

Biannual MIFTAH Newsletter - Third Edition (January - June 2018)

A Conference to Discuss Implications of Regional and International Developments on the Future of the Palestinian Cause Palestinian Scenarios- Women and Youth Visions



During the first half of 2018, MIFTAH organised its annual conference, discussing the implications of regional and international developments on the future of the Palestinian cause, as well as proposing scenarios and alternatives to Palestinians from women and youth perspectives. In the first session, following the opening session, PLO Executive Committee member Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, presented an overview of the nature of regional and interna

MIFTAH's third biannual newsletter highlights the most significant achievements and accomplishments of the organisation over the past six months and offers our friends and partners a snapshot of our activities and accomplishments.

tional changes, their impact on the Palestinian situation and available options. Additionally, Dr. Naser Al-Qudweh, member of Fatah Central Committee, presented proposed and available political scenarios. This session was followed by two different sessions where the focus of the conference was presented. The sessions presented women and youth visions to address political challenges, the impasse in national reconciliation and ending political division from two angles: the first focused on strengthening the internal front, while the second angle focused on available scenarios to Palestinians at the international level, as well as the identification of national priorities and alternatives from women and youth perspectives. The conference concluded with a number of recommendations:

* Pursue the attainment of full membership in the United Nations and the accession to international organisations.

- Develop a unified national strategy engaging all political and social actors.
- Advance the role of the Palestinian people in protecting national achievements and defending the national strategy.

• Improve the relationship with Palestinian delegations abroad, and enhance their role in networking and engaging with their societies.

- Examine available alternatives and scenarios by researchers, research centres and politicians to disengage from treaties signed with the occupation authorities.

MIFTAH Continues to Support Line Ministries in the Release of the Citizen Budget

Since the beginning of 2018, MIFTAH continued to work on the development and release of the 2018 citizen budget with the Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Education and Higher Education; and Ministry of Health. This comes within the framework of diligent efforts with partner organisations that culminated in the release of the citizen budget of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education for the second year in a row and the citizen budget of the Ministry of Social Development for the third year in a row. Through the release of the citizen budget, MIFTAH seeks to summarise the main policies and approaches of the Ministry for the upcoming year, represented in numbers and figures and in reflection of the public budget. MIFTAH also seeks to familiarise Palestinian citizens in the distribution and types of expenditure, including both operational and developmental budgets, and thus contribute to the adoption of standards of international transparency.

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Regional Meeting for Palestinian Women...Legal and National References of the Palestinian Women's Agenda: Priorities and Interventions

In a letter submitted to the Palestinian National Council at its last meeting in Ramallah, Palestinian women identified their demands and the priorities of their political and social agendas.

This came as a result of the follow up session to the regional meeting held in Amman, Jordan, with the participation of women leaders from inside the Green Line, the West Bank (including east Jerusalem), Gaza Strip, the Diaspora, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. The meeting discussed the outcomes of the meeting, and agreed on a set of priorities and tools. The participants formulated a memorandum that serves as a reference for women in their demands and visions, and as a preliminary step in submitting them to the National Council. Participating women leaders and civil society representatives also discussed the status of women in the State of Palestine, unions, laws and legislations related to Palestinian women. The memorandum includes a number of demands, the most important of which are: the equal representation of women; working on the consolidation of recommendation No. 9 of the Central Council, which stipulates that women representation in all decision-making positions in public institutions and those of the PLO should not be less than 30% reaching full equality; and to emphasise the political role of women in their places of residence, including refugee women and women within the Green Line.

The meeting also emphasised the need to activate communication with women in all their places of residence; the need to engage them in national and feminist work; the implementation of joint programmes with women inside the Green Line; the promotion of a women's rights discourse; and the expansion of women's participation in professional unions in the homeland and diaspora. The participants also emphasised the need to respond to the problems of Palestinian women in the Diaspora, which were presented at the regional meeting of Palestinian women in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan through communication with the various PLO bodies, to protect Palestinian women, as well as preserve Palestinian identity.



