

# The Peace Building in Lebanon

News Supplement



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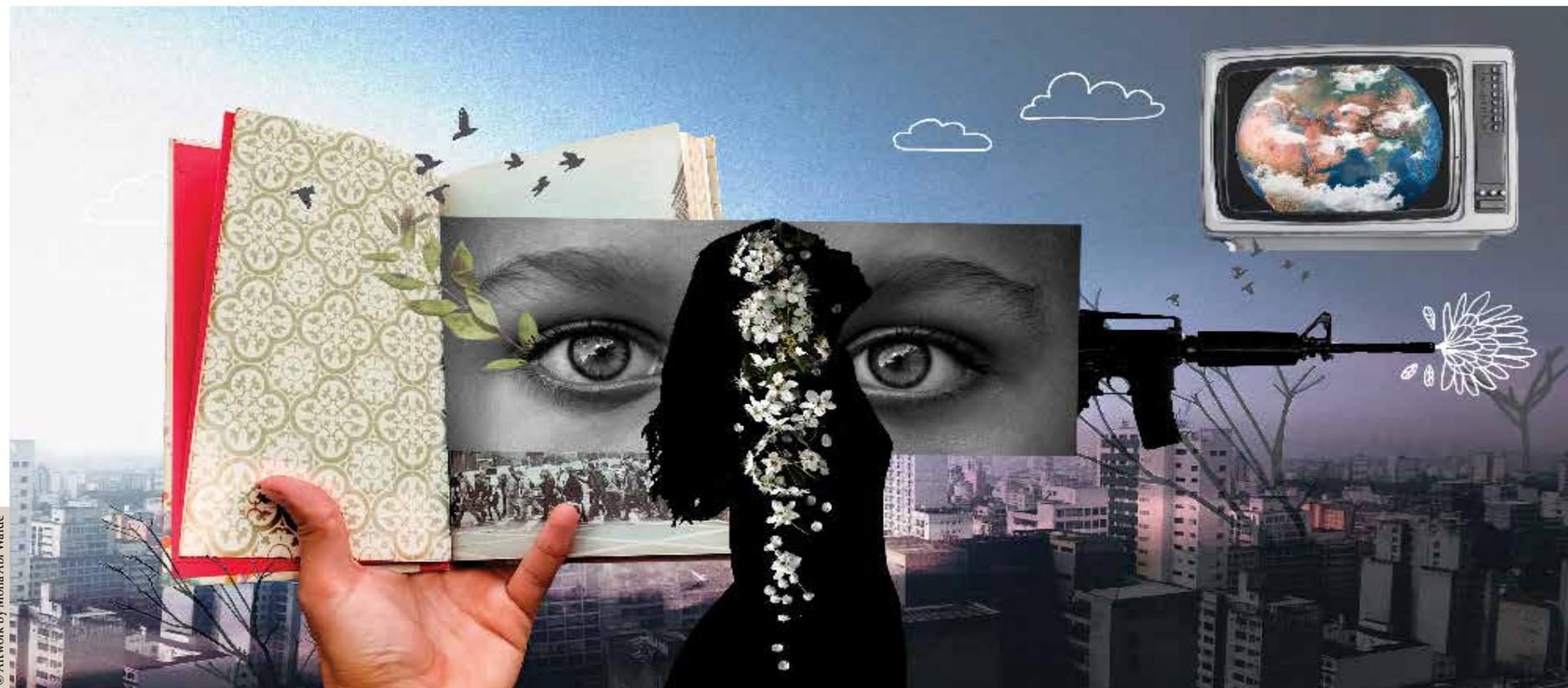


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## Special Edition

This supplement is produced by the UNDP «Peace Building in Lebanon» project and funded by Germany through the German Development Bank (KfW). The Arabic version is distributed with An-Nahar newspaper while the English version is distributed with The Daily Star and the French version with L'Orient-Le Jour. The supplement contains articles by writers, journalists, media professionals, researchers and artists residing in Lebanon. They cover issues related to civil peace in addition to the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon and the relations between Lebanese and Syrians, employing objective approaches that are free of hatred and misconceptions.

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The National Action Plan (NAP) for an Inclusive Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325



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## Women and the Industry of Peace

Many of the women we meet every day in Lebanon have been able to rise to the challenge of building peace. Many of them, if not all, were able to keep a measure of resilience and strength during times of war and displacement. This supplement presents national and international perspectives to better understand the work of women in peace building in Lebanon: their missions, struggles, sacrifices, hopes and aspirations. It also showcases—through the lives of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian women peace builders residing in Lebanon—the reasons why women must have a role in deciding their own future and building a better peace.

As activists and peacebuilders, refugees, heads of households and community leaders, women in this supplement are sharing experiences and lessons learned from their work in the field of peace building in Lebanon.

This supplement, funded by Germany through the German Development Bank KfW, also reflects the commitment and the full support of Germany to the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 in Lebanon and in the region. Adopted in the year 2000, this resolution recognized the impact of conflict on women, and their contributions to peace, security and conflict prevention and recovery. These topics constantly need to be addressed and discussed in Lebanon, especially that according to the Global Gender Gap Report published in 2018 by the World Economic Forum, Lebanon ranks 140 out of 149 countries ahead of only Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, Iraq and Yemen in the region.

In this context, the German Government and the German Development Bank KfW along with their partners, are also working on supporting women in Lebanon by strengthening political participation and raising awareness about the important role of women as community leaders in selected communities in Lebanon. Promoting economic participation and combating gender-based violence are also at the core of the embassy's mission in Lebanon. And while focusing on women as community leaders, we can never forget the important role that men play as change agents.

When women are engaged in politics and security sectors in addition to mediation, peace processes and negotiations, peace and security are strengthened. This is what the supplement you have in your hands reflects.

Enjoy reading it.

**Mr. Sascha Stadler**  
Director, German Development Bank  
KfW, Lebanon

## Arab Women: Beacons of Peace

As the Arab region continues to struggle with crises, our supplement focuses on the many actions that women take every day in Lebanon to contribute to pathways to peace and participate in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at their own levels.

The stories in this issue, therefore, highlight the many Lebanese, Palestinian, and Syrian women that are stepping in as beacons of peace across Lebanon and challenging women's expected or traditional roles. They remind us of the importance of strengthening women's representation in the collective consciousness and documenting their impactful contribution to social change.

Specifically, recounting Lebanese women's peacebuilding efforts during and post-civil war can serve as an example for other countries at war. Conveying the balancing acts that Syrian women strive to make in the education of their children can be a model for conflict mediation in all refugee communities across the globe. Finally, showcasing the engagement of Palestinian women leaders in their communities highlights the impact of education and the arts on building peace. All these beacons of peace should serve as an inspiration everywhere.

**Celine Moyroud**  
UNDP Resident Representative

## Meeting the challenge

It is very curious to note that when any subject related to the status of women is discussed, there are still men in Lebanon, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, who feel obliged to sketch a smirk, suggesting that there are more important issues to deal with. A tad macho reflex, remnant of a tenacious oriental tradition of confining women to their role as mothers and wives at home, loving and resigned.

Certainly, this attitude is no longer as blunt and ostentatious as it was in the days of the absolute patriarchal system, the time when the father, husband or brother decided everything and demanded obedience and submission from all family members. The reluctance of some men to emancipate women is manifested in a more insidious way, such as forcing the future wife to abandon all professional life in order to devote herself to the home; offering the woman candidate for employment in a company a lower salary for work equal to that of her male colleagues; reluctantly accepting parity in administrative or

political responsibilities, only to play with figures and then empty the concept of its content...

However, it is easy to see that today, with the development of education, especially in large cities, Lebanese women are increasingly represented in professional life, right up to the top levels in societies, universities and the liberal professions. Many have become financially self-sufficient and, as a result, no longer need to cling to a father's or husband's side to take their place in society.

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to hold men alone responsible for the slowness of women's acquisition of their rights. Some of them are even pleased with their situation, ruling out in advance any challenge to patriarchal «authority». It is especially up to these women to rise to the challenge of freeing themselves from male guardianship. Of course in a gentle and humane way, but with a good dose of firmness.

**Gaby Nasr**  
Managing Editor - L'Orient-Le Jour supplements

## Women are Key Elements for Peace Building

Perhaps the responsibility of women is more severe in times of adversity and war than it is in good times. The challenges become bigger, living difficulties, security situation, educational constraints... And perhaps the repercussions fall on the mother and the elder sister more than on men who master the arts of war, and fail in the face of peace efforts because it diminishes their power and their eastern masculinity, which delves in manifestations of violence and power. Paying attention to women in this case becomes a pressing duty, ahead of the living requirements of food and clothing, because when a mother reaches the state of loss and confusion, this will transform the whole family, and will make the children vulnerable to murder and fighting, terrorism, crime and theft. And this situation creates ongoing and re-emerging

wars. Hence, the necessity and urgent need to provide women with care and follow-up, especially in refugee camps, where things are set to slip away, even head towards chaos, and where means of control are limited. In some parts of our Arab world, the mother is a tool for procreation, and if the idea does not evolve with hard work, our world will lag behind. It would be desirable if we could achieve what the Prime Minister of Lebanon, President Saad Hariri noted, that a woman becomes Prime Minister. Maybe then women in advanced positions could achieve what men have not been able to do, because experience is the best proof, and we have nothing to lose in trying, because we have reached the «Maximum» losses.

