

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of **Global Dialogue and Democracy** MIFTAH  
المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحوار العالمي والديمقراطية



## **Report**

# **A Study of the Obstacles which Hinder the Equal Representation of Women and the Youth inside the various bodies of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Limit their Access to Decision-Making Positions**

**The design and preparation of this study and its accompanying report were implemented by:**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. Introduction

This study was prepared by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy “**MIFTAH**”, along with several women organizations and social and legal institutions and political parties, to empower and promote the equal political participation of women and the youth, support their access to various decision-making positions and to remove the impediments and challenges which hinder their progress. **MIFTAH** and its partners are seeking to formulate an effective strategy and action plan to perform lobbying and advocacy activities, enhance the political participation of women and the youth and promote their access to decision-making positions.

This report presents the main findings/results of a field study which was conducted to examine, understand and analyze the various factors which limit the equal representation of women and the youth inside the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its factions and bodies and hinder their access to decision-making positions inside this organization. The report also presents a number of insightful recommendations for enhancing the equal representation of women and the youth and promoting their political participation and access to decision-making positions.

Our adopted study methodology includes a mixture of qualitative research methods - and especially those which enhance the level of participation – in order to obtain in-depth results related to various issues. The research methods include the following:-

- ◆ A review of the documents of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), along with its regulations, policies, laws and literature related to this subject.

- ◆ In-depth personal interviews with a number of political, community, women and youth leaders, as well as intellectuals and leaders of various unions and associations.
- ◆ A meeting with a group of youth activists.
- ◆ Group interviews with the members of the project's Executive Committee, including a number of high-ranking political leaders from various political parties, factions and popular unions inside the PLO, along with a number of youth activists and academics.

## **2. Key Findings**

### **A. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of women in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?**

1. Our in-depth review of a number of PLO laws, regulations, legislations and policies – along with the internal regulations of several associations, popular unions and PLO-affiliated factions – showed the neutrality of the legal, regulatory and legislative provisions and the non-existence of any references, texts or statements which discriminate against women in terms of representation, rights and duties; including the right to elect and be elected. This shows that the reason behind the low representation and weak participation of women inside the PLO structures and components is not attributed to any discrimination in the laws but can rather be linked to the practices and applications on the ground.

2. The study also shows that the reason behind the low representation of women and their inability to reach decision-making positions has to do with a number of cultural and social factors, as well as administrative and institutional practices as follows:-

- ◆ The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its leaders and political system were influenced by the patriarchal, male-dominated culture which believes in the capabilities of men but undermines the abilities of women and see their existence as a mere “attachment” or supplement to the work of men and an additional “decoration” for “beautifying” the scene.

- ◆ The PLO was established outside the motherland in an environment which was filled with risks and challenges, and it adopted the armed struggle and secret guerilla activities and worked to remain independent from all Arab attempts to intervene in its affairs. This further enhanced the status and domination of male leaders in this organization.
- ◆ The PLO's adoption of a Quota system based on factional agreements weakened the democratic process and prevented the holding of elections for the selection of leaders, hence strengthening the domination of traditional male leaders.
- ◆ The Post-Oslo period saw a decline in the role and status of the PLO and its affiliated political parties and factions and witnessed the domination of the Palestinian Authority. This led to weakening the PLO on all levels; including the absence of democratic work processes, not resorting to elections for the rotation of power, the disruption of many PLO plans and programs, not holding regular meetings inside the PLO, not admitting any new members inside its councils and leadership positions, and the absence of any control mechanisms or accountability inside the PLO.
- ◆ The internal political divisions disrupted many PLO activities and exacerbated the challenges and problems faced by this organization.
- ◆ The PLO's sole focus on the political struggle and the idea of liberation while unfortunately neglecting the social struggle led to the domination of traditional male leaders in the various decision-making positions.
- ◆ The women's movement had a weak performance due to several reasons summarized as follows: the absence of a common women-related vision which can be transformed to agreed plans, work mechanisms and demands which everyone can support; the intense factional competition led to the dispersion of efforts and weakened the coordination with civil society components, thus isolating the demands of women as a women-only matter which is not related to anyone else; the decline of the grassroots/popular action and the weak level of cohesion and synergy between women organizations and their respective environments and audiences limited their ability to do mobilization; the weak programs that were unable to

produce young leaders who are capable of mobilizing the women and planning and implementing effective activities pertaining to women.

- ◆ The absence of any obligatory mechanisms and monitoring means to maintain and preserve the achievements and gains of the women movement; such as maintaining the Central Council's decision regarding a 30% Women Quota inside the PLO.
- ◆ The study showed that the situation of associations and popular unions is not better than that of the political parties and factions. This is because many of these associations and unions have not held any elections for a long period of time, do not have any female representation inside their administrative bodies and there are no compulsory regulations for holding elections on a regular basis or any laws which guarantee the implementation of the Women Quota during elections.

**B. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of the youth in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?**

1. The study showed that there are many common reasons/factors for excluding and marginalizing the youth and women from decision-making positions inside the PLO. However, it was discovered that the situation of the youth is much worse than that of women. For example, there is not a single young person inside the PLO Executive Committee, Central Council, Palestinian National Council or the high-ranking leadership positions of most factions. There are also very few young people in the popular unions and associations, and there are no young people heading any PLO department and no young members inside the Board of Directors of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports.

2. The in-depth review of a number of official PLO documents, laws, regulations, legislations and policies, as well as the internal bylaws of several associations, popular unions and PLO-affiliated factions, showed the presence of several laws which reduce the participation of the youth and prevent their ability to access leadership positions in

various Palestinian factions. Hence, this prevents them from becoming members of PLO councils through their factions. One of the main limitations is the condition which prescribes that a person must be a factional member for a number of years before being nominated for leadership positions. For example, the study showed that, based on the internal system of the Fateh movement, it is impossible for young people [i.e. persons aged 15-29] to become members in the Fateh Revolutionary Council because the latter states that in order for a person to be nominated inside the Council, s/he must have been a Fateh member for at least 15 years. The same is true for the Fateh Central Committee membership which prescribes that nominees should be members of Fateh movement for at least 20 years in order to join this committee.

3. The study showed that the reasons behind the low representation of the youth and their limited access to decision-making levels are attributed to a number of cultural and societal factors, as well as administrative and institutional practices, including the following:

A. A number of social and cultural factors lead people to believe in the capabilities of the youth in field and executive activities but not in leadership positions. This enhances the domination of older persons (both male and female) in high-ranking positions.

B. The absence of any law which specifies the term/mandate period for leaders in their positions, or the retirement age or the number of terms/periods of service in leadership positions. This means that the current leaders can stay in their positions for 50 or 60 years without being held accountable. The older peoples' domination of higher positions excludes the youth and prevents them from advancing towards leadership positions.

C. The absence of factional education which produces young leaders who are well-qualified to assume leadership positions.

D. The traditional leaders' clinging to their positions, absence of democratic work processes and the lack of power rotation mechanisms inside the political parties.

E. The weak influence and performance of the PLO and the declining role of its affiliated factions, unions and associations; including the traditional leaders' strong grip on their positions, absence of power rotation mechanisms and the absence of elections for the proper selection of leaders.

F. At a time when the youth are facing tremendous challenges, we see a great weakness in the youth movement (absence of an effective system for coordination and cooperation between youth organizations; absence of an agreed discourse, program and demands related to the youth; and the declining impact of organizations which used to traditionally embrace the youth (such as the universities, institutes, schools, etc.).

G. The general decline of youth and grassroots action and the failure of many youth organizations to reach up to the youth and interact with them.

H. The frustration among the youth and their reluctance to be involved in any political parties.

I. The failure of political parties to educate the youth on the national, intellectual and leadership levels.

J. The great gap between the generations (i.e. the generation gap) and the lack of fruitful discussions and communications between them led to great disparities between the perspectives and visions of the different generations in various aspects.

### **C. Assessment of the Quota Experience for Supporting the Access of Women to Decision-Making Positions**

The study showed that a number of achievements were made after implementing the Women Quota as a system for positive discrimination towards women. Its most important achievements include the selection of a number of women in high-ranking positions (both in the Legislative Council and local bodies), enhancing the self-confidence of women, accustoming the traditional society to the women's assumption of high-ranking public positions and expressing

the opinions and demands of women in bodies which were usually monopolized by the men. For example, as a result of the Quota system, 17 women participated in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections of 2006 (12%), whereas only 5 women participated in the elections of this council in 1996 (4.4%).

Despite these great achievements, a list of weaknesses and shortcomings were noted on the level of implementation such as the political parties' great control and influence in the selection of their preferred female candidates; whereas the female candidates were being selected based on kinship ties and factional loyalty and not based on their qualifications. Additionally, some factions and clans did not take the Quota system seriously but only applied it because it was an imposed electoral requirement. Moreover, the implementation of the Quota in most places was limited to the very minimum percentages. On the level of women organizations and activists, the Quota system was perceived as a mere electoral system and not as a step towards achieving equality, whereas the Quota is many times remembered during the elections but is forgotten afterwards. For this reason, the women did not form a solid block for pressuring various parties to oblige them to implement the Quota in the best manner. In some places, the Quota played a role in excluding the youth because the older, traditional leaders accepted the membership of women since this was imposed as a result of the Women Quota but this reduced their willingness to accept young leaders because that would decrease the number of seats that the older persons and the youth would have to compete for. Moreover, several councils adopted the traditional, male-dominated work orientation and intentionally marginalized the elected women members by choosing unsuitable meeting times or not informing the women about the latest work developments. Also among the most important shortcomings of the Quota related to Legislative Council departments is the absence of any instructions which specify certain positions for women in the electoral lists. For this reason, the names of female candidates were recorded way below the list [i.e. put in insignificant locations] which reduced their chances of winning.

All the study participants agreed that the Central Council's decision to adopt a 30% Women Quota is considered a great step forward. However, unfortunately this decision was not followed up and was not

transformed into a law with procedural regulations. Hence, some political parties and associations avoided implementing this Quota under the pretext that it is considered a recommendation and not an obligatory decision.

In the past years, there has been no comprehensive and in-depth assessment of the Quota experience in order to improve this system and overcome its weaknesses and shortcomings for the purpose of promoting equality.

#### **D. Study Recommendations**

The study came up with several insightful recommendations such as:

1. To demand the reform of the PLO in accordance with the principles of justice, democracy and equality. In order for women and youth movements to have a more influential role, it is important for them to be more involved in the reform process and not to work outside its framework. Also, we cannot reform this organization without reforming its components (factions, associations, popular unions, Legislative Council, etc.), and this requires cooperation with different parties, avoiding the implementation of factional quotas and working on the basis of democracy and elections.

2. To boost the level of coordination and cooperation between the women and youth movements and to specify the mutual interests of the youth and women despite the diverging viewpoints of political factions.

3. To have the women and youth movements formulate a suitable vision, program and actions plans which help in exposing the mechanisms of human rights violations. Also, these two movements must develop a work agenda, establish particular demands and prepare a societal transformation program in which the women and youth movements can play a prominent role with the support of various allies (such as human rights organizations, social activists, media persons and other influential parties on the regional and international levels while benefiting from their coordination and great experiences). In the case of the women's movement, it is very

important to coordinate and cooperate with other parties which have similar goals such as the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) alongside the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

4. To develop effective educational curriculums and involve the media and have them play an influential role in the process of societal transformation.

5. Assess the Quota experience for the purpose of improving and activating it and maximizing its achievements.

6. To coordinate,, cooperate and reach to agreements with various parties from the youth movement in order to pressure the PLO bodies to adopt and implement a Quota for the youth.

7. Support the preparation of a specialized study to present some options, philosophies and orientations for activating the PLO in accordance with the principles of human rights, equality, justice and political and democratic partnership.

8. To call on the political parties and factions to improve their political, factional and societal programs.

9. To introduce programs for developing women and young leaders.

10. To demand the creation of a body for monitoring, follow-up and accountability concerning the rights of women and the obligations of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO (including its various components) with regard to implementing the Women Quota.

11. Develop effective mechanisms to benefit from all the below-mentioned opportunities as soon as possible. Among the available opportunities are the following:

A. To follow up and build on the President's endorsement of the CEDAW agreement [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women]; and to particularly adopt certain steps and measures to make this endorsement a reality on the ground and to harmonize the local laws with the requirements of the signed CEDAW agreement.

B. To follow up and build on the decision of the Central Council regarding the adoption and generalization of the 30% Women Quota inside the various PLO organizations and bodies in order to institutionalize this decision and ensure its application. This should be done by issuing clear and binding laws, regulations, bylaws and executive procedures, and to establish a good monitoring system to ensure the Quota's implementation.

C. To have the women and youth movements participate alongside the bodies where were assigned to reform the PLO system based on the factional agreement which was reached during the Beirut meetings. This gives the chance to incorporate the demands of women and the youth in the reform-related discussions and can ensure the translation of these demands into new laws and regulations which enhance the representation of women and the youth and promote their access to decision-making positions.

