

Biannual MIFTAH Newsletter - Fifth Edition (January – June 2019)

MIFTAH's fifth bi-annual newsletter highlights the most significant achievements and accomplishments of the organization over the past six months, and offers our friends and partners a snapshot of our activities and accomplishments.

MIFTAH holds a hearing session on the obstacles to adopting the Family Protection Bill



In line with MIFTAH's strategic directions in strengthening the legislative environment and influencing public policies with the view of protecting citizenship for all, and in cooperation with the civil society in combating violence against women, MIFTAH held a hearing session to highlight the obstacles facing the adoption of the Family Protection Bill. The Family Protection Bill is considered to be among Palestine's first pieces of legislation to combat violence in the Palestinian society in general and violence

against women in particular, specifically in light of the absence of true legal and deterrent provisions that provide protection and justice for Palestinian women and girls while preserving family unity within society. Additionally, MIFTAH emphasised the need to adhere to constitutional legislative channels in dealing with the adoption of legislation and laws in accordance with the foundations and principles of democracy.

The session; which focused on the obstacles facing the adoption of the Family Protection Law, hosted speakers from the Ministry of Justice, President's Office, the General Union of Palestinian Women and the NGO Forum to Combat Violence against Women. Suad Melhem, from the Ministry of Justice, confirmed that the Ministry has worked for seven years within the mandate and competence of the Harmonization Committee to adopt the law. Following its adoption by the Ministry, the law was submitted to the President's Office for approval, when the Advisor to the President on Legal Affairs added his comments on the legislation. This was confirmed by Ms. Randa Karkar- the President's Office- and that the bill was later returned to the Ministry of Justice, and all participating institutions and bodies. The latest development was the formation of a ministerial committee, comprising the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Office of the Chief Justice, and the Fatwa and Legislations Bureau. Now, the technical committee will review the notes on the law that were provided by the President's Legal Adviser.

Meanwhile both Haitham Arar of the General Union of Palestinian Women, and Sabah Salameh from the NGO Forum to Combat Violence against Women confirmed that the demand for the adoption of the law is not a matter of luxury, nor of the application of international conventions, as much as it is a response to the urgent need of our society where the manifestations of violence includes all members of society including persons with disabilities. They also added, that working with the government as the General Union for Palestinian Women and as an NGO Forum that includes numerous civil society organizations working on women's issues in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, came to accelerate the adoption of this law, which led to the development of suggestions submitted to various committees, based on reflection and consensus among the various components of the feminist movement. In this context, preparations are under way to hold a sit-in on July 29, 2019 in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to lobby for the adoption of the law.

MIFTAH's Publications during the first half of 2019

Special studies:

 Procedures and Regulations Manual to Support Local Councils in the Implementation of the Gender Charter.



Regulations to Activate the Institutionalization of the Gender Charter in Local Councils and Regulations Implementation Manual.

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MIFTAH and the Business Women Forum hold Ramadan Bazaar

Based on the strategy of MIFTAH to support and promote women's active and pioneer roles and raise their level of participation within the family and society, coupled with the importance of the impact of providing economic support for Palestinian women and young women especially those steadfast in marginalized areas, MIFTAH and the Business Women Forum organized the Ramadan Bazaar. The two day period bazaar included products and handcrafts, accessories, sweets, fashion, soap, ceramics, paintings, decorations, antiques, gifts and Ramadan pastries and drinks from 60 projects across the West Bank.



MIFTAH, which has been working for the past 11 years on women economic empowerment, was able to reach more than 300 Palestinian women through small income-generating projects. These projects have contributed to positive change and impact on women's reality by empowering them and improving their social and economic realities. The targeted women also achieved successes that contributed to the development of models for women with dependents in marginalized areas suffering from poverty and isolation and continuous violations by the occupation's policies and practices of land confiscation, house demolitions, settlement expansion, arrests and restrictions on citizens and repeated closures.

Demands to reform the Local Elections Law to Promote Real Representation of Women and Youth

MIFTAH, in partnership with a number of human rights and feminist organizations, demanded the Prime Minister to include amendments and reforms to the Local Council Elections Law number (10) of 2005, in line with the new government's intentions to emphasize the principles of equity and justice for Palestinian women and to include the empowerment of Palestinian youth as a priority within the policies of the 18th Government. The demands are based on the provisions of the Palestinian Basic Law and Declaration of Independence, in addition to the recommendations issued by the Palestinian Central Council on the importance of equality and fair representation of women in various institutions by at least 30%. The demands are also in line with the ratification of Palestine of a number of international conventions and treaties, notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservation, and are in keeping with the State of Palestine's obligations before the CEDAW Committee on the importance of introducing amendments and reforms to promote women's political participation on the basis of equality.

The demands were as follows:

First: To uphold the principle of full equality of women's representation in candidacy, and at least a 30% quota as a temporary measure to achieve full equality during periodic electoral cycles.