**Ghassan Hajjar**  
Editor in Chief - An-Nahar newspaper

# Including Women Reinforces the Legitimacy and Sustainability of any Peace Process

Lea Baroudi\*

Johanna Hawari – Bourjeily\*\*

Justine Abi Saad\*\*\*

Karma Ekmekji\*\*\*\*

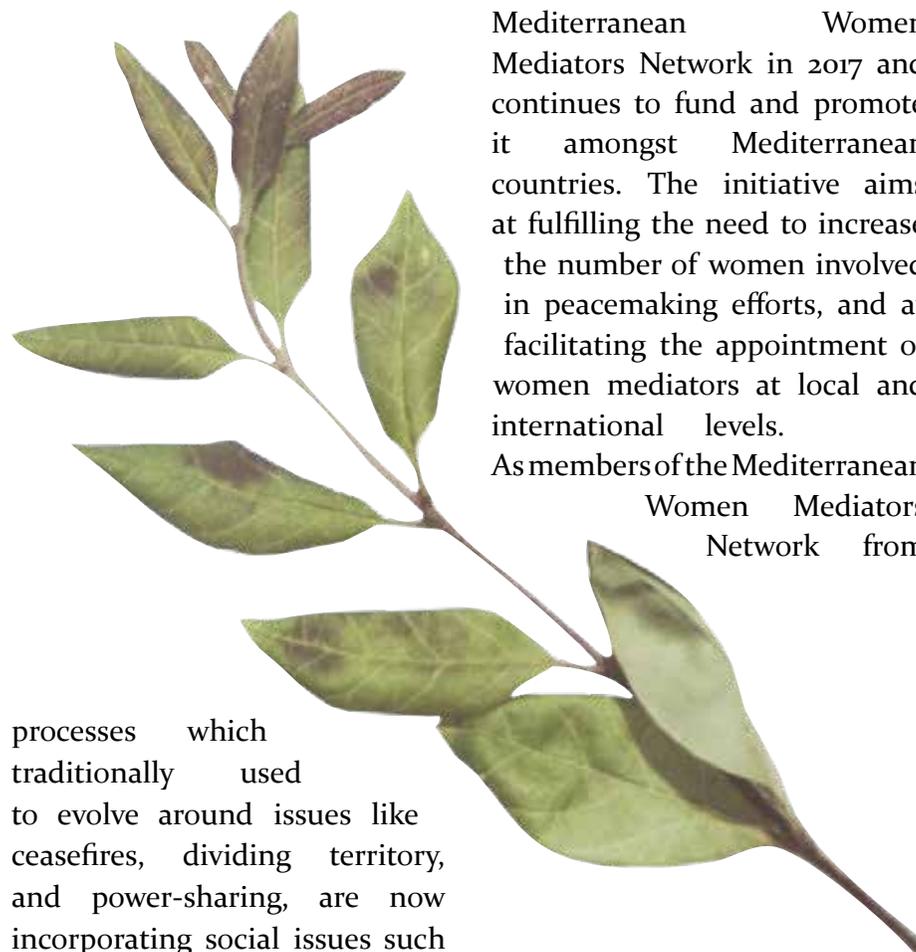
Governments, civil society organizations and multilateral institutions across the world are getting ready to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the twentieth anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325, a landmark resolution on women, peace and security, and a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

2020 is going to be a year to watch for when it comes to advancing the agenda of women in mediation, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and security. It will also be a year where we must set off alarm bells and sirens across the world, and particularly in our region, to say that women remain under-represented in these field and our opinions are still left unheard.

«Women are no observers of conflict,» says Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee, the Liberian peace activist responsible for leading a women's nonviolent peace movement, that helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War, «why then should they be the observers of conflict resolution?»

A critical mass of academic research shows that including women enhances the legitimacy and the credibility of any peace process and that inclusion and sustainability go hand in hand. When women are included in peace processes, there is a 20% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least two years, and a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least fifteen years! Meanwhile, when peace processes failed to include women, the peace agreement would crumble within five years.

Furthermore, studies published by the International Peace Institute indicate that peace



processes which traditionally used to evolve around issues like ceasefires, dividing territory, and power-sharing, are now incorporating social issues such as education, healthcare and so on.

It is in this context, and in this spirit, that the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation launched the

Mediterranean Women Mediators Network in 2017 and continues to fund and promote it amongst Mediterranean countries. The initiative aims at fulfilling the need to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts, and at facilitating the appointment of women mediators at local and international levels.

As members of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network from

Lebanon, we each have taken the responsibility upon ourselves, as individuals and as a collective group, to advance the agenda of women in peace and security

within the spheres of our work that span over the community, national and international levels. We share and work on instilling our common values of inclusion, tolerance and advocacy for women in peace and security and believe that it is only through leading by example that we can garner enough political and social support, from men, before women, to ensure that more women are included in grassroots, national and cross boundary peace building efforts. As you flip through the pages of this UNDP supplement so befittingly entitled, The Peace Building in Lebanon, you will get acquainted with the amazing work that different stakeholders in Lebanon are doing to advance the agenda of women, peace and security. These efforts are inspiring and should serve as spring boards for girls and women to believe that change can be instigated when we stop being spectators and start assuming active roles in the field of peace and security.

**As members of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network from Lebanon, we each have taken the responsibility upon ourselves, as individuals and as a collective group, to advance the agenda of women in peace and security within the spheres of our work that span over the community, national and international levels**

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# The Role of Lebanese Women in Consolidating Peace during the Civil War

Myriam Sfeir\*

«Our daughter was killed on the stairs of our building... Three weeks after my daughter Jana's death, I had a meeting to prepare for the handicapped demonstration, and I attended it. ... I can't say we stopped the war, but even though we were a minority, it helped us overcome the war». Despite her tragedy, Laure Moghaizel, was one of the backbones of the peacebuilding movement.



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April 2020 will mark the 45th anniversary of the Lebanese civil war, one of the longest and most devastating wars of the twentieth century. A war that gravely scarred us physically and emotionally, given its brutality and absurdity.

Amidst this terrible war, women emerged as heroines, forced to assume new roles within the family, the community, and the public sphere. They were persistently mending and re-stitching the fragile social fabric left tattered and torn by massacres, rapes, snipers, car-bombs, shelling, and displacement. While the men were gone – off fighting, detained, displaced, disappeared, or dead – women became the heads of households, the carers, the nurses, the supply distributors, the negotiators, and the peace initiators, to mention a few.

Lebanese women actively tried to tame the war's fury by participating in non-violent peace movements such as marches, hunger strikes, sit-ins, humanitarian work, reconciliation ceremonies, and prayer meetings. They volunteered and worked in national and international organizations where they organized holiday camps for children in Lebanon and abroad, helped raise money for the handicapped and severely wounded and sent them for treatment abroad. They coordinated relief actions for refugees and displaced families by providing food rations, blankets, clothes, medical treatment and shelters.

Lebanese women, individually and collectively, played a major role in creating a semblance of normalcy, becoming the, «saviors of the fabric of Lebanese society». They served as a buffer throughout the war period attempting to help break the demarcation lines and striving to bridge the gap and erase the division in a country wrecked by sectarianism that created havoc among its citizens. They negotiated peace in their communities, they were the go-betweens who shielded their men and families trying to reason with the militia men on the streets and with the warring factions to maintain

constructive dialogue.

One such person is Iman Khalifeh, a regular citizen, who was turned overnight into a peace activist when she spontaneously questioned «Do you think people need a permit to revolt?» and called for a peaceful march protesting the atrocities of the war around its tenth anniversary. The march she strove to organize never materialized in Lebanon due to heavy shelling by warring factions, however, her call triggered protests in Paris, London, and New York and her activism earned her the Right to Livelihood Alternative Nobel Prize for Peace.

Na'maat Ken'aan, then-Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs, indefatigably committed to her humanitarian obligations, bravely spoke out against the militia barricades and partitions, «I never tolerated hearing anything bad spoken by one side against the other, and used to defend the Muslims when the East Beirutis complained and defend the Christians when the West Beirutis complained».

The war also triggered resistance from Lebanese women writers who voiced their horrors and resistance to the war. Emily Nasrallah, Hanan Al Shaykh, Etel Adnan, Evelyn Accad, and Jean Makkaddissi were just a few of the writers that documented their experiences, transforming their daily sufferings into moving stories of humanity's capacity for rebirth, degradation, and compassion.

In a now-famous plea echoed across a militia radio stations, Wadad Halawani called to all Lebanese who knew someone that was missing to march with her in front of the Abdel Nasser Mosque to demand government support for their missing relatives and friends. From her work grew the Committee of the Families of the Kidnapped and Disappeared – it was one of the first times that women actively took to the streets in protest of the war.

Despite all their efforts and even though women represented a majority of peace movement activists, and their participation in unions and political parties

increased during the war, they were marginalized from participating in post-war peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts. Their absence from the negotiation tables and their relegation to the private sphere is indicative that patriarchal structures can be recalled whenever «order» is restored. While the Lebanese war was a war without winners, those who lost the most were, ultimately, women.

\* Director Of The Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University (LAU)

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# Highlights from a Life's Journey

Salwa Saad\*

**I was born a female in a country where the male has double the share of the female; in fact, even more. I was not at peace with this reality and I have never accepted it. This early rejection of discrimination has shaped the course of my life. And it just happened that my country of birth and residence, Lebanon, during that time, went through many conflicts, mostly violent, and culminated in a 15-year civil war whose repercussions continue to signal the possibility of sliding back into conflict despite the devastation, destruction and pain it had brought on.**

Self-affirmation and the ability to take action and excel have steered my choices. I was diligent in my studies at the village school to prove to my family that I was no less capable than my brother, who attended a private school. I graduated from a public high school in a richly diverse area. We fought to ensure that the children of the poor receive a good education and to open applied colleges at the Lebanese University. I was a champion of the Palestinian cause, and then the war broke out. We became «us» and «they»... It was «imposed on us» we were told, just as they were told. So they said, so we believed it. It became a battle for existence: «either us or them». The other became an enemy whose killing and elimination was legitimized.

