

Biannual MIFTAH Newsletter - Fourth Edition (July - December 2018)

MIFTAH organizes its annual camp for young leaders



As part of its “Youth Empowerment” Program, MIFTAH concluded the activities of its annual winter camp for 2018. The camp brought together members of MIFTAH Youth Network and representatives of the Palestinian Students' Union and the Student Councils. The activities of the camp focused on the review of the Youth Political Agenda and the preparation of an action plan for the Youth Empowerment Program covering the next two years. The action plan included in-

MIFTAH's fourth biannual 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.

terventions that feed into MIFTAH's strategic priorities in empowering youth leadership capacities towards participating in decision-making positions, as well as integrating them in policy formulation processes with the view of increasing its responsiveness to their needs. Moreover, the action plan focused on promoting the use of the Youth Political Agenda as a framework for the general principles in the work of student blocs inside Palestinian universities, as well as target student union councils through the development of a consensual lobbying plan with the view of activating the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), as a unifying framework to advance youth representation within the Palestinian polity and particularly in the Palestinian Liberation Organization. The conference also fostered the start of dialogue between student blocs on one side and decision-making bodies inside Palestinian political parties, on the other; this dialogue is based on the perspective of activating democratic values and means in renewing the legitimacy of leadership bodies within political parties, as well as ensuring representation of youth and women inside these bodies in order to promote the participation of various social components, and address exclusion and discrimination.

Following the conference, a session that brought together representatives of Palestinian political parties and factions convened to discuss means to revive GUPS. Additionally, the session included the presentation of proposals to enrich interventions that seek to activate the union and ensure accelerating the responsiveness of stakeholders to set a date to convene the general congress of the Union in addition to setting a timeframe to complete the preparations to hold the conference, integrate proposed amendments on the constitution of the Union.

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

- * **Dr. Omar Rahhal:** Director of the Human Rights And Democracy Media Center 'Shams': on civic peace and the rule of law in light of the growing phenomenon of violence and high crime rates, including murder and its repercussions on the Palestinian society and social fabric.
- * **Mr. Sami Mshasha:** UNRWA Spokesperson, Public Relations and Communications Director, spoke about the financial pressures that are guiding UNRWA's work after the US decision to halt funding.
- * **Dr. Huneida Ghanem:** political and social science expert, researcher and director of Madar Center for Israeli Studies, spoke about the nation-state law and its implications for the national rights of the Palestinian people.

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Young Human Rights Defenders Network Commences in Monitoring and Documenting Violations in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Gaza

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy “MIFTAH” concluded the preparation phase of creating, empowering, and enabling the Young Human Rights Defenders Network. This concludes a series of collective efforts in mobilizing and building the capacities of the members of the Youth Network, identifying the topics that the interventions will focus on, developing the tools that would enable the youth defenders to monitor and document violations of these rights, and identifying the host organizations as a strategic partner in the proposed interventions to be implemented within the next two years. Within this framework, 37 defenders from Jerusalem, Hebron, and the Gaza Strip were chosen, including both male and female youth who are active in their communities and have a desire and passion to defend human rights in Palestine.



The area of focus in the West Bank will be on the right to education and cultural rights that are relevant to Palestinian national identity. As such, within the framework of the right to education, focus will be on house arrests, conditions of classrooms, obstacles to accessing schools, school drop-outs and the curriculum. In terms of cultural rights connected to Palestinian national identity, focus will be on the curriculum taught in schools, right to worship and access to religious sites, imposition of constraints and harassment of organizations working in the field of culture, and imposition of restrictions on expanding and renovating shops and structures. Conversely, in Gaza, focus will be on the right to work and right to healthcare. Within the framework of the right to work, focus will be on the targeting of fishermen and farmers, and adherence to workers’ rights. Alternatively, within the framework of the right to health, focus will be on the granting of treatment permits, obstacles in accessing medical facilities, quality of services and medical negligence, and provision and availability of health services.

The choice to focus on these rights and aspects is based on the mapping research on Palestinian and International Organizations that Monitor and Document Violations in Jerusalem, the Old City of Hebron and the Access Restricted Area of the Gaza Strip. Within this framework, “MIFTAH” determined the rights that are violated in the specific areas of intervention, alongside the violated rights being monitored and documented by Palestinian and international organizations. These efforts are based on the perspective of promoting consolidation of efforts among civil society organizations, avoiding duplication of interventions and results, and expanding the number of violated

**MIFTAH’s Publications in 2018
Specialized bulletins**

**Citizen Budget 2018
Ministry of Education and Higher Education**



**Citizen Budget 2018
Ministry of Health**



**Citizen Budget 2018
Ministry of Social Development**



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MIFTAH policy meeting discusses findings of paper on sexual violence against women and prepares the first of its kind guidebook on "Reproductive Health and Gender-based Violence". Guidebook for Imams, Preachers and Community Leaders

As part of its Women Protection Program, MIFTAH recently held a central policy meeting in Ramallah on sexual violence (rape, incest, and harassment in public spaces) at the level of decision-makers in civil society, government institutions and social leaders. This was preceded by a series of sessions held in the northern, central, and southern districts aimed at producing recommendations on topics from working papers that included data and findings on violence. The goal of this policy meeting is the development of a public policy on halting gender-based violence and ensuring a rights-based system that protects male and female citizens in Palestinian society, including health and reproductive rights for Palestinian women.