D. To hold meetings with the factions that signed the Code of Honour and committed to implement a 30% Women Quota in 2012. These factions should be asked to translate their commitments to specific procedures and executive regulations to ensure the implementation of what was agreed upon, and to introduce a suitable mechanism for monitoring and follow-up.

E. To communicate with the different stakeholders related to the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, including the Board of Directors and the Executive body, for introducing laws and regulations which enhance the access of the youth to leadership and decision-making positions inside this Council in order for the Council to express the views, ambitions and demands of the youth and to deal with their various concerns.

F. To communicate with the leading body of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) to discuss the issues which concern women and the youth; and especially those which are related to their representation inside the various boards of directors and decision-making levels. The General Union of Palestinian Students is considered the main gateway/entry point for the youth to become members inside the Palestinian National Council.

G. To communicate with the Board of Directors of the General Union of Palestinian Journalists to discuss the issues which concern women and the youth; and especially those related to their representation inside the Board of Directors and decision-making levels, and to urge this union to introduce a Youth Quota and to implement the Women Quota in the next elections. Also, there should be some joint steps to have the journalists support the efforts and activities of raising the level of community awareness regarding the issues and rights of the youth.

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# **Chapter I: A Brief Overview of the Role, Reality and Hierarchy of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**

## **1. Creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established in an Arab summit conference which was called for by late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1964. This organization was created as a framework for representing the will of the Palestinian people and demanding their rights; and especially their right to self-determination. During this conference, Mr. Ahmad Al-Shuqeiri – who was representing Palestine at that time - was assigned to communicate with the active Palestinian players and to discuss with them the possibility of adopting a decision to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization and putting it into effect, as well as preparing a report to the Arab League regarding these communications and work results. While implementing the aforementioned tasks, Mr. Al-Shuqeiri held a visit to different Arab countries where he met with several Palestinian leaders.

Following these visits, the PLO's draft National Charter and draft Statute were formulated. Also, a decision was taken to hold a Palestinian conference in Jerusalem in 1964 and Mr. Al-Shuqeiri listed the members of the Preparatory Committee [for the conference] and worked alongside this committee to prepare for the First Palestinian Conference which was inaugurated in Jerusalem by King Hussain Bin Talal. This conference – which was attended by 242 Palestinian representatives selected by the Arab governments of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq – became known as the “First Palestinian National Council” of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). During the conference, Mr. Ahmad Al-Shuqeiri was elected as the Chairman of the PLO and Hikmat Al-Masri from Nablus, Haidar Abdul-Shafi from Gaza and Nicola Al-Dayer from Lebanon were elected as the Chairman's deputies. Afterwards, the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was announced. This conference ratified both the PLO's National Charter and Statute. Also, Al-Shuqeiri was elected as the

Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee and the city of Jerusalem was selected as the PLO Command Headquarters. The conference also decided to prepare the Palestinian people from the military point of view and to create the Palestine National Fund (PNF). However, despite the tremendous efforts exerted by Mr. Ahmad Al-Shuqeri and his associates, many Palestinians saw that the PLO was overly subservient and influenced by the Arab action system. For this reason, it was quite normal to see the restructuring of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) after the launching of Fateh movement [“Palestinian National Liberation Movement”] which came to represent the independent Palestinian decision amidst the state of Arab brokenness and retreat following the defeat of 1967.

The PLO was further consolidated in its new form after the launching of the other Palestinian revolutionary factions in the end of the 1960s such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Also, Mr. Yasser Arafat was elected as the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) passed through several stages – both on the level of its slogans, charter and tactical and strategic goals, as well as its structure and hierarchy. For example, when this organization was established, its main goal was to liberate Palestine through a long-standing armed struggle. However, in 1974, the PLO (including its National Council) adopted an Interim Plan for establishing a secular democratic state on any liberated part of the land of Palestine. Some Palestinian factions utterly rejected this idea and they formed what was called “The Rejectionist Front”. In 1988, the State of Palestine was declared and the PLO officially adopted the Two-State solution and the idea of living peacefully side-by-side with Israel while guaranteeing the Right of Return to Palestinian refugees, independence of the Palestinian people and the establishment of the Palestinian State on the occupied territories of 1967 with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.

In 1993, the Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee Mr. Yasser Arafat officially recognized the State of Israel in a formal letter sent to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In return for that, Israel recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole

legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This led to the establishment of a Palestinian self-governing authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a result of the Oslo Accords signed between the PLO and Israel.

## **2. The Palestinian National Charter**

The fundamental parts of the Palestinian National Charter were completed in July 1968. This charter came to reaffirm the Palestinian resolutions, principles and goals which accumulated throughout the years of the Palestinian struggle starting from 1919 all the way to the first Palestinian National Council meeting of 1964. The Palestinian National Charter was unanimously recognized in the fourth session of the Palestinian National Council held in Cairo on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1968, hence making this charter the main framework and reference point for specifying the strategic goals and program of the PLO with the agreement of all Palestinian factions, organizations and social components.

Following the peaceful orientation of Arab countries towards Israel, some amendments were made in this charter in subsequent National Council meetings. After the PLO's signing of the Oslo Accords and the electing of Yasser Arafat as the President of the Palestinian Authority in 1996, the PLO saw the need to make some vital amendments in its National Charter in order to reflect its orientation and commitment to the Oslo Peace Accords which it had signed recently. In the same year (1996), a Palestinian National Council meeting was held and a decision was taken to erase from the Charter all the sentences and words which called for the destruction of the State of Israel and President Arafat pledged to combat terrorism. As a result of these amendments, December 1998 witnessed the complete erasure of 12 clauses and the partial amendment of 16 clauses in this Charter, and these amendments were ratified during a Palestinian National Council meeting in Gaza with the attendance of former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

### **3. The Factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**

The PLO includes in its ranks several political parties and factions. Some of these factions are quite large and pivotal while others are smaller in size and have less influence. The following are the main factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization:-

- Fateh Party (“Palestinian National Liberation Movement”);
- The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP);
- The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP);
- The Palestinian People’s Party (PPP), formerly known as the Palestinian Communist Party;
- The Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF);
- The Palestinian Liberation Front (PLP);
- The Palestinian Arab Front (PAF);
- The Arab Liberation Front, and
- The Palestinian Democratic Union – FIDA.

It is also worth noting that Hamas [“the Islamic Resistance Movement”], the Islamic Jihad Movement and the Mubadara [i.e. “the Palestinian National Initiative”] are not among the factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Also, the membership of the General Command of the PFLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] was suspended by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

### **4. Hierarchy of the Palestine Liberation Organization**

The PLO consists of three main components:-

- The Palestinian National Council (PNC);
- The Central Council, and
- The Executive Committee

#### **A. The Palestinian National Council (PNC)**

The Palestinian National Council represents the highest decision-making authority inside the PLO and it is the party in charge of amending and developing the Palestinian National Charter, as well as electing the members of both the PLO’s Central Council and its Executive Committee.

The Palestinian National Council was established in 1948 when Haj Amin al-Husseini held a Palestinian national council in Gaza following the adoption of United Nations Resolution 181 in 1947 and the creation of what was called the “All-Palestine Government” which represented Palestine in the Arab League. However, the establishment of the Palestinian National Council in its modern form dates back to the 1964 conference organized by Mr. Ahmad Al-Shuqeiri in Jerusalem as mentioned previously. The following is a successive list of Palestinian National Council Chairmen:-

1. Ahmad Al-Shuqeiri: 1964 – 1967;
2. Abdel Mohsin Al-Qattan: 1968;
3. Yahya Hammoudeh: 1969;
4. Khaled Al-Fahoum: 1974 – 1984;
5. Abdul-Hamid Al-Sa’eh: 1984 – 1996;
6. Saleem al-Za’noun: 1996 until today.

The Oslo Accords led to a heated dispute among Palestinians between those who supported these accords and those who rejected them. This led to an internal division in the Palestinian National Council and the exclusion of several resistance figures and national symbols who refused to return to Palestine based on the terms specified in the Oslo Accords. This division further deepened when a Palestinian National Council session was held in the Palestinian Territories, hence the automatic exclusion and isolation of Diaspora members who utterly rejected the Oslo Accords. It is also worth noting that the Palestinian National Council has not held a single regular meeting since 1996 but a special meeting was held in 2009 to elect new members inside the PLO Executive Committee.

On the hierarchical level, the current Palestinian National Council has three types of members:-

- The representatives of the Palestinian political parties and factions (whereas the number of representatives of each faction is based on a previously-agreed quota);
- Representatives of associations and popular unions (and the number of representatives of each union or association is based on a previously-agreed quota);
- Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC).

## **B. The Central Council**

The Palestinian Central Council is formed by the Palestinian National Council and it reports to the latter. The Central Council represents the focal/linkage point between the National Council and the Executive Committee. The Central Council comprises the following:-

- Members of the PLO Executive Committee;
- Chairman of the Palestinian National Council;
- Representatives of the factions, popular unions, associations and qualified independent Palestinian persons whose total number must be equal to at least twice the number of Executive Committee members.

The Central Council assumes the role of discussing the topics and executive plans presented to them by the PLO Executive Committee. Also, the Central Council receives periodic reports from the Executive Committee regarding the progress of work inside the various departments of the PLO, and the Central Council presents the related recommendations to the Executive Committee. Additionally, the Central Council can make decisions regarding urgent matters or issues provided that they do not violate the provisions of the Palestinian National Charter. The Central Council is also entitled to freeze or suspend the membership of any member or organization and to implement any related penalty against them, provided that this matter would be presented to the Palestinian National Council in the following session.

## **C. The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee is the highest executive authority inside the PLO and its members are dedicated to administering the affairs of the PLO. The Executive Committee is responsible for planning and implementing the PLO's plans, programs and policies in accordance with the guidance and decisions of the Palestinian National Council, whereas the Executive Committee reports to the latter. The Executive Committee also makes the managerial and financial decisions of the PLO and prepares the PLO's budget. This committee is headquartered in the city of Jerusalem and it has the right to hold its meetings in any given place. The members of the PLO Executive Committee are elected by the Palestinian National Council and they

are represented by the political parties and factions, independent members and the Chairman of the Palestine National Fund (PNF). Also, the members of the Executive Committee are in charge of the various departments of the PLO (please see the following section).

## **5. The Departments of the Palestine Liberation Organization**

The programs and plans of the PLO are implemented and followed up by a number of departments. Each of these departments is headed by a member of the PLO Executive Committee. The PLO departments are as follows:-

- The Political Department
- The Military (and Security) Department
- The Palestine National Fund (PNF) Department
- Department for Refugee Affairs
- Education and Higher Education Department
- Negotiations Affairs Department
- Department of Culture and Information
- Legal Department
- Department of Popular Organizations
- Department of Youth and Sports
- Expatriate Affairs Department
- Department of Arab Relations
- Social Affairs Department
- The Palestinian Planning Center
- International Relations Department
- Department of Administrative Affairs

## **6. The Relation between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority**

The PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in all places where it is present. It is also the party which is authorized to represent the Palestinian people in the homeland and overseas. This organization is entitled to hold negotiations and sign international agreements on behalf of the Palestinian people. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is the party which

established the Palestinian Authority (PA) based on the Oslo Accords which were signed by the PLO. Therefore, the Palestinian Authority was established after the Oslo Accords and represents the nucleus for building the Palestinian state, managing the affairs of Palestinian citizens inside the country, providing services to citizens, etc. Based on the aforementioned points, the PLO is supposed to be the main reference point which holds the Palestinian Authority liable for its actions and it even has the authority to dissolve the Palestinian Authority if it wishes to do so.

However, despite the above-mentioned principles, the facts on the ground say otherwise. The period which followed the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority witnessed some significant changes in the Palestinian action system. These changes led to the declining influence of the PLO and its factions and the marginalization of the PLO's role in many aspects. On the other hand, the same period witnessed the expanding influence of the Palestinian Authority and its domination on the Palestinian scene. This happened due to both subjective and objective reasons which we chose not to elaborate here but they include the transfer of PLO bodies to the Palestinian Territories which led to a weaker representation of the Palestinian Diaspora, less available funds for the PLO and its dependence on the available funds of the Palestinian Authority, the declining role of political parties, confusion in the Palestinian discourse and political program regarding what is referred to as the Peace Process, being preoccupied with complex challenges and concerns, the ensuing developments after the Oslo Accords, etc.