I'm not a bystander by nature; I got involved in the war. I lived as a fighter armed with the defense of my «rightful» cause. I also experienced it as a civilian after giving birth to my daughter, who introduced me to fear as soon as she came into existence.

During war, violence has the upper hand, and despotism spreads its wings. Peace retreats in its broad sense, from being open to many possibilities, such as security and stability. But «peace» derives new forms to express its presence, such as inhabiting our small things and simple day-to-day routines. We support each other, and we help the displaced and those in need. Women shed the weight of obsolete, forgotten burdens as a result of the destruction of what exists. Despite the shelling, killing, destruction and senseless death, war has not been able to defeat human beings' natural need to live in peace—even if at irregular intervals. I was never a fan of weapons, it is cold as a neutral force, I took up arms to be on an equal footing as men, and fought for the right of women to be decisionmakers. I lost many loved ones and friends. I worked on several sites and in different fields—I gave comrades haircuts on the front, bought clothes for them, and listened to Jamal, a martyr, before his premature departure to the irony of glory as he dreamt of eating his mother's lentils dish. I stole my father's car to transport the many wounded on the day of the incursions. I did

not mourn anyone as I did Kamal Jumblatt. I mourned a dream that was shattered. And the defeats followed. After my marriage, I would sneak into my marital home so that my neighbors would not notice my husband's absence during our «honeymoon» for a more serious mission. When he would come back, we would spend the night in anticipation of the parting to come. The cause is the foundation, for «big causes» fuel war, consigning the individual self to the position of an accessory or a theatrical prop for its own victories or defeats.

My daughter was born in 1983, and I returned to the «natural» role in the home. I became a mother and a civilian, and started a different journey. I will not forget the day I was walking in the streets of Beirut crying because our neighbor, the store owner, who used to put my groceries on the tab until the end of the month, did not have milk to feed my child. I was besieged by the fall of the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound, my neediness, my helplessness, and my poverty. Beirut was besieged by explosions here and there. The children's playground at the entrance to the building was a moment of relative calm. I remember the iron gate as prison bars.

In war as in peace, the people in my country are not equal, whether men or women. Those who hold power have privileges that keep them away from the course of life of others... whether they are figures, subjects or the marginalized. Men are superior to women in wars—they are stronger physically, and the most inclined to despotism and violence... Perhaps because nature has sowed the blessing of motherhood in women... I do not know! That is why men, especially the defeated ones, are more fragile after a war... Therefore, it is inevitable for women to bear the main burden of reconstruction and the cleaning up of the dirt stuck in a state that has almost resigned from carrying out its functions.

The children grew up... A life has gone by... There's time for self-reflection... And the questions gush out... I asked myself repeatedly: What did we get out of the war? Was there really a greater noble cause that justified this immense destruction of our

country, our people and the future of our children? What do we fear and what do they fear?

When I met those I wanted to isolate and those who wanted to eliminate me, we discovered how little we knew about each other. Both sides were fighting the shadow of their fears. It was not easy to wrest away caution and get closer to the «enemy». It is a road that starts with doubt about what we memorized and learned, and to get rid of our fears by purifying what is inside of us from the sins of hatred of the other who is different and attempts to eliminate him. To get to a point where we work together to prevent a repetition of the war.

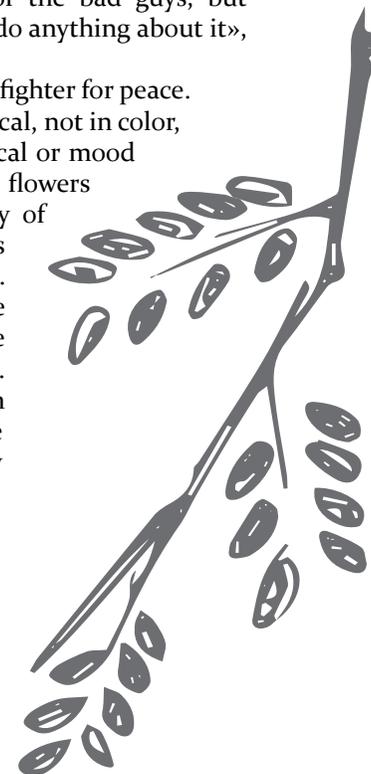
...After some hesitation, I met with Fighters for Peace, a group of former combatants and civil society activists from all walks of life, who have come together to establish a new culture that respects pluralism, ascendancy of peace over killing, dialogue over fighting, and love over hatred. They believe that there is no winner in any civil war, everyone is a loser, a conviction recognized through blood and remorse.

«The world has become a dangerous place to live in, not because of the bad guys, but because others do not do anything about it», said one of them.

That is why today I am fighter for peace.

We will never be identical, not in color, sex, or religious, political or mood affiliation. Meadow flowers rejoice in the diversity of form and color. That is why they rush spring... Even fall is slow to bare itself to leave open the possibilities to trees. And there's a reason why creatures were created in so many species, whims and lifestyles. Let us learn from the law of nature, enjoy its greatness and preserve it.

\* Peace activist



# The Lebanese Kandakas

Manar Zeaiter\*

**Alaa Salah, the icon of Sudan's revolution, or the «Kandaka» as she has been crowned to denote the courageous Sudanese women who are taking part in the rise to injustice and the demand for democracy. We shall recall Alaa's name well as she became a symbol even beyond the borders of Sudan. The icon embraces the march of the thousands of women kandakas who are rebels, fighters, hunger strikers, detainees and prisoners. It is a march of women in various parts of the strongholds of injustice and tyranny; women who have fought occupiers and resisted oppressors, women who took to the streets in demand of dignity and in pursuit of peace. But in the end, history has not done them justice, it has unseen their roles and denounced their contribution to peacebuilding.**

This recapitulation draws from the recent Sudanese experience on the Lebanese scene at its various stages, as well as on the position of Lebanese women and their struggle at the different political stages.

The struggle of women began with the formation of the Lebanese entity in its political sense, i.e. the date of independence and the outbreak of the civil war in the mid-seventies when women had contributed to national liberation. This was followed by the period of open crisis from 1975 until the signing of the Taif Agreement, in which women had neither participated in its drafting nor in any of the subsequent attempts to implement it. During those years of war, many women had taken up arms and engaged in internal fights, others preferred to keep their distance and played an opposite role in preserving the remaining fabric of the Lebanese society. Others still took on the responsibility of the entire family during the absence of men and their preoccupation with fighting or their death or disappearance, while other women took part in the resistance against the Israeli occupation both during that time and later.

And after war had strained all fighting parties came the new agreement, the Taif Agreement, establishing the transformation or transition period in the format of the Lebanese political system and founded a consensus formula that retained the formula that was neither victorious nor defeated; it ended the war but did not achieve peace and stability to this day. This was a formula that did not engage the women who had lived that war, taken part in it, were affected by it and shaped it.

Following the Taif Agreement, the country witnessed political, security and military developments; the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the so-called million-marches, the departure of the Syrian Army from Lebanon and the division of the Lebanese people between two new axes, and the several ensuing assassinations and

tensions including the events of the 2008 conflict. And to escape a new war, the Doha Agreement took place in Qatar; a prompt settlement that did not allude to the long-standing crisis in the Lebanese regime, and in which formulation women did not participate.

Since 2005, there has been a different political scene in the country, in the wake of regional wars that have fueled the division among the Lebanese, accompanied by conspicuous local stops such as the campaign to bring down the sectarian system in 2011 and the 2015 protests, or the so-called waste crisis. Today, this phase is still in place, and continues to frame the political course of the country and the fragile stability of the constitutional institutions. A path and stability in which women are present coyly, whether through participation in demonstrations or media recruitment or through the human rights and social work, as well as political work through the portal of political parties.

The absence of women from the Lebanese political scene at the time of bloody conflicts, or during the consequent stages, or during the stages of fragile stability, has its reasons that cannot be summarized.

On the general level, the Lebanese constitution has shaped the fragile political scene and the identity of this hybrid entity by rooting the sectarian identity at the expense of the national identity. This has been reflected in the features of the state and the different political spaces of parties, unions and social movements that have been adopting the logic of sectarian-based mobilization and lack a proper democratic practice. This reality has negatively affected the participation of women in political life and excluded them from playing their role in building a democratic entity and in laying the groundwork for sustainable peace. Public space and private space usually overlap. Women undertake the primary responsibility for raising and caring for children and doing household chores. This division of

roles between men and women has led to their ranking in unequal positions. This hierarchy has negatively reflected on the political roles of women, whether within the official structures of the state or within the various political spaces that adopt the standards of women's private space in their justification for the weak presence of women in the public life and the weakness of serious initiatives aimed at involving women and activating their roles.

In conclusion, during the various political stages, the Lebanese State has not formed a genuine political will to engage women in peacebuilding paths. It has neither implemented its international commitments of involving women in all peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction efforts nor of adopting a distinctive approach to the way in which peacemaking is conducted in order to meet the different needs of men and women in the fields of security and peacebuilding.