"Women Political and Social Agenda"



MIFTAH held a policy meeting entitled "Proposed amendments to the electoral system to promote the participation of women and youth," which discussed the recommendations of a research paper prepared by MIFTAH on the available means of amending the electoral system with the view of promoting a democratic climate in Palestine. The participants discussed the challenges facing the introduction of amendments to the electoral law in Palestine including the General Elections Law, the Local Councils Law No. 10 of 2005 and its 2012 amendments.

The recent local council elections' results of 2017, based on Central Election Committee (CEC) reports, showed that women's representation did not exceed 20%. The participants concluded their discussion with a consensus to cancel the restriction imposed on the candidacy age for youth, making it 18 years; to call for equal representation of women in electoral lists; and to lower the threshold from 8% to 5%. They also agreed on the need for factions and civil society institutions to agree on the proposed amendments, in addition to a genuine and serious political will to work on these amendments.

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Presentation of Recommendations on the Protection of Palestinian Women under Occupation in the 62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women



MIFTAH, during its participation in the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, presented the findings of a deep analytical research that highlights the human rights violations that Palestinian women are subjected to under occupation. In partnership with other feminist and human rights organisations, MIFTAH contributed to the development of the report that seeks to highlight the flagrant violations women are subjected to and showcase them in international human rights arena and platforms.

MIFTAH contributed to the report by documenting violations against women and girl refugees in Palestine through the filing of 500 questionnaires. The tool utilised was developed based on the relevant international legal frameworks. The report also seeks to pressure of a lasting and just solution for the Palestinian refugee issue in general and the protection of refugee women in particular, as well as lobby stakeholders to uphold their due responsibilities, conferred by relevant international conventions and resolutions on the protection of refugees.

MIFTAH also presented a brief on the status of rural women in Jerusalem, which reflects the policies and procedures utilised by the government of Israel towards the ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The brief discussed Israeli policy relevant to closure and imposition of constraints on freedom of movement; settlement expansion; the construction and expansion of the Wall; and house demolitions. These policies and procedures have a disproportionate impact on Palestinian women as a vulnerable social group, which further exacerbates poverty and violence against women, as well as being subjected to violence at the hands of Israeli authorities, military, settlers and intelligence.

MIFTAH's Dialogue Sessions Facilitated the Promotion of the Role of Youth in the PLO

MIFTAH secured commitments from all Palestinian political parties to revive the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). This was accomplished through diligent meetings that took place throughout 2017 and 2018 with all relevant stakeholders, including political factions, student bodies and groups, PLO departments, popular unions and university student bodies. The most important amendments to the Union's bylaws were discussed with the view of ensuring fair representation of Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, by considering each Palestinian university an individual branch of GUPS, as well as determine the age GUPS members and those holding leadership positions. Additionally, an amendment for consideration was the stipulation of at least 30% representation for young women in accordance with the Central Council Decision. These demands were included in the public policy paper sent to the PLO's Executive Committee as recommendations to be approved after review and discussion.

The participation of student body representatives in political factions in these discussions reflected their aspirations on the need to revive youth bodies within the Palestinian political system. Several of the youth ran for membership in the PNC in its most recent session, some of whom did gain membership as youth representatives of their factions. This was considered a success for all efforts previously made by MIFTAH and contributed to developing national efforts and directing them towards dedicating increased attention to this vital issue. It had a direct impact on renewing the legitimacy of the youth component of the Palestinian political system through reviving GUPS and making it a priority for political action for youth.

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Towards a Feminist Vision in the Palestinian Constitution: “MIFTAH” Organises a Study Tour to Tunisia with a Palestinian Feminist Delegation