## **Chapter II: Study Methodology**

### **1. Introduction and Background**

International experiences clearly show us that supporting the equal participation of women and the youth and increasing their access to decision-making positions and policy formulation have an important impact on attaining sustainable and comprehensive development, promoting equality and justice in the formulated policies and strategies, eliminating the exclusion and marginalization of vital societal segments and expanding the grassroots and social participation in developmental efforts. Additionally, the local and international experiences have referred to the presence of a number of social, economic, political and cultural factors which influence the reality and status of women and the youth inside the society. These factors can sometimes limit or impede the development and advancement of women and the youth and the enjoyment of their rights; including their right to political participation and equal representation on various levels, and preventing their access to decision-making positions and roles. Therefore, achieving success in the empowerment of women and the youth, promoting their access to decision-making positions and formulating effective strategies and interventions for bringing about change can greatly improve their current reality and will led to the achievement of gender equality and the fulfillment of their ambitions. This requires an in-depth understanding and analysis of the current reality and circumstances, along with the official and unofficial structures, policies and institutional systems which can promote or hinder the opportunities of women and the youth in having an equal political participation, assumption of leadership roles and access to decision-making positions.

After examining the structural composition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) since its foundation, we can clearly notice the weak representation of women and the youth in all PLO bodies on various levels. For example, the different executive committees of the PLO were void of any female representation since the establishment of the organization, and the exception of this is the current PLO

Executive Committee which came to include only one woman for the first time in 2009. The representation of women is also limited in the Palestinian National Council and the Central Council, and these small numbers do not suit the great actions, roles and sacrifices of Palestinian women. Moreover, the heads of departments of the PLO and the chairpersons of the Palestinian National Council and Central Council are almost void of any female representation. The same applies to the leaders of Palestinian factions, political parties, associations and popular unions. For example, there is not a single political faction which is headed by a woman except for the “General Union of Palestinian Women” (GUPW). Furthermore, there are no female chairpersons in any of the popular unions and associations which are represented inside the Palestinian National Council. As for the representation of the youth, the situation seems to be even gloomier. For example, the youngest member of the PLO Executive Committee is older than sixty. Additionally, there is not a single young person heading any faction, political party, association, popular union or any of the departments or administrative bodies on various levels inside the PLO.

Hence, this is the general context of this study. The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy “**MIFTAH**” - along with several women organizations and social and legal institutions and political parties - is aiming to empower and promote the equal political participation of women and the youth, support their access to various decision-making positions and to remove the impediments and challenges which hinder their progress. **MIFTAH** and its partners are seeking to formulate an effective strategy and action plan based on scientific results and outcomes and a good awareness and understanding of the current reality in order to perform lobbying and advocacy activities, enhance the political participation of women and the youth, promote their access to decision-making positions and increase their contribution in policy formulation based on the principles of justice, integrity and good governance.

## **2. The Objectives, Methodology and Outcomes of the Study**

### **A. Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to understand and analyze the Palestinian political system – and especially the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – in terms of the factors which impede the progress of women and the youth and prevent them from reaching decision-making positions, in addition to presenting practical recommendations for enhancing the role and participation of women and the youth in reactivating the PLO. The aims of this study are as follows:-

- Determine the main obstacles of the Palestinian political system – and especially within the PLO – which prevent the access of women and the youth to decision-making positions;
- Conceptualize the activation of the PLO by enhancing the active participation of women and the youth.

### **B. Study Methodology, Phases of Implementation and Research Methods**

#### **1. The Methodology and Orientations of this Study**

This study adopts an in-depth analytical methodology for determining the main obstacles which limit the political participation of women and the youth and prevent their representation on various decision-making levels inside the Palestinian political system; and especially within the PLO. Additionally, this study analyzes the current reality and practices of the Palestinian political system, as well as specifying the gaps and loopholes which this system is suffering from. These gaps hinder the progress of women and the youth and prevent their access to decision-making positions. A special focus will also be given to examining the nature and hierarchy of the PLO, as well as the work practices and policies of this organization which lead to the limited and marginalized role of women and the youth and prevent their access to decision-making positions.

This focus of this study is on the following four main dimensions:-

- Reviewing the system, policies and basic [applicable] laws of the PLO, as well as determining the gaps which prevent the access of women and the youth to leadership positions and decision-making roles (i.e. are there any discriminatory laws, regulations or policies which prevent or reduce the access of women and the youth to decision-making positions?).
- Analyze the current practices, motives, grounds and rationale of the PLO and its various components which lead to reducing the participation of women and the youth, preventing their access to leadership positions and excluding and marginalizing them.
- Analyze the wider societal system and the different social and cultural factors which lead to the marginalization and exclusion of women and the youth from leadership positions and decision-making departments within the PLO.
- The analytical review of the main past experiences which aimed to promote the access of women and the youth to decision-making positions (such as the Quota system), and to specify the gaps and loopholes in the related policies and work mechanisms.

## **2. Phases of Implementation and Research Methods**

This study aims to have a more insightful understanding of the current reality and to obtain a more conscious and informed analysis. For this reason, the study has utilized a combination of research methods which include the review of various literatures, analyzing the writings of researchers who discussed this topic and using several research methods whose aim is to collect data directly from the largest possible number of experts, scholars and other knowledgeable persons regarding this subject matter based on the available time plan. The implementation of this study passed through the following phases:-

## **A. Phase One: The Necessary Preparations and the Review of Laws, Policies and Literature**

This phase included the following activities:-

A. Formulate the action plan and the necessary steps for achieving this study.

B. Obtain and review the laws and policies of the PLO, including the various laws, policies and procedures which govern the work of the PLO (along with its various components), as well as the previous literature and research works which discussed this subject matter.

C. To prepare for the field work (specify the main topics and research questions for directing the personal interviews and focus groups, list the names of persons who will be interviewed, etc.). The research topics included the following:-

- Are there any discriminatory laws, legislations, policies or procedures which hinder the equal representation of women and the youth and prevent their access to leadership positions in various decision-making departments within the PLO and its various structures?
- What are the reasons, nature and roots of the obstacles, practices and work mechanisms which hinder the access of women and the youth to leadership and decision-making positions?
- The analytical/critical review of the past experiences and activities of promoting women and the youth and enhancing their access to decision-making positions inside the official Palestinian institutions (e.g. the Quota system). What are the main advantages, disadvantages and problems in implementing these activities?
- Practical recommendations and suggestions to promote the access of women and the youth to leadership positions inside the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The personal interviews and focus groups included the following guiding questions:-

1. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of women in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?
2. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of the youth in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?
3. In your opinion, what are the main PLO practices and work mechanisms which prevent the access of women and the youth to decision-making positions?
4. What is your assessment of the past attempts of promoting the access of women and the youth to decision-making positions (such as the Quota system)?
5. How can we change the current situation to guarantee the equal representation of women and the youth and their access to decision-making positions within the PLO? What are your recommendations and suggestions regarding that?

## **B. Phase Two: Field Work and Data Collection**

During this phase, the following things have been achieved:-

A. Personal in-depth interviews with 16 experts who have experience and familiarity with the various work mechanisms of the PLO, as well as some stakeholders and gender and youth experts. This included the following:-

- PLO employees from various levels and departments;
- Representatives of some PLO factions;
- Representatives of some groups within the Palestinian National Council which are related to this subject matter (Palestinian women, students, etc.).
- Experts in the fields of youth and gender and members of this project's Steering Committee.
- Members of women organizations which have a great experience in supporting the access of women and the youth to leadership positions.

B. The holding of a focus group with the members of the project's Steering Committee.

C. The holding of a focus group with six young people from a youth group.

### **C. Phase Three: Data Analysis**

During this phase, the following things have been achieved:-

A. The processing and analysis of data. This includes the disaggregation and classification of the data which was collected from various research methods under certain headings/titles, comparing the data, verifying the data's consistency, logic and compatibility, and producing preliminary results which reflect the opinions of research participants.

B. The holding of a focus group with some PLO Executive Committee members in order to present and discuss the key findings and recommendations and to ensure that they represent the viewpoints of the research participants.

C. Outline the final results of this study.

### **D. Phase Four: Report Preparation**

During this phase, the following objectives have been achieved:-

- The preparation of a report which summarizes the key findings and presents the main recommendations, and to forward this report to MIFTAH organization.
- Receive the notes and comments of MIFTAH organization regarding this report and to discuss these comments whenever needed.
- Prepare the final report and present it to MIFTAH organization.

### **3. The Limitations of this Study**

This study was implemented in a relatively short period of time. It includes a brief review of the main factors which hinder the representation of women and the youth and prevent their access to decision-making positions. The framework and results/findings of this study were limited by the following points:-

1. This study can be considered an analytical and exploratory one but is in no way a comprehensive study. The focus of this study was to conduct interviews with a number of persons who can contribute to answering the research questions through a selective sample which was specified in partnership with MIFTAH organization. Therefore, this study does not express the opinion of all parties related to or familiar with the PLO, thus we cannot generalize its mentioned results and findings.

2. In order to achieve this study in the specified time-frame, the research questions were formulated with great precision in order to avoid any divergence in the presentation and analysis of the various contexts and to serve the particular purpose of this study. However, if more time were allocated for this, we would have delved deeper in some contexts which have a great impact on the examined issues.

3. The purpose of this study was not to perform an in-depth analysis of the performance of the PLO or its factions and components. Therefore, the opinions included in this study merely represent the analysis and insights of the persons who participated in this study.

4. There was the addition of several research activities to cover, in a more elaborate manner, some aspects which were seen as necessary by the research team. For example, the research team saw that the insights/viewpoints of the youth were not sufficiently covered and therefore they held a group meeting with a number of young males and females. However, if there had been more time and resources, the team would have conducted additional meetings with the youth.

5. The research team aimed to diversify the research participants in order to enrich the opinions of this study. As mentioned previously,

these persons included PLO employees, representatives of various political parties and factions (on different levels), the youth, women, and gender and youth organizations. Nevertheless, if more time and resources had been allocated, the research team would have held interviews with a larger number of persons.

## Chapter III: Key Findings

We hereby present the key findings of this study. These findings were classified according to the main study questions:-

### **1. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of women in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?**

#### **A. The laws, regulations and legislations which govern the work of the PLO and its factions, and their effects on the representation of women**

The research team reviewed a number of official Palestinian documents related to or issued by the PLO. Also, this team examined the internal bylaws of some PLO-affiliated factions in order to see whether the laws, regulations and legislations included any references, texts or statements which discriminate against women or limit their participation (See Annex 1 for the list of documents that have been reviewed). The main aim of this review is to make sure that there are no laws, regulations or legislations which limit the participation of women inside the structures of the PLO or prevent their access to decision-making positions. Our review confirmed the neutrality of the legal provisions and regulations and the absence of any statements which discriminate against women in the rights, duties and representation; including the right to elect and be elected (i.e. running for elections).

Among the most important Palestinian legal documents considered as main reference points for Palestinian legislations are the following: i. The “Declaration of Independence” document which was proclaimed in 1988 during the Palestinian National Council meeting in Algeria, and ii. The Amended Palestinian Basic Law (2003) whose provisions were explicitly and clearly devoted to the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The following was stated in the “Declaration of Independence” document: “*The State of Palestine is*

*the state of Palestinians wherever they may be. The state is for them to enjoy in it their collective national and cultural identity, theirs to pursue in it a complete equality of rights. In it will be safeguarded their political and religious convictions and their human dignity by means of a parliamentary democratic system of governance, itself based on freedom of expression and the freedom to form parties. The rights of minorities will duly be respected by the majority, as minorities must abide by decisions of the majority. Governance will be based on principles of social justice, equality and non-discrimination in public rights of men or women, on grounds of race, religion, color or sex, under the aegis of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary..”<sup>1</sup>*

Also, in Article (9) of the Amended Basic Law of 2003, we see the following legal provision: “...Palestinians shall be equal before the law and the judiciary, without distinction based upon race, sex, color, religion, political views or disability.”<sup>2</sup>

In fact, there is one kind of positive discrimination for women by having only female candidates represent the “General Union of Palestinian Women” (GUPW) and men cannot be representatives in this union. As for the other bodies/organs of the PLO – whether on the level of political parties and factions, associations, popular unions or the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) – they are theoretically accessible for both women and men and there are no laws which prevent or deprive women from representing these bodies or becoming members in them.

