

Report

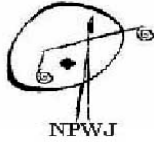
The 2nd Women Democracy Forum

*“Two Years of Democratic Transformation:
Achievements and Missed Opportunities”*

3-5 November 2006
Sana’a-Yemen

Sana’a - Yemen

Sisters’ Arab Forum for Human Rights SAF organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Rights, the Second Women Democracy Forum during 3 to 5 November 2006, under the theme “Two Years of Democratic Transformation: Achievements and Missed Opportunities”. The Forum was sponsored by Middle East Partnership Initiative MEPI, FIDH, No Peace Without Justice NPWJ organization, and United Nations Fund for Women UNIFEM. The Forum was attended by 40 participants from 14 Arab states, Turkey, Afghanistan and by a number of activists from Yemen. *(list of participants attached)*.



Agenda of the Forum:

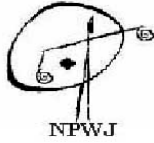
First Day: Friday, 30 November 2006

Opening Ceremony:

The Forum was opened on Friday 30 November 2006, at 8 p.m. with the attendance of 135 participants representing officials, diplomats, representatives of international organizations, parliament, governments, civil society organizations and media.



Ms. Rana Ghanim, Project Officer welcomed the participants and briefed them on the Democracy Forum. Followed by Ms. Amal Basha, Coordinator of the WDF and Chairwoman of SAF who called regimes in the Arab region to implement political reform, empower women with their all rights and facilitate their participation in the decision-making process, noting that policy-making is not exclusively masculine affairs, rather women are genuine partners in the political reform process. Women participation in the political reform should not be seen as unwelcomed interference or women should rather bother themselves with other issues, as some may claim; she added. Ms. Basha noted that freedom of movement and participation in events that aims at creating political transformation is an integral part of males and females human rights. What some female participants in the Forum faced by official authorities at some Arab states has become a common practice, where they were denied entry visa to Yemen. Such behavior contradicts with these countries' official stand. Many regimes consider democratic dialogue as a threat that undermines their "thrones" contradicting their public political stand where they claim to respect human rights and commit to democracy, peaceful dialogue and partnership with civil society. Ms. Basha added that it is painful to see that two Arab countries; Iraq and Palestine are still under occupation at the third millennium. She confirmed that the 33 days war waged against Lebanon by Israel has made Lebanon the graveyard for international justice, where UN stood tied-handed unable to take an immediate resolution to stop the war and save innocents' blood-shed. Ms. Basha emphasized that democracy could not be forced by tanks, this will lead only to more blood-shed as the situation in Iraq now. She called all regimes that are reluctant to bring about democratic reforms, to review history and learn its



lessons. History will not have mercy on them and peoples will not forgive their oppressors or those who humiliate and degrade them and deny their right of freedom and free choice to shape their own history.

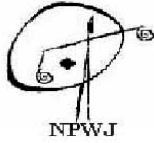


Mr. Nabil Khouri, Deputy Chief of Mission, USA Embassy in Yemen, affirmed that women in the Arab region were deprived their basic rights and freedoms due to poverty and illiteracy, where 40 percent of people in Yemen live under poverty line. Yemen occupied 151st rank out of 171 in the human development indicator; 70 percent of women in rural areas are illiterate, he added. Mr. Khouri mentioned that US has aided women in the Arab region with 50 million dollar

during the past ten years at the economic, social and political areas. Yemen alone has received 5 millions of such aid. He called Yemen to benefit from US focus on women rights and to approach governmental and nongovernmental institutions in this respect. He called the WDF to adopt a number of recommendations and work to implement them during the coming years.

Mr. Gianluca Eramo, Program Officer at NPWJ stressed in his speech that his organization is working to enhance partnership with the international organizations to achieve justice to women and child rights. He emphasized that women voices are to be heard, women are to strive for their rights to leave impact on the community to attain support for their all rights. He called to move from ideas and theories into practice, confirming that NPWJ will exert all efforts with donors' community to honor their commitments and create wider partnership with international organizations. Mr. Eramo pointed to the positive trends related to women and children as seen in Morocco, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt. Few years ago women voice was unheard; however recent political developments changed many countries' concepts and policies in handling women issues, as seen in Japan, where the Japanese government plans to submit a draft law that would allow a female child of a monarch to ascend to the throne.

Ms. Catherine Booth, FIDH representative said in her speech that issues which bring them together today are of essential importance. This initiative represents a significant opportunity to evaluate progress made over the past two years in the region since the First Women Democracy Forum in December 2004 and to seek new strategies to enhance the political empowerment and advancement of women, protect of human rights for all and reinforce progress achieved since Beijing 95 Conference in China. She called to stop all oppressions on women and remove preservation expressed on CEDAW. She further called



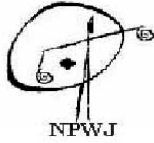
to report on women development and progress. She highlighted that another conference convened in Rabat to ensure full women rights, increase their participation in the decision-making process access to senior posts as stipulated at Beijing Conference and by the UN and to tackle challenges that faces women around the world. She called for effective implementation to these rights either by institutions or individuals being the responsibility of all to support women and attain justice. She noted that FIDH is striving to identify women issues and challenges to provide support for countries to enable them overcome them in favor of women everywhere.



Mr. Gamal Amir, Editor-in-Chief of Al Wasat independent newspaper called women to implement the 2nd WDF recommendations and benefit from media. He urged women to struggle for their political rights; noting that what have been granted by political decision could easily be deprived by the same decision. Women should adopt educational policy using press, media and through religion scholars. Mr. Amir called to enhance political reform, democratic transformation and to integrate women, particularly under the international pressure. He hoped that all 2nd WDF recommendations for women could be achieved by the time of the third Forum, noting that nothing has been achieved since the first Forum in 2004.