We are witnessing today, in the Arab region, the many experiences of women active in the peace-building processes of their countries; especially women in Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia and Syria, who participate in national dialogues, peace negotiations or transitional justice.

The question that remains is when will we witness a greater presence of the Lebanese kandakas in the process of building a modern democratic civil state? A state of equality in law and before the law. A state of protection against the various forms of violence faced by women and girls, both in the private and public sphere. A state whose women are active and not mere victims. A state that did not recognize the roles of its women and did not document their experiences and still, every morning, plays an anthem that sings: Our mountain and our valley, they bring forth stalwart men.

\* Lawyer and women's rights activist and researcher



# Mothers are Peacemakers

H.E. MP Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine\*

**There is no doubt that peacemaking in the world constitutes a sustainable humanitarian challenge for humanity, and an end to which hearts, souls and minds aspire. However, despite the efforts made over time, that end remains an unattainable dream, and the world continues to be the scene of wars that destroy human lives, dreams and opportunities for a dignified and prosperous life.**

The absence of concepts of true justice and the permanent and constant pursuit of supremacy through the unjust use of force, patronization and abuse of the rights of others is one of the main reasons for the absence of peace in the world. This factor entraps humanity in a vicious circle of injustice, aggression and the natural reactions challenging it.

Is this the world we wish to leave for future generations? Should we just stand by and watch wars and conflicts erupt, or should we engage in sowing the seeds of peace, security and prosperity?

The logic of justice requires working together to make the human being the center of life. The essential condition for this is the peacemaking, which is a global community mission in which both men and women must be involved, but women are more specific in this area, especially through their role as mothers.

The mother is the center of the family and its orbit, and she is the most effective member, and her ability to instill values in her daughters and sons is unmatched. And the educational process managed by mothers, shapes human behavior and determines its nature.

It is true that the task is not easy because planting thoughts of peace and its values in new generations constitutes a threat to a system of evil interests that lives on wars and their disasters, but not impossible, because mothers are qualified to open major educational pathways contributing to the establishment of a just peace and coherent security

in the world.

I'm not a fan of simplifications. I know that the issue is tricky, sensitive and often complicated and complex. We are advocates of peace and yearn for it. We want a generation that tends towards peace in its dealings, performance and behavior, and at the same time we find ourselves in the need for a generation equipped to resist all forms of injustice and aggression and to defend the value of a free and dignified life.

This required balance is what must be done by mothers who raise the men and women who will in the future assume social, political, economic, security and military positions, and adopt the decision of either making peace or maintaining the mill of death, disasters and endless losses.

The gateway to world peace passes through the role of mothers. The future of the world depends on the values that mothers cultivate in the minds and souls of their children.

This compels us to respect women's rights and their cultural, educational, economic and political empowerment, and increase their presence in decision-making positions at different levels, in addition to taking into account their emotional and psychological needs so they become qualified, ready and socially and legislatively immune in order to play this pivotal and crucial role.

A woman's sense of peace and inner security allows her to convey these feelings to her children, enhancing their

positive behavior. And by acquiring serious and profound knowledge and culture, the mother excels in enlightening her children and consolidating their intellectual balance, allowing them to achieve an integrated personality that leads a life in three dimensions:

The first dimension: seeking a generation capable of distinguishing between right and wrong and between evil and good, thereby constantly striving for a tendency towards truth and goodness.

The second dimension: respect for human beings and positive interaction with the environment, to ensure the integration and respect of the other with his different beliefs and principles.

The third dimension: building self-confidence and respect for intellectual and cultural privacy and promoting and defending justice and freedom values to prevent imbalance or abuse of human beings.

A person with these principles and values is qualified to achieve peace and security and resolve conflicts in order to establish justice and commit society to applying and respecting laws and making them a reference for the ruling and settlement of various violations and problems when they occur.

This is one of the mothers' missions. Establish a project that will preserve the lives of many who will succeed us, and shape the course that will govern the world in order to ensure peacebuilding, development and a better life.

\* Chairperson of Women and Children Parliamentary Committee

## To my Children A Message of Love for Life and Peace

Baria Ahmar\*

Dusk is already upon us; the sun, along with any hope of a peaceful solution, slowly fades away, and the sound of war drums beats once again. As negotiations were breaking down, the women of Liberia mustered up their courage and stubbornness to stand side by side at the gates of adversity, and at the hotel's main entrance, to lock the men inside the hotel; forcing their conversation towards a productive direction that led to the end of that conflict.

I am the mother; I am the earth, the giver of life. I am all the mothers standing there, hands raised to the skies, armed with hope and faith. Their bodies are a shield that thwarts the woes of injustice and murder, keeping them away from their children; the very pieces of their hearts that they conceal between their ribs.

I am writing to you and your friends, brothers and sisters, and all your generational kin, a message of love; for life and for peace. I wish to embrace you. To hide you deep under my skin, to girdle you with a belt heavy with faith and love; a belt that will anchor you in a sea of peace in this life, rather than send you to the next one.

I belong to a generation that has never known peace. I have known all the forms of war, the wars that tore asunder all my attachments and severed my humanity. I grew up in the

shadow of a monolithic fear, a fear that abducted me and took me away from my own life, halted all joy in my life, and darkened all the colors in my sky. It made me a nomad, never being able to establish any roots; so I fled all the dictums that my family, religion, region and culture were allegedly built upon. It was an anguish that made me wish to apologize to my children for having brought them to this world; for having taught them my language, and the history and prose of my ancestors.

For those who are born in burned cities, live the pain of stolen memories, and search all their lives for the springs of love to snuff the fires of their hearts burning with terror and nostalgia.

As a mother and as human; I claim my right to demand the rejection of war.

I also claim my right to acknowledgement and gratitude; for all the years taken from my life by these wars.

Is it too much to ask?

I will not allow you to throw your years to the wind. I will not allow you to imprison your ambitions and future behind the bars of hatred and death. I will not allow that to happen; this tragedy is never to befall you.

Do you hear me?

You, the descendants of sailors and scribes. Let your heritage envelop you; let science, culture, music, colors, silk handkerchiefs, ports and beaches reign in your world. Fill your nests with books and tenderness; fill your walls with drawings and paintings. Don't grow up to be fighters, rather, become poets, builders and artists, cultivators of nature; advocates of the world, shapers of humanity.

Leave the glorious mottoes of war and death to those noble people whose hearts and souls have already departed. Memorize the lyrics to a good song; do not memorize political catchphrases that can only be described as foreshadowing titles on the cover of horror stories. Work hard and with confidence. Dance free like butterflies. Grow tall like a cypress tree, strong like an oak branch. And hold your heads up high with your convictions and moral compass, not with the sorcery of ignorance and greed; because when the blood is spilt, your mothers' hearts will be bleeding rather than yours.

Be loyal to your mothers' womb. You are mistaken in thinking you are no longer part of them, for you are their life and limb that refuses to be severed from them.

\* Professor and novelist

# The National Action Plan (NAP) for an Inclusive Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

**Claudine Aoun Roukoz\***

**One of the major breakthroughs that marked the path of the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in 2019 was the establishment of a National Action Plan (NAP) for an inclusive implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Towards the end of 2017, NCLW was entrusted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with the task of developing a national action plan to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Determined to adopt a participatory and inclusive approach to fulfilling its new mission, NCLW formed and chaired a 1325 steering committee that included government and civil society representatives, and was tasked with developing an inclusive 1325 NAP addressing Lebanon's priorities. Furthermore, NCLW held several rounds of consultations with key stakeholders at the local and national levels to develop measurable interventions in accordance with the strategic priorities of the NAP.**

As such, working alongside UN agencies, governmental institutions and civil society organizations, NCLW drafted a 1325 NAP by reaching consensus on strategic priorities and interventions, while developing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the progress of the NAP.

The proposed 1325 NAP for Lebanon includes five strategic priorities that were defined and agreed upon as follows:

- 1- Increasing the participation of women in decision-making at all levels: in security and defense sectors, in political and public life; in the economy as well as in peace mediations and negotiations;
- 2- Engaging women in conflict prevention including raising awareness on human rights and tolerance;
- 3- Preventing sexual and gender-based violence and protecting women and girls from it through strong coordination mechanisms between different national institutions to respond effectively to gender-based violence;
- 4- Integrating women's needs and perspectives in all relief and recovery efforts;
- 5- Amending, adopting and implementing laws and policies that will serve to advance the above priorities.

The involvement and engagement of all stakeholders and partners throughout the development process of the NAP increased national ownership of the plan along with the commitment of both government and civil society to its full implementation. Accordingly, some governmental entities proceeded with the implementation of activities within their scope of work, even before the final governmental endorsement of the plan.

However, past experiences have shown that the political will of governments remains insufficient for the proper implementation of any national action plan in the absence of financial provisions. Governments will struggle and eventually fail in their mission of fulfilling their commitment if no funds are secured for this purpose.

In light of the financial crisis that Lebanon is going through, the main challenge for the successful implementation of the 1325 NAP lies in the funding of its interventions across the five strategic priorities.

In order to overcome this challenge and provide the NAP with optimal chances of success by ensuring its timely and effective implementation, NCLW led a highly participatory process for costing the 1325 NAP in order to help the government form a comprehensive picture of its future financial commitments, and to encourage the international community to finance activities that fall within countries' mandates and strategic plans to assist Lebanon.

This four-year NAP will undoubtedly pave the way to a peaceful and stable Lebanon where peace and security are strengthened by women's increased engagement in politics, security and defense, as well as in mediation and peace negotiations; where gender-equality is reached by providing women and men with perfectly equal rights and opportunities.



