

Role of youth and women leaders in political parties – mechanisms for action and influence

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Introduction:

This session is a continuation of the previous session and its resultant work with the youth sector in this context in order to look for mechanisms of action and influence that would allow youth and women leaders to reach decision-making positions in factions.

MIFTAH's programs target women and youth leaders and seek to build their capacities in the fields of dialogue, debate and the intellectual dimension of political action in addition to providing opportunities for them to take on leadership positions with preparedness and competency. Through field work with youths, it became clear that there was a setback in general political knowledge among them, coupled with their reluctance to participate in political factions. This is in addition to the growing gap of understanding between them and leaders at the grassroots level and the fact that factions have not produced young and able youth leaders to be at the forefront of political action.

Discussion:

One of the most important recommendations that came out of the first part of the session was the need to formulate a specific conceptual framework to revive the role played by factions in creating youth and women leaders in decision-making positions. The recommendation also included formulating a clear vision with a political dimension for encompassing young men and women; there was also a suggestion to work towards reviving political factions in a bid to create new channels of communication with them and to give them the space to practice their role through developing the mechanisms at their disposal, which coincide with the requirements of the current circumstances.

Field work with the youth sector has highlighted a number of indicators, most importantly the setback in awareness of political culture. This was apparent in two workshops held on the women's rights and independence declarations. The youth had no idea about the contents of these documents. Furthermore, the youth sector is currently living in social crisis full of frustration and uncertainty; they lack motivation and encouragement because of the state of political uncertainty in the current phase and the lack of sense that there is no real leadership able

to pull them out of this crisis. Additionally, the younger generation has not experienced the political work and thinking of former generations.

Furthermore, the role of progressive leftist factions has retreated, thus increasing the feeling of frustration and lack of confidence among women and youth circles, both of which have witnessed a setback in the ideological awareness of factions given the absence in the role of the elite at the popular level. This is in contrast to the factions with a religious ideology, which explains their broad popular acceptance, something translated in the election results.

Tools in the hands of the factions

It has become an urgent need to take advantage of new media and to use the virtual world and social network websites, given that they are considered an important tool for pressure and advocacy of youth issues. However, at the same time, they are not a goal in and of themselves and do not take the place of work on the ground, mobilization in the field and the real organization provided by political factions in support of the demands of youths or for confronting any force that seeks to take advantage of these youths' potentials and direct them towards their own purposes and agendas.

Youth, in their quest to escape the stereotypes of traditional societal norms and society's patriarchal nature, must take the reins of initiative into their hands in facing these norms, which exclude women and marginalize their role. They must also push towards creating a youth project that is clear and integrated with the national program and with political action.

There must be a departure from this state of political and intellectual confusion and a fight against the drop in the level of education and knowledge among youth and women in society. There must also be a push against the fundamental and religious practices in society in order to emerge with an enlightened perspective on contemporary issues having to do with modernity.

Recommendations:

1. There must be a marriage between the old and new generations, which would allow for opportunities for youth to exercise their role and to work perpendicularly within a joint national framework.
2. Reviving the role of the progressive leftist approach in influencing educational and curriculum and practical approaches directed at Palestinian youths.
3. Use of social network to form support and advocacy for youth issues and to work in finding a balance on the ground.
4. The need to link political action with a factional and organizational framework, which would guarantee its sustainability.
5. There must be positive intervention in favor of women in factions; they need motivation and positive discrimination through laws and legislation.
6. Work on unifying a national program.