



The Arab Revolutions: The Present and the Future of Gender Equality

Report from Karama's One-Day Conference at

the 56th annual

Commission on the Status of Women



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Executive Summary

In March 2012, Karama convened a delegation of fifteen women from six Arab countries to attend the fifty-sixth annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting in New York. Coming a year after the Arab Spring and uprisings and with Syria still in turmoil, the delegation, which included members from Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Somalia and Sudan, participated in high-level roundtables and 90 side events by Member States and



UN entities. The event was part of Karama's longstanding commitment to increase the presence of activists and intellectuals from the Arab region at CSW and build bridges between women's rights activists in the Arab world and across the globe.

The week of advocacy culminated in Karama's one-day conference on 2 March 2012, "The Challenges and Prospects of Gender Equality in the Context of the Arab Uprisings," that presented three panels featuring expert presentation by the delegates and other high-level speakers.

The goal of the conference was to move from a situational analysis of the effect of the Arab uprisings on women to a shared vision of how to advance the status and rights of women across the region, particularly in light of recent Islamist electoral victories. The participants agreed on a series of shared analytical ideas and policy recommendations, which are reproduced below, followed by a précis of each of the three panels.

Key Analysis and Recommendations

- ❖ Success for women will come from how well they are organized, and what social and other resources women have. We must use our numbers to organize, to speak loudly, to counter what's happening against women's rights, to reach the political candidates, and to use the media.



- ❖ Poverty and illiteracy are the barriers against women's empowerment. We must reach women wherever they are in rural areas to end poverty and illiteracy.
- ❖ We need to understand the new dynamics and build bridges between the different players, stakeholders, youth, and progressive men, all who are for human rights, equality, justice, and freedom, and build good connections with men and women from different perspectives and horizons, as well as accommodate more people around women's rights and gender issues. We have to adapt our language, strategies, tools, and tactics according to targeted populations needs and concerns and create the change we aspire to achieve.
- ❖ We should examine and emulate each other's achievements lobbying for equality in the new constitutions, such as Article 19 in Morocco and the electoral law in Libya. We must assess if current governments are taking us away from gender mainstreaming and toward a sidelined, "women-in-development" approach and work hard to promote women's rights and gender mainstreaming in these contexts.
- ❖ Women are central to alleviating the deep economic crisis afflicting the region and this will determine whether any consolidation or progress toward political liberalization can be achieved. Since Arab women have been mobilized as a central part of the labor force and the public sphere for over 4 decades now their role in any economic programs is central. Women's economic empowerment must be emphasized in the next phase of programs, campaigns, reforms, and trainings.
- ❖ Women should not hold themselves to the standard of repressive countries, but rather to the most progressive countries on women's rights issues. We must emphasize human rights and equality in the constitutions, and permit no forms of discrimination. Advocating for the supremacy of ratified international conventions (such as CEDAW) over national law in the constitutions is one way.
- ❖ We must realize that Islamic trend movements are not uniform when it comes to their conceptions and discourse of women's rights. Let us also convince the Islamist parties that women's rights and equality will benefit them and their base.





- ❖ Rather than blaming local political parties for excluding women, we should look at ourselves and rise to a higher standard. We must involve men in our discussions, meetings, and campaigns, to increase their political support for our goals for constitutional reform and positive measures to increase women's political representation.
- ❖ Seek parity for women not only in parliaments but in political parties, judiciary, constitutional courts, and on district councils.
- ❖ The feminist movement must lobby the assembly to integrate amendments and provisions that promote gender equality and incorporate gender-mainstreaming indicators in the constitution. Women must work hard to organize themselves and develop strategies to claim their rights.
- ❖ There should be observatories as an innovative mechanism that will monitor the parliaments, the implementation of the new laws and provisions, and which will assess the work of the new elected governments on women's issues and rights.
- ❖ 1325 is an extremely useful tool for lobbying at the international levels, and national action plans must be written with the participation of all stakeholders. We have to work with men on peace and reconciliation and promotion of gender equality.
- ❖ 1325 and other similar international human rights/women's rights mechanisms could initiate the development of a new conception of "peace" that envisions, not only the absence of conflict, but the absence of genocide and crimes against humanity. For women as well as girls, peace is a state that must be constantly negotiated and upheld even during periods of non-armed conflict instability
- ❖ 1325 and the subsequently related Security Council Resolution 1820, as well as resolutions 1612, 1882, 1888, 1889 and 1960, are not well disseminated at the national level. More awareness-raising about their contents and goals is necessary.
- ❖ 1325 and other similar international human rights/women's rights mechanisms have suggested a new conception of "peace" not as an absence of conflict, but as something that must be constantly negotiated and upheld even during periods of stability
- ❖ Allocation of sufficient funds by governments and international bodies is highly recommended for implementation of 1325.
- ❖ Legal reform is required for successful implementation of UN SCR 1325 and related resolutions.