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\* President of The National Commission For Lebanese Women

# The Gendered Nature of PVE

Rubina Abu Zeinab\*

**The masculine image of violent extremism had a clear impact on the mental model of policymakers and researchers which have been often slanted toward men. It is until recently that this conviction started to change with evidence overwhelmingly proving that prioritizing women's inclusion increases the likelihood of peace; especially when women are involved in decision-making.**

There is a plenty of research on the role that gender inequality plays in the proliferation of violent extremism which confirms its nature as a highly gendered issue: it is highly sensitive to the propensity of gender inequality in a given society. The inclusive security report on 2015 observed that «Fourteen out of the seventeen countries at the bottom of the OECD's index for gender discrimination also experienced conflict in the last two decades.»

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSC 1325) has been a major milestone in mainstreaming gender in peace and stability; and resolution 2242 which recognizes the need to engage with women on CVE/PVE and urges Member States and the UN «to ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's

organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism.» Moreover, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the women, peace and security agenda have recognized the importance of prevention and the need for collective commitment to it. This approach was echoed by the United Nations Secretary General's Plan of Action for PVE which dedicated a specific pillar for women empowerment and called on all member states to ensure that efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism do not impact adversely on women's rights.

In Lebanon, the National Strategy for Preventing Violent Extremism, which was endorsed by the Council of Ministers early 2018, started from a clear understanding to the gendered nature of violent extremism. In that sense the strategy dedicated one of its pillars to «gender equality and the empowerment of women». The pillar covers four areas of activities: a) women's awareness of their constitutional and legal rights and of the risks of violent extremism at the individual and family levels; b) legislative reform to achieve justice and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women; c) women's participation in social, cultural and development

activities; and d) women's participation in decision-making and policy-making processes.

The post-strategy phase is based on a «whole-of-society» approach to the development of an executive action plan. Women experts, representatives of entities and activists have been key stakeholders in the consultation process while gender sensitivity has been mainstreamed in all the discussions in order to be recognized in the monitoring and evaluation system.

The role of women, and the question of gender at large, have been rooted in the history of the socio-political thinking. Plato's 'Republic' stated clearly that in the 'just city' humans should not be defined by the material properties of their bodies but rather by their cognitive function. In that sense, the twenty first century shall correct course and ensure that the whole of humanity is equally empowered and involved.

\* National Coordinator for Preventing Violent Extremism

## Women's Engagement in Conflict Resolution Essential for Sustainable Peace

Nadya Khalife\*

After the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1991 women were excluded from decision-making processes related to reconciliation, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. Women did not take part in the Ta'if Accords that brought the civil war to a halt in 1991 or subsequent national dialogues. In 2010, the National Dialogue Committee, set up by then President Michel Suleiman, included 19 male representatives from the country's major political parties, and no women participated in the sessions of the national dialogue.

Today, Lebanon continues to face internal and external insecurities, economic instability and political turmoil contributing to the country's increased volatility. In an effort to promote women's roles in conflict resolution and prevention, UN Women recently formed two local women's mediation networks in Abbassiyeh and Tyre in South Lebanon that aim to promote women's leadership in decision-making processes to more effectively engage women to resolve community-level conflicts. Two additional mediators' networks will soon be established in Ain El Helweh and Shatila to ensure that women's roles in conflict resolution are also amplified within Palestinian

communities.

One of the participants from Tyre, Hanan Saleh, a university professor, says «peace is necessary for the renewal of society and its development and we, in Lebanon, are in need of internal peace before external peace. These trainings contribute to a culture of increased dialogue for more effective conflict resolution.» She further notes «to decrease tensions, [we need] to concentrate more on our collective energies and benefit from our diversity and different points of views so that our diverse thoughts are seen as richness [for our communities] and not as reasons for conflict.»

Women's mediation networks respond to the priorities set forth in Lebanon's first National Action Plan (NAP) on UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women's meaningful participation in peace and security issues. The NAP 1325 is pending endorsement by the Council of Ministers.

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# Is the Medium Still the Message? Breaking the Glass Ceiling in Lebanon

**Professor Dr. Eugene Sensenig\***

As the saying goes, 'the medium is the message' and media platforms around the world are in a state of constant transformation. Is the message being reshaped as well; and if so for the better?

Over half a century ago gender equality activists began challenging discrimination and stereotyping of women on several fronts. They pointed to the glaring absence of female voices, and faces, globally. The few women who were mentioned were usually shown in traditional, inferior and submissive roles. Finally, portrayals of women were accused of condoning or encouraging gender based violence (GBV), sometimes subtly, but often openly. The struggle for gender equality in the media was a long uphill battle, both in the Global North and the Global South.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), great progress has been made. However, as victories were celebrated in one area, new forms of stereotyping were opening up elsewhere. It seems that neither the medium nor news, entertainment, and cultural content are the 'real message'. The core issue is power, control over resources, decision making and communication channels, and this has changed little in 50 years. Much has improved on the surface and this is not insignificant. Today, more women are producing media content and involved in presenting it, both in front of and behind the camera. A wide variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) have taken up the gender equality cause and are becoming increasingly media-savvy. Individual activists and grassroots movements now realize that the media frontier is a primary battleground when fighting GBV and promoting a world in which women and men are judged based on their merit. Today, most political parties in Lebanon have a gender-equality plank in their partisan platforms or media messages.

So why is the mainstream media playing field still tilted so unfairly? Why do women have to work twice as hard to advance in their careers, get their message out in the schools and universities, and break the glass ceiling in cinema, the music industry, theater, art and



design? One of the reasons is that patriarchal power remains invested in social injustice in the workplace, with respect to the family rights legislation, or full citizenship rights for Lebanese women. Equality in the media sector is seen as a threat to patriarchy. Another key problem is nepotism and 'cherry picking', where women are hired based on the proverbial 'wasta' (influence peddling) system or are promoted by men without the support of female networks and movements, which can 'cover their back' once they move up the career ladder in a man's world. Finally, the medium still is the message and sexism, and even GBV, in the digital media sector is as bad as it was in the old days of newspapers, magazines and radio broadcasting.

Today women are increasingly taking up leadership positions in the ICT sector, and many men have joined the struggle against stereotyping and GBV. Together they are focusing their efforts strategically at eradicating the root source of inequality in the media, the pervasive lack of meritocracy within Lebanese society. This struggle requires the combined voices of all genders, confessions and social classes, if we are going to collectively make a difference in the coming 50 years.

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# A Story of Women from Agricultural Cooperatives who went Global

Safaa Ayyad\*

**Agricultural cooperatives have long been a haven for women in rural villages to work closer to home and not far from their domestic duties. However, the ingenuity of some women made them a leading example in their surroundings enabling them to reach worldwide. From cooking and the popular Saj, two women have turned into fighters for the traditional Lebanese cuisine and contributors to its dissemination as a message of peace at home and abroad.**

## Ambassador of «Frakeh and Freekeh»

When asked to introduce herself, Zainab Qashmar (54 years old) replies with full confidence that she is the ambassador of «the Southern *Frakeh* and *Freekeh* with distinction». A title she has strived and worked hard to achieve from 2008 until today. The housewife, who quit school in third grade, never imagined that joining the cooperative of her southern village of Halousiyah (Tyre district) would lead her to tour the world with her «tasty food and prowess in marketing the traditional Lebanese mouneh products.» The Story of Zainab began after devoting many years of her youth to raise her three sons. When they grew up, she decided to be socially engaged in her town, so she joined the Halousiyah agricultural cooperative, which introduced her to the Souk el Tayeb where she marketed the products of five southern villages. And thanks to her talent she managed to sell all the products, and earned the trust of the organizers to showcase their distinctive product throughout the whole month. During the said month she gained the experience of «advertising and marketing» without any prior knowledge, «given that my sweet tongue is as good as my food.» From marketing Halousiyah olive oil, olives, thyme and southern Freekeh, Zainab then rose to the throne of southern cooking, which turned her life upside down, transforming her into a productive, socially and economically effective woman, offering food and culinary art for those who wish to learn.

Her main concern is to preserve the ancient Lebanese cuisine heritage and prevent «the invasion of the cities and their fast food of the Lebanese villages, whether in the South, the Bekaa, Mount Lebanon or the North.» Zainab considers food a tale rooted in the land, which is why she decided to make global the stories of South Lebanon cuisine. Therefore, she toured the southern regions seeking the elders to learn the old traditional dishes, their origin and story, and exclusively displayed them at



the Souk el Tayeb. As soon as she became famous, she visited many countries around the world such as France, India, Singapore, Belgium and Switzerland, to present the «South Lebanese Freekeh». Thereby, she challenged many obstacles, such as language and communication, but «her smile and the taste of good food were like her introductory label.» Zainab is proud to have conveyed to the world a different image of South Lebanon, which is associated with wars, displacement, deaths and injuries, by introducing them to the true story of the land and its riches from which she compiles her dishes, which she confirms to be unquestionably healthy.