Dr. Khadiga Al Haisami, Minister of Human Rights, sponsor of the 2nd WDF, stressed in her speech that Yemeni women did not achieve their aspirations yet. Where illiteracy, poverty and high birth rate are impeding women participation in the decision-making process. She considered the 2nd WDF as a result of noble efforts to promote women rights in this part of the world. She called to foster existing initiatives, create new ones to improve women political empowerment and mend discrepancies, where possible, to promote women participation in the public life and achieve their aspirations.

Ms. Rana Ghanim concluded the ceremony announcing the launching of Women Democratic Watch website and its objectives. The website has been demonstrated to the participants, finally the participants gathered for dinner at the hotel, and the opening session was concluded.



Second Day: Saturday, 4 November 2006.

First Session: Official Initiatives on Political Reform and Democratic Transformation and Women Involvement.

Chairperson: Dr. Ebtisam Al Kutbi, Emirates Society for Human Rights, UAE

Rapporteur: Ms. Za'fran Al Mahana, Middle East Center for Human Rights Development, Yemen.

Ms. Gamila Ali Ragaa, Expert in women issues in Yemen addressed in her presentation "Official Political Reforms and Democratic Transformation Initiatives and Women Involvement" therein. She reviewed Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative and other initiatives, demands and reforms in the region. She highlighted the three shortfalls in the Arab states; i.e. lack of freedom, lack of women empowerment and lack of capacities and knowledge. She underlined the Middle East Partnership Initiative axles for the year 2002, which focuses on:

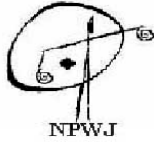
- Political Axle: aims at institutional development to foster:
 - Democratic Practices and Electoral Systems,
 - Sovereignty of Law, Media Independence and Judiciary Independence.
- Education Axle: aims at raising youth and children enrolment at education facilities, in addition to improve education quality and link it to reality.
- Economic Axle: aims at promoting private sector to create employment opportunities and establish free market zones in the Middle East.

Ms. Ragaa reviewed achievements at women empowerment axle as follows:

- Improving political and communication skills for women candidates.
- Participation of 42 women from 16 countries in the small enterprises training, etc.
- Establishment of women lawyers' network.
- Training of women judges and lawyers on personal status cases.

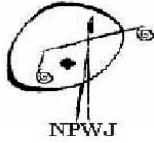
Ms. Raga concluded with a number of remarks and recommendations on G8 document, Democracy Assistance Dialogue Initiative, Democratic Transformation Conference and the supportive role of the (civil) society; as follows:

- Collection of all resolutions, recommendations, treaties, and UN international declarations concerned directly and indirectly with women rights and empowerment in order to implement them.
- Collection of all recommendations and outcomes of all conferences, international, regional and national meetings and gatherings concerned with women in order to



revise and identify those which comply with the development and the political, economical, cultural, religious and social changes, consider their impact on women and endeavor to revitalize them.

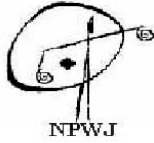
- Establish observatory and an independent institutions at the region to collect, analyze and study data from the countries of the region. Also to provide scientific database to assist concerned UN commissions such as:
 - CEDAW Commission, *and*
 - Human Rights Commission.
- Independent surveillance to countries' commitment to implement ratified institutions and remove all reservations and further to ratify protocols and assist civil society organization in preparing shadow reports.
- The paper also recommended publishing local experiences and manuals at the regional level to be used in the consultations, studies, training and preparation of programs and plans that support women empowerment.
- Involve wider number of women activists, pioneers and youth in the conferences concerned with reform in the broader Middle East and North Africa in general, and in conferences concerned with women in particular.
- Consider quota system and easily accessible electoral system to encourage women participation in the political process.
- Address various women sectors (rural women, working women, housewives.. etc) issues through development programs to empower them.
- G8, donors and concerned bodies that support broader Middle East and North Africa Partnership Initiatives to deal with genuine partnership approach with the region in addressing reform and women issues.
- Employ wider number of women in the initiatives, bodies and apparatuses, Foundation for the Future and Future Fund.
- Capacity building of the civil society in the region and protect its independence. Apply certain criteria to assess its performance based on transparency and accountability.
- Represent women's civil society organizations in the Arab Dialogue Forum mechanism.
- Set forth timeframe to implement women status reform programs in the region with due assessment and follow-up processes to determine their efficiency.
- Expedite donors support to reform in the region vis-à-vis supporting combating terror and adopting security resolutions.
- Warn against the contradicting religious message that confuses (impedes) women's status reform march.
- Benefit from the three Arab Human Development Reports and integrate women issues in its various endeavors. Also to employ relevant gender expertise to reach such integration.



- Provide sufficient and sustainable funds and support for women organizations in the region to implement their comprehensive programs.
- Publication and provision of assessment information and reports related to countries and civil society's performance on women issues at all levels.
- Avoid generalization in describing women status in the region.
- Reaffirm the significance of peer-to-peer partnership between civil society, business sector and governments in the reform process.
- Existence of genuine political will among governments to implement reform requirements and women empowerment.

