenda and to put pressure on enhancing women participation in the national reconciliation efforts as a national party in the national dialogue circles. The position paper emanated was built on the main findings of the specialized and one of its kind study drafted by MIFTAH on "*The impact and damage of the division on Palestinian women,*" the study includes testimonies of women specially from Gaza who have been affected by the political division.

1.5.4 Fostering a Vision for Palestinian Women's Rights Organizations based on the UN released Global Review of Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325

The published Palestinian women's vision document addresses ten strategies for advocating Palestinian women's efforts for the realization of Palestinian Women, Peace and Security agenda on the national and international level. These were shared among international organizations, diplomatic missions and regional networks in a roundtable discussion, a step towards initiating a forceful unified women's discourse that calls for national unity and for ending the Israeli occupation, to put an end to human rights violations committed against Palestinians in general and women and girls in specific. The strategies also focus on the important role that international organizations can play in supporting Palestinian women's international efforts in demanding an end to the occupation.

Ten Strategies for the Realization of Palestinian WPS Agenda

One: The occupation must be viewed as a colonial hegemony and this analysis should be used as part of an integrated system for human rights.

Two: The National Coalition and the National Plan are considered a great achievement which should be celebrated, and they must be constantly supported and activated.

Three: The role of international organizations in pressuring international bodies, courts and international forums to try those responsible for human rights violations, hold the Israeli occupation accountable and adopt the necessary international measures for doing that.

Four: To continue to support Palestinian women's contributions in their local communities in terms of documenting the perpetrated violations

Five: The strong link between the various elements of the Human Rights System and the International Humanitarian Law from the perspective of women's rights

Six: Raising the issues of women, peace and security in local, regional and international conferences.

Seven: Communication on various levels- use of effective advocacy tools

Eight: To Involve human rights organizations in raising the issues of women, peace and security.

Nine: The important role of the Palestinian diplomacy in raising the issues of women, peace and security.

Ten: It is crucial to continue working on internal issues

1.5.5 Addressing Recommendations at the CSW 62nd Session Demanding Protection for Palestinian Women Living under Occupation: Documenting Human Rights Violations against Palestinian Women Refugees

MIFTAH contributed in drafting a comprehensive “evidence based research” shedding light on human rights violations against Palestinian women living under occupation. The research findings are meant to be addressed at human rights international platforms such as the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, Human Rights Council sessions, and other platforms that support Palestinian women’s advocacy efforts to hold perpetrators of violence accountable and to end the impunity of Israeli officials and hold them accountable towards their announced commitment for International Resolutions on Human Rights.

Moreover, the aim of the intervention is to push for the development of interventions that would provide protection for Palestinian refugee women from competent international and national institutions. This would contribute towards advancing the Palestinian WPS agenda on the national, regional and international levels.

MIFTAH’s contribution was through the documentation of 500 cases of human rights violations against Palestinian Women Refugees from 12 refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. To that end, MIFTAH drafted a documentation tool through forming an advisory committee from 16 members from different human right organizations in Palestine; OHCHR, the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), BADIL - Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Negotiations Support Unit

(NSU) and Al Haq Center in addition to UNRWA, women activists from the UNSCR 1325 National Coalitions, and independent researchers.

Main Recommendations of MIFTAH's Documentation on Human Rights Violations against Palestinian Women Refugees:

- Recognize the Palestinian right of return through United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 194 and 513. It is also necessary to confirm United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, pertaining to the rights of women and peace, along with Security Council Resolution 237 of 1967, calling on Israel to respect human rights in the regions affected by the Middle East conflict of 1967, to ensure safety and security for their residents and facilitate the return of the displaced.
- Confirm the importance of implementing United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 3236 of 1974.
- Prosecuting the Israeli Occupation at the ICC for the psychological and social crimes it has committed against women
- Donor states and organizations should fulfill their obligations towards UNRWA so that the Agency can continue providing services to Palestinian refugees
- Providing psycho-social support for individuals exposed to traumatic experiences as a result of violations committed by the Israeli Occupation. This should include a heightened role for international bodies (governmental and non-governmental organizations) in Palestinian camps.
- Designing developmental economic programs that address women's psycho-social and recreational needs as a means of providing relief from the daily suffering resulting from the Israeli Occupation.
- Providing support for local women's institutions and human rights organizations to monitor human rights violations, with an emphasis on those committed against refugee women, and providing regular updates to the UN and other international human rights organizations.