Although Zainab moved to Beirut to work at the Souk el Tayeb and the «Tawlet» restaurant and joined the «Atayeb Al Rif» Cooperative, she did not forget to upgrade the situation of the

southern women who were part of the agricultural cooperative in Halousiyah. She relies on their agricultural products and energy to help prepare large quantities of the Freekeh recipe, contributing to their financial and moral support. «These women safeguard the southern dishes from extinction, and they linger in their land against all odds.» Qashmar is concerned about preserving the old things and the danger of the foreign food patterns spread in the local community, which is a threat to cultural identity, especially that the actual situation in Lebanon is not reassuring, and the cultural and food heritage is currently in danger. According to Zainab, today's generation knows nothing about traditional food and is only interested in speediness, and for that reason she offers cooking classes in Lebanon and abroad, for those who wish

to learn. «My goal is to protect my country's heritage, so how can I not pass it on to others?»

## Massoud: she broke traditions

Qashmar does not forget to introduce us to her work colleague Rima Massoud (52 years old), from the village of Ramlieh in the Aley district, who has another story of self-development and overcoming her social reality. Rima is skilled in baking the Saj bread and serves it in her village, to economically assist her husband who works in the agricultural sector. Rima was a member the «Association for Forests, Development and Conservation» which paved the way for her to participate in a training program with René Moawad Foundation for the development of the Lebanese women capacities, and she underwent training courses in economics, marketing, production and

mouneh. These courses served as a crossing gate for her from the mountain to Beirut, so she defied the traditions and customs facing the «mountain women» by working outside her region. And the Association for Association for Forests, Development and Conservation supported her by transporting the Saj

from the mountain to the «Souk el Tayeb».

At first, she was not bold enough to bake in public, but the encouragement she received and the flow of Lebanese and foreign customers to savor her Saj bread made her very daring. The qualitative shift in Rima's life has changed her

economic situation, and she became the first supporter of her three sons to reach university and become involved in the work market. Rima carries a message to all women about the necessity to enjoy financial independence, and work from home whether in the «crochet, mouneh or cooking.» «Her dream of going to

Beirut has turned into a tour with her Saj in European and Arab countries», to which she gives credit to the association which she joined years ago and which enabled her to tone her social, educational and economic skills.

\*Journalist

## Municipal Police Women at work to restore dialogue with citizens

Janine Jalkh\*

**While women in Lebanon still struggle to breach the walls of the political sphere - in which the Parliament includes only six women MPs while the Government four ministers - they are slowly and surely beginning to make their way into municipalities, many of which have opened their doors to women.**

The inclusion of women in municipal police units is now rising, as several municipalities have decided to inject their municipal police units with female officers who are capable of earning peoples' trust while protecting and reassuring them. Mayors are convinced of the need to change the traditional methods of suppression and coercion in policing by replacing them with dialogue and engagement with citizens. Based on that, several mayors have opted for an inclusive municipal police, given that women can better play this role in a country where the culture of coercion and violence remains the norm.

The Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with funds from the governments of Canada and the Netherlands, support the integration of women in municipal police as part of a larger project which aims at supporting municipalities to strengthen social stability. This was set based on consultations with municipalities with the aim of introducing policing methods that match growing needs for services of the population.

Given that women are more community-oriented, and enjoy better communication and listening skills than their male peers,

female police officers have gradually begun to establish themselves in municipalities such as Bourj Hammoud, Mina, Enfe, Zahle and Antelias, to name but a few.

In Antelias - women-managed to establish themselves in the the municipality's administration- after being recruited in 2017 by mayor Elie Abou Jaoudé. The mayor was extremely satisfied with the productivity of the women he had recruited in admin roles, so he decided to take it to another level by recruiting more women as municipal police agents. «They are simply more rigorous and much more professional than many men on the team,» the mayor explains.

Another asset that these new recruits can rely on is their gender. The cultural norms that force people to respect women and treat them gently, provides them with spontaneous help from the residents, making them eager to facilitate their tasks by showing kindness and greater cooperation.

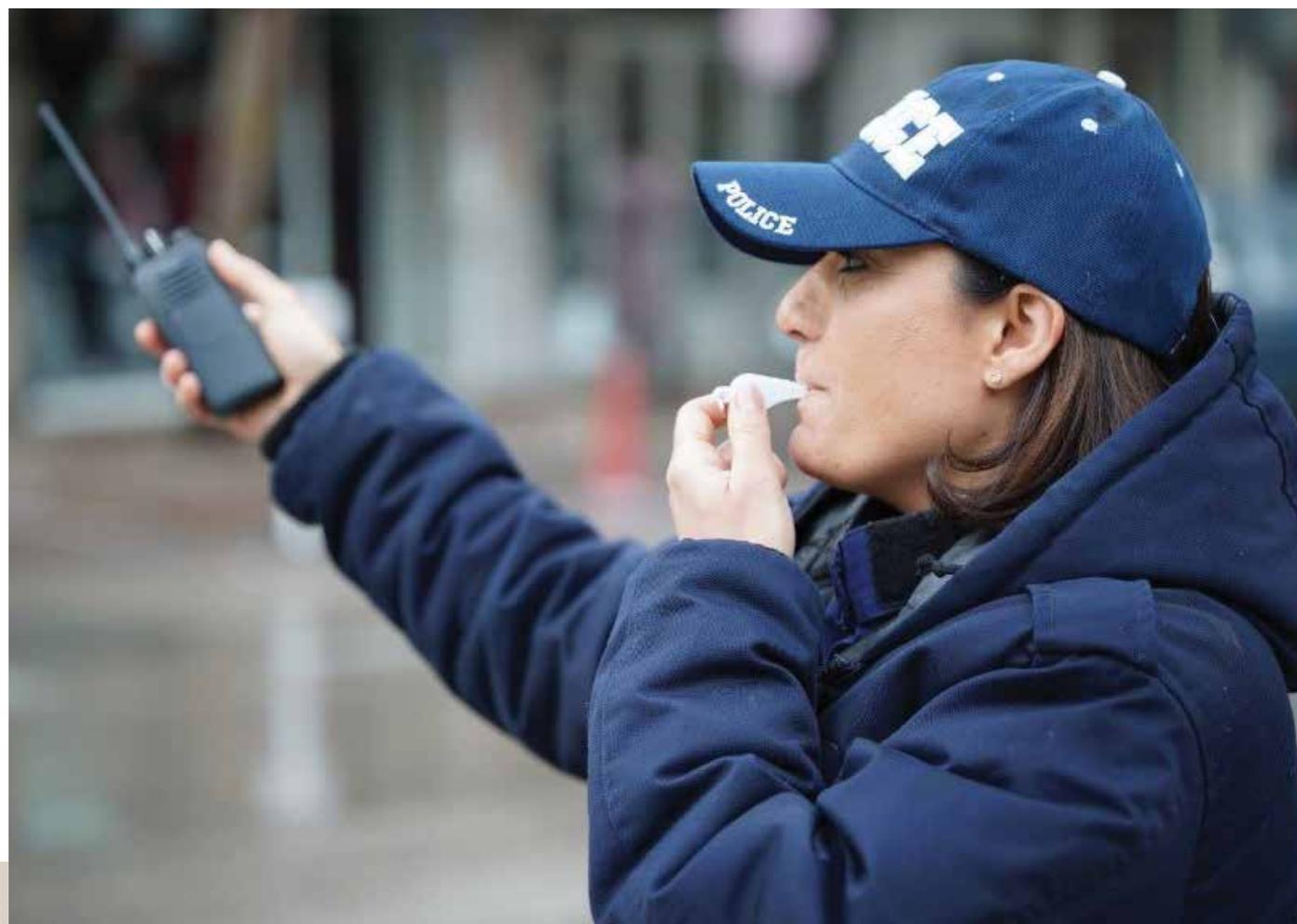
In Bourj Hammoud, the inclusion of women in both municipal police and administration was initiated a while ago. Women now represent nearly 34% of the workforce and some of them have been assigned to traffic management.

In the beginning, female municipal police faced intimidation attempts and inappropriate jokes, but they have now gained confidence and established themselves in a rather difficult environment. The social context was also difficult for Zahle's 15 female municipal police members who, over the years, have finally earned the respect of the people.

«In the beginning, nobody took us seriously, not only because we were women, but because of the poor perception the citizens had of the municipal police in general,» says Cosette Abdayem, who joined the team almost three years ago now. Over time, she says, she has learned to reconcile firmness and affability, sometimes using gentleness and active listening, and sometimes boldness and confidence when the situation got tough.

«Although very new at this stage, the feminization of municipal police would be more effective when municipalities are given the necessary resources and power to better enforce the law in a country where impunity is still prevalent,» explains an expert who monitors the project closely. According to her, women have an enormous potential that only needs to be revealed and put to good use.

\*Journalist at L'Orient-Le Jour newspaper



# Syrian Women-led Peacebuilding in Lebanon: Between Delusion & Possibilities

Massa Mufti\*

When I was asked to write about the role of Syrian women in peacebuilding education in the context of Lebanon, I instantly tried to reflect on the prompt by deconstructing the question in an attempt to understand it better. I started asking myself: What is really meant by “peacebuilding” when referring to the actions undertaken by Syrian women residing in Lebanon when the conflict itself is in Syria? Which women are we specifically talking about: Syrian refugee mothers, Syrian teachers, active women within the Syrian civil society, or women in the Syrian Diaspora? Who is implicated when it comes to educating children on peacebuilding in the context of crisis and conflict? Moreover, how can we address the notion of peacebuilding when peace itself is not reached in the country of origin of Syrian women? More importantly, how can we even initiate a discussion about peacebuilding if we do not start by addressing the root causes that have engendered the conflict in question? Maybe the question carries additionally an underlying message that peace in Lebanon is subject to debate as well?