Panel 1: Are Arab Women Shaping the Future after the Arab Spring?

Welcome & Convocation

Hibaaq Osman (Somalia),

Founder and CEO of Karama, called the session to order and welcomed participants from all around the Middle East and North Africa who had gathered in New York to attend the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Ms. Osman reiterated that the main objective of the one-day conference at CSW will be, rather than lamenting the lack of adequate representation of women from the Arab region at CSW, to hold an alternate event to bring together the top minds on the Arab spring to share their insights on the trends shaping the region. Hibaaq extended her thanks to Karama's supporters and donors, and especially for the confidence shown from Karama's members and mentors, so many of whom said "of course I will be there." Ms. Osman explained that the overall theme of the conference would be to move from a situational analysis, to an identification and exploration of the opportunities facing women after the Arab spring.



The Current Situation for Arab Women: Her Excellency, Dr.Mervat Tallawy (Egypt)

The Arab uprisings, asserted Dr. Tallawy, have confirmed that there is in fact a "magic link" across the region, but Arab leaders never realized or acknowledged it. So many "paper summits" were never translated into action. This link underlines the need for Arab NGOs to continue meeting and coordinating with each other for the benefit of the wider region. Dr. Tallawy's talk comprised a country-by-country overview of the impact of the Arab Spring on women in the region.

TUNISIA: Despite the electoral dominance of Islamist candidates, Tunisia's interim government set a strong quota for women's representation at no less than 30% of representatives and 50% of electoral lists; it lifted all reservations on CEDAW, and Rashid al-Ganoushi declared that women's rights will be enforced and enhanced.



LIBYA: Despite the likely success of the Islamist trend, male and female candidates are required to alternate on party lists, a measure that guarantees up to 40 seats for women in parliament. On the other hand, the NTC head Mustafa Abdel Jalil, in his first official speech, announced an end to the polygamy ban, which was heavily reported in international media.

YEMEN: Tawakol Karman from the Muslim Brotherhood had a very energetic and positive role in Yemen's revolution. Called the "Mother of the Revolution," Karman has been very forceful and persistent in the demonstrations despite insistence on separate male and female protests. Presenting her with the Nobel Prize was a great honor and we should support her as a symbol of the whole community.

MOROCCO: There has not been a revolution, but a silent revolution; article 19 of the new Constitution is a model for the new Egyptian Constitution, and there are encouraging efforts to achieve greater gender parity in political life. Morocco has also lifted CEDAW reservations and promulgated an advanced family law.

EGYPT: Despite historical precedents of women's participation, women were excluded after the revolution, and lacked representation in the constitutional committee. There was no female inclusion on a key SCAF advisory board, and only one female minister remains in power, who is a Mubarak hold-over. The quota for women in politics was abolished, and there is a strong need to represent women in the upcoming election. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis resisted putting women on party lists, in some cases putting a flower symbol in place of a woman's name. Compared to other Arab states, the situation for women is worse in Egypt because of high rates of poverty and illiteracy, which should be addressed - particularly in rural areas and urban slums. There are many possible projects that can move in the right direction, such as microcredit banks for rural women, and investments in rural infrastructure.

No Retreat after the Revolution: Egyptian Women Fighting for their Rights, Dr. Hoda Badran (Egypt)

It is clear that during the revolution, Dr Badran argued, that women were badly needed, but were soon after excluded from decision-making. The most conservative and patriarchal groups in society soon found themselves in positions of power, so women were not chosen.

The solution, Dr. Badran argued, was not to attempt to address this situation from a position of weakness but rather from one of strength. The women's movement must build on power, not just in terms of raw numbers, but in terms of organization, cultural and social resources. A major hurdle is the atomization of feminist NGOs, in particular the divisions between the human rights, development and



charity organizations. In emphasizing the need to unify the women's movement's efforts, Dr. Badran emphasized: "Unless we are organized our numbers do not help us."