Ms. Gihan Abu Zaid, Gender Expert from Women Development Forum in Egypt presented her study on Civil Society Initiatives on Political Reforms, Democratic Transformation and Women Involvement. She identified in her study women status in the civil society issued documents and the approaches employed therein to revitalize women participation at all levels. Ms. Abu Zaid divided her paper into three sections as follows:

- demonstrating the political, economical, social and cultural contexts of Arab women in relation to globalization.
- Analyzing the initiatives from a gender perspective as a methodology that reflects a wider and a comprehensive ability to explain the gap between women and men at each society within the specific economic, political and cultural conditions.
- Listing a number of recommendations that may support civil society initiatives and deepen their impact to achieve the overall goal; which are:
 - Prepare Arab Women Reform Document based on a gender perspective by Arab nongovernmental feminism and human rights organizations on the basis of a clear and specific vision and philosophy on reform and includes a set of demands and mechanisms that governed by general principles.
 - Revise and analyze Arab constitutions according to the gender, and include clear and decisive legal articles that ensure full and equal participation for women.
 - Increase the number of feminism human rights organizations and encourage feminist development organizations to adopt human rights principles and CEDAW. Promote feminist organizations' capacity and facilitate their existence in the Arab civil society.
 - Raise Arab human rights organizations' awareness with the gender issues to play greater roles in minimizing the gender gap.
 - Raise civil and human rights organizations' awareness with the significance of integrating gender in all programs and projects.
 - Prepare a viable Arab Strategy by women to improve women status, includes action plan and priorities for the coming five years.



- Review the factors responsible for deteriorating political, economic and legal position of women in each state; also prepare viable and suitable programs of action for each state.
- Envisage comprehensive Arab feminism vision to empower women economically according to an overall strategy to alleviate poverty among women.
- Embark on gender analysis gender at all policy-making level or implementation processes, to avoid describing Arab policies as gender blind to gender needs, to become gender sensitive.
- Arab civil society organizations shall built parallel cultural models based on human rights principles, and disseminates them.
- Building information capacity of the civil society organizations to create public bases awareness with human rights principles.
- Combat poverty being the base for all types of discrimination against women, rather than satisfying with alleviating poverty logo.
- Include all citizens, males and females under the health and social security umbrella.
- Generate liberal Islamic and Christian discourse.

Second Session: Outcomes of tow Years of Democratic Transformation

Chairperson: Sanem Guner, Turkish Foundation for Social and Economic Studies, Turkey

Rapporteur: Brigitte Chilibian, Justice without Border, Lebanon

First: North Africa Countries

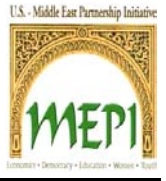
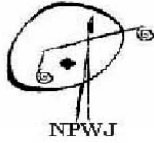
Libya Paper

Ms. Amal Al Abidi, Faculty of Economic, Tripoli University

“could not participate in the Forum due to personal reasons” however she sent her paper to the Forum.”

The paper stated that the Libyan Citizenship law does not allow children of Libyan women to a foreign father to hold Libyan citizenship. In fact they need entry visa to enter Libya. Penal Code also discriminates between men and women with respect to adultery cases. Article (375) of the Law permits verification of the sentence imposed on a man who killed one of his female relatives for committing adultery. If such a man physically assaulted his female relative he is sentenced with only tow year’s imprisonment. However the law does not criminalize beating or light physical assaults. Ms. Al Abidi noted that President Qadafi has called to review and amend Penal Code; also to abolish exceptional courts and legislations, on top public court, however none of these have been accomplished.

Ms. Al Abidi called to amend national legislations pertaining to women in conformity to international treaties that Libya has ratified. Further to amend and reform discriminatory legislations, such as Citizenship and Labor Laws. She also called to enact laws that criminalize all forms of violence against women including rape and sexual harassment. Ms.



Al Abidi called to establish independent women societies and reconsider education curricula. She further called to establish specialized research institutions concerned with feminism studies and create database that monitors development among women movement in Libya. Also to adopt equality principles in occupying political posts based on competition. Ms. Al Abidi called to adopt transparency, equality and maintain clear procedures to facilitate males and females participation in the political process. She noted that despite the conducive official political message to promote women status in Libya, women occupation of senior political and leading posts are not that significant, there are only two female ministers with a plenty of male ministers, judiciary is still limited to females. Although women are represented at the Public Committees, yet they have zero impact on the decision-making process.

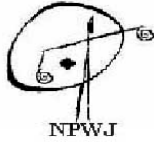
Tunis Paper

Ms. Insaf Khereddin, Media Officer, Arab Institute for Human Rights, Tunis.

Ms. Khereddin noted that the Personal, Physical and Labor Code have been amended. Females represent 40 percent of the physicians in Tunis. Women rate in parliament multiplied from 1.1 to 22.7 percent, at municipality raised to reach 26 percent, 15.2 percent as advisors, and 20.6 percent during the year 2005. there are 857 female advisors at the municipality. Females also represent 20 percent at the economic and social council, 6.6 percent at judiciary, 25 percent at higher councils, 25 percent at local councils, 32 percent as advisors, women judges 21 percent, women lawyers 30.3 percent, justice 19 percent, and legal experts 2.5 percent. Citizenship Law has allowed for children of Tunisian women to obtain Tunisian nationality, also for children of unknown fathers and those who born in Tunis. Foreign wives married to Tunisians are also granted the nationality, unlike foreign husbands who have to reside in Tunis for 5 years, which is a positive discrimination. Family Law also provides for equal wages for men and women. However women does not occupy senior posts in the cabinet such as premiership, interior minister, defense minister or speaker, where the traditional perspective is still dominant. Ms. Al Abidi noted that discrimination still exists in inheritance issue and efforts are exerted to make amendments. Media plays positive role to ensure women presence in political life and contributes to media sector. Women ministry in Tunis supports such endeavors.