1.5.6 Supporting Women Protection through Advocating for Ratifying Legislations

MIFTAH coordinated with the *NGO Forum to Combat Violence against Women - Al Muntada* to conduct a National Conference that focuses on the Family Protection from Violence Law. The participants in the Conference presented the most significant gaps and challenges obstructing the ratification of the Law. The participants from civil society and governmental institutions supported the adoption of the Law that will ensure protection for women and girls from violence within the family.

Moreover, MIFTAH collaborated with Al Muntada to produce a key message related to Gender Based Violence (GBV). The title of the message was “the Absence of Law Legitimizes Violence” that was posted in public spaces on light screens in three governorates (Hebron, Nablus, and Ramallah). The main purpose of the message is to raise the public's awareness on the importance of adopting the Family Protection from Violence Law in Palestine.

1.5.7 Mobilize Community and Religious Leaders as Advocates for Enhancing Reproductive Health and Rights, Family Planning, GBV and Youth Health

More than 1800 (60% females) citizens in different local communities within Tulkarem and Jenin districts had their awareness raised on reproductive health and rights (PHR), family planning, GBV and youth health. This was done through MIFTAH's work with 15 community and religious leaders (imams and preachers) (9 females, 6 males) to reach out to and conduct 124 awareness sessions.

MIFTAH adopted a participatory approach in mobilizing these community and religious leaders where it organized an orientation workshop in Jenin district targeting a group of active preachers and imams from Tulkarem and Jenin districts which were targeted through MIFTAH's interventions and capacity building programs on RHR and GBV in 2015-2016. Eighteen imams and preachers (female 11, male 7) participated in the orientation workshop which was organized in cooperation and in close coordination with the Directorate General of Women at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The main purpose of this workshop was to share the experience of preachers and imams after holding a series of awareness sessions on RHR and promoting Women's rights and combating GBV within their localities in Tulkarem and Jenin districts during 2015-2016 and to identify the challenges and obstacles that they faced during the implementation and facilitation of the awareness sessions.

1.6 Enhancing Fiscal Transparency and Social Justice

1.6.1 Articulation of Policy Recommendations for Fair Taxation

MIFTAH proposed reforms to the 2011 Income Tax Law with focus on the law's articles that determine taxable income (tax base), exemptions, income deductions and tax brackets in order to improve the level of tax fairness rather than improving tax collection within the Palestinian tax system. This was presented based on MIFTAH's finalized and published studies and evidence based researches which tackled issues of tax fairness in Palestine and identified findings and policy

recommendations for influencing the tax system to be more responsive to socio-economic aspects that support social justice.

MIFTAH capped off work on the “Fair Tax Monitor” report in Palestine. The report includes practical and specific recommendations within six categories towards increasing the contribution of the tax system to the effectuation of social justice. MIFTAH will proceed with reaching consensus among relevant civil society organizations on necessary and priority tax reforms followed with opening dialogue with the Ministry of Finance. The importance the “Fair Tax Monitor” comes within the framework of accumulating efforts and work on reforming the taxation system in Palestine towards contributing to the realization of social justice

“Fair Tax Monitor” is a methodology that was developed and implemented by Oxfam on an international level in 10 countries in the initial phase. The methodology is characterized as a comprehensive methodology that analyses the fairness of the tax system including both revenues and expenditures. This is undertaken by analyzing: tax structure; tax burden and progressivity; tax leakages; tax administration; government spending; and transparency and accountability.

1.6.2 Enhancing Budget Transparency- Adoption of Fiscal Policies (budgets) and Transparency Measures by Selective Public Institutes; MoSD, MoEHE, MoH

The adoption of transparency measures and participatory approach within the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was culminated by the production and publication of two Citizens' Budgets 2017 by MoSD and MoEHE. The institutionalization of transparency and accountability measures regarding fiscal policies with focus on budgets within the two ministries were made possible by following a highly participatory approach in budgeting and planning where MIFTAH played a key role in building the capacities of civil servants in preparing participatory/ citizens' budgeting. Moreover, MIFTAH led follow-up actions for developing citizen budgets, including leading dialogue with duty bearers and decision makers for initiating the needed processes and procedures for institutionalizing the transparency and accountability measures within the fiscal policies of the two ministries.