In conclusion, the weak representation and participation of women in PLO structures and components are not attributed to any discrimination in the laws themselves but can rather be linked to the practices and applications on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> المركز الفلسطيني لقضايا السلام والديمقراطية، وثيقة اعلان الاستقلال- المجلس الوطني الفلسطيني الدورة 19، 1988. ص 3.  
*Arabic Source: The Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy (PCPD). Also available in English in various websites.*

<sup>2</sup> المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحوار العالمي والديمقراطية (مفتاح) القانون الاساسي المعدل للسلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية، 2008. ص 11  
*Arabic Source: The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy MIFTAH. Also available in English in various websites.*

## **B. Cultural and Social Factors and Administrative and Institutional Practices**

The study participants mentioned a number of social, political, institutional and cultural factors which contribute to the weak representation of women in the various PLO structures and organizations. These factors led to the marginalization and exclusion of women and the youth from all decision and policy-making bodies inside the various political parties and factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The most important of these factors are the following:-

### **1. Social and Cultural Factors:-**

The PLO is the result of a certain social and cultural reality. Therefore, the system of action, leadership, performance and structures of the PLO are highly influenced by a certain culture, ideas, beliefs and social values which distinguish between men and women and entrench certain stereotypical roles for each gender. This male-dominated patriarchal culture views men as superior to women and better capable of administering public affairs and political and leadership functions with greater wisdom, power and vision. These beliefs also hold that women have lesser capabilities and view them as being emotional and weak. Also, women are perceived as having less wisdom, firmness and strength in dealing with the various pressures of the political work. These views, which are widespread among large segments of the Palestinian society, are also present among the leaders of the PLO and its affiliated factions, unions and associations. This is why we have stereotypes in defining the role of women and confining their role to being mere partners in the Palestinian struggle without being real participants in the decision-making process.

Despite a few achievements in representing women and promoting their access to key positions, these achievements are nowhere close to being sufficient or achieving gender equality.

“The prevalent culture is often reflected in the political system. But instead of seeing the elites and political and legal parties confront some negative aspects of our culture, we see them succumbing to their will and acting as wimps before them”. - Study Participant

“The PLO organs deal with the issue of female representation as if it were an additional “decoration” for “beautifying” the scene and making the Palestinian system of action look more civilized so to speak... but their real orientation is not based on a firm belief in the rights and capabilities of women”. - Study Participant

“The PLO leadership emerged from a patriarchal, male-dominated society which excludes women and does not believe in their capabilities”. - Study Participant

“Some people view women as a mere “attachment” or supplement to the work of men. This is why women kept playing a peripheral role embodied by merely supporting the men”. - Study Participant

“Even when women reach high-ranking positions, people still deal with them based on common stereotypes. This is why they are only given leadership positions pertaining to women’s rights and social affairs while the men maintain a strong grip on all political, economic, military, media and other affairs”. - Study Participant

“The traditional domination of men in the leadership of various PLO factions led to the indifference, weakness and lack of interest of these factions in taking into consideration the aspirations of women and the youth. The leaders who did understand the rights and demands of women and the youth and were willing to support them constituted a very small minority and an exception”.

- Study Participant

## 2. The Circumstances and Environment in which the PLO was Created

A number of study participants saw that the circumstances and environment of the PLO in its first years have highly impacted its organizational structure and *Modus Operandi* (mode of operation). This organization was established outside the motherland and adopted the armed struggle and secret guerilla activities in a very complex environment and reality. During this period (i.e. the first years of activity), most of the cadres and leaders of the PLO's guerilla and commando operations were men and this is why they dominated the various aspects of the PLO work, including its high-ranking leadership. This situation further exacerbated by the dependence of some Palestinian factions on Arab countries and the intervention of Arab regimes in PLO affairs with the attempt to influence the PLO's orientation. Amidst these circumstances, the male leaders who dominated the PLO saw that they were the most capable of dealing with these situations and protecting the PLO from foreign intervention.

“The PLO system was established in the context of revolution and not in the context of a stable civil society”. - Study Participant

“The PLO was developed outside the country and faced a number of challenges. These challenges led to undermining the role of women and restricting their ability to access leadership positions. The following factors led to the exclusion of women from leadership positions and limited their roles to field work: 1) The PLO was established as a revolutionary organization, 2) The political leaders were all men, 3) The PLO was struggling to maintain an independent Palestinian decision amidst the attempts of Arab countries to interfere in Palestinian matters, 4) Men were seen as the only ones capable of being good leaders, 5) Men were competing to assume different positions as a result of the Quota system”. - Study Participant

### 3. The Quota System

The various study participants agreed that the strong competition between the various PLO factions and parties under the Quota System [which led to establishing factional agreements and using the quota approach] had a very negative impact on the composition/formation of various PLO bodies, structures and components. This system also limited the democratic options of the Palestinian people and prevented them from electing their desired representatives inside the various bodies of the PLO. This played a great role in enhancing the hegemony of men and excluding women from all key decision-making positions. The following are some examples and cases mentioned by the study participants:-

- ◆ Resorting to the Quota System and factional agreements in the formation of PLO bodies and work mechanisms weakened the democratic process and prevented the monitoring of organizational performance.
- ◆ For example, the names of factional candidates were selected behind closed doors without resorting to elections or objective and transparent work mechanisms.
- ◆ The Quota System led to enhancing the representation of male leaders in their various factions because of the huge number of general candidates and the limited number of possible candidates for each faction. In situations like these, there would be a very small chance for women to be nominated.
- ◆ The factional competition and the Quota System led to the selection of people who had the highest level of political and factional connections and not necessarily the most qualified and suitable person for the particular task or position.
- ◆ The political competition between the various factions led to the exclusion of women in many cases; and especially since each faction aimed to nominate the strongest person to ensure a better factional representation, promote factional interests, compete against the representatives of other factions and achieve factional goals. This kind of situation consolidated the exclusion of women since women were many times perceived as untrustworthy or incapable of competing on the factional

- level and representing their factions' political interests vis-à-vis the other factions.
- ◆ The Quota System weakened the democratic process during the selection of candidates in the various PLO organs and bodies. For example, if a certain faction had a quota of 20 persons in the Palestinian National Council, this faction would have to present the list of candidate names without any monitoring of the selection process and without proving that the selection of names was done in a democratic manner.
  - ◆ One of the reasons behind the limited female participation is that the involvement of women was never based on their capabilities and competency but that they were simply added as a peripheral party amidst the Quota System and factional agreements.

“If any representation-related disputes took place between the various factions, women would be the first to lose. The reason behind that is that the easiest representatives to get rid of are the female candidates”.

- Study Participant

#### **4. The Irregular Meetings of PLO Bodies**

The irregular meetings of PLO bodies has weakened the democratic process of leader selection and disregarded the principle of rotation of power and the introduction of new leadership. For example, the last meeting of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) was held in 1996, i.e. 21 years ago. This means that many PNC leaders have not changed since that year. Therefore, the formation/membership of the PNC remained identical and male-dominated.

#### **5. The Declining Role, Status and Performance of the PLO:**

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is supposed to be the reference party for monitoring the performance of the Palestinian Authority and it is the party which signed the different agreements. It is also the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, the events that took place after signing the Oslo Accords

and establishing the Palestinian Authority led to the declining role of the PLO and the rise of the Palestinian Authority. Therefore, the PLO's role became merely formal [without any real power on the ground]. In fact, when explaining our study objectives to our participants and mentioning the name of the PLO, the participants uttered the following words and phrases to describe the current situation of the PLO:

- [the PLO] Is suffering from weakness and feebleness;
- Is heavily injured [the speaker actually used the analogy of "bone calcification" to describe condition of the PLO]
- Has gotten worn out and disintegrated;
- Suffers from old age;
- Is reaching the end of its life [another translation could be; "is on its death bed"];
- An empty structure which is used only when necessary;
- An old-aged lion without any claws or teeth;
- Died and was buried;
- A hope that faded away.

All the participants that we have met stated that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had a much stronger role when it was headquartered outside the country. During that period, the PLO was financially independent and it strongly mobilized the various factions and unions affiliated with it. However, all of this changed after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. In addition to the expanding role of the Palestinian Authority and the declining role and influence of the PLO, there was a great level of overlapping between the two organizations and they were not really separated in terms of the persons running them and the roles and functions within them. This led to the marginalized role of the PLO; and especially due to the dependence of the PLO and Palestinian factions on the funds coming from the Palestinian Authority.

Also, several participants mentioned that some PLO organizations were quite active outside the country but after returning to the motherland, they got confused or marginalized and their roles became quite limited.

The declining role of the PLO led to a weaker performance and inefficiency in its various work aspects. Many study participants highlighted several points with regard to the reasons and outcomes of the PLO's poor performance and inefficiency, the most important of which are the following:-

#### **A. The Irregular Meetings of the PLO Organs:**

In the preceding period, PLO bodies were holding meetings on an irregular basis. This led to a less influential role, failure to perform its assigned tasks and the non-utilization of democratic approaches pertaining to its work. Also, these irregular meetings helped the PLO disregard the principle of rotation of power and therefore it did not change its leaders. Additionally, there was the absence of any performance accountability and no one was held responsible for their shortcomings and failures. This is because the Palestinian National Council (PNC) held its last meeting in 1996, i.e. 21 years ago. This means that many PNC members have not been replaced since that year and there is not a single proof that they performed their ascribed roles and duties effectively. In this context, the composition/formation of the PNC (which was totally dominated by men) remained the same and it is worth noting that the people who were considered young at that time [i.e. 1996] have become older men and women by now.

The irregular meetings of the PLO led also to the absence of periodic elections to replace the Palestinian leaders whenever necessary, hence disregarding the principle of rotation of power, non-utilization of democratic approaches and the non-legitimization of the current Palestinian political system.

#### **B. The Absence of Vision and the Disruption of the Plans and Programs of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)**

The majority of the people who were interviewed pointed out that the post-Oslo period and the declining role of the PLO led to the absence of a clear vision regarding the role, priorities, tools and action plans of the PLO, as well as the lack of self-financing and weak internal departments within the PLO. Also, many of the traditional plans and programs undertaken by the PLO or which were supposed to be

implemented by them have been disrupted. This situation gave the upper hand to the Palestinian Authority's action plans as an alternative for determining and achieving the Palestinian priorities. As mentioned earlier, instead of having the PLO orient and monitor the Palestinian Authority and hold it accountable whenever necessary, the various activities of the PLO came to be controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

### **C. The Palestinian Internal Division and the Efforts to Reform the PLO**

In the past decade, the Palestinian state of division played a great role in increasing the challenges faced by the PLO, reducing the chances of reactivating it and causing confusion in the various efforts of reforming it. The preliminary agreement reached during the Beirut meetings of the Palestinian factions is considered a positive step towards reforming, strengthening and restoring the PLO. The Beirut meetings also led to the formation of a committee from the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to formulate a new vision and hold new PNC elections. Some participants considered this to be an important achievement in reforming and promoting the PLO. However, a number of study participants were doubtful about that because the implementation of this agreement faces tremendous challenges caused by the lack of progress in achieving any meaningful steps towards ending the internal state of division. Additionally, several study participants expressed their dissatisfaction from these meetings and their outcomes because there was the repetition of the same mentality of political quotas among the factions instead of adopting a new comprehensive vision which confronts the current challenges faced by the Palestinian cause. These participants warned that the justification for using political quotas – which the PLO adopted in a specific time-period due to its various circumstances and challenges at the time – is no longer valid today. The participants also stressed the importance of looking at the reform process from a different viewpoint which adopts the principles of equality, human rights, justice and fairness. These principles can bring out a tangible change by developing the PLO hierarchy/structure, programs and work mechanism so that the PLO would be fairer to women and the youth and that it would be resuscitated after a long period of inactiveness.

These principles will also enhance the PLO's ability to deal with the various circumstances and challenges facing the Palestinian cause and people in the last three decades.

Nevertheless, a number of participants noted that the discussions of reforming the PLO and introducing a new electoral system for the PLO are great opportunities that must be quickly seized by the women and youth movements and their supporters. It is also beneficial to develop a strategy that pressures the various factions to adopt new visions and approaches to reform the PLO in accordance with the principles of justice and equality. These visions and approaches should include tackling the cases of unequal female and youth representation, promoting their access to leadership positions inside the PLO and the selection of female and young representatives to join the committee responsible for holding the future elections and having good coordination with them.

#### **D. Focusing on the Political Struggle while Neglecting the Social Struggle**

The agenda of the PLO and the Palestinian political parties and factions was always preoccupied with the political and military struggle, fighting the occupation, liberating the motherland and establishing the Palestinian state. However, there was no real attention towards the social struggle and no one asked questions about our preferred kind of state and society and the various aspects related to people's rights and duties and maintaining justice and equality. Many of the Palestinian factions did attach any particular importance to the social struggle and they purposely delayed these subjects until the country's liberation; their claim was that these issues would only be meaningful in the state-building process. With this approach of disregarding the social struggle and not giving any attention to the principles of justice, equality and human rights, it is not surprising to see the weak representation of women in various leadership and decision-making positions and departments.

In this context, the decentralized struggle of women in the field was highly encouraged by the heads of political factions. However, they imposed very strict and reserved measures when it came to women reaching decision-making positions.

“When the women and the youth struggled hard during the First Intifada, our goals and motives were quite clear. Despite the tremendous sacrifices that we made, we never thought of the coming positions and gains; we simply believed in an idea and struggled hard to fulfill it. However, when the Palestinian Authority was formed, we were shocked to see the painful reality of neglecting and disregarding the social struggle and giving the main priority to the political struggle. The Palestinian Authority introduced a male-dominated system, got rid of the existing structures and aimed to integrate everything in a generalized system. This resulted in marginalizing the role of women and the youth while male leaders – and particularly the old traditional ones – took over all the positions”.