The session resulted in a number of recommendations including: reconsideration of the law pertaining to how cases of sexual violence are handled in a way that would protect battered women; to overcome the legal problems which still constitute the most significant challenges in rulings on these issues; and the need to enact a special law for dealing with cases of sexual harassment in the public sphere. The recommendations also addressed the mechanisms and measures used in the referral system between the private and public sectors and the problems of referral, which remain an obstacle in protecting battered women and survivors of violence, calling to overcome them. Additionally, MIFTAH prepared the first of its kind Arabic guidebook on "Reproductive Health and Gender-based Violence for Imams, Preachers, and Community Leaders." The guide aims to provide imams, preachers, and community leaders with information and guidance that broaden their knowledge on gender-based violence, to support them while conducting awareness-raising and counseling activities, and to provide them with practical guidance relevant to the national referral system for battered women. MIFTAH has also prepared a special report documenting the success stories, conclusions, and lessons learned from targeting imams, preachers, and community leaders to build MIFTAH future interventions.

MIFTAH publishes the Fair Tax Monitor in Palestine

MIFTAH has issued the Fair Tax Monitor in Palestine report, which aims to provide the public and civil society organizations with quantitative and qualitative analysis of all components of the Palestinian tax system and to evaluate the determinants of tax justice. The research was undertaken in accordance with the methodology of the joint research framework, which was developed in cooperation with Oxfam and the African Tax Justice Network. The methodology includes six main categories that provide a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis of the tax system in Palestine: tax structure; tax burden and progressivity; tax leakages; effectiveness of tax administration; government spending; and transparency and accountability.

The "Fair Tax Monitor" research is the first of its kind in Palestine and is a unique advocacy tool that is based on rigorous scientific research, highlighting policies and practices that affect the fairness of the tax system, and providing recommendations related to suggesting policies that contribute to improving the fairness of the tax system and support the principle of progressivity in the setting of tax brackets, as well as developing the administrative efficiency of the tax system. Based on the results of this report, MIFTAH seeks to open a dialogue with the relevant official parties, especially the Ministry of Finance and the General Tax Administrations, in partnership with the Civil Society Team on Public Budget Transparency (CSTPBT) to support budget transparency in terms of the adoption of tax policies that contribute to improving the fairness and performance of the Palestinian tax system.

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WIFAQ women shadow committee for the national reconciliation committees held an expanded dialogue session on the files of reconciliation

Within the context of MIFTAH's efforts to situate the women, peace, and security agenda within the dialogue efforts related to the national reconciliation files, MIFTAH and WIFAQ held an extensive dialogue session on three files of the national reconciliation: freedoms' committee, social reconciliation, and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) files. During the session, facts were presented reflecting the exclusion of women from the national reconciliation efforts. MIFTAH had supported WIFAQ in developing three factsheets that dealt with the files based on data from MIFTAH and human rights organizations' reports that documented human rights violations. The factsheets highlighted the voice of women among the different components of Palestinian society, which were marginalized during the period of division, through in-depth meetings with the local community in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. The session, in which the officials of the three reconciliation files participated, was considered an opportunity to listen and discuss, and serve as a platform for the participation of all relevant parties to reach an agreement on public policies on national reconciliation, freedoms' committee, social reconciliation, and PLO files.



The main recommendations were as follows

The need to take serious collective steps to stand against division and preserve the national project, while stressing the important role of political factions and civil society organizations in addressing gender exclusion, which casts a shadow over Palestinian society and the Palestinian political system.

Calling on the PLO to play its role in accountability, activating the role of different factions in this regard, and calling for a unified political review based on genuine political partnership and a national mechanism for action based on dialogue.

The need to agree on a comprehensive national project, review the procedures for imposing sanctions on the Gaza Strip, respect for public rights and freedoms in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and give the feminist discourse appropriate means of pressure on both sides of the divide.

MIFTAH's Publications in 2018 Special Studies

-  • An Analytical Report on Violations Against the Palestinian Women and Girls in Gaza Strip During the National Division
-  • TimeLine Report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Palestine
-  • Manual: Reproductive Health and Gender-based Violence Guidebook for Imams, Preachers and Community Leaders. Pocket guide for trainers, preachers, imams and leaders.
-  • Women Transformative Leadership in Palestine - Documentation of Shadowing Opportunities for Potential Women Leaders
- The Fair Tax Monitor in Palestine
- Government spending on the social sector from a social justice perspective
- The tax burden from the perspective of tax justice
-  • Manual: Citizen Budget Preparation Manual in the Ministry of Finance and Planning
-  • Manual: Citizen Budget Preparation Manual in the Ministry of Health
-  • Manual: Citizen Budget Preparation Manual in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

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MIFTAH holds a series of meetings within international platforms in Geneva, New York, and Brussels to amplify women's voices and highlight violations against Palestinian women in Area C and Jerusalem

MIFTAH, during the second half of 2018, held a number of international meetings that included intensive discussions on Palestinian women's issues within the Women's Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. MIFTAH shared statistics and data that clearly reflect the ongoing violations against Palestinian women in Area C and Jerusalem. This data pointed to the scope of violence exercised against Palestinian women in these areas, with a focus on violence against women as a result of Israeli occupation measures. These include home demolitions, settlement expansion and forced evictions, all of which have a disproportionate impact on Palestinian women due to the lack of sufficient services such as water, electricity, and housing. This is over and above the almost total lack of medical services, weak economic resources, and restrictions on freedom of movement.