During 2017, MIFTAH expanded its work to include the Ministry of Health (MoH) and built the capacity of around 60 civil servants from the three ministries that were targeted through this program with the reflection on initiating the process of the

preparation of the citizen budget for 2018 for the three ministries; MoSD, MoEHE and MoH.

Furthermore MIFTAH initiated coordination and discussion with the Ministry of Finance to support the ministry in developing the guidelines for processing the development of the best formulated citizen budget in accordance with the transparency international measures in this regard with focus on the IPB measures.

As a mean of sustaining transparency measures within the Ministries policies and procedures, MIFTAH supported the MoSD to design and develop a manual on the preparation of the citizen budget of the MoSD to serve as a credible reference for the development of the MoSD's citizen budgets. The manual is adopted as the main document of the MoSD fiscal policies and procedures.

MIFTAH supported both the MoSD and MoEHE to present and share their citizen budgets for 2017 through a workshop that brought together representatives of the planning and budget teams at the MoSD and MoEHE with civil society organizations, including the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute "MAS", Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem "ARIJ", Social and Economic Policies Monitor "Al-Marsad", Ma'an Development Center, Madarat Center for Community Development, Health Work Committees, Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights, Women's Affairs Technical Committees and Coalition for Accountability and Integrity "AMAN".

1.6.3 Shared Palestinian Knowledge and Expertise on Standards of International Transparency with Tunisian Counterparts

MIFTAH organized a visit to exchange knowledge and expertise to Tunis on standards of international transparency for budgets. The Palestinian delegation included representatives of the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and Higher Education and Ministry of Local Government, as well as the Palestinian civil society, represented by MIFTAH and Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem "ARIJ". The visit comes in harmony with MIFTAH's interventions to adopt standards of international transparency among official institutions by publishing the citizen budget. The Palestinian delegation shed light on Palestine's experience in fiscal transparency and participatory budgeting in their meetings with Tunisian Social Affairs; Women, Family and Childhood; and Local and Environmental Affairs Ministries. This framework promoted networking and exchange opportunities between Palestinian official institutions and their Tunisian counterparts.

1.7 Contribute to supporting Women Economic participation

63 Jerusalemite women were supported in leading income generating projects in remote areas in Jerusalem, by providing small grants along with a comprehensive capacity building program to support targeted women to assess, plan and manage an income generating project, which effectively enhanced their self-reliance and their self-esteem and empower their roles in their local communities and supported the remarkable contribution in increasing their families' income.

The 13 income generating projects contribute in providing job opportunities for marginalized women in 13 remote areas in east Jerusalem, and in securing financial support to 63 families to provide essential needs and facilitate their access to basic services such as education and higher education and health services.

MIFTAH organized the “Bab Al Amoud [Damascus Gate]” bazaar in Ramallah on May 9 and 10 as a culmination of the efforts to support the economic empowerment of the marginalized women. The projects and bazaar particularly targeted women in different districts of Jerusalem that are in close proximity to the separation wall and Israeli settlements. The bazaar was visited by several citizens and organizations and achieved an important success in terms of the future of their projects. Their products were uniquely showcased in booths throughout the bazaar's wings and sections, including embroidered pieces, traditional clothing, food and household products.

Women's economic leadership role was also promoted through the broadcasting of a documentary film shedding the light on women's successes in managing economic projects and the influence on the social fault lines within their local communities.

II. To Strengthen National Unity and International Awareness of the Palestinian Narrative

2.1 Enhance internal dialogue to reach consensus on key political positions imperative to the Palestinians

2.1.1 The Repercussions of the Recent US President's Decision

MIFTAH conducted a policy meeting on “the repercussions of the American ‘recognition’ of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel”. The meeting discussed the

current political developments at the national, regional and international levels in light of the recent US president's speech recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and his decision to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The meeting touched on the implications of this decision, as well as the challenges that directly face the Palestinian reality and the national issue, in addition to the steps required at various levels to address them. The participants called on the Palestinian national movement to adopt a new national strategy based on the premise of peaceful popular resistance and comprehensive civil disobedience, particularly since the experience of Jerusalem reflected the Palestinian people's steadfastness and survival capacities. The participants emphasized that the Palestine Liberation Organization has to take the lead in this movement and define the political agenda for the next phase through an integrated national strategy. The restoration of Palestinian national unity and the Palestinian national sense, the establishment of a program with clear objectives and follow-up with determination remains the Palestinian priority at this stage.