For the sake of being concise, this piece will address specifically the Syrian refugee women who, according to UN Women, represent 52% of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon.<sup>(1)</sup> 80.9% of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon are women and children as of December 2017 (Yassin, 2018)<sup>(2)</sup>.

With regards to the notion of «peacebuilding», it is former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who introduced in his 1992 report «An Agenda for Peace», the concept of ‘peacebuilding’ to the UN as an «action which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict».<sup>(3)</sup> The Brahimi Report of 2000 elaborated further on peacebuilding activities to ensure that peacebuilding is more than just the absence of war. According to International Alert, peacebuilding comprises two phases of peace: ‘positive’ and ‘negative’: «The challenge is to use periods of stability, ‘negative peace’, to build the longer-term ‘positive’ peace which is measured by achieving improvements in governance, and in fair access to economic opportunities, justice, safety and other aspects of wellbeing, such as health, education and a decent environment in which to live.»<sup>(4)</sup>

Peacebuilding, therefore, is a highly intricate endeavor that does not end with reaching «stability», a pre-condition to establishing lasting peace. Moreover, peace education requires a holistic approach when it comes to education provision in the context of conflict and in host countries of refugees. Yet, from experience in this field, peace education is not a criterion in the Education Response adopted by UN agencies and international organizations who mostly dedicate their support towards the enrollment of Syrian refugee children in the Lebanese public schools as part of the RACE I & II launched by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education<sup>(5)</sup>. More importantly, Syrian teachers who carry a natural empathy and a common anguish with Syrian children, are not allowed to teach in Lebanon due to employment regulations. Having said that, what could be then the role of Syrian refugee women in peacebuilding education in the strikingly complex socio-political context of Lebanon?

According to positive psychologist<sup>(6)</sup>, Dr. Zelana Montminy, the pursuit of any wishful thinking such as happiness or peace is elusive. The only path to true self-fulfillment requires being able to confront challenges as



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**Host countries have a large stake in helping to develop the livelihood and educational skills of refugees in exile. When refugees repatriate, they return to fragile environments that are often at high risk of relapsing into conflict [...] Relapse into war often means the perpetuation of yet another refugee situation, with countries that hosted refugees in the past forced to do so again (IPI, 2011)**

opportunities, and building emotional strength at difficult times which requires resilience.<sup>(7)</sup> «Being resilient is more than just bouncing back» says Montminy, it is about a shift in mindset, leading to self-growth and making change. In other words, resilience is not about accepting the status quo which would become in this case a state of subordination as per Paulo Freire’s terms.

However, when safety and livelihood are primary concerns for Syrian refugee women, whether mothers, teachers or activists, contributions to peacebuilding and development become an afterthought.<sup>(8)</sup> And what mostly contributes in increasing the chance for durable peace and development, is supporting Syrian refugee women in Lebanon, who - according to UN Women, 83% of them have a larger decision-making role than before displacement. This support entails helping them become more resilient and more prominent actors for peacebuilding by developing their educational skills and offering them appropriate livelihood opportunities. A study on «Refugees and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding» elucidates that regional dynamics of peacebuilding and refugee situations carry much room for improvement and remain an untapped opportunity for host countries:

Host countries have a large stake in helping to develop the livelihood and educational skills of refugees in exile. When refugees repatriate, they return to fragile environments that are often at high risk of relapsing into conflict [...] Relapse into war often means the perpetuation of yet another refugee situation, with countries that hosted refugees in the past forced to do so again (IPI, 2011).<sup>(9)</sup>

As a Syrian refugee woman living in a harsh informal settlement in the Bekaa Valley said to me: «We know what we need, but it is THEY who need to be convinced». By «they», she meant the international community, the donor and host governments. In fact, she was right. Those key players need to be convinced to shift to a development approach by working on a comprehensive Pedagogy for Peace rather than a mere Education Response, and on «minding the gap» which relates to linking humanitarian assistance to longer-term development in order to prepare for the effective reintegration of refugees into their country of origin.<sup>(10)</sup> Otherwise, peacebuilding remains a self-deceiving endeavor if all stakeholders do not take effective part in it. It takes a whole village to make peace a reality.

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(1) [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2019-01/the\\_status\\_of\\_syrian\\_refugee\\_women\\_in\\_lebanon.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2019-01/the_status_of_syrian_refugee_women_in_lebanon.pdf)

(2) Yassin, Nasser. 101 Facts & Figures on the Syrian Refugee Crisis. 2018

(3) <https://www.globalpolicy.org/un-reform/un-reform-initiatives/secretary-general-boutros-boutrosghalis-reform-agenda-1992-to-1996/48077.html>

(4) <https://www.international-alert.org/what-we-do/what-is-peacebuilding>

(5) <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2016/05/25/reaching-all-children-with-education-lebanons-national-education-response-strategy-to-the-syria-crisis/>

(6) Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing, and an applied approach to optimal functioning. It has also been defined as the study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities and organisations to thrive (Gable & Haidt, 2005, Sheldon & King, 2001).

(7) Montminy, Zelana. 21 Days to Resilience. HarperOne. 2016

(8) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/15423166.2016.1239404>

(9) [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_e\\_rpt\\_refugees.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_e_rpt_refugees.pdf)

(10) Ibis

# Transformation of Women in Times of Conflict

Ola Al Junde\*

**A conflict is defined as an actual dispute between two or more parties, who believe their goals to be incompatible or that resources are insufficient for both of them, and that a party is hindering the achievement of the other's goals, especially if that party is unknown, or that each side perceives the other differently than its true image encompassing all its life aspects. This image in our minds is often stronger than the real picture we see with our own eyes on a daily basis.**

The image of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, of whom 78% are women and children, is a conception depicting the Syrian women refugees since the early years of displacement as barefoot, often dirty weeping ladies, sex workers, standing in queues for aid, illiterate women and farm workers. And even though many Lebanese see Syrian women refugees in various places as different from this picture, but our mobile phones, TV screens and news reports are stronger than our actual lives.

We are not talking about this conception here in order to convey the real situation, but we are talking about a message conveyed to the Lebanese viewer through this picture «Look, they are poor people different in customs, traditions and culture, who came to share our already limited resources». Therefore, the Syrians in Lebanon remained anonymous, hiding behind this picture as a cause of an underlying conflict and a possibility of a manifest violent conflict at every moment.

Because women usually naturally manage problems analysis, and usually accept temporary gains for the purpose of caring for their family for which they are almost entirely responsible, they started working as individuals and groups in a primitive unorganized manner at the beginning, but later preceded women's organizations in the will to work and in setting priorities. While the organizations focused on

providing relief and psychological support at best, mothers went to education and sought employment opportunities, shaking off the dust of a long and exhausting journey of displacement. Year after year, some Syrian and Lebanese organizations began to emerge from their shell and join women in local communities to work with them on long-term strategic and development goals.

Since 2017, Syrian women have been participating with Lebanese and Palestinian women's groups, domestic workers' groups, and LGBTQ groups to commemorate International Women's Day on the streets of Beirut. Many of them gave statements to the media voicing their desire to speak up regarding Syrian affairs in general and their status as refugees in particular. And so there were Syrian women who did not request assistance or relief, but demanded social

justice for all women under the slogan: our issues are many and our struggle is one. These rallies have not only changed the image of Syrian women in the minds of participants from other groups, but also changed the dynamics of the relationship between groups of host society and women refugees, both mentally and concretely, in an exemplary manner. They have indeed seen the solidarity of Lebanese women who defend them despite the significant harshness of the streets of Beirut.

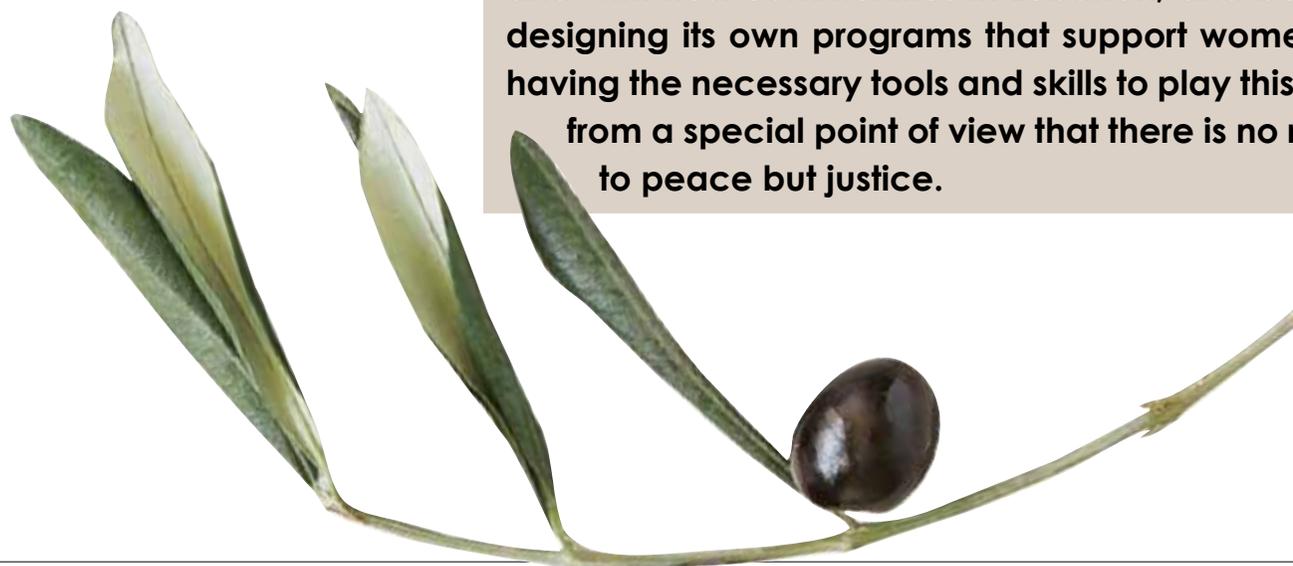
With them, we discovered at the «Women Now For Development» organization which arranged this participation, that peace building begins in the streets, in narrow alleys, in homes and despite diverse issues and goals.