- Study Participant

“A woman who applies for a high-ranking position is requested to prove herself and her capacity and to fulfill a long list of standards which are carefully checked by persons who either reject the presence of women in such positions or accept them with great hesitation. However, these same people perceive men to be qualified immediately” [without having them pass through the same strict measures].

- Study Participant

“Many of the people who do not think that women are capable of assuming decision-making positions place strict monitoring measures against women and seize the first opportunity when they find mistakes caused by women leaders even if these mistakes were not grave. At the same time, if a man commits catastrophic mistakes, there is always someone who justifies these acts. Therefore, when a woman commits even the smallest mistake, these mistakes seem to be aggrandized and exaggerated by responding harshly against such mistakes. This bigoted and biased monitoring against women makes women feel more cautious and reluctant and prevents the society from enjoying the great creativity of women if they were given the chance to prove themselves.”

- Study Participant

## **E. The Absence of Democratic Processes inside the PLO and Political Parties**

The weak democratic approaches/processes and the absence of election monitoring [in a fair and transparent manner] by credible oversight bodies is one of the main challenges preventing the rotation of power and the acceptance of young new leaders in the PLO organs and political factions. The high-ranking positions of the PLO organs and parties have not changed much in the last three or four decades and the leaders of many factions and organs/bodies remained in their positions without any change. In such a weak environment, there is a very small chance for women to reach leadership and decision-making roles and positions inside the various political parties and factions.

One of the most important criticisms by participants was the absence of elections as a way to prevent the rotation of power. A number of participants mentioned that despite some shortcomings in the ways of holding elections inside political parties and the questioned neutrality of these elections, these elections are still considered important because they can lead to the entrance of “new blood” and new members inside the political parties. It was also noted that the great integrity of the last Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections must be also seen in the elections of the various factions, associations and popular unions affiliated with the PLO. It was also mentioned that the difficulty of holding elections inside unions and political parties must not disregard the principle of resorting to elections as a great approach and option.

“Among the biggest mistakes of the PLO and its factions was the absence of a culture of critical examination regarding their performance, as well as the lack of openness and accountability regarding the various decisions taken on different levels. All of these are important requirements for the attainment of good performance, effectiveness and integrity inside these national liberation movements.”  
- Study Participant

“It is the right of the people - who paid a heavy price in terms of their lives and properties in order to be emancipated from occupation - to hold their leaders accountable for their decisions, performance and stances/positions.

- Study Participant

## **F. The Declining Performance of Factions and Parties**

Most of the study participants agree that the declining role of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the Post-Oslo era affected the various political parties and factions whose performance became weak, roles became ineffective and started having a smaller presence and activity on the ground, as well as a weaker cohesion and mobilization with the Palestinian populace. Many participants also mentioned that the performance and programs of many political parties/factions lacked the necessary vitality and dynamism for responding to the substantial changes and transformations witnessed by the Palestinian cause and society in the last two decades. The reason behind this is the marginalized role of many political factions, the domination of different aspects by the PLO's main political faction, rigidity of the parties' internal bylaws and the old factional leaders' ongoing use of traditional discourses, maintaining a strong grip on their leadership positions and their resistance to any change or renewal. These circumstances led to creating a scene which came to exclude women, the youth, and all those who call for change and renewal, from all decision-making positions.

Most of the people that we have met mentioned that the majority of political factions and parties lack the suitable orientation programs, mobilization, factional education [based on common national principles], the upholding of people's rights, a culture of equality, joint participation and mutual respect between the different generations. The absence of this kind of education further weakens the performance and ability of many factional members who choose to resort to more traditional, male-dominated action systems, hence preventing the factions from positively influencing the community action system and upholding the vital social values.

In general, the post-Oslo era saw some great gaps and shortcomings in the relations between factional leaders and the Palestinian grassroots level/populace. This led to the weakening and absence of several social institutions which were previously considered “the arms” of community action for the factions and the “roots” which used to link the factions with the various components of the Palestinian people such as the volunteer work committees, student movements in universities and schools, women and youth organizations and community action centers.

This situation directly impacts the performance of factions on various levels. For example, the absence of factional and grassroots education and mobilization and the weak social and grassroots organizations belonging to political factions prevented the parties from producing young and effective community leaders and prevented the factional grassroots from holding the leaders of their factions accountable in order to oblige them to adopt and uphold the principles of integrity and transparency. Also, we notice the absence of democratic approaches and processes for the selection and renewal of leaders, as well as those pertaining to the attainment of equal rights and justice; including the representation of women.

“The post-Oslo era saw the deterioration of many political parties and factions and their inability to cope with the emerging developments. The main concern of these parties’ leaders is to increase their gains and personal privileges and benefits.”

- Study Participant

## **6. The Weak Performance of the Women Movement**

Many participants noted that feminist institutions and women’s rights organizations and activists made a number of important achievements. However, they also stressed that the past experience showed the weakness of the women movement in bringing out real societal change for defending the rights of women and achieving positive transformations which suit the roles and sacrifices of women. These weaknesses were attributed to subjective reasons related to the performance of women organizations, as well as objective reasons pertaining to the wider contexts of the PLO and the

Palestinian society as a whole. The female and male study participants also mentioned several issues related to this subject and we hereby mention the most important ones:-

- ◆ The lack of awareness of some women organizations weakened the collective commitment to what is called “the common interests of women” regardless of their preferred political faction. Also, there was the absence of faith in the power and importance of blocs/clusters and female solidarity in promoting women’s interests and improving their conditions inside the various PLO factions, organizations and the Palestinian society as a whole. In this context, the women’s action system failed to establish a strong alliance based on an agreed women’s agenda. Also, factional representation and links to certain factional groups seemed to have been given priority over the collective action pertaining to women.
- ◆ There was also the absence of a common discourse, viewpoint and vision for formulating crystal-clear strategies, actions plans, work mechanisms, activities and objectives for empowering women to achieve equal representation and support women leaders in reaching decision-making positions. This weakness led to the dispersion of women movements and prevented them from working in an organized manner to make meaningful achievements. This also led to the partial and inconsistent struggle of women which was rather characterized as seasonal and discontinued.
- ◆ The weak methods, tools and strategies used by women organizations and unions. For example, these organizations did not exert sufficient efforts to coordinate and cooperate with civil society organizations and create alliances with the various forces which support the demands of women in order to exert tremendous pressure for empowering women and promoting their access to decision-making positions.
- ◆ A weak level of cohesion and synergy between women organizations and their respective environments and audiences, hence their limited ability to do mobilization to support their demands. Some participants also noted that the discussions of some women organizations are overly focused on elitist issues which do not express or concern the majority of Palestinian women and do not fulfill their needs and demands. In general,

the recent years have seen a steady decline in the relations between women organizations and the grassroots and popular levels.

- ◆ Despite the presence of some good individual female capacities from various currents of thought, political parties and those who do not belong to any political party, the collective action of women has not been organized effectively and influentially.
- ◆ In order for women to succeed in achieving equal representation and reaching decision-making positions, it is important for them to be aligned together on the basis of agreed programs to be a point of reference for all parties.
- ◆ Several male and female participants noted that in order to make meaningful changes and help women reach decision-making positions, the best approach would not be through weeping and begging for rights from the male-dominated leadership. Rather, these rights must be fully recognized by everyone and should be embedded in crystal-clear and binding laws, legislations and organizational procedures. This can be achieved through the collective struggle of women and the forming of alliances with the various supporters of the women's cause. Therefore, these rights should not come as a "favour" from any side but should rather be seen as a vital matter.
- ◆ Isolating the women's cause from the wider contexts. Instead of having the women's cause be a community cause for which everyone is held responsible, this cause has become an isolated one which is only cared for by women organizations. This was clearly reflected inside the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) where there was the isolation of the women's cause and the assigning of this duty to the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and not as the collective responsibility of the various spectrums of political action. Some participants noted that this is one of the most serious risks facing the equal representation of women. This is because some leaders think that the representation of women inside the Palestinian National Council (PNC) is guaranteed and fair through the presence of the General Union of Palestinian Women since all of this union's candidates are women but they do not understand that it is the right of women to be nominated by political parties and factions, associations, political unions, independent persons, etc.

- ◆ Some female participants also noted the lack of producing capable young female leaders inside women organizations. These female leaders should have a vision regarding women's and social affairs and to be able to enhance the struggle for women's rights and to take into consideration the various concerns and demands of women. According to these participants, the reasons behind the weak young female leaders are the strong grip of traditional women leaders on their positions, the absence of power rotation mechanisms and ineffective programs for training young female leaders and qualifying them to become more able to struggle for the representation of women and their access to decision-making positions.
- ◆ The negative factional competition and the lack of willingness inside women organizations prevented the women-related action from benefiting from the experiences, leaders and competencies of these organizations; and especially in the fields of administration and management, planning, success stories, effective strategies, communications and the rich experiences of knowledgeable and wise persons inside these organizations.

“Women do not know how to climb up to decision-making positions because they work in a different manner. The struggle for higher positions, privileges and gains is characterized by entering a quite severe and intense competition dominated by men. This makes it quite hard for women to access these positions..”

- Study Participant

“We must believe in ourselves and our ability to bring about change. Also, we must remember that our common struggle for women's rights can lead to various successes which will be beneficial for all of us. Among our best achievements is the successful coordination and collective female action which brought forward the first female member inside the PLO Executive Committee after some quite tough elections and an intense competition.”

- Study Participant

“It is important to remember that this subject is not limited to increasing female representation but it also has to do with elevating [i.e. bringing to power] females who are capable of serving the women’s cause and who possess the required professional competencies, a women’s rights perspective and the necessary insight and ability to tackle the concerns of women. .”

- Study Participant

## **7. The Absence of Monitoring Mechanisms for Supporting the Women’s Cause and Maintaining the Achievements of the Women’s Movement**

Some important achievements have been made on the level of female representation in decision-making positions inside the PLO system. However, not translating these achievements into binding laws and procedures and the absence of an authorized party to monitor the PLO organs and hold them accountable regarding their performance hindered the parties’ commitment to implement these procedures and laws on the ground. An example of this is the failure to implement the Palestinian Central Council decision regarding the women’s quota of 30%. Also, despite the fact that several political parties made resolutions which call for gender equality, there is a great level of disparity between them with regard to implementing these decisions.

“The absence of a female monitoring body which is authorized to monitor other parties and hold them accountable prevented the ability to benefit from some of the achievements made by the Women’s Movement.”

- Study Participant

## **8. The Condition of Unions and Associations**

After communicating with the competent departments of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), we discovered the presence of 31 registered unions and associations and others which are in the process of registration. Some of these associations and unions are represented inside the PLO and have a known quota, while others do not have representation and have not been given a quota because of the absence of PLO council meetings; and especially the Palestinian National Council (PNC).

### **The Main Associations and Unions represented inside the Palestinian National Council (PNC)**

1. General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
2. General Union of Palestinian Workers
3. General Union of Palestinian Teachers
4. General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS)
5. Red Crescent Society and the General Union of Palestinian Doctors
6. General Union of Palestinian Engineers
7. General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists
8. General Union of Palestinian Lawyers
9. The Higher Palestinian Council for Youth and Sports
10. General Union of Palestinian Economists
11. General Union of Palestinian Farmers
12. Union of Palestinian Expressionist Artists
13. Union of Palestinian Plastic Artists

During the implemented field work, we collected some data regarding several associations and unions; and particularly with regard to the last elections of the administrative bodies and the representation of women inside these bodies. The following table summarizes our key findings:-

<b>Association/Union</b>	<b>The Representation of Women in Leadership Bodies</b>	<b>Elections</b>
General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)	All the leaders of the leadership body are women from different factions	Currently in the process of holding new elections
General Union of Palestinian Workers	This union has three branches: The first one is headed by Mr. Haidar Ibrahim and it is based abroad. The second branch is headed by Mr. Rasem Al-Bayyari and it represents the Gaza Strip, and the third one is headed by Mr. Shafer Sa'ad.	Elections take place but not on a regular basis
General Union of Palestinian Farmers	The number of members of the Administrative Body is 19 of which there is only 1 woman	Elections took place on the 26 <sup>th</sup> of December 2015.
General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists	The number of members of the Administrative Body is 17 but there is only one woman among them.	Their last elections were held in 2010.
Association of Palestinian Economists	There is only one woman in the Administrative Body	Their elections took place in Kuwait and no other elections were held since the Gulf War [1990]

Association of Agricultural Engineers	This union is a new one and it has a preparatory committee comprising a total of 9 members of which there is one woman.	-
Association of Pharmacists	The administrative body is made up of six members of which there is one woman.	The last elections took place in 2014.
Union of Dentists	The administrative body does not have any woman	Their last elections were held in 2016.
Palestinian General Union of People with Disability (GUPWD)	The administrative body comprises 9 members of which there are 3 women.	Their last elections were held in 2012.
General Union of Palestinian Engineers	There are no women in the Administrative Body	Their last elections were held in 1999.
Palestinian Veterinary Medical Association	There are no women in the Administrative Body	The last elections were held in 2017.
Palestinian Physiotherapy Association	The administrative body comprises 13 members of which there are 2 women but one of them got married and the second one apologized and withdrew. <sup>3</sup> Their new elections will take place in 2017 but no women were nominated up until this point.	Their last elections were held in 2013.
Psychologists Association	There are no women in the Administrative Body	-
Bar Association	There are no women in the Administrative Body	-

The table above shows that the condition of associations and unions is no better than that of the political factions and parties in terms of the regularity of elections, representation of women in leadership bodies and the implementation of women's quotas. We also noticed that some unions and associations held elections recently, whereas the others have not held an election for a long time. It was also seen that the representation of women in associations or unions is either too low or non-existent, and that many unions do not have any female representation.