Ms. Ahlam Belhaj, Tunis Society for Democrat Women, Tunis.

Ms. Belahj notes that Tunis is not involved in the broader Middle East project. She confirmed that laws in Tunis need to be amended. Women have attained considerable gains. She remarked that new law on sexual harassment has been amended following a campaign launched by Democratic Women Society. The Law criminalizes sexual harassment. Also marriage age was raised to 18 years for both females and males. Also Labor Laws were amended. The parliament is requested to ratify Arab Charter on Human

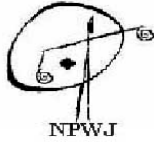


Rights, yet civil society organizations are against the Charter as it does not meet all women human rights demands. She noted that women rate in the parliament is 20.7 percent, 7.15 percent in the legislative authority, however these rates are still beyond expectations. However gap still exists between legislations and reality, which display certain instances of discriminations. In addition to the fact that poverty is still feminized and women freedoms are limited. She concluded that no democracy without equality and no citizenship without freedoms.

Morocco Paper

Ms. Aisha Al Hegami, Faculty of Law, Morocco.

Ms. Al Hegami remarked that Morocco witnesses qualitative development at the human rights level due to the civil society struggle, and the new approaches adopted by the government. Such development is demonstrated by the investigations carried out on the victims of state violence during the sixties and seventies of last century. Women also suffered from such violence as prisoners and/or relatives to prisoners and abductees. Justice and Reconciliation Council was established in this respect. The Council organized public hearing sessions for the victims and compensated them financially. As with respect to women's rights, the Moroccan constitution provides for equality of all citizens before law. Women and men enjoy equal political rights. However women are still underrepresented at decision-making posts (only two ministers and one advisor to the king). Also political parties nomination of women during elections is still below the level required. Moroccan Elections Law has adopted the National Code which states that "National constituency is allocated for 30 members". Political parties agreed to reserve them for women, as a result women representation in the parliament has increased considerably during September 2002 elections from 0.61% to 10.6%. However there is no clear legal provision to specify such constituency for women, under the pretext that quota system contradicts with the constitution, thereby it is subject to political parties will. Feminist and human rights organizations are endeavoring to approve quota system by the Elections Law and raise it to 30 percent. Also Morocco has adopted new Family Law in February 2006. The Law is derived from religion and universal human rights standards. It reflects equal perspective as seen in the article which established marriage age at 18 years for both male and female. Family Law also stipulates that guardianship "*Willaya*" is optional for adult female, and that running of family and children affairs is a joint responsibility of man and woman. It also restricts polygamy to judge's permission. Women are granted the right of *Shiqaq* (disunity) to end marriage, unlike the situation before where women were forced to prove damage in order to get divorced, or to resort to *Khul'u* (*type of divorce where women can claim divorce in lieu of financial compensation to be paid to the husband*), which is misused in a greedy way by some husbands. Article 49 of the Law provides that husband and wife can split money gained during marriage life either amicably when concluding



marriage contract, or by referring to general proof codes when ending marriage. Children of Moroccan women married to foreigners will shortly be granted the right of citizenship.

Algeria Paper

Ms. Melika bin Ouda, Al Belida University, Algeria

Ms. Ouda remarked that Algerian women became president of a political party for the first time and contested in the presidential elections in 2005. Algeria has ratified all treaties and article (132) of the Constitution has provided supremacy of international treaties over national legislations. Algeria has made legislature amendments to promote and develop women rights, as seen in the Civil Law, Citizenship Law and Family Law. Citizenship Law which was enacted in 27 February 2005 grants citizenship to the children of Algerian women, foreign wives and husbands, without being forced to abandon their original citizenship. Family Law, enacted in 4 May 2005, has identified marriage age at 19 years for both males and females.

As with respect to political process, three women occupies senior public posts related to family, education and culture. There are 55 female MPs out of 533 MPs, 27 in the National Public Council and 28 in the Nation's Council.

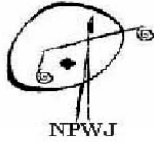
Egypt Paper

Ms. Hala Shukralla, New Women Foundation, Egypt.

Ms. Shkralla stressed that women are facing severe challenges and are aspiring to achieve justice, equality and human values; meanwhile police state and unlawful elements have developed. Women are faced with physical assault whenever they go out for demonstrations. She confirmed that they challenge that paradigm that women are lower beings and do not have dignity or rights, and challenge governments which believe they will remain in power forever; liberalism is considered as part of development.

Ms. Shukralla considered recent elections as a comedy by all measures, where women position in the parliament has deteriorated compared to the current parliament. However there is positive development with the amendment of article (76) of the constitution to provide for electing the president, unlike before when referendum is practiced to elect the president since the inception of republic regime in Egypt. Nonetheless, parliamentary election is nothing but comedy. National ruling party nominated 6 women, 5 only made it to the parliament. Also female candidates don't have election program, and many contested elections independently without adopting unified election program fearing that they will not win elections.

Second: Levant Arab Region (*Mashrig*)



Jordan Paper

Ms. Basma Al Hasan, Arab Organization for Human Rights, Jordan.

Ms. Al Hasan noted that women situation has deteriorated significantly at various levels. However quota system has allocated 6 seats in the parliament out of 110 seats. Women presence in Islamist parties is weak. Nonetheless, women occupied senior posts including one ministerial, secretary general and chancellor of university, while in the previous cabinet there were two female ministers. The Penal code has abolished honor crimes, granted equal rights and equal penalty for women and men. Personal Status Law raised marriage age to 18 years for both males and females. In 2004 *Khul'u* law was enacted and women were granted the right of *Khul'u*. Citizenship Law was not amended to grant children of Jordanian women married to a foreign husband with the citizenship. While Women Law – Family Protection Code, 2004 – safeguards women from violence and a protection house (facility) was established. In a breakthrough, a woman was appointed as Director of District in the capital Amman.