Furthermore, issues of Palestinian women in Jerusalem were highlighted with a focus on residency rights. Palestinian women in the city live under constant threat from the Israeli government that they will be stripped of their rights as permanent residents of Jerusalem, either because they are married to Palestinian citizens from the West Bank or Gaza Strip or because they are West Bank residents, and could be expelled from the city at any time. In addition, they must endure the heavy restrictions and financial burdens demanded by the Israeli government in order to prove that Jerusalem is their "center of life". This has threatened the Palestinian family as a fundamental unit in the city, has dispersed its members and allowed for the loss of women's rights as a result of both Israeli civil laws and laws enacted by the PA.

These meetings took place within the framework of the Human Rights Council's 39th session in Geneva, as well as meetings with members of the European Parliament in Brussels, a team from the Belgian Foreign Ministry, a number of international non-governmental organizations, and the Women's Peace and Security Week commemorating the 18th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 at the UN in New York.

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 factsheets have been compiled:

-  Factsheet on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
-  Fact Sheet on Violations Against the Palestinian Women and Girls in East Jerusalem by the Israeli Occupation
-  Factsheet on Violations Against the Palestinian Women and Girls by Israeli occupation forces in Areas designated as C
-  Factsheet: The Budget of the Ministry of Health 2016, 2017 and 2018
-  Factsheet on sexual violence against women (rape, incest, and harassment in public spaces)
-  Facts and figures sheet on "Social Sector Budgets and Expenditure in Palestine for 2016-2018".
-  Facts and figures sheet on "Ministry of Social Development Budget and Poverty Allocations."



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In support of the unity of Palestinian women's discourse on activating the CEDAW ... MIFTAH and GUPW present a paper on CEDAW recommendations 30, 32, 35 in the Palestinian context

MIFTAH and the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) held a special session with members of the Women's Civil Coalition for Implementing the CEDAW Agreement in Occupied Palestine, and GUPW members to discuss Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) **general recommendations 30, 32, and 35** in relation to the Palestinian situation. The session aimed at producing a paper that would constitute a reference for the Palestinian women's movement in discussions and debates at the local and international levels, particularly in terms of demanding protection for Palestinian women and girls given the circumstances of the Israeli occupation and internal division under which they live in Palestine and the Diaspora. They also discussed the repercussions of these three recommendations on the specificity of Palestinian women under occupation, which would therefore promote discourse on women's issues in matters relevant to engaging the Israeli occupation and other relevant parties in international arenas. **The most important recommendations were as follows:**

Regarding Recommendation 35, these included: expanding the concept of protection for women to include economic and financial support; to develop a clear intervention strategy with concrete mechanisms for their protection; and to pressure decision-makers to create a protective legal system.

In terms of the general recommendations No. 30 and 32, the session put forth the following: to call on the international community and its various organizations to legally and morally commit to the protection of civilians in the Palestinian territories in general and of women in particular; to pursue and hold Israel accountable for its grave violations of international law; to call on the UN to implement its agreements; and to guarantee women's representation in decision-making positions.

MIFTAH organizes a policy meeting on

"Possible repercussions of the collapse of the international order on the Palestinian issue"

As part of MIFTAH's efforts to promote the dissemination of the Palestinian narrative and bolster solidarity with the Palestinian cause, MIFTAH organized a special policy meeting entitled: "Possible repercussions of the collapse of the international order on the Palestinian issue in the light of the statements made by Mr. Antonio Guterres in the opening of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly". Dr. Hanan Ashrawi led the meeting with the participation of a number of representatives of human rights organizations and diplomatic missions working in Palestine.

Discussion revolved around how the possible collapse of a global order impacts the Palestinian cause and their quest for independence and statehood. The discussion particularly revolved around the shrinking space for Palestinians civil society to act in the protection of human and civil rights and the growing Israeli influence on US policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and ways of circumventing these obstacles in order to preserve our national goals and ensure sound civil society processes and action in the process. The participants discussed the current global situation in light of the US administration's adoption of the most extreme and racist politics of the Israeli government and has further enhanced impunity for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his coalition by fully aligning itself with the occupation. As a result, the Palestinians have been excluded from protection, and the peace process is near collapse.

The session concluded by stressing that, in spite of the weakness of the global system and the domination of certain member states, it is crucial to work within this system to realize the aspirations of Palestinians. This can be done through working with parliamentarians and civil society in various countries to push our agenda forward, to push for imposing sanctions on Israel in order to make the occupation costly, and to urge the international community to pool together its own views and just laws.