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<sup>3</sup> The person who we communicated with mentioned that the first of the two women represented inside the administrative body got married, and it seems that she quit because of pressure from her husband. As for the second woman in the administrative body, she quit after the first woman withdrew from the administrative body because she became the only woman in a group made up solely of men.

It is also worth noting that there is not a unified election system applied by all unions and associations. This is because each one of them has its own electoral system without abiding by any female quota or being keen on female representation. However, the exception of this is the General Union of Palestinian Journalists (see below).

## **2. What are the reasons behind the weak representation of the youth in decision-making positions inside the PLO (the Palestinian National Council, Central Council and Executive Committee)?**

After analyzing the opinions of participants in this study, we saw a great level of similarity between the reality of the youth and the reality of the women (which was explained in the previous section) with regard to the low and unequal representation of the youth in PLO-affiliated bodies and components such as political factions and parties, associations, popular unions, etc. It also became clear that there are similar reasons for excluding and marginalizing the youth and women from decision-making positions. Many participants actually noted that the participation of the youth and their representation in PLO factions and structures was even worse than the situation of women. Hence, when we analyze the current situation we clearly see the exclusion and marginalization of the youth from leadership positions inside the PLO:

1. There is not a single young person inside the PLO Executive Committee. As a matter of fact, the youngest member in the PLO Executive Committee is older than sixty.
2. There is not a single young member inside the PLO Central Council and the Palestinian National Council.
3. There is not a single young person in the higher leadership of most factions, and even in the factions which admit young persons in their higher leadership we see a low level of youth representation.
4. The youth are not represented in any associations or grassroots unions.
5. There is not a single young person heading any department of the PLO.

6. There is not a single member representing the youth inside the Higher Council for Youth and Sports which belongs to the PLO.

The following section presents the main obstacles/impediments which prevent the youth from having equal representation inside the PLO structures and decision-making positions:-

**A. The laws, legislations and regulations which govern the work of the PLO and its factions, and their effects on the representation of the youth.**

As mentioned previously, the research team reviewed a number of official Palestinian documents related to or issued by the PLO, as well as the statutes/internal bylaws of some PLO-affiliated factions in order to see whether the laws, regulations and legislations included any references, texts or statements which discriminate on the basis of gender or age, or limit the participation of women or the youth in PLO structures or prevent their access to decision-making positions. While we did not find any references or texts which discriminate on the basis of gender, it was seen that there are some disparities between PLO political factions and bodies with regard to the terms/conditions of youth membership. These conditions can hinder or even prevent the access of the youth to leadership positions. In this study, we adopted the official definition of “the Youth” as described by the Palestinian Authority, the Higher Council of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Sports. This definition is as follows:- *“any person, whether male or female, whose age is between 15 and 29”*.

The results/findings of this research were as follows:-

A- There are no legal provisions which prevent the youth from becoming members in associations and popular unions.

B- The only positive discrimination for the youth in the PLO system is the presence of the General Union of Palestinian Students since most of the candidate members of this union belong to the youth segment.

C- With regard to the political parties and factions, the situation is as follows:-

- ◆ In the general conferences of most factions, the admitted age of membership is between 16 to 18 years. This gives the chance for the youth to have a sense of belonging and to participate in various Palestinian political factions and parties. Also, most of the factions have mechanisms for involving and integrating the younger men and women in the groups of “Cubs” [i.e. “young lions”] and “Flowers”.
- ◆ The main difference between the different factions lies in their statute/internal bylaws which could allow or prevent the youth from reaching higher positions in the factional structures. In most of the political parties and factions, the term/duration of membership constitutes one of most important conditions for allowing or preventing the youth from joining their central committees or political offices. A number of examples will be given to explain this:-
  - The statute of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) prescribes that the membership duration of candidates for the Central Committee must be at least 7 years as active members, and that the candidates for the PFLP’s Political Office must have at least 10 years of seniority as active members. This means that, from the theoretical point of view, it is possible for the young party members of the PFLP to reach its Central Committee and to a lesser extent to its Political Office.
  - As for the statute/bylaws of FIDA (the Palestinian Democratic Union), they are more flexible in terms of the ability of the youth to reach high-ranking positions, whereas it prescribes that candidates for the Central Committee membership must have completed 3 years as active members and that the candidates to the Political Office should have ended 5 years as active members.
  - However, with regard to the statute of the Fateh movement, the prescribed conditions are quite strict, whereas it is impossible for young persons between the age of 15 and 29 to be nominated to leadership bodies and reach high-ranking positions. For example, the statute of Fateh – which was ratified by the Sixth and Seventh Fateh Conference – prescribes that

the candidates for membership inside the Fateh Revolutionary Council must have spent 15 years as active members inside the movement and that the candidates for membership inside the Fateh Central Committee must have spent 20 years as an active member inside Fateh. In simple mathematics, if a member joined the Fateh movement at the age of 18, this means that s/he cannot be nominated to the Revolutionary Council before the age of 33 and neither can s/he be nominated to the Fateh Central Committee before the age of 38. Therefore, this statute eliminates all the possibilities of nominating the youth to become members inside the higher organizational levels of the Fateh movement; and particularly the Revolutionary Council and the Central Committee. Even the membership of the Fateh General Conference requires the nominee to complete at least 10 years as an active member. Even though the access of young candidates to the membership of the Fateh General Conference is theoretically possible, this possibility is quite limited because it requires that the person would enroll in the movement at the age of 18 or 19 and if the person joins Fateh after that, s/he will not be able to be nominated to the General Conference at a young age.

D. The youth membership in the Palestinian Legislative Council is theoretically possible but it is quite limited by the minimum age restriction, whereas Article (45) prescribes that those who want to be nominated as members in the Legislative Council should have completed the age of 28.

In conclusion, despite that there are no legal or procedural obstacles which impede the participation of the youth in PLO-affiliated factions on the lower organizational levels – and especially on the level of field work - it is quite difficult for the youth to access higher leadership positions in some factions and even impossible in others. This [negative] situation is directly reflected in the other bodies of the PLO where most of the political factions and parties nominate the first-line leaders to join the membership of these bodies.

## **B. Cultural and Social Factors and Administrative and Institutional Practices**

Our previous analysis of the legal restrictions in the statutes of some factions helps us in partially understanding the reasons for marginalizing and excluding the youth from decision-making positions inside the PLO organizations and factions. However, in order to see the picture in a more holistic manner, the following analysis covers the opinions and viewpoints of study participants with regard to the impact of cultural and social factors, as well as the administrative practices and organizational philosophy of the PLO and its affiliated factions and bodies. These factors and practices highly affect the representation and participation of the youth in various PLO structures.

### **1. The Domination of the First Generation of Leaders on the various Decision-Making Aspects**

The study participants noted the presence of a historical legacy of excluding the youth, resisting change and being keen on keeping the status quo. One of the most important features of this orientation is the ongoing domination of traditional leaders on the various decision-making positions and their strong grip on their positions inside the various political parties and factions and also in the unions and associations representing the PLO. The study participants highlighted a number of reasons behind this; the most important of which are the following:-

- The absence of the retirement age and a period/term for leaders in their leadership positions within the PLO and many affiliated factions. For example, in most of the PLO factions and bodies there are no restrictions related to age and duration of service, hence a leader can stay in the same position for 30 or 50 years.
- The domination of old leaders (both male and female) does not give chance for the youth to become members in the various PLO bodies.
- Despite the factional competition in the work of the PLO, the first generation of leaders introduced some mechanisms for agreeing and solving disputes between them and they have become quite used to working together. This is why the traditional leaders of the

various factions prefer to work with each other and support the presence of their counterparts in their respective positions. Any possible replacement or entrance of new elements would be a great concern for these leaders because they find it hard to accept change and are not flexible enough to deal with new persons who might hold new or different ideas that they might have a difficulty to deal with.

- The traditional leaders and the cultural heritage of many Palestinian segments perceive the youth as persons who possess energy, vitality and passion to conduct field work related to the struggle and exert substantial efforts and make sacrifices. However, the general culture does not see the youth as persons who have the necessary capabilities and experiences to excel in leadership positions because, according to this view, they lack the wisdom and maturity for decision-making. Therefore, the youth are sometimes seen as ineffective in decision-making.

“Despite that the leaders of our political factions accepted the admittance of the youth in higher leadership positions, they kept putting them under close scrutiny and are always prepared to aggrandize and exaggerate their mistakes and shortcomings.

- Study Participant

- The absence of sufficient factional education sometimes leads to unacceptable behaviour by the youth (for example, the weak representation of political parties by the youth, making mistakes when presenting the viewpoints of their faction or party, not arriving on time to meetings, not achieving their assigned tasks, acting arrogantly and condescendingly when they reach decision-making positions and not respecting or benefiting from the experiences and knowledge of the older leaders. Such behaviors discourage some traditional leaders from expanding the participation of the youth.

“At times the traditional leaders choose young persons who have a high degree of loyalty to assume high-ranking positions in order for these leaders to guarantee their control over various aspects.”

- Study Participant

- Of course the leaders' strong grip on their positions and their reluctance to leave their positions is related to their desire to enhance their personal interests, privileges and gains.
- The absence of a retirement system and the beneficial experience of old leaders have contributed to their being highly attached to their positions and gains. Hence, people who have a high status, influence and privileges choose to stay in their [influential] positions. However, when such people leave their positions they immediately lose their privileges, gains and benefits. If there had been a retirement system which maintains the dignity and status of these leaders while giving them another mechanism to benefit from - such as senior consultancy positions - this might give the chance to younger people and generations to assume leadership positions.

“The youth will not be employed as long as the older people remain in their positions, and the youth will not reach leadership positions if there is no environment that embraces them and if the current leaders do not give them the chance to reach to these positions.”

- Study Participant

## **2. The Absence of Elections and Democratic Processes during the Selection of Leaders**

As explained earlier in our discussion of the obstacles which prevent women from reaching decision-making positions, most of the study participants noted that one of the reasons for excluding the youth is the absence of democratic processes during the selection of leaders and the weak level of commitment to the principle of rotation of power as an organizational culture which should orient the work of PLO factions and bodies. This situation prevented the entry of young leaders in the various parties and factions and reduced the opportunities of the youth in competing and being nominated and reaching decision-making positions. The absence of elections does not only prevent the access of the youth and women to decision-making positions but it also supports the traditional leadership orientations which are anything but suitable for tackling the great changes and challenges facing the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause. Some participants also noted that the weak role of PLO factions and bodies, their distance from the grassroots level and

their insufficient resources have led to fierce competition inside the political parties and other components of the PLO in order to cling to their positions and resist all kinds of change. In such situations, the youth and the women would surely face exclusion and they would not be able to compete effectively.

### **3. The Weak Performance of the Youth Movement**

The situation of the youth is quite hard even in comparison with that of the women's movement. Despite the aforementioned difficulties which confront the women's movement, there are several strength points which support their roles and activities such as the presence of a common system for collective action [pertaining to women]; coordination and cooperation mechanisms and channels such as the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA); the great and long-standing experience of women-related work; the ratification of international agreements and conventions which enhance the position of women's movements and support their claims, etc. On the other hand, several participants mentioned a number of serious obstacles which hinder and impede their role and ability to make important achievements for the youth:-

- ◆ The current challenges faced by the youth are unprecedented and their solutions are quite difficult (marginalization, unemployment, psychological pressures, the absence of a horizon for reassuring them about a better future, low levels of participation, absence of community work and activities by the youth, frustration from the political reality, lack of any horizon or vision for a political solution, etc.).
- ◆ The absence of an active coordination and cooperation system and the lack of common experiences in youth-related activities. There are actually many personal, unorganized activities and achievements but there is no real collective work and presence by the youth. It is also worth noting that one of the main challenges which prevent the creation of an active, influential and strong youth movement are the weak inputs of the youth and the weak impact of traditional environments which used to previously embrace the youth, such as the universities, institutes, schools, political factions, the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), the Student Union, etc.