Dr. Badran concluded her presentation by announcing the re-launching of the Egyptian Feminist Union (established 1923), a coalition of 16 feminist NGOs coming together to make statements, use media, promote female political leaders, collect signatures, and act as one to promote Egyptian women's rights. She announced that the initial National Convention was attended by over 3,000 civil society members, and the group will be announcing new activities shortly.

Women and Youth: A Capable Force for Building the New Libya, Dr. Farida Allaghi (Libya)

Dr. Allaghi began by echoing the sentiments of Dr. Hoda Badran, and lamenting the fact that, despite there being so many brilliant minds in the Arab world, that there remains such a high degree of atomization between various nations, individuals, and groups - between which bridges have not yet been built.

"I have no more tolerance for the same old statements and reports - enough!" she exclaimed. "I have been involved in the Libyan opposition for years, but now we need to ask new hard questions of the international community, conferences, the Arab League, and the UN so that we can make the big leap forward that we need," she said.

Dr. Allaghi noted that no one in the world could have forecast the revolution, and argued that now it is time for the West to take responsibility for the agony the Arab region has suffered under for 40 years. The UN and other multilateral organizations have been saying for years, Dr. Allaghi noted, that they will work with women, but in practice this has been "remote control" activism from the luxury of five star hotels.

The main themes of the Libyan revolution, Dr. Allaghi explained, are dignity, equality and honor. And Libyans from around the country have been rallying to join over 80 newly-formed NGOs, who have a strong connection with the transitional government. Yet, Dr. Allaghi cautioned, it is important to nominate the right women to leadership roles; there is a danger of nominating women who will not stand up for women's rights, and leave society no better off than it is now. But we are now discovering, she said, how many smart young Libyans are connecting with each other on their own volition, and making a difference.

Dr. Allaghi cautioned against over-optimistic expectations and projections: "Of course we are not going to fix Libya in four months," she quipped, arguing that the West should now stay out of Libyan politics since they now have their own domestic crises to attend to. "Business, politics, the sciences" are the



three levers of power that women must grab hold of, Dr. Allaghi stated, if they are to truly succeed in the world of domestic and international politics.

"Half of my family is dead, and we are devastated," she said. "We will not be trapped in tokenism, and we must not let the Islamic trend hijack the hope of the new generation and the hope of the Arab people; we are working hand in hand and we are optimistic," she concluded.

The Politics of Funding Women's Rights in the Arab Region: Before and After the Revolutions, Dr. Fatima Khafagy (Egypt)

Dr. Fatima's presentation centered on the work of a European Commission study done in Brussels on all projects greater than \$100,000 or lasting between two and three years conducted between 2007 and 2010. It is astonishing, she noted, that there is no existing central database of these projects, except for those in Palestine.

Among the key observations of the study are that it is very difficult to show results and appreciable impact for short duration projects. Another commonality among the projects was very weak monitoring and evaluation. The main donors in the space were the European Community, particularly the Spanish Aid Agency.

In Lebanon and Syria, Dr. Khafagy noted, large portions of the funding were allocated to government programs, while other countries had more direct relations with civil society organizations. Most projects focused on violence against women and women's political participation. Another commonality among the programs was an almost exclusive focus on the capital city, with very low attention to rural women. Main activities included awareness raising, training, and advocacy, again with low monitoring & evaluation oversight. Dr. Khafagy also noted that very little attention in these programs was devoted to refugees or women prisoners.

After the Arab spring, Dr. Khafagy posited the key questions as "how to deal with Islamic regimes." The major issue is are we just delivering services to women, or are we truly training and empowering them to make the change they seek in their politics and societies? We know that civil society is fighting now in revolutionary countries; the need now is to address the position of women in society also, she argued.

Discussion and Key Takeaways

- Raghida Dergham of *al-Hayat* newspaper observed that Dr. Tallawy was looking at the glass "half full" but that politicians in the region are talking the talk but not walking the walk when it



comes to women's inclusion, and that much more work is needed before women are empowered as full decision makers on political and economic issues.

- Dergham added that there must be no "fear of multiple efforts" and that there are too few women working on these issues. She emphasized that 2012-13 is the crucial time to make a difference
- An audience member posed the question regarding Dr. Khafagy's presentation as to what conditions to put on funding for women's empowerment programs, given the issues identified in her presentation.
- Dr. Allaghi stressed the need to motivate and involve men in the movement for women's rights, and noted the high numbers of men attending conferences on these issues "90% of our agenda is similar" she argued.
- Dr. Badran commented on the need for new concepts and methodologies to advance women's rights, noting that "CEDAW and other concepts sound foreign," whereas Islamists have found much success mixing social services with political messages; this rethink should happen on a regional basis
- Dr. Khafagy countered, arguing that provision of basic services is not the right way to empower women; and that an integrated approach is needed across social, political and economic spheres.