Syria Paper

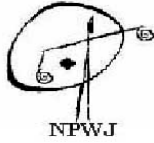
Ms. Hala Ne'mi, Judge, Syria.

Ms. Ne'mi noted that Syrian laws have increased women sufferings, physical and psychological problems. All types of violence against women have escalated. Syrian women are still judged by the Penal Code enacted in 1949, Personal Code for the year 1953 and Citizenship Code for the year 1969, these laws undermines women rights at all aspects. It is known that Ba'th party is controlling everything in Syria, establishment of other political parties is not allowed. However, two women ministers were appointed, Minister of Labor and Immigrants. Syrian president appointed a woman as arts affairs advisor. There are 30 female MPs out of 250 MPs, which is reasonable number compared with other countries, noting that they won elections through free competition without quota system. However, number of women in the parliament are still low considering their population which represents half of the population.

Ms. Da'd Musa, Syrian Center for Women Human Rights, Syria.

“Could not participate in the Forum due to security measures, however she sent her paper”.

Ms. Musa remarked that Syrian women are still demanding equality, abolishment of discriminatory laws, and amend Personal Status, Penalty and Citizenship Laws. Further they demand to abolish Ba'th party control over public organizations and professional syndicates. The Syrian Parliament has enacted recently Parties' Law and amended societies' law to allow for feminist civil organizations and human rights organizations to operate in safe environment. Empowering women participation in public life, training them



and educating them to participate in electoral process in the parliament, local councils, political parties, unions and others, are becoming persistent demands raised by Syrians.

Iraq Paper

Ginan Husein Nafl, Iraqi Organization for Human Rights Coordination, Iraq

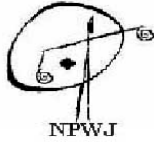
“Could not attend the Forum as she could not get the visa. However she sent her paper.”

Ms. Nafl noted that women situation is improving under the recent political and constitutional development. Women are occupying notable positions and have increasing impact on constitutional and legal aspects in Iraq. Iraq Administration Code during the transitional period in 2004 and Iraqi Constitution for the year 2005, have provided women with 25 percent of the seats in the Council out the 275 seats. Accordingly, a number of female MPs reached 73 members. Such high number of females MPs led to develop laws and policies in favor of women rights and promoted their social and political position. The Iraqi Constitution provided for women participation in public life and contribution to form the government or executive institutions. Women were represented in the Transitional Ruling Council by 3 women ministers out of 25 ministers, and by 4 women in the Transitional Government out of 31. Women are represented by 6 ministers in the current government out of 36, and are represented in the parliament as well. Women also contributed to enact new laws particularly that have a direct impact on their rights. For instance, women united against Law No. (137) issued by Governing Council on organizing personal status to replace law No. 188 of 1956 which organizes personal status according to individuals’ religion or cult. They managed to maintain the Law No. 188 calling for certain amendments to the Law. Women in Iraq are also striving to abolish article (41) of the Constitution which legalize law No. 137. Women also occupy judges’ posts following preparatory courses in the Judicial Institute.

Palestine Paper

Ms. Suna A’rori, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy Issues, Palestine.

Ms. A’rori noted in her paper that following Hamas election and women election to the local councils and parliament, many demands raised to amend Elections Law and to reduce election age from 28 to 25 years. However, many amendments to laws were postponed following Hamas election and refusal to acknowledge treaties signed by the previous government with Israel. Ms. A’rori confirmed that women have marginal impact. They lack funding, which negatively impact their rights; however what is going on has a negative impact on all males and females. In 3 November 2004, 51 women contested election in 26 local councils in the West Bank. It is the first time in Palestinian history that women contest for Local Councils’ elections. The number of candidates raised to 150 following adoption of quota system, 11 of which withdrawn, leaving 139 candidates in the West Bank and 65 in Gaza Strip, proving that the quota system has encouraged women to



contest elections. 52 women won the local councils' elections compared to 3535 men, with the rate of 2 percent.

Lebanon Paper

Ms. Brigitte Chilibian, Justice without Borders, Lebanon.

Ms. Chilibian mentioned that following assassination of former PM, Rafiq Al Hariri, Syrian withdrawal and Israel recent aggression on Lebanon, women are preoccupied with relief operations more than with political issues, thereby many women issues have been postponed. Nevertheless, Lebanese constitution has maintained equal status for men and women and committed to UN charter and international treaties which enjoy supremacy over national legislations. There is wide religious varieties in Lebanon with 19 Muslim and Christian sects, and 19 laws. Parliamentary elections were conducted in 2005 and a committee was formed to draft new elections law. 6 women made their way to the parliament out of 128. Quota system was proposed in the same year to grant women 30 percent of the seats, and was laid in the parliament table for approval; however some MPs opposed quota system considering it as negative discrimination, and other support the system as a positive discrimination that assists in electing more than 25 women to the parliament instead of 6, however Israel aggression halted debates over the draft law.

Ms. Chilibian noted that there is one female minister in Lebanon, 23 women won local councils elections in 2004, one female judge, not a single woman in the Constitutional Council, furthermore women has never chaired the Bar Association. Women are deprived of many rights due to the wide ethnic and sectarian variety.

Third Session: Islamic Countries and Democracy Partners

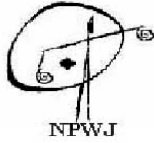
Chairperson: Dr. Hala Shukralla, New Women Foundation, Egypt

Rapporteur: Mr. Nabil Abdulhafeez Majed, Social and Democratic Forum, Yemen.