Second: Maintain the system of proportional representation in the elections of local bodies with a reduction of the threshold to 5% in the Local Councils Elections Law.

Third: Cancel the candidacy age to enhance the access of young groups to local councils, so that the person who has the right to vote is allowed to run, in line with the trends of the majority of the world in this regard.

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MIFTAH Contributes to Amplifying the Voices of Palestinian Women in International Forums

During the first half of 2019, MIFTAH participated in several international forums and meetings, in which it highlighted the reality of Palestinian women under occupation.

MIFTAH participated in the Tunis Forum for Gender Equality in April, represented by Maysoun Qawasmi, who presented an intervention on "The Priorities for Action with International Institutions and Diplomatic Missions in Palestine" to support the Palestinian cause and strengthen solidarity with Palestinian women who are under the longest occupation and its associated oppression. Qawasmi also presented the reality of women's participation in Palestine in decision-making process and the adoption of the women's movement of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Qawasmi also emphasized in her intervention the most important strategies to work on women, peace and security issues, first and foremost ending the occupation and holding it accountable for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people.



MIFTAH also participated in the International Conference "Women between Patriarchy, Colonialism and Occupation" at Al-Najah National University, represented by Tamara Tamimi, who presented a working paper entitled "Protection of Women from Violence in times of Armed Conflict: Palestinian Women as a Case Study." Tamimi presented available protections to civilians from violence within the frameworks of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, women, peace and security agenda and international criminal law. The paper continued to present the most prominent forms of the violence perpetrated by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people as a whole, and its disproportionate impact on Palestinian women.



MIFTAH also participated in several meetings and dialogues with international missions during the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) in New York, represented by Riham Al Faqih. The priority topic of this session focused on social protection systems, opportunities to benefit from public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality purposes. Discussions on the role of Security Council Member States in holding the occupation accountable for its crimes against the Palestinians was discussed, highlighting the lack of services provided to women especially in area "C" of the West Bank.

Tamara Tamimi represented MIFTAH in the international conference organized by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in Geneva entitled "Preservation of the Cultural and Religious Character of Jerusalem." MIFTAH's participation comes within the framework of the "Palestinian Narrative and Political Dialogue" program and in line with its strategic priorities in highlighting violations of international human rights law by the occupying forces against the Palestinian people, especially those that take place in Jerusalem.



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MIFTAH Discusses Constitutional Principles in Palestine

الشعب مصدر السلطات



As part of MIFTAH's efforts to expand community dialogue on constitutional principles in order to strengthen the democratic approach, alongside emphasizing the importance of dialogue and discussion on the values and principles of democracy and ways to achieve them, including freedom, equality, social justice, and respect for pluralism within the Palestinian society, MIFTAH, in cooperation with the Center for Constitutional Studies at An-Najah National University and the Women's Development and Media Association – TAM, initiated the engagement of various social groups in dialogue and discussions on principles of the constitution. This included youth and women, national forces and factions, civil society organizations and universities, across all the governorates of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These efforts culminated in the organization of an expanded workshop aimed at establishing the constitutional principles in Palestine by presenting and discussing the critical review of the Draft Palestinian Constitution of May 2016, in addition to examining international experiences in the development of constitutions. The workshop hosted the international expert Dr. Francesco Biagi, Professor of Constitutional Law, Dr. Sana Al Sarghaly, Director of the Center for Constitutional Studies and Professor of Constitutional Law at An-Najah National University, and Professor Anwar Mansri, a founding member of the Association of Tunisian Women Voters. During the expanded workshop, the comparative experiences of drafting constitutions were discussed while highlighting the constitutional situation in Palestine. After extensive discussion, the participants emphasized the importance of transparency in the release of the constitution. Participants also stressed the need to define the features and characteristics of the polity through the constitution, ensure that the constitutional principles are based on the Declaration of Independence, as well as on the role of the media and the need to ensure national ownership of the constitution, the alignment of the constitution with international conventions, respect for the rights and protection of religious and marginalized minorities, the indivisibility of human rights, the creation of a constitutional culture, and the need for coordination between different viewpoints, in addition to benefiting from the Arab and international experiences on this level.

MIFTAH Continues to Institutionalize

Partnership and Cooperation to Promote Participatory Approach in the Formulation of Fiscal

The Ministry of Social Development represented by Undersecretary Daoud Al-Deek and the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), represented by Youssef Dajani, signed a memorandum of understanding with the view of promoting cooperation. This agreement is in line with the strategic directions and consolidation of efforts between MIFTAH and the Ministry of Social Development, represented in advancing advocacy and lobbying in public policy to ensure justice and equality within the framework of promoting good governance and building state institutions in Palestine.