Panel 2 – Striving for New Constitutional Rights in the Context of Islamist Electoral Victories: Rule of Law, Women’s Rights, and the Role of Political Parties

Dr. Khalid Medani (Sudan), Assistant Professor of Political Science and Islamic Studies at McGill University and a scholar on Islamic and ethnic politics in Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia, opened the session by describing some of the tensions within the Islamist parties’ divergent approaches to women’s rights, which will become more prominent in the constitutional reform debates:

A younger generation in the Muslim Brotherhood seeks greater decision-making roles for women, but are finding themselves at odds with the older generation’s paternalistic attitudes toward women. *Fiqh* is Islamic jurisprudence that can be open to change while *Shari'a* is considered sacred and immutable; the Islamic feminists say that *talaq* is not *Shari'a* but *fiqh* and thus subject to interpretation and rulings. [*Talaq* is the much easier procedure for men to initiate divorce as opposed to the process for women, called *khul'*].

The Tunisian Revolution: Which Reforms Are Needed? Boutheina Gribaa (Tunisia)

Speaking about reforms sought by women since Tunisia’s revolution, Boutheina Gribaa of CAWTAR focused on the constitutional process currently taking shape in her country right now. Ms. Gribaa explained, “Women’s demands are for a gender-equal document that speaks to all women and men on an equal basis, a constitution that will prohibit any barrier to women’s exercise of their equal rights.”

Today 41 of Tunisia’s 49 female parliamentarians (women are 22.6% of the total deputies) represent the Islamist party, Ennahda. Because Islamist women may not necessarily be allies for equality reforms in the constitution, she cautioned that it will be important for women’s rights activists to engage male parliamentarians to stand with women “to take down barriers to equality.”

The reforms and rights being pursued in the development of the new constitution include:

- Equality legislation being drafted in line with CEDAW Convention
- Full participation of women and men guaranteed in all aspects of Tunisian life
- Women and men equal under the law
- Gender mainstreaming in all policies and government sectors

The Observatory of Arab Women’s Rights, Amira Yahyaoui (Tunisia)

Offering a direct political perspective from Tunisia was Amira Yahyaoui, who ran for parliament in 2011 as the head of an independent youth list of candidates. She now leads the Tunisian Parliamentary



Observatory, a new NGO monitoring the parliamentary assembly and the deputies as they shape the new constitution.

Although Tunisia's 1956 personal status code has long been considered one of the most progressive in the region, it does not permit Muslim Tunisian women to marry non-Muslim men nor does it guarantee equality between daughters' and sons' inheritance.

Ms. Yahyoui advocates for a constitution that integrates human rights:

- Respecting international laws and conventions (i.e. CEDAW)
- Guaranteeing equality between women and men, and empowerment of civil society
- Is gender-sensitive and includes rights of women

She echoed the call for expanding women's rights activists' support base to men, and universalizing the concept of human rights and women's rights. One strategy she urged is to persuade Islamists that putting women's rights in the constitution will benefit them as well.

If Tunisia's new constitution is strong, it will set a strong precedent for the rest of the region, Ms. Yahyoui asserted: "We must set our standard by the progressive countries and not the regressive ones."

Women's Rights in New and Existing Constitutions, Saadia Wadah (Morocco)

In July 2011, Morocco became the first to complete its constitutional reform since the Arab Spring began. To ensure women's rights were among the reforms proposed by the constitutional committee, the women's movement formed a coalition called the Feminist Spring for Equality and Democracy and joined forces with the youth's February 21 Coalition. Attorney Saadia Wadah, member of the Executive Board of the Moroccan Association for Combating Violence Against Women, shared the strategies, successes, and concerns from the campaign.

For the first time in Morocco's history, civil society members had the chance in 2011 to make statements to the constitutional committee, which included a female legal scholar on constitutional affairs among its ranks. This allowed the Feminist Spring for Democracy and Equality to present its demands directly and publicly to the constitutional committee.