Afghanistan Paper

Roya Rahmani, International Center for Democracy Development, Afghanistan.

Ms. Rahmani remarked that all gender issues are always referred to the Ministry of Women Affairs. In 2004 registration process 10.5 million voters had registered. About 42% of those registered were women; the elected president received 48 % of his total vote from female voters. Many women claimed that they voted according to their husbands' will. Quota system has provided women with 25 percent of the seats. Legal age is specified at 17 years for both males and females. The 2004 Constitution confirms gender equality. Laws are based on the Islamic *Shari'a* following *Hanafi* doctrine. There is only one woman in the new Cabinet. The deteriorated security situation has a negative impact on all issues, including women's.



Iran Paper

Ms. Elahi Kolai, Tehran University, Iran.

'Could not attend the Forum, visa was not granted, however she sent her paper'

Ms. Kolai confirmed that the sixth reformist parliament is much better than the current seventh parliament. The former parliament strived to improve women status and ratified CEDAW; however, Trustees Council has rejected the Convention claiming that it contradicts the Islamic values, the position which the current parliament has adopted. Such position has caused a great setback to women issues. Although women are represented in the seventh parliament, yet they are not supportive of their issues, rather they stood against their rights claiming that it is against *Shari'a*. as with respect to calls to adopt quota system, president Mahmoud Najad has rejected these demands under the pretext that it is considered as discrimination against women. Conservative women MPs also refused to support CEDAW ratification. Parliament has identified 70 articles of CEDAW as contradicting *Shari'a* rules, despite the ongoing disagreement on such issue in Iran. Ms. Kolai remarked that Iran Civil Law states in articles (964 and 976) that children of Iranian women married to a foreign husband may obtain the citizenship same as the case with men. She further called for amending certain laws and gender integration.

Turkey Paper

Ms. Sanem Guner, Turkish Foundation for Social and Economical Studies, Turkey.

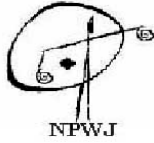
Ms. Guner confirmed that women in Turkey are struggling for their issues and status. Some are dealing with women issues from an Islamic perspective, and many female Islamist activists are striving to ensure that Islam is not restricted to males' interpretation *Ijtihad*. Struggle between progress and traditions engulfs the whole region likewise struggle between secularism and Islamism. Women have achieved many successes at certain issues such as honor crimes and managed to criminalize such incidents. Also efforts are exerted to consolidate partnership between governments and civil society organizations to press for implementing international treaties and CEDAW in particular. Personal Status Law, Penal Code and laws pertaining to honor crimes were amended. Ms. Guner called civil society to monitor and press for implementing CEDAW, she believes that they are in the right track, yet CEDAW must be implemented.

Gulf and Arab Peninsula States

United Arab Emirates Paper

Ms. Ebtisam Al Kutbi, Emirates Society for Human Rights, UAE

It is known that no political parties in UAE, rather there are societies which address women issues, also few elite that write and talk about reform; however, there are no lobby groups



for change. There is considerable openness as with respect to social freedoms due to the existence of various nationalities in the country. Further, there is no legislative discrimination, there are two religious doctrines *Maliki* in Dubai and Abu Dhabi and *Hanbali* - which is more conservative - in other emirates. The Women Union has called to discuss social affairs draft law, yet the state was unfair to women who follow *Maliki* doctrine. UAE signed CEDAW with nine reservations. There are two female ministers; economic minister and social affairs minister and one woman in the diplomatic corps. Late 2005 head of the state made amendments in the National Council, 40 members used to be appointed, now 20 are elected and 20 are appointed. However right to vote is limited to certain number of voters. The Women Union has no hand in that. The Citizenship Law does not allow for the children of Emirate woman to a foreign father to obtain Emirates citizenship.

Bahrain Paper

Ms. Rabab Marhon, Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, Bahrain.

Ms. Marhon noted that there are two women ministers and one judge. Bahrain witnessed recently the establishment of the Women Union, enactment of law on divorce women, foundation of millennium fund and wife right to keep the apartment as major developments. However nonexistence of statistics on violence against women issue is one of the major negative facts.

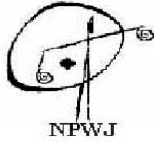
Saudi Arabia Paper

Ms. Fawzia Bashatah, Researcher and Professor, King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Ms. Bashatah noted that Saudi Arabia is lagging behind on democratization; however, there are reform movements surfaced during the past three years with certain political openness. There is no parliament, no political parties although there are municipalities with zero presence of women. However such terms as democratic action has been introduced which is a positive sign, yet there is a religious argument among religious sheikhs on women participation in elections as a voter and a candidate. There is approval of the cabinet to women serve in posts that fits with women. Also, there is National Dialogue Committee, women have participated in the second meeting and National Dialogue Center was launched, also a center for women issues was established.

Qatar Paper

Ms. Moza Al Maliki, Qatar University, Qatar.

Ms. Al Maliki confirmed that Qatari women have achieved significant progress. For the first time a woman has been appointed as a university chancellor, also most of the deans are women. Moreover, *Khul'u* is granted for women. There is one female prosecutor, but no female judge. Elections and democracy culture has become a common concept among



public. Furthermore Moza Al Maliki Training Center is training women to acknowledge their rights and claim them. Also a Women Rights Committee was established recently in Qatar. Qatar now is preparing for 2007 parliamentary elections, where training courses have been conducted for women to run for elections and raise their awareness with political issues. Family Law has granted women the right of custody to their children till the age of 13 years.