- ◆ The youth do not have a crystal-clear project and orientation and an agreed discourse and action plan which everyone refers to. If these were present, they could unify the efforts and achievements of the youth in order to enhance their influence, political participation and access to decision-making positions.
- ◆ The competition between young people inside the various factions and Palestinian Authority frameworks to achieve personal benefits improves their personal conditions on the account of youth collective action and the search for common solutions for various problems.
- ◆ The limited activities of women and the youth on the popular level. This includes a lower level of activity inside the various factions and student movements and the inability of traditional youth frameworks to provide good alternatives for the youth.
- ◆ Many of the youth who belong to political factions do not express their opinions in the decision-making process and they are many times used by factional leaders to enhance the leaders' positions by attracting a large number of young supporters.

“The youth and the women are like fuel for field work and they are the most important social components for the [Palestinian] struggle. However, when it comes to decision-making and representation, these two segments are always excluded.”

- Study Participant

“The youth are in a difficult situation. They are unable to reach decision-making positions inside the PLO if they were not active members inside the political factions or if they were not nominated in any political party, association or popular union. Therefore, it is quite hard for them to reach to these positions.”

Study Participant

#### **4. The Declining Role of PLO Factions and the Lack of Effective Education, Formation and Factional Frameworks**

The male and female participants of this study noted the declining role of PLO factions in the past period and that they are no longer able to provide factional and intellectual education and youth mobilization. They also mentioned that these factions are only able to

create a positive environment which embraces the youth and listens to their concerns and ambitions. Also, the past periods have shown the factions' failure to develop their programs and adopt modernized strategies and tools for attracting the youth and tackling their various priorities. These weaknesses led to their failure to develop patriotic, factional and intellectual young leaders who are well-prepared to play influential roles which have a great impact on the political, social and leadership levels.

This negative situation made the youth lose confidence in political parties and led to their frustration and reluctance to join or be active in any political factions. Therefore, many of them withdrew from the public life and joined their colleagues in smaller, ineffective closed groups based on social, professional or cultural backgrounds, as well as being more concerned with the virtual world instead of the reality in which they live in.

"The discourse of factions with relation to the youth is neither realistic nor practical."  
- Study Participant

"Intellectual education cannot create leaders on its own. Leaders are developed through the intellectual and psychological formation of people coupled with fighting the hard battles of life and passing through various experiences in the field."  
- Study Participant

The outcomes of this study are very similar to those which were presented in a study conducted by Birzeit University's Center for Development Studies which targeted some youth from various locations (West Bank, Gaza Strip, Palestinians inside the green line and the Palestinians of Lebanon). The latter study analyzed in an in-depth manner the causes and results of the desperation and frustration of the youth, their unwillingness to be involved in politics under the current situation and the low level of youth participation in charitable organizations and volunteering activities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See: "جميل هلال، 2016" in addition to "مركز دراسات التنمية وهيئة خدمات الاصدقاء الامريكية (الكويكرز)، 2017".  
[Arabic Sources]

## **5. The Generation Gap and its Expanding Consequences**

A large number of study participants saw that the generation gap is one of the most serious challenges facing the Palestinian youth. All of these participants agreed that there is a great and ever-expanding gap between the young and the old. The reasons behind that are the lack of dialogue between them and the influence of modern life on the youth, whereas the older persons choose to cling to older traditions, norms and work systems which are usually rejected by the youth. What further widens this gap are the advanced hi-tech capabilities and experiences of the youth which give them all sorts of knowledge and information (both positive and negative), whereas the older generation failed to keep up with the technological developments of the modern times and usually have limited hi-tech capabilities and experiences.

On the factional and political levels, we see a gap caused by the absence of a constructive and productive dialogue between the factional leaders and young party members, whereas we see mutual distrust between the two sides and the traditional leaders cling to their old viewpoints, visions and working methods. On the other hand, the young people see that the currently used tools are not good enough to confront the modern challenges and developments seen by the Palestinian community and the Palestinian cause and that they do not lead to any significant changes or achievements.

Many young participants also expressed their dissatisfaction from the performance of both the PLO and its political factions and they held the traditional leaders the responsibility of failing to make any national achievements and restoring the hope and confidence of the Palestinian youth. The young participants were also disappointed from the lack of a political horizon, absence of a political discourse and the irrational and ineffective action plans and programs. At the forefront of the reasons behind their frustration is the absence of opportunities for the youth to express their opinions and viewpoints and the failure to introduce real mechanisms for promoting the effective participation of the youth.

## 6. Analyzing the Attitudes of the Youth:

The young participants expressed their great level of frustration from the current situation of the Palestinian people. They also expressed distrust towards the PLO and Palestinian Authority leaders, as well as their rejection of the negotiation approach and the consequences of the Oslo accords. A number of the youth also expressed their bitterness and sorrow from the “dissolution” of the PLO inside the Palestinian Authority (PA), noting that instead of having the PLO be the referral party which guides the Palestinian Authority, holds it accountable and imposes some controls and restrictions on its work, the PA is the party which is actually controlling the PLO. Also, many young people see that the PLO in its present condition is no longer supported by the youth and the society. They also questioned the whole essence and justification for the PLO’s existence after cancelling the clauses of the Palestinian National Covenant before actually being liberated and building the state.

“According to my view, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was established for the purpose of “*Liberation*” as suggested by its name and prescribed by its Covenant. However, when the PLO got rid of the whole idea of liberation, Palestinians all over the world no longer supported this organization. This issue has nothing to do with reform or improvements but it mainly revolves around the main essence and mission of the Palestinian cause”.

- Study Participant

When asked about the performance of the PLO, many of the youth expressed their disappointment from this organization and its various components; and particularly the leaders of the Palestinian factions. The youth blamed these traditional leaders for their ongoing failures and incompetency. In fact, according to the youth, the main concern of factional leaders is to keep their strong grip on their “seats” and positions and that this explains why the youth are being excluded. Many of the youth also noted that most of these leaders have clung to their old ideas, visions, methods of work (“*Modi Operandi*”), approaches and [conventional] ways of responding to the new events. Additionally, several young participants mentioned that the Palestinian leaders lack the basic tools that successful leaders and

modern politicians must have in our modern world in which the international stances and alliances are formed on the basis of interests and not morality and values, and that this requires a great level of efficiency and the possession of modern and effective communication tools among other things.

These results are similar to the results included in a study conducted by Birzeit University's Center for Development Studies, and one-fourth of the young participants saw that neither the PLO nor the PA represents them.<sup>5</sup>

### **3. Assessing the Quota Experience in Supporting the Access of Women to Decision-Making Positions**

The Quota subject was discussed elaborately with many participants of this study. These participants noted that the "Quota" as an idea is not a new concept for the PLO. In fact, the PLO had a Quota system since its inception and this system gave certain proportions/shares to political and factional forces, unions and associations inside the various structures of the PLO. However, many participants mentioned some shortcomings in the Quota system of the PLO. Their argument was that this Quota system is strictly political in nature without having a fair system which guarantees the rights of certain segments (such as the women and the youth) and protects their right to access decision-making positions and have equal representation. Also, the Quota system used by the PLO lacks any clear procedures, detailed instructions, control mechanisms or monitoring systems which guarantee the attainment of the Quota's objectives, i.e. the preservation of rights and the achievement of equality, justice, accountability and integrity.

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<sup>5</sup> See: "مركز دراسات التنمية وهيئة خدمات الاصدقاء الامريكية (الكويكرز)، 2017".  
[Arabic Source]

## **A.The Concept and Reasons for the Women Quota**

In the absence of a good community culture, laws and a system for enhancing the values of social justice and equality, a great level of injustice is done to the weaker segments of the society. One of the main forms of injustice as a result of these things is the marginalization and exclusion of women and the youth from political and social participation, preventing their access to decision-making positions and the traditional forces' control and domination over all economic, political and social spectrums, authorities and influential positions.

“*Quota*” is a Latin word which means “a proportional part or share”. This word is many times associated with electoral systems and it helps in guaranteeing the rights of minorities in general elections by helping them have access to the political authority. Quotas are also considered a positive intervention for the achievement of equality and reducing discrimination between the various segments of the society; such as the elimination of gender discrimination. In other words, the Quota system is seen as a temporary solution to a perennial problem.

The “Quota” system was first introduced in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 as a mechanism for helping women reach decision-making positions. This came as an interim solution for the low level of female participation in the political life and their limited access to decision-making positions.

The study participants focused on several advantages and justifications for adopting the Quota system, the most important of which are the following:-

- ◆ The Quota system is considered an important positive discrimination tool for guaranteeing the access of women to decision-making positions amidst an unsupportive environment which does not believe in gender equality and does not accept the principles of equality and social justice.
- ◆ The Quota system is one of the temporary solutions adopted by states and societies to enhance the participation of women in the public life in order to empower women and eliminate the obstacles which impede their participation in the political life.

- Therefore, the Quota system is not considered a discriminatory procedure.
- ◆ Supporting the access of women to decision-making positions through the Quota system will strengthen the public's trust towards women and the ability of women to develop their societies and build their countries. At the forefront of social change is the changing of the common stereotypes against women and having people get accustomed to seeing women assume high-ranking and non-traditional positions.
  - ◆ The Quota system urges the society and its leaders to reconsider their views towards women and their respective roles, status and abilities.
  - ◆ The Quota system gives women the chance to build their skills and capabilities, develop female leader role models and enhance the self-confidence of women.
  - ◆ Many participants saw that the Quota system must be applied temporarily [i.e. in an interim phase] until we see a change in the social mentality and their true belief in gender equality and the roles and capabilities of women.

It is also worth noting that Article (4) of the CEDAW Agreement [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women] stipulated the following:

*“Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved”.*

The Quota system was based on the following legal frameworks<sup>6</sup>:

## 1. General Elections

The participation of women in the general elections is regulated by Law No. (1) of 2007 Concerning the General Elections.

### **Article (5) – Women’s Representation**

*“Each electoral list nominated for the elections shall include a minimum limit for the representation of women that is not less than one woman in:*

- 1. The first three names in the list;*
- 2. The next four names that follow;*
- 3. Each five names that follow”.*

## 2. Elections of Local Bodies

The participation of women in the local elections is regulated by the Local Elections Law No. (10) of 2005 in which Article (17) states the following:-

### **Article (17) – Women’s Representaton**

*Women’s representation in local councils shall be no less than 20% and each list shall include a minimum limit for the representation of women that is no less than:*

- a. One woman among the first three names of the list.*
- b. One woman among the next four names.*
- c. One woman among the remaining names.*

Some amendments were made to this law through Law No. (12) of 2005 as follows:-

Article (1) of this law mentions that there has been an amendment of Article (17) titled “Women’s Representation”

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<sup>6</sup> See: “مركز جنيف للرقابة الديمقراطية على القوات المسلحة، المرأة الفلسطينية والأمن- دليل التشريعات السارية، 2010. ص74-76.”  
[Arabic source; Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)]

*Article (17) of the Local Elections Law No. (10) of 2005 is amended to become as follows:-*

- 1. In the local body in which the number of seats does not exceed 13, the women representation should not be less than two seats:
  - a. One woman shall be among the first five names in the list;*
  - b. One woman shall be among the next five names**
- 2. In the local body in which the number of seats exceeds 13, a seat shall be allocated for women among the five names that follow paragraph 1 (b) mentioned above;*
- 3. Local bodies in which the number of voters is less than 1000 according to the final table of voters are excluded from provisions of paragraph (1) mentioned above. In such a case, the option for selecting places allocated for women among the candidates shall be left for the electoral lists.*
- 4. If a post allocated for a woman in the local body council becomes vacant, the woman that follows in the sequence of seats allocated for women in the same list to which she belongs, shall replace her.”*

## **B. The Achievements of the Women Quota**

All the study participants agreed that the achievement of the 20% women quota inside the legislative and local council elections was a great success and an important achievement for the women's movement. Even though some people considered the quota of 20% to be somewhat low and unfair, they still saw this as the most effective step for enhancing the access of women to decision-making positions and increasing their political representation and participation. Therefore, this is considered as an important step which must be built upon.

As a result of the Quota system, 17 Palestinian women – i.e. the rate of 12% of the total number of members – were able to join the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in the last PLC elections held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2006. This is a great achievement compared to the first PLC elections held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1996 in which only five women out of 88 members (i.e, 4.4% of the total number of members) were able to join the PLC. Also, the Quota system significantly increased the women's representation inside the various local councils and bodies.

The study participants also noted that the Central Council's decision to apply a 30% quota for women inside the various PLO bodies is considered another great achievement and a valuable opportunity for enhancing female representation inside the various PLO bodies.

