

“Opening the door to young Palestinian women’s participation in political parties”

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Introduction:

The topic of youth and women’s participation in decision-making positions has recently received wide-scale attention in light of the marginalization of these sectors. This calls for a change in stereotypes in favor of promoting the participation of women leaders as key players in all institutions and bodies. Based on this premise, MIFTAH held a meeting with faction and women leaders who called for the removal or alleviation of the obstacles they face in reaching decision-making positions through the ratification of several practical approaches to help them reach these positions within parties and factions.

Overall framework

Given that women and youth represent the largest sectors of Palestinian society, it is imperative that they are given the opportunity to take their places in the decision-making realm. It is illogical that a society excludes the elements of its own strength, especially when speaking about justice and development. Hence, it is time to change the current approach towards one more appreciative of women and youth and to promote their active presence in factions, institutions and the government.

Discussion:

Historically, Palestinian women have always played a vanguard role alongside men in the national struggle. Today, they have come a long way in their participation in all Palestinian arenas. Women are in decision-making positions already in Palestinian institutions and have proven they have surpassed other Arab women in leaps and bounds. However, this role is still lacking and is not up to par with the aspirations for women or youth. We want broader and more active participation of women in the future in proportion to their size in society. Hence, we have taken important steps within the factions to raise women’s representation and participation in all leadership bodies by enforcing a minimum representation for their participation with the hope of raising this percentage in the future through a binding law. This requires constant efforts from women themselves to insist on their rights and to educate themselves they can be free from this cycle of marginalization and assume a bigger role in leadership positions.

Practical mechanisms among factions

The vision however, is still foggy due to the many changes in the Palestinian and Arab arenas. Palestinian factions have not changed many of their tools or modified their programs in line with the requirements of the present stage and the challenges to our cause and society. They are not aligned with the aspirations and needs of women and youth leadership, which has increased their exclusion and limited political action to the older generation. What is needed today is to reopen the way for women and youth and to change current perceptions to one based on rights and respect, if we are ever to embrace changes in our society and confront growing fundamentalist ideas and practices.

Recommendations

- 1- To call on civil society institutions to take a bigger role in educating women and raising their awareness of the importance of their participation in political life.
- 2- Palestinian women are doing themselves an injustice by excluding themselves. Hence they must involve themselves more, especially in terms of active participation.
- 3- The need to ratify a legal system or a law promoting the active participation of women in political life whether at the national or factional level, and to obligate all organizations and institutions to involve women in proportion to their size in society.
- 4- The need to work towards changing the cultural and social backdrop that limits women's and youths' participation through designing programs for this purpose.
- 5- To regain a democratic lifestyle, end the political division and renew the social contract between citizens and leadership institutions through immediate democratic elections in which women strongly participate.
- 6- To demand that political factions provide more space for women and remove the obstacles that prevent them from participating. They should also adopt a clear and transparent approach in their choosing process, far removed from favoritism and nepotism.
- 7- The need to establish new relationships based on respect and appreciation for qualifications and expertise, especially among women, instead of policies based on courtesies and patriarchal authority, which contribute to the marginalization of women and limit their participation.