Gender-equality reforms were approved in the constitutional referendum on 1 July 2011, and these included:

- National laws will be subject to international laws and treaties (CEDAW)
- Article 19: women are guaranteed social, cultural, and environmental equality with men; previously the constitution granted women only political equality
- A government institution will be established to oversee compliance with gender equality and elimination of discrimination

Other reforms sought and still pending attainment are:



- Positive measures to fulfill parity in the legislature and in the Cabinet
- Criminalization of VAW, as proposed and drafted by other coalitions
- Civil society should be mentioned in the constitution, not just political parties
- Institute a quota for women judges to be represented in the judiciary and in the constitutional court
- full citizenship and parity for women

Ms. Wadah emphasized the need for the constitution and legislation to address citizenship to males and females explicitly, not just to males. A new coalition called Equality Today and Not Tomorrow has been formed to ensure the government establishes its monitoring body and amends the legal code in line with the constitution and international conventions.

The Key Players: Political Parties and their Relationship with Women, Fatima Outaleb (Morocco)

Morocco has been hailed by many for the success of its quota for women in the national and district elections, which brought the level up from 2 women in parliament to 35 women elected in 2002, approximately 10.8% of the seats. Yet veteran activist Fatima Outaleb (Morocco) of the Union de l'Action Feminine spoke candidly about the flaws in these measures, and lamented that “we have failed in 2011 in reforming the quota system and the national list.”

The original electoral quota was never a law; it was a pledge signed by the political parties in 2002 to ensure a national list for women which guaranteed 10% or 30 of the parliamentary seats. However, by turning the quota over to parties, the women's lobby had given the male leaders of the parties the opportunity to decide which women would be selected to run, in many cases eliminating the gender equality activists. This created divisions and disenchantment among members in the women's branches who had sought to participate meaningfully and enter politics themselves. Women could also run in the open races from provinces for the remaining seats, which resulted in 5 additional female representatives in 2002 and 4 in 2007. In 2007, seven women were appointed Ministers in the national government, a new high.

After the Arab spring in 2011, the women's lobby advocated intensely for applying the new constitutional guarantee of gender parity to parliamentary elections and reforming the positive measures up to at least 30% of the seats. Instead, the Ministry of Interior proposed a national list quota of 90 seats (22% of 395) *to be shared with young men*: 45 seats for women and 45 for young men, giving each approximately 11% representation.

Although the women's rights activists and female MPs fought this proposal, their toughest resistance came from the political parties, which simply stated that “the parity given in the constitution cannot be implemented now.” Ms. Outaleb realized that the women's lobby had not adequately cultivated political parties to increase their recruitment of women, change their patriarchal mindsets, and open up



access for women to their leadership. When the time came for reforming the quota, the women's lobby lacked the high-level support to win it on their terms.

Ultimately, the women's lobby won a small gain in the national list in which 60 seats were allotted for women and 35 for young men. From the 2011 election results, women now hold 66 or 16.5% of parliamentary seats, but immediately encountered another setback when only one woman was appointed as a Minister in the new Cabinet.

"The government apologized and promised to institutionalize affirmative action to ensure a better representation of women in all decision making spheres," reported Ms. Outaleb, but "we have to blame ourselves first—we close ourselves into project management and competitions for funds instead of projects that aim to change the patriarchal attitudes of society." She continued, "We have not done what we need to do to create change and influence," neither at the elite level nor at the base. "A crisis of leadership and egos has also contributed to our divisions as a women's movement, and this impacted our campaigns and results concerning different issues, namely quotas, as we fought for 30% and got only 12%."

Egyptian Women and the Constitution, Azza Kamel (Egypt)

"One year ago I was in Tahrir along with the Islamists, and we were all together; now Egyptian women are trying to prevent the stealing of the revolution," observed Azza Kamel (Egypt).

Egyptian women saw their quota eliminated by the post-Mubarak military government; as a result, female representation in parliament dropped dramatically, falling from 12% in 2010 to 1.6% after 2011's elections. Even more alarmingly, the new parliament is dominated by Islamist parties seeking to revoke hard won gains in women's rights from the past 20 years.