2.1.2 Guarantees for Holding Local Council Elections on Time and on One Date in the West Bank (including Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip

MIFTAH organized a policy meeting to discuss the guarantees for holding local council elections. The aim of the policy meeting was to push towards holding local council elections on time in accordance with Cabinet decision 07/121/17 and to ensure that the elections are held concurrently in all districts of the homeland. The session addressed the various positions regarding the development of the electoral system, including ensuring there are no new obstacles to holding the elections on time.

2.1.3 Recent Political Developments on the International Level and its Influence on the Palestinian Cause

A policy meeting was held to discuss "the recent political developments on the international level and its influence on the Palestinian cause". The aim of the policy meeting was to discuss the latest political developments in the Arab, regional and international arena and their influence on the Palestinian cause. Moreover, the policy meeting discussed the changes in the regional relationships and alliances, Israel's role in these changes and how these factors are playing a key role in alienating the Palestinian cause, which were not highlighted in regional and international fora, including the Arab League and United Nations Security Council.

The policy meeting concluded with a number of recommendations that the Palestinian leadership should take into consideration to safeguard the national liberation agenda.

2.2 Promoting the Palestinian Narrative as a Just and Fair Cause

2.2.1 MIFTAH's "Facts and Figures"

MIFTAH believes that presenting accurate information is a key part of its mission. These “Facts and Figures” offer specific information on subjects related to the Palestinian condition, Palestinian-Israeli conflict and final status issues. Most recently, the following fact sheets have been compiled:

- Palestinian Prisoners
- Palestinian local, legislative and presidential elections
- Settlements: an obstacle to peace
- Forced Displacement in east Jerusalem
- House Demolitions in the West Bank
- Palestinian Child Prisoners
- United Nations Resolutions and the Middle East Peace Process
- Current Palestinian Government Structure
- Palestinian Government Timeline Since January 2006
- International Humanitarian Law: The Siege on the Gaza Strip
- Fateh-Hamas Reconciliation Efforts
- Israeli Checkpoints in the Occupied Territories
- Family Reunification
- Olive Trees – More Than Just a Tree in Palestine
- The Jordan Valley

2.2.2 “Hosted by MIFTAH”

Interviews with prominent individuals and political leaders to share current political situation development at the national and international levels and their impact on the Palestinian cause and published on MIFTAH website under “Hosted by MIFTAH”. Three special interviews were conducted and published with the following:

1) Head of the Palestinian Water Authority, Engineer Mazen Ghneim: The daily per capita share of water for settlers is from 400 to 800 liters in comparison to 45-50 liters for every Palestinian citizen.

2) PLO Executive Committee Member Dr. Hanan Ashrawi: 'The new US administration has no clear strategy for the peace process except for its complete adoption of the Israeli position'

3) Ambassador Ammar Hijazi, Head of Multilateral Relations Desk, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The report issued by the Secretary General of Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Dr. Rima Khalaf , on “Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid” and its content remain valid for the Palestinians”.

4) Dr. Azmi Shuaibi, Advisor to The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN)’s Board of Directors: Analysis of the recent developments of Palestinian reconciliation

5) Mr. Khalil Tufakji, Arab Studies Society’s land and settlement expert: Fifty years of occupation have isolated Jerusalem from its Palestinian extension and the situation on the ground is even more tragic

III. MIFTAH’s Publications in 2017:

- Obstacles which Hinder the Equal Representation of Women and the Youth inside the Various Bodies of the PLO and Limit their Access to Decision-Making Positions.
- Proposed Reforms to the 2011 Income Tax Law and its Amendments
- A Vision for Palestinian Women’s Rights Organizations based on the Global Study on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325; Ten Strategies for Tackling Issues Pertaining to Women Peace and Security.
- The Impact and Damage of the Internal Division from Gender Perspective
- Analytical Reading on Violence against Women: Documenting Cases and Data from the Forum on Violence against Women
- Manual: Citizen Budget Preparation Manual in the Ministry of Social Development (Arabic)