In another project carried out by «Women Now For Development» and entitled Women's Theatre, Syrian women took the stage to present their

play «Tarha Bayda» in Beirut, as part of ABAAD organization campaign for the abolishment of Article 215 of the Lebanese law which exempts a rapist from criminal sanctions if he marries the raped victim, and addressed a wide audience about women's similar experiences in the face of discrimination and violence. In the play «Souriyeh», they spoke about their experience of displacement and loss and their demands of social justice for all women. These ladies also said, in a live audio visual presentation, that they fight to be survivors of violence, not victims of conflict or its cause, and that they can be an essential resource with their experience and knowledge, and the trials they overcame and are still trying to overcome.

At first, women's access to social, psychological support, rehabilitation and training centers, was a result of a conscious sense defining their needs to change their common image and their willingness to change themselves as well. While today, it is the result of a deep understanding that their role in building peace must address the causes of injustice against them, their Lebanese counterparts, and all the women living on Lebanese territory marginalized and deprived of their rights in general, and that they must face this injustice by learning, training and seeking work opportunities that preserve their dignity. When speaking about Lebanon, Syrian women are now able to overcome the racist image of Lebanon that comes to mind, thanks to the eagerness of Lebanese women activists, human rights defenders and women of various nationalities on the Lebanese territory to provide assistance, help and expertise. They can also say that there are two kinds of Lebanon, a Lebanon confiscated by the Lebanese government with its political tensions, and a Lebanon of the steadfast solidary people who defend their rights and any other people rights for a decent life, whoever they are.

**The Women Now for Development organization in Lebanon, which aims at empowering women everywhere to participate in all aspects of political, economic and socio-cultural life, was one of the first organizations to recognize the role of local women in the process of change in any society and in any legal situation. In 2015, it started addressing the role of local women in building peace at the local level and with host communities in Lebanon, and began designing its own programs that support women in having the necessary tools and skills to play this role from a special point of view that there is no road to peace but justice.**



\* Participation Officer - Women Now For Development

# Palestinian Women Active in all Fields

## Rabie Moustafa\*

The suffering of the Palestinian community in Lebanon is chief, but what largely alleviates it is the fact that the women of this community are very active in various fields; they take initiatives and they dream. Below are profiles of four of them.

### Fadia Loubani

#### Director of "Peace for You" Association in Burj el Barajneh Camp

An active, visionary woman. That's how Fadia describes herself, and if you know her you will agree that these two qualities apply to her quite well. In 1986, the Burj el-Barajneh camp for Palestinian refugees where she lives, was ravaged by the war and the siege which led to the inability of the camp's children to reach their schools located outside the camp. Therefore, Fadia established with a number of women in the camp a temporary school in an empty yard, so that the students don't waste time. She was 17 years old at that time. After the war ended, she wanted to benefit from the experience and established a kindergarten alongside other four women and started collecting symbolic contributions which enabled her to build a classroom. Over the years, she received assistance from Palestinian and international organizations that made the project become today a social center that hosts kindergarten children and women's activities, and be equipped with a playground and a stage where a theatrical performance was held last year that saw Fadia becoming a playwright and an actress. Today she has two dreams: the first is to establish a sewing workshop that employs women living in the camp, regardless of their nationalities, to empower them economically, and the second is to build a fully equipped theater within the camp that will be a space for free expression and interaction. Given what she has been able to accomplish in her previous projects, one or both of these dreams could likely come true!



### Leila El Ali

#### Executive Director of Najdeh Association

Social work is inseparable from the political activity for Leila, who comes from a militant family and whose militant personality began to form with the rise of the national tide in Lebanon in the early seventies, and then further evolved during her university years, which coincided with the restrictions on Palestinian presence after the invasion and departure of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and during which she became a student activist and later president of the Youth Union of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. She then went to work for the Najdeh Association, which is active in Palestinian camps in the areas of relief, vocational training and women's empowerment. Leila lived most of her life in the Shatila camp, which she remembers as open to its Lebanese surroundings, and a home for activists from all over the world, and she is saddened by the marginalization and isolation that the camp goes through nowadays. In her work with Najdeh, she insists that the diverse assistance should be given to Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and everyone who needs it because she believes that the distinction between those in need is immoral. Leila is also one of the right-to-work campaign founders that calls for Palestinians to be fully granted this right in Lebanon.

Few hours before the 1982 massacre in Shatila Camp, Leila miraculously went out with her family, and came back after the slaughter to see dead bodies scattered on the ground, including the bodies of Lebanese neighbors. But despite this traumatic experience and others over the years, she decided to remain an active woman and stay always optimistic that some justice can be achieved in this world.



### Mira Sidawi

#### Actress, Filmmaker and Writer

Mira is always looking for ways to express herself freely. She found one when she entered the Lebanese University to study theatre, and later filmmaking became an additional means. Between theatre and cinema, she got engaged in writing short stories and today her various and interlocked projects include the completion of her first novel. After graduating from university, she founded with playwrights, mostly Palestinian although some are Lebanese, the Camp Theatre Troupe based in Burj el-Barajneh camp. She then trained a group of Kanafani Foundation children on theatre, and at the end of the training produced a play about Ghassan Kanafani, whose name the foundation holds. Her most acclaimed plays are "Ayoubia", which relates the stories of Palestinian women from the camp, and the recently screened play "It's All My Fault", about the significance of having a child in the camp and the associated difficulties and funny situations. In cinema, she directed the documentary "Four Wheels Camp", which sarcastically tackles the issue of death in Palestinian camps, and she is now finalizing her second movie, "Al Jidar: The Wall", which follows the lives of young people from Shatila camp who tried to bring Pink Floyd to the camp. Mira recognizes and creates her lost homeland through her individual achievement and through a rebellion that is far from raising haughty slogans and self-victimization and closer to the normal daily struggle. This is probably what makes her artistic practice special.



### Ghada Kassem

#### Trainer in Popular Education and Adult Education

Ghada has been active in community work for 33 years, and started her activity with the Middle East Council of Churches in Saida, being the daughter of the Ain el-Hilweh camp located in the city. She then worked in the field of community health for 13 years before embarking in 1999 on the Ecumenical Project for Popular Education, as a teacher and designer of educational programs for adults. These programs are based on the development of knowledge in a variety of areas in combination with literacy, and aim to develop life skills that enable participants from both genders to achieve better employment opportunities. The Ecumenical Project also provides training to the cadres of Palestinian and Lebanese institutions alike in the field of popular education. Ghada is also a human rights activist who contributes to the struggle for Palestinian rights in Lebanon, and is also an activist in women's work and aspires to establish a non-partisan coalition for Palestinian women that non-working women can join. Ghada has three daughters who have all finished their university education, and thus giving birth to three new active Palestinian women can be added to her achievements!



## Partnering for Peace Through Women's Economic Empowerment

Violette Safadi\*

Peace and economic stability are inherently linked - as are women and men - in building a sustainable future for Lebanon. The country's development depends on the effective engagement of women at all levels - from decision-making to political, social and economic participation. The recent launch of the Mashreq Gender Facility, which aims at increasing women's participation in the labor market, as well as of Lebanon's National Action Plan on UN Resolution 1325 are testaments to the Government of Lebanon's strategic commitment to advancing the role of women in furthering peace, security and economic growth.

Governmental entities, civil society, media and private sector are key partners to ensure this reform agenda results in concrete action and real change. The Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth (EEWAY) is designing and implementing programs and partnerships that champion gender-sensitive policies and opportunities that enable women to more effectively participate in the labor market. This includes advocating for an improved enabling environment that ensures the rights of women in the work place, promotes family-friendly policies and practices, and upholds the positive roles that women play at work, at home, and in society at large.

We are partnering with private sector companies and membership organizations, such as the Women Leaders Council and the Lebanese League of Women in Business, to advance economic opportunities for women, close the gaps they face in access to markets and finance, as well as to advocate for the legal framework that facilitates equality in the labor market, promotes leadership of women, and combats discrimination and sexual harassment in the work place.

But to ultimately transform the structures of the Lebanese economy, we must improve the position of women by proactively engaging men. Men are our allies in transforming inequitable gender norms into positive ones; in reducing gender-based violence; and in promoting more equal relationships at home and at work. Ensuring women's agency will enable women to make choices that benefit their own well-being and that of their families' and of Lebanon as a whole.

\* Minister of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth

## The Giant Worker

I wish my body were my land. I would put up my tent on it. No one would be exasperated by me. I wish my hammer was not made to knock down my house nor my little bucket to fill my debris.



Mohamad Khayata, Visual Artist



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The UNDP «Peace Building in Lebanon» project works since 2007 on enhancing mutual understanding and promoting social cohesion by addressing root causes of conflict in Lebanon. The project has been also lately working on addressing the impact of the Syrian crisis on social stability in Lebanon. The project supports different groups from local leaders and local actors, to educators, journalists, youth and civil society activists, in developing medium and long-term strategies for peace building, crisis management and conflict prevention.

### For more information:

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