Dr. Kamel emphatically declared, "women are nearly 51% of the population—we have to raise our ceiling and our demand to 50% representation in the constitutional committee, and we must talk about a constitution that does not allow discrimination on any basis." The director of Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT), Dr. Kamel presented talking points for activists to seek women's equal representation in the constitutional committee and the rights it will enshrine:

- We are a modern state, a democratic state; the state is created by men and women, and the constitution should not be written only by men
- The revolution's call was for Citizenship, Dignity, and Equality
- There should be no discrimination on any basis
- National law should respect and be based on international conventions that Egypt has already ratified, especially CEDAW

Dr. Kamel shared the agenda that the women's lobby in Egypt will present to the constitutional committee for the new constitution's articles and reforms:



- Equality: men and women shall be equal under the law
- Positive measures: the government shall adhere to CEDAW standards, and protect women's full participation in all spheres
- Right to political participation and elections: candidate lists will alternate male and female names
- Cultural, economic, and social equality: women should have full access to and participation in employment, health, sports, insurance, and all aspects to live a free life
- Freedom of expression
- Criminalizing domestic violence and all forms of violence and discrimination against women
- Ensuring reproductive rights and safe maternal health

Group Discussion of the Islamist Parties and Islamic Feminism

The session culminated in a discussion of the strategies and concerns for engagement with the Islamist parties and their female representatives. The moderator Dr. Khaled Medani mentioned that Islamic feminism merits dialogue and debate as to whether it is a legitimate term.

Ms. Yahyoui rejected the suggestion from an audience member from Sudan that the Islamist parties' electoral victory was a public mandate for legislating Shari'a: "In the revolution the people asked for freedom, dignity, and justice [Horiya, Karama and Ad'ala]—never for Shari'a. Ennahda did not 'win'—they only got 39% of the votes. To run the government, they needed CPR and Ettakatol [centre-left parties] as coalition partners. More than 50% will vote against Shari'a – that's for sure. When we have a referendum on Shari'a, it will be voted down." Her compatriot Boutheina Gribaa asserted that Ennahda was elected simply as the one alternative to the other more conservative parties.

Dr. Farida Allaghi of Libya advocated that secular women try to be open to inviting women wearing scarves into their campaigns: "Some of the Islamist women are not closed in their minds but are feminist. They cannot shut us out of a democracy, nor can we shut them out of democracy, or else we become dictators on each side." Amira Yahyoui acknowledged that "we as Arab women need to change the discourse on women's rights in the Arab world—in Tunisia it was stereotyped as being the right to wear a bikini or to drink alcohol, and this has been very damaging."

Several acknowledged that while the women's lobby has been focused on legal rights and advocacy, the Islamists stepped in to provide charitable services to the poor, winning the support of many grassroots women and communities this way. This was exacerbated, said Samia al Hashmi of Sudan, by donors ceasing their support of services that women's organizations have provided, even though these were essential.

Others countered that the Islamist parties' discourse is deliberate, part of their political game to win power. Azza Kamel of Egypt reminded the audience that members of the Salafi and Muslim Brotherhood groups used the technique of calling people an infidel if they didn't vote for the FJP (Muslim Brotherhood) or al-Nour (Salafi) party. And Egypt's Taqadom Ishtiraki party did not appoint any women



to its candidate lists, despite the ruling that at least one woman must be named on each party list of 8 candidates.

Saadia Wadah, Morocco, pointedly observed, “Regarding conflict with Islamists, does it ever come up on any issue other than women? We are in a battle for democracy, citizenship, equality, and our struggle for these rights are not just for women only.”





Panel 3—Women, Peace, and Security: Demanding Accountability for Implementing Resolution 1325 and 1820 in the Arab Region

Anne Marie Goetz (Canada) UN Women's Chief Advisor for Governance, Peace, and Security set the context with a reminder that UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 form the link between gender equality, peace, and conflict prevention. She opened this session cautioning what is lost when Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are not implemented: "The failure to hear women's voices when we resolve conflicts is devastating when we want to build peace and address rights violations."

Lobbying for Women's Inclusion and Full Participation, **Elisabeth Van Der Steenhoven (The Netherlands)**

Ms. Elisabeth Van Der Steenhoven, Director of WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform, began by describing how Resolution 1325 opens new opportunities for national and international lobbying for women, conferring the right for women to participate in political decision-making at all levels, and requiring all countries to write a national action plan documenting their plans for the inclusion of women in decision-making roles.

She discussed the drafting process for the Dutch National Action Plan on 1325, which was written with full consultation of civil society. The benefit of this approach, she argued, is that it allows non-governmental actors to get involved, thus widening the base of women's rights issues and those engaged in them.

In a time of global financial worries, Ms. Steenhoven asserted, there are significant opportunities for widening international coalitions on women's rights to deal with financial stress by consolidating forces and pooling resources. Furthermore, the women's rights issues can contribute to a wider discourse on human security (freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom to speak, freedom to act on one's behalf).