Kuwait Paper

Dr. Heila AL Makimi, Kuwait University, Kuwait.

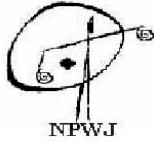
Dr. Al Makimi noted that significance of women political rights is derived from the fact that women represent the majority of the population, thereby nonparticipation of women is depriving the majority the right of participation which is provided by the Constitution. Women were banned from political participation by the previous Elections Law which is as a contradictory to the Constitution. However, approval of women participation enroots democracy and ensures constitution sovereignty. There are certain (religious) societies against women although there are women members. Also there are quasi-governmental organizations and the Women Cultural and Social Society which is criticized for being an elite society. Islamists have good presence in the parliament the matter that (negatively) impacts women right of participation. Women did not make their way to the parliament this year, due to the unfavorable political atmosphere among voters, limited candidacy time; moreover women were not well prepared for elections and were politically new faces. Women have contested 2006 elections following amendment made to the law to permit their participation, however none has won the elections.

Yemen Paper

Ms. Belquis Al-Lahabi, Democratic School, Yemen.

Ms. Al Lahabi noted that 2006 elections deprived women from winning local councils elections despite the fact that women represent more than 46 percent of the registered voters, however they are highly underrepresented compared to their high rate. This is attributed to the political parties' position, where women support has no place inside the parties or during elections. There are 27 discriminatory laws against women in Yemen that have not been amended yet despite repeated demands. Women active in politics and media are further facing harassments and slanders in quasi-governmental newspapers to shun them away from politics. Ms. Al Lahabi noted that despite numerous conferences on women, yet they did not serve women cause. Women position in latest elections remained worse than ever and women coalition did not achieve their aspirations. Ms. Al Lahabi recommended the following:

- reinforce Yemeni women coalition and maintain strong administrative mechanism and invent new mechanisms.



- Prepare studies on recent elections by feminist coalitions to identify factors that impacted women participation in this process.
- Review and amend laws that impede genuine women participation and strive for advocacy to amend such laws prior to next elections.
- Identify capacity of women who run elections whether they won, lost or withdrawn from the process also to collect data on those who received training to contest elections to assess their capacity to run parliamentary elections.
- Launch long term activities for three years with women at their constituencies to secure public support in case they lack party support in 2009 elections.
- Negotiate with political parties to reach a certain mechanism that enable women to be more involved in administrating their parties and ensure their representation.
- Involve women in the Supreme Committee for Elections and Referendum to contribute to women elections.
- Organize fundraising campaigns to assist women in next elections.

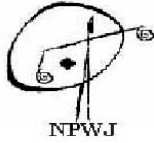
At the conclusion, the participants were requested to register at the next day thematic sessions and another theme was added as “Revitalize Women Democracy Watch Website” to replace watching the WDW Website session.

Third Day: Sunday, 5 November 2006.

The workshop started at 10 a.m. and concluded at 1 p.m. the 4 Rapporteurs of the 4 working groups presented the following outcomes:

First Working Group: Lessons Learnt after two year of Democratic Transformation: Achievements and Challenges.

Politically	Economically	Socially	Culturally
Political administration at appointment issues	Systematic methodology to impoverish women	Dominations of norms and traditions in spite of the ratified international treaties on women	Nonexistence of media strategic vision towards women
Weak presence of women in the political parties due to parties position	Stereotyped women economic empowerment projects	Domination of the traditional and political elite over development	Lack of awareness on international treaties and rare reference to them



Lack of political awareness among male political parties leaders	Lack of economic empowerment policies (rural, urban areas)	Stereotyped look on women at the family and community levels	Ratifying treaties without implementing them
Undermining multiparty system and concept			Lack of awareness among women on their rights and legal culture
Lack of conducive legal environment for women political participation			Illiteracy among males and females
Political instability and occupation in the region			Fanatic religious discourse that negatively impacts women empowerment
			Non ratification of the Optional Protocol of CEDAW

First Working Group noted that:

- achievements during the past two years 2005-2006 were not up to some countries' aspirations to approve and implement quota system.
- Some laws were amended at certain states in favor of women such as; Personal Status Law, Penal Code, Family Law and Citizenship Law.
- Women reached senior political posts at certain countries, although their situation deteriorated in others.

Second Working Group: Existing Mechanisms and Extent of their Success concluded that:

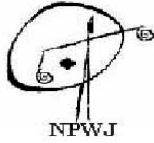
- a. Quota System: implemented at some countries, (partial, elections, constitutional, assignment) quota.

Extent of Success:

Increased number of women in the elected bodies.

Constrains are:

Lack of awareness on quota system.



Non acceptance of political parties of quota.

Nonexistence of quota legislations in countries that implement it (Morocco).

Demands:

- Provide a comprehensive perspective to implement quota system that avoids present faults.
- Expand quota system to include decision-making posts, elected bodies, civil society organizations and participation in national and international conferences and symposia.
- Enhance quota culture through social upbringing institutions.
- b. awareness and capacity building programs (governmental and nongovernmental).
 - amend laws and legislations.
 - Political parties:
Existence of strong political parties in key factor to revitalize democracy, existence of effective civil society and of women at leading posts.

Success Indicators:

- increased number of female voters at certain countries.
- Increased number of women at civil society organizations.
- Increased number of feminist civil society organizations.

Obstacles:

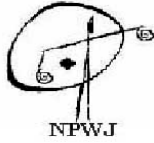
- rare programs that target building of young leaders capacities.
- Use of an inadequate language beyond targeted women comprehension.
- Short term of the programs life span.
- Most programs are depending on foreign fund.
- Non sustainability.
- Lack of institutionalized activity.
- Competition among civil society organizations and nonexistence of integration.
- Programs are focusing on political skills only.