MIFTAH organised a study tour to Tunisia with a Palestinian feminist delegation, representing a wide-array of bodies, including members of the General Union of Palestinian Women; a member of the Palestinian Constitution Committee; civil society representatives; a Palestinian Legislative Council member; a representative of the UNESCO; and feminist and legal activists. The study tour sought to familiarise the participants with the developmental track in drafting and adopting the 2014 constitution in Tunisia. This comes within the context of serving as a first in the efforts to reach a feminist consensus for a Palestin

ian constitution through a comparative employment between the Tunisian and Palestinian contexts, as well as build on MIFTAH's recent efforts in the development of a feminist vision that included the legal framework for the social and political agenda of Palestinian women. The importance of this study tour lies in being in line with current efforts to harmonise Palestinian legislation and laws with conventions and treaties that the State of Palestine acceded to, as well as the efforts of the Constitution Committee in drafting a constitution as a cornerstone that guarantees fundamental freedoms and social justice for Palestinians. A meeting followed the study tour that brought together the participants to discuss appropriate work mechanisms that are in line with the Palestinian context, to participate and influence the development of the constitution of the State of Palestine to guarantee State secularism, democracy, participation and justice, as well as the inclusion of clear texts that emphasise equality, non-discrimination, protection of women and elimination of violence against women.

Hosted by MIFTAH

MIFTAH publishes interviews with prominent individuals and political leaders, which discuss the current situation developments at the national and international levels and their impact on the Palestinian cause.

During the first half of 2018, MIFTAH has conducted interviews with the following:

* **Dr. Sana Soroghli:** Professor of constitutional law at An-Najah University. The interview focused on the importance of the Constitutional Court in the process of state-building and separation between the authorities. Dr. Soroghli also stressed the importance of raising awareness and constitutional culture among citizens and the different segments of Palestinian society. This increased awareness supports the importance of focusing on issues of gender and social justice in the writing of the Constitution.

* **Ola Awad:** Head of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The interview discussed the results of the latest consensus, housing and establishments, which were recently released and are an indicator of the paradigm shift achieved by the Bureau towards e- data and linking this to geographic information systems, in spite of the challenges they faced. Ms. Awad also discussed the census of refugees in Lebanon which will provide a comprehensive and up-to-date database on the demographic, economic, social and living status of Palestinian refugees in Palestinian camps and communities.

* **Majida Al-Masri:** Politburo member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Ms. Al-Masri discussed the political and national factors behind the participation of the DFLP in the 23rd session of the Palestinian National Council, and the importance of supporting the representation of women and youth in the National Council and all decision-making positions.

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Facts and Figures

MIFTAH believes that presenting accurate information is a key part of its mission. MIFTAH's "Facts and Figures" offers 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:

- Facts and figures sheet on "Social Sector Budgets and Expenditure in Palestine for 2016-2018". The paper demonstrates the allocated budgets and compares them to the actual expenditure for the Ministries of the social sector in Palestine over a three year period.
- Facts and figures sheet on "Ministry of Social Development Budget and Poverty Allocations." The paper analyses the budget allocations for the Ministry of Social Development over the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. The paper also employs a comparative approach to actual expenditure to reflect the priorities of the Ministry in addressing poverty and empowering marginalised groups.
- Factsheet on the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and its Subsidiary Bodies. The paper focuses on the Palestinian National Council, its establishment, composition and main resolutions over the past 45 years.
- Factsheet on United Nations and Security Council Resolutions Relevant to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, such that the General Assembly and Security Council, composed of 15 members, have adopted more than 600 resolutions on the Palestinian cause, since the Partition Plan in 1947.
- Factsheet on Child Prisoners in Israeli Jails, such that Palestinian children have been detained and tried in military courts, in the absence of due process and standards set in international law. This paper reflects that 500-700 Palestinian minors are arrested, interrogated and detained annually by Israeli soldiers.

MIFTAH's Publications in 2018:

Special Studies:

- **Analytical Study: Documenting Violations by the Israeli Occupation against Refugee Women in Palestinian Refugee Camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.**
- **Women Transformative Leadership in Palestine - Documentation of Shadowing Opportunities for Potential Women Leaders**
- **Manual: Citizen Budget Preparation Manual in the Ministry of Finance and Planning**

Specialized bulletins:

- **Citizen Budget 2018 - Ministry of Education and Higher Education**
- **Citizen Budget 2018 - Ministry of Social Development**
- **Citizen Budget 2018- Ministry of Health**