There is no longer any question about the importance of women's access to the highest level of leadership, transformative justice, and gender training before the start of policymaking and interventions - an important effect of the widening discourse around UNSCR 1325.

The international lobbying possibilities on 1325 are significant, and have only increased in importance due to the factors mentioned above. The key opportunities include sharing lessons learned and widening international support for women's leadership as a goal of National 1325 Action Plans. The challenges with respect to 1325 include finding out when government negotiations and consultations are happening, and making it about more than just women's "participation," but rather leadership in theory and practice.



Implementing 1325/1820: From Theory to Practice, Patricia Sellers (USA)

Dr. Sellers began by outlining the significance of Resolutions 1325 and 1820, particularly in that they put women and children in the context of security and peace. Dr. Sellers argued that the true significance of 1325 is that it gave birth to mechanisms with teeth that can ultimately lead to UNSC sanctions. The strength of 1325 can be amplified when it is linked to other legal instruments, for example the exclusion of sexual violence from conflict-ending amnesty agreements, and within DPKO peacekeeping regulations. Most importantly, however, is the symbolic power of 1325 as a “watershed” moment that injected women’s issues into the normative discourse of conflict and peacekeeping operations. The follow-on resolution, 1612 on Children and Armed Conflict, added more teeth to the norms established by 1325 in that it exposed state parties as well as non state parties to possible sanctions for violation.

Dr. Sellers advocated for a more expansive definition of the concept of “peace” to include not just the absence of armed conflict, but also the positive action of preventing armed conflict from ever starting. That is, peace is not just the absence of conflict but a positive state that must be negotiated and upheld when there are not periods of direct armed conflict.

The Role of Civil Society in Applying 1325 and 1820, Samia Al-Hashemi (Sudan)

“It is more dangerous to be a woman in wartime than to be a soldier,” reported Ms. Al-Hashemi, noting the severe gender disparities that exist across all levels of Sudanese society. In the realm of literacy 48% of Sudanese women are illiterate, in comparison to just 12% of men, and the Gender Inequality Index in Sudan is high, at .708.

Civil Society, explained Ms. Hashemi is distinguished by a series of principles. It is inclusive, giving space to political parties, educational institutions, media organizations, trade unions, CSOs, and host of other groups. It is participatory, responding to political social and economic processes, and engages youth women and the elderly. Civil society is also representative of ethnic, religious and geographical affiliations and works from a democratic ethos. The current environment in Sudan poses significant challenges for civil society, in particular:

- Registration restrictions by the Sudanese government
- Restriction on the ability to work on human rights and political issues
- Limitations on the ability to move freely around the country
- Limitations on funding and institutional capacity to deliver services

In this context, resolutions 1325 and 1820 pose a real challenge: governments have said that they pose a challenge to national sovereignty, and NGOs need some sense of commitment to the resolutions by the



government. At the same time, civil society organizations feel helpless as governments are ignoring their commitments to the resolutions.

Timeline of Actions by Sudanese Civil Society on 1325

- 2005: Civil society first intervention; Orientation sessions conducted by 5 NGOs including Women Union
- 2007: 1325 Operation (Swedish) operated in Sudan
- 2008: 10 NGOs including southern NGOs were trained on 1325
- 2008: 1325 Network established to implement, monitor and assess progress of 1325/1820
- 2008/09: Women of Darfur joined the process, mandating peace talk with 1325/1820
- 2010: 1325 network conducted trainings: Nuba, Darfur and Khartoum
- 2011: SuWEP movement adopted 1325 to orient membership and build implementation strategies
- 2011: 1325 Network members attended a seminar in Stockholm with women from post conflict area
- At present 1325 network and SuWEP joined activities

Despite the commitment of civil society, Ms. Al-Hashemi concluded, the effects of 1325 are limited to date in Sudan because of government resistance and absence of a concrete government action plan. A true legal reform movement and a more robust legal framework are needed to move towards a complete implementation of 1325 and 1820 in Sudan.

How to Leverage 1325 and 1820 for the Advancement of Women, Jetteke Van Der Schatte Olivier (The Netherlands)

Ms. Oliver opened her talk by inviting participants to stand up, close their eyes, and picture their memories of watching images of the Arab Spring on television and other media. In order for Arab women to materialize the rights enshrined in CEDAW and other international human rights conventions Ms. Oliver argued that these legitimate claims must be “sold,” or framed in such a way as to incentivize policy changes.