Third Working Group: What to do? Future Vision, concluded that:

- Develop comprehensive and independent feminist vision on all community issues; economic, social and political.
- Develop and refine religious concept from a unilateral masculine perspective.
- Deal with all references (stakeholders) to promote women rights.
- Lobby among political stakeholders, such as:
 - a. State, constitutional and legal legislation bodies.
 - b. Political parties: communicate and influence their programs including that concerned with women issues.
 - c. Influence media: women image, information strategy, school curriculum and social upbringing.
 - d. Influence public opinions.
 - e. Raise women capacity: politically, legally and on Islamic jurisprudence.
 - f. Raise politician women capacities: rehabilitation courses focusing on supporting women at local councils – networking among women advisors.
 - g. Rehabilitation courses for youth and involve them in the political processes and mechanisms.
 - h. Political women supportive monitoring institutions – database.
 - i. Develop social programs emerging from gender perspective.
 - j. Involve with the wide women grass roots through training, networking and join forces with social movements to advance their issues and deal with them as a party.
 - k. Quota system: as a temporary phase necessity at the party level and for candidacy – legalize the system and include it in the constitution (constitutional amendment).

Feminist organizations and the civil society:



To take advantage and deal cautiously with funds and seek national and nongovernmental funds.

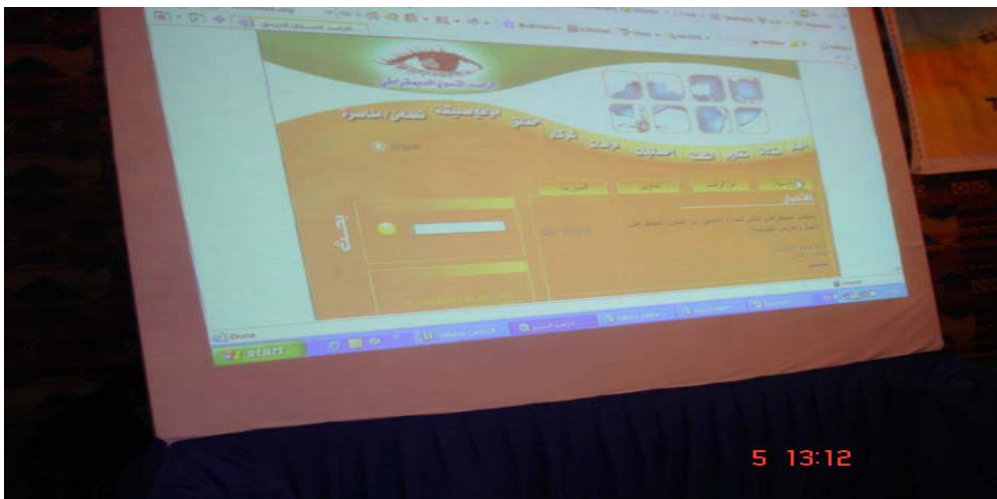
Fourth Working Group: Revitalizing Women Democracy Watch Website, provided the following recommendations:

a). The Layout:

- conduct a competition to design the website logo.
- rearrange to include the following windows:
 - a. International treaties related to the WDW website activities.
 - b. Archive.
 - c. Official websites.
- use Arabic, English and French languages in the website.

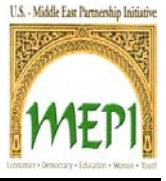
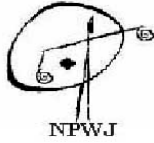
b). Organizational:

1. draft an article of association includes:
 - objectives of the Watch.
 - Membership.
 - Bodies.
 - Funding.



N.P: it is recommended that the body shall include an advisory body responsible for proofreading and selections of subjects to be included.

- Use of attractive colors in the website.
- Use of images and caricatures.
- Display successful women programs.
- Open a window for model women elections programs.



A questionnaire has been distributed to evaluate the Second Women Democracy Forum, as with respect to organization, objective, interaction and results. Following are the datum collected:

Details	percentage
Background Paper on the WDF	89
Tickets reservations and obtaining visa	93
Opening ceremony	76
Media presence in the opening ceremony	93
Organization and follow-up by the SAF	93
Documentations	91
Official Initiatives on Political Reform and Democratic Transformations and Women Involvement Study, by Ms. Gamila Ali Ragaa	89
Civil Society Initiatives on Political Reform, Democratic Transformation and Women Involvement Study, by Ms. Gihan Abu Zeid	86
Time provided to prepare working papers	82.5
Country working papers	65
Presentation of working papers	67.5
Level of interaction by the participants	84
Themes of the workshops	87
Interaction and deliberations in the workshops	91
Workshops reports	82.5
Administrative/logistic assistance by SAF staff	98
Accommodation	93
Meals at the hotel	81.5
Hotel services	87
Dinner at Shaibani Restaurant	94
Lunch ant Al Fakhir Restaurant	100
Dinner at Manqul Restaurant	100
Women special get together party	100
Tour to old city and the Rock Palace	100

The 2nd WDF received extensive media coverage, where Al-Jazeera satellite channel broadcast the whole opening ceremony for one hour at Al-Jazeera Mubasher. Yemen satellite channel, Al-Arabia and Al-Hurra also showed the opening ceremony. Many local and international newspapers and websites interviewed some of the participants. ‘*attached press clippings*’.

The 2nd WDF concluded at 3 p.m. on Sunday, 5 November 2006.

**Edi Al Munefi, Rapoteur General of
The 2nd Women Democracy Forum**