Specialized bulletins:

- Info graphic: Enhancing Gender Equality and Women Participation in Local Elections
- Citizen Budget 2017 - Ministry of Education and Higher Education
- Citizen Budget 2017 - Ministry of Social Development

3. Situation Analysis:

The ongoing unrest throughout Palestine is a reminder of the sensitivity of the issue of Jerusalem: about 70 per cent of all Palestinian injuries in the occupied Palestinian territory during 2017 occurred during protests and clashes, following developments related to Jerusalem¹ – the installation of metal detectors at the entrance of the Haram ash Sharif in July, and the decision of US president to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The later constituted a dangerous breach of the Charter of the United Nations and a serious threat to international peace and security, while also undermining the chances for a two-State solution and fuelling the fires of violence and extremism.

The General Assembly, by a recorded vote of 128 in favor to 9, adopted the resolution “Status of Jerusalem”, by which it declared “null and void” any actions intended to alter Jerusalem’s character, status or demographic composition. Calling on all States to refrain from establishing embassies in the Holy City, it also demanded that they comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions and work to reverse the “negative trends” imperiling a two-State resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution reaffirms its relevant resolutions, including resolution A/RES/72/15 of 30 November 2017 on Jerusalem and those of the Security Council, including resolutions 242 (1967), 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 298 (1971), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), and 2334 (2016).

Moreover, the number of Palestinians allowed moving in and out of Gaza declined by almost 50 percent in 2017 compared with 2016. High level of demolition of Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem in 2017 in addition to significant decline in Area C as a result of settlement expansion in the West Bank (despite the UNSCR 2234) and the separation wall. Additionally, the blockade and closure imposed by the Israeli government for the tenth year in a row with restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza impacting every aspect of life. All these factors increase pressure on vulnerable communities and are a form of collective punishment.³ According to the mission statement of the UN special committee to investigate Israeli practices, emphasized that the lack of accountability measures against Israeli officials for human right violations that they commit against Palestinians has further exacerbated the cycle of violence.

¹ OCHA 2017 Situation Report

² The Monthly Humanitarian Bulletin, December 2017, OCHA-oPt

³ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21881&LangID=E>

The above developments create a new reality on the ground that will affect how civil society organizations in general and MIFTAH in specific will work in 2018. These changes might affect MIFTAH's strategy 2017- 2021 and 2018 action plan especially that one of MIFTAH's main fields of work is opening national dialogue on timely issues related to the Palestinian cause.

Regional lack of stability has also been used by Israel to justify the lack of progress on the Palestinian issue and lessen criticism over its behavior 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, and despite the temporary progress in the reconciliation between the two largest Palestinian political parties; Fateh and Hamas, the efforts have not yet reached fruition. The two parties signed a reconciliation agreement on 12 October in Cairo after Hamas agreed to hand over administrative control of Gaza, including the key Rafah border crossing. However, the parties have failed to implement the deal, arguing over the interpretation of its details and missing deadlines it set. Leaving the fate of reconciliation in the air. The cost of intra-Palestinian political division that has effectively paralyzed 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.

On April 17th, Palestinian prisoners launched a hunger strike in order to get a public landline to communicate with their families, relax regulations on family visitation, improve medical care of prisoners, allow prisoners to take matriculation exams, and many other requests in a list of demands. The strike lasted for 40 days until the Israelis agreed to grant the prisoners their demands, but not after many of the prisoners' health was in dangerous conditions.

However, and despite of the frustrating political atmosphere; the Local Government Elections took place on 13 May 2017. They were expected to be the first elections in all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the political split in 2007 between the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2007, as Hamas agreed to participate in the local elections and allow them to be held in the Gaza Strip but disagreements between Hamas and Fatah led to Hamas boycotting stating it will participate only after

"ending disagreements, achieving reconciliation, and uniting Palestinian institutions, including at the political, judicial, and security 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.