The Palestinian Elections Law of 2005 stipulates the following:-  
*Each electoral list nominated for the proportional elections (lists) shall include a minimum limit for the representation of women that is not less than one woman in: 1. The first three names in the list; 2. The next four names that follow; 3. Each five names that follow.*

### **C. International Experiences regarding the Implementation of the Quota System**

1. Some study participants stressed the importance of calling the Quota system "a temporary procedure on the pathway towards achieving equality". Thus, the Quota system should be integrated in a holistic plan for achieving equality and is not to be considered as an isolated or separate activity which people resort to during the elections and then they totally forget it. These participants suggested that we stick to the Quota system provided that we achieve equality by gradually increasing the Women Quota rate from 20% to 30% to 35%, etc. while constantly assessing this process and making the necessary changes to the demands and procedures.

2. The goal of achieving equality is a long-term one which even the most democratic states have not achieved yet and this is why they kept adopting the Quota system in different forms. In fact, some studies mention that the Quota system is currently applied in no less than 50% of world countries. About 45 countries have thus far introduced a Gender-based Quota system by formulating special elections laws for this particular purpose, whereas approximately 50 countries apply the Quota system through the political parties' adoption of an optional Quota and by including this Quota in their constitution.<sup>7</sup> We hereby present a number of Quota models throughout the world:-

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<sup>7</sup> European Parliament- Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2008. Page 8.

A. In the year 2000, France passed the 50 percent (equal proportion) Quota in its gender parity laws which stated that the party lists of the French Parliament must include equal numbers of men and women.<sup>8</sup>

B. In most of the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark), female representation in parliaments was not less than 40%. The Quota system started being applied by some political parties in order to prevent the female representation of less than 40%. After their successful experience with this and the societies' achievement of an advanced level of maturity and acceptance of the principle of equality, a voluntary Quota was given to the parties. For example, the percentage of female representation in the Swedish parliament reached 45.3% in 2002 as a result of the Swedish parties' adoption of the voluntary Quota. Sweden undoubtedly has a rich legacy of female participation, whereas the Liberal Party of Sweden adopted a women Quota of 40% in as early as 1972 and the other parties followed suit in the following decades. In fact, the percentage of female representation in the Swedish Social Democratic Party reached 50%.<sup>9</sup>

C. In the Soviet Union, the percentage of female representation after introducing the Quota was 37% but it was only 17% when there was no Quota. As for Italy, when women ran for elections without a Quota, they achieved only 11% representation even though their level of participation in the elections was quite high.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See: عبد السلام المحطوري، الكوتا وتطبيقاتها في النظم الانتخابية: [Arabic source]

<sup>9</sup> See: نظرة للدراسات النسوية، 2013، ص 1 [Arabic Source]

<sup>10</sup> [Arabic] Interview with Mrs. Zahira Kamal, Secretary-General of FIDA party [Palestinian Democratic Union]

### Rate of Female Participation in a Selected Group of European Countries<sup>11</sup>

Country	% of Female Representation	Election Year
Sweden	45%	2010
Finland	42.5%	2011
Iceland	39.7%	2013
Norway	39.6%	2013
Denmark	39.1%	2011
Belgium	38%	2010
Italy	28.4%	2013
Germany	32.9%	2009
Greece	21%	2012
Slovakia	18.7%	2012
Malta	14.3%	2013

### Percentage of Women Quota in a Selected Group of European Countries and the Year of Adopting that Quota<sup>12</sup>

Country	Quota Percentage
Belgium	50% (2002) Previously: 33.3% (1999) 25% (1994)
France	50% (2002)
Ireland	30% (2012)
Portugal	33.3% (2006)
Poland	35% (2006)
Spain	40% (2007)

3. An analytical study by the European Union concerning the European experiences with the Quota system shows that implementing the Quota system led to a great success in enhancing the representation of women in some countries but this system had a limited success in some other countries. This study concluded that implementing the Quota system on its own is not sufficient to guarantee the increased representation of women. It also mentioned that the Quota system is most effective when it is integrated and taken into consideration by the various legislations and election systems which regulate the implementation of the Quota system; and especially the procedures which specify the order/arrangement of men and women's names in the election lists. Another thing which

<sup>11</sup> European Parliament- Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2013, Page 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, Page 15.

was concluded by this study is that the Quota system must be seen as part of a whole integrated system which aims to enhance the representation and participation of women and that there are some complementary strategies which must support the Quota system to guarantee the equal representation of women. This includes some procedures to be applied by the political parties to guarantee the Quotas' implementation when formulating the lists of candidates and putting their names in order.<sup>13</sup>

4. It is important to regularly and constantly review, modify and develop the electoral system. For example, in Spain and Tunisia, the following order: "man – woman – man – woman)" was applied in the elections which were expected to select an almost equivalent number of men and women in the lists. However, the results were not as expected and the percentage of female representation turned out to be only 33% due to the absence or limited number of lists which were headed by women.<sup>14</sup> This means that if a person won in one of the lists, it is most likely that it would be a man but if three people won then they will most likely be two men and a woman.

#### **D. A Critical Review of the implementation of the Women Quota during the Palestinian Legislative Council and Local Council Elections**

We have asked from various participants (both male and women) to assess the Quota experience. The following section summarizes their most important comments, analyses and discussions:-

A. A number of participants stressed the importance of conducting a comprehensive, thorough and objective assessment of the Palestinian Quota experience in terms of its success in fulfilling its objectives and the ways of making more achievements, minimizing its weaknesses, improving its performance and multiplying its benefits for promoting the women's cause. This assessment should also help in imposing control mechanisms to protect the fine implementation of the Quota system.

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<sup>13</sup> European Parliament- Directorate-General for Internal Policies, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> [Arabic] Interview with Mrs. Zahira Kamal, Secretary-General of FIDA party [Palestinian Democratic Union]

One of the study participants noted that “we must prepare an objective and comprehensive review to find out whether the Quota system created a new stereotype [against women] or if it was finely implemented to make the maximum possible achievements”.

B. All the study participants agreed that the Women Quota was a great achievement and an important step for enhancing the principles of equality, increased female representation and the access of women to decision-making positions. The Quota system also enabled several women to become members inside the Palestinian Legislative Council and some local bodies. Despite the performance disparity of the women who became members inside the Legislative Council, many of them worked actively and diligently to perform their tasks and duties and were seen as a great role model for all Palestinian women. These women also advocated for women’s rights with great strength and effectiveness. However, if the Legislative Council had not been disrupted, many more achievements would have been made by these honourable women.

C. Many study participants considered the Central Council’s decision (of March 2015) to apply a minimum Women Quota of 30% in the PLO organizations as an important achievement. However, the failure to translate this decision to a law, failure to issue some clear procedures for its implementation and the absence of a body which monitors and holds accountable those who do not abide by this decision have allowed some PLO bodies to get away with not implementing this decision under the pretext that this decision is only a recommendation and is not obligatory in its very nature. A good example of this is the Seventh Conference of the Fateh Movement which failed to implement this decision and did not apply a Women Quota during the formation of the General Conference, Revolutionary Council and the Central Committee of the Fateh movement. Therefore, female representation in the Fateh Revolutionary Council was less than 14% and only one woman became a member in the Palestinian Central Committee made up of 23 members.

“It was a great failure to not immediately build on the decision of the [Palestinian] Central Council. Another failure was not creating any mechanism for monitoring and follow-up. The decision to apply the Quota was political and is considered as an important reference but in order to correctly implement it, it must be strongly embedded in the various laws and mechanisms for the purpose of follow-up, monitoring and accountability”.

- Study Participant

Also, the Bar Association did not abide by the Central Council's decision and did not have any female representation in its elections. This led to another association which is made up solely of men.

There is also some disparity between the factions with regard to implementing the Women Quota. For example, some factions had more than 30% female representation while others had less than 14%.

This shows the importance of building on the decision of the Central Council by formulating a crystal-clear law, introducing specific mechanisms and issuing executive and monitoring procedures which oblige all PLO bodies and components to abide by the Quota decision.

#### D. The Quota system inside the Legislative Council and the Local Councils:

As mentioned previously, all the study participants agreed that applying the Quota system inside the Legislative Council and local councils/bodies was one of the most important achievements of the women's movement. However, the actual process of implementing the Quota system had some shortcomings which negatively affected the Quota experience and led to limited achievements. We hereby mention some remarks regarding this matter:

1. The selection of female candidates related to this Quota was highly influenced by the male-dominated traditional mentality which pervades the various Palestinian factions; Even though the women's movement was behind the idea of introducing the Quota, it somehow lost its control over the

implementation of this Quota because of its weak or missing interventions. This led to the selection of female Quota candidates on the basis of factional and/or tribal/clannish considerations and the adoption of certain standards which lead to the selection of female candidates who do not serve the women's cause.

“In many cases, the Quota system was not professionally and effectively implemented. This system was actually controlled by the factions, clans and tribes whose selection of candidates was based on loyalty and not competency and capabilities. For example, a woman would be selected [for a certain position] because she is the daughter or sister of an influential or well-connected person.

- Study Participant

“When selecting female candidates for local leadership positions or for representing their factions in the Women Quota, the factions prefer to select obedient women who have a high sense of loyalty and who are easily controlled and do everything which is asked from them. On the other hand, the factions avoid women who have an independent personality, ideas and perspectives because the male leaders are afraid that these women would bring them a headache”.

- Study Participant

2. Some of the factions and clans do not take the Quota system seriously:

A number of local leaders did not take the Quota system seriously and did not have the vision and political willingness for implementing it in accordance with the plan.

3. The implementation of the Quota was minimal in most places

The participation rate of women never exceeded the prescribed female Quotas. For example, despite that the prescribed Quota is a minimum female representation of 20%, most of the factions stuck to this percentage and acted as if it were the maximum percentage and not the minimum one, hence they never expanded female representation beyond 20%.

4. The women did not form a solid block to pressure the various parties to implement the Women Quota based on the justifications and philosophy of this important tool. In this context, the Quota system was dealt with as part of an election mechanism and not as a tool for a holistic societal transformation. Also, the Women Quota should have been supported and enhanced through proper policies and procedures. In order to have an effective Quota which fulfills its designated purpose, there is a need to adopt a number of procedures in an integrated system which would positively influence the society's culture and the factional and tribal systems.

5. In some instances, the women Quota led to the exclusion of the youth.

Leaders would sometimes be obliged to accept female candidates inside their factions. However, due to the large number of traditional male candidates, there would be no chance to accept young candidates beyond the minimum levels. As described by a study participant: "The leaders were obliged to accept women in leadership positions. But this reduced the ability to accept the youth because of fierce competition between the leaders. Therefore, the easiest option was to exclude the young candidates.

6. In the footsteps of the male-dominated traditional mentality, some local councils did not give prominent roles to the women who won in the elections and did not care about their attendance and participation. A number of women complained and stated that the leaders underestimated and disregarded their roles, did not hold discussions and consultations with them and set their meetings at night or during the holidays which made it impossible for women to attend because of their family responsibilities. This made women look as if they failed to perform their tasks and duties.

7. There was not a single example of the factions' willingness to nominate a women to lead their faction or to have a women be a mayor.

8. During the elections of the Legislative Council departments, there was the exclusion of women because the election-related instructions did not oblige the factions to specify certain positions for women in

the electoral lists. Consequently, women's names were recorded way below in the list in a manner which would make it impossible for them to win. Thus, it is important to solve this problem in the future and to make sure that the women's names/places in the list are not subject to personal preferences but should be recorded in specific places as prescribed by the instructions and bylaws which everyone must commit to uphold.

# **Chapter IV: The Recommendations of this Study**

## **1. The Most Important Recommendations**

The following is a summary of the most important recommendations of this study regarding the ways of promoting the equal representation of women and the youth inside the PLO bodies and supporting their access to decision-making positions:

1. We cannot restructure the PLO system (based on the principles of democracy, equality, justice and political participation) without exerting some efforts to reactivate and revitalize this organization and restore its important role. In this context, the women and youth movements must consider their struggle for equality and political participation as an integral part of reforming and reactivating the PLO. For this reason, the women and youth movements must discover new ways to participate in discussions and activities which aim to reform the PLO and urge it to adopt the basic demands of the women and youth movements.

2. We cannot reform the PLO without reforming the various components which comprise it, as well as reforming its philosophy and work principles by moving from a system which is solely built on a Quota to a set of democratic work processes which involve a holistic political and social mobilization.

3. It is important for the women and youth movements to participate in various discussions in order to specify the common demands of women regardless of their different factions and agendas, and to put the factional competition on a side and build a programme which aims to benefit the women and the youth.

4. At this point, the equal representation of women and the youth and their access to decision-making positions cannot be achieved except in one of the following components which comprise the PLO:

- A. The political parties and factions;
- B. Popular unions and associations;
- C. The Legislative Council

The women and youth movements must separately develop their own comprehensive projects in a well-coordinated manner in order to