



## What about my children?

*Address by Karama Jordan Country Director Amneh Helweh to the Jordanian Parliament*

*Mother's Day, March 21, 2001*

Respected Representatives,

First, permit me to express my happiness that the women of Jordan have this historic opportunity to meet with the representatives of the Jordanian people to present this very important proposal – one that is significant not only for women, but for every Jordanian from the perspectives of citizenship, justice, and equality.

This year, Mothers Day comes at a time of great change in the Arab world, a time when revolutions have affected several countries, and brought with them the great hopes of peoples made weary by oppression and poverty. It is a time when the people have revolted to break the cycle of repression and deference to authoritarianism that has violated all limits, discriminated, squandered riches, and monopolized political power.

As Jordanian women, as members of movements calling for political and legal reform, based on women's participation in ongoing national dialogues – both as a topic and a participant – and in observance of the holidays of Women's Day and Karama Day, we request that the respected Parliament enact the calls of Jordanian women to amend and enforce the nationality and personal status laws to conform to international agreements, particularly the Convention on Ending all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This reform should guarantee the constitutional rights of Jordanian women, and create a democratic society protected from all forms of discrimination and violence, one based on equal rights, citizenship, and preservation of dignity of all, both men and women.

Dignity is indivisible; women's dignity is the dignity of the homeland. Thus, how is it possible to honor women and mothers on their holiday while at the same time depriving them of their principle rights in raising children and providing them security and dignified lives?

Isn't it true that women are the earth? They are the elements... the cells of our bodies were conceived in their wombs.

These are the questions we place before you, Members of Parliament, who have the ability to legislate in the name of the society that elected you, women and men alike.

Isn't the mother the first school that teaches us love of homeland? So how, then, can she be our school without being a part of the homeland?

So let us add our voice to the voices of all Jordanian women when they ask : "What about my children?"

This is the question we put before you. Will anyone respond?