The way the civilians in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have claimed their rights and stood up against dictators has changed the geopolitical spectrum profoundly, she argued. In the meantime, it has created huge opportunities for the advancement of women's rights in all aspects of Arab life.

On the other hand, history has shown the potential backlash. Just think of Iran. Last year's Iranian civil society representatives were imprisoned after their return from the SCW, which indicates what is at stake too. Therefore, we must NOW prevent what went wrong in other states, she argued.

Now, the international community is willing to support the struggle for equal rights and gender equality in the MENA region, she declared. In the Netherlands when we talk about the role of women in politics, especially in post conflict situations where resolution 1325 is applicable, we use the words: smart economics, smart security, smart politics.

For example, the Dutch minister of MFA has declared that political participation of women on the MENA region is a priority and I will focus on putting it higher on the political agenda in the EU. "So please send me your information, demands and we can put them on the European Agenda" she encouraged. Yet international solidarity alone is not enough, given the fierce opposition Arab women are facing. That is where international NGOs can step in.

The EU works with the principle "more is more and less is less;" if human rights, including women rights, are not respected the Arab governments will receive less funding. So your legitimate claim for equal rights can have financial repercussions. Let's all advocate, she argued, for the implementation of equal rights for Arab women in all relevant political arenas, enabling these Arab women to become role models in the field of politics, economics and security in order to sustain the picture of strong, powerful Arab women.

"The Role of Men in the Equation of Gender Equality, Ghida Anani (Lebanon)

International Women's Day comes today in a time of transition, Ms Anani declared.. There is a revolutionary spirit infused in this day. And it reminds us that our struggles remain highly politicized and multi-dimensional. And it is only through viewing our work in its countless dimensions that we stand a chance of success.

So what of the Arab world, a region that has always highly politicized women's issues, intertwining them with nationalist and religious struggles? What dimensions can we use here to generate the change we seek?

Engaging men lead to strengthening the Women's Empowerment Movement by decreasing the resistance of men, while simultaneously gaining their support.



We need to liberate ourselves of outdated stereotypes if we are to understand the dimensions that animate our struggle. We fought to level the playing field – and we are still fighting - but we have also come to realize that we cannot do it without the support of men – as partners, advocates, and champions.

There are dynamic women and men working at the forefront of this peaceful battle, and many organizations that are supporting them; organizations that embrace the belief that human security involves engaging with men. In the Arab world, this is a wellspring of untapped energy that can bring about positive sustainable change.

A global case has been made for working with men. There are strong movements in this direction, and experiences we can learn from. But the movement must be home-grown. Arab men have the capacity to understand that socially-constructed definitions of being a man only exist in a certain time, in a certain culture, in a certain context. And this is the time for change.

Arab men also see that they can be champions for women's empowerment – or they can be obstacles. The former liberates them, and the latter will continue to bind them. Historically, men are the ones with power. This is a global truth. But power can be shared. It is not a zero-sum game. There is room for all of us.

Engagement with men usually progresses through five phases. It began with near neglect, where we only saw men as perpetrators, and therefore women as victims. Too narrow a view and we all suffered from it, she argued. Moving to the second phase, we exposed our previous neglect, but still only saw men as obstacles to women's development. This was still insufficient. Slowly, we began to engage men only to advance women's interests. This fails to promote a human security perspective because it only allows for select individuals to benefit. We then evolved and began to see those men who are advocates and supporters of women's issues. We viewed these men as exceptions and anomalies. This still falls short of our goal to achieve gender equality – in the robust sense of the term, Anani argued.

When we pave the way for men and women to work together in the new Arab world, we come full circle, expanding the dimensions of International Women's Day to be a peaceful revolution for us all and let us not forget that after all gender stresses differences that are few and ignores similarities that are many.

Discussion and Key Takeaways

- “Don’t wait to be asked,” reminded an audience member, emphasizing the need to take initiative and actively move to influence events in the region
- Saadia Wadah of Morocco posed the question: “How can we involve women in the reconciliation process?”



- Another participant asked “How do we address unemployment and underemployment, and how men are reacting to that, how women are marrying late, and how that can be the site of where crisis can be but also progress?”
- Ghida Anani remarked that one consideration is that religious leaders get paid in their religious courts for family cases, which is why they oppose putting VAW under the civil code. Also, to initiate a divorce requires 4000 dollars, so the religious leaders’ objection is more about money than his morals
- What can be done to support peace coalitions and to support people going through conflict, and to be prepared in the case of Syria to have women represented asap in the conflict resolution and transitional government and justice?

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