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MIFTAH Supports the Commitment of Local Government Units to the Provisions of the Gender Charter of Local Councils

In line with MIFTAH's strategic directions that seek to promote the participation of women and youth in policy formulation and decision-making positions in both public and local sectors, and institutionalize the integration of gender issues in local government policies, MIFTAH worked on updating and developing the Gender Charter, which was adopted by the Ministry of Local Governance in 2009-2010. The development came with the view of increasing the Charter's responsiveness towards the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, and ensure that it is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Additionally, a manual of procedures and regulations to facilitate the implementation of the Charter within the work of local councils was developed. These efforts came in partnership with the Gender Forum in Local Governance.



With the view of improving the role of civil society organizations that are members of the Forum to ensure holding local councils accountable to adhere to the Charter, MIFTAH developed a manual of monitoring and evaluation indicators on the performance of local councils on the implementation of the Gender Charter and the identification of stakeholders towards assessing the compliance of local councils with the provisions of the Charter, and clarifying the procedures for assessing the commitment to implement the provisions of the Charter along six main dimensions: governance, management and environmental regulation, planning and development, accountability, transparency, and services. The manual was considered as a means to support the NGOs working in the field, such that it provided a set of standard criteria in the process of assessing and monitoring the commitment of local councils in implementing the Gender Charter and facilitating the process of measuring results. This serves to collect the data needed for the forum's organizations to facilitate necessary intervention.

MIFTAH Publications

MIFTAH believes that political participation can take many forms, including the writing of essays especially by young people. Therefore, MIFTAH decided to devote a corner of its biannual newsletter to publish several articles by young writers.

This issue focuses mainly on the role of the General Union of Palestinian Students during the liberation phase, especially as MIFTAH's strategic directions aim to contribute to expanding youth participation in the public sphere and to support their access to advanced levels in decision-making positions. This takes place through organizing dialogue sessions aimed at activating the General Union of Palestinian Students, in order to persist in and direct national efforts to pressure the factions of the PLO to adopt the attitudes of young people to hold the General Congress of the Union.



General Union of Palestinian Students... Deterioration and Activation Solutions

By: Tahreer Bani Sakher.



General Union of Palestinian Students ...From Contributing to National Liberation to Stagnation

By: Kamal Siyam



Political and Social Marginalization and its Impact on the Attitudes of Young People


By: Rizek Atawneh


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Success Stories

Within the project "Support the Protection of Women", an imam and a preacher share their experience and success story with MIFTAH

 After attending the "Protection of Women" training workshop on reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence, an Imam from Hebron and a preacher from Nablus changed their lessons and sermons to include gender issues between men and women that have been avoided in the past because of their social sensitivity.

 Knowledge about Reproductive Health Strengthens and Protects the Society: Community Leader Jalal Obeido on MIFTAH's Impact: Jalal Obeido was a participant in the "Protection of Women" project training workshop. Obeido emphasized that MIFTAH's impact on his experience as a community leader and activist has been an important turning point in his education and awareness of citizen rights, reproductive health and gender-based violence. Obeid added "I have acquired knowledge and skills on these issues, including on international laws and treaties on reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and international conventions pertaining to addressing violence and discrimination against women."


 MIFTAH's Beit Ijza Women: Accessories and Embroidery Project as an Aspiring Project for Further Economic and Social Empowerment: Five women from the village of Beit Ijza, located northwest of Jerusalem, committed to the project "Small Income Generating Projects for Women in Rural Areas" in the hope that it will help them meet the demands of daily life and help empower them socially, mentally and economically. With MIFTAH providing them with sufficient training and funding to succeed, these women emphasized that the project was a "paradigm shift in our lives" and had a positive psychological, social and economic impact that enabled them to broaden these scope and develop their skills.


Hosted by MIFTAH

MIFTAH publishes interviews with political and prominent personalities to discuss the current developments in the Palestinian political arena and the changes in international political tracks and their impact on the Palestinian cause.

During the first half of 2019, the following interviews were published:

 Dr. Ghassan al-Khatib; Lecturer in Cultural Studies and Contemporary Arab Studies at Birzeit University, discussed the repercussions of recent political developments, including those pertaining to the deal of the century and the Bahrain workshop on the economic dimension of the deal, the possible options for the Palestinian leadership to address these developments, in addition to several developments at the regional and local levels.

 Dr. Ammar Dweik; General Director of The Independent Commission for Human Rights – ICHR, discussed the legitimacy of the decision of the Constitutional Court to dissolve the Palestinian Legislative Council, as well as its decision regarding the supremacy of international conventions and treaties over national legislation in keeping with the national, religious and cultural identity of the Palestinian Arab people.

 Dr. Nasr Abdulkarim; Professor of Finance and Economics at the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the Arab American University in Ramallah, discussed the repercussions of the occupation's decision to retain the clearance revenues, the financial crisis that the Palestinian Authority is suffering of and its impact on the various social groups of the Palestinian society, especially vulnerable and marginalized families who receive monthly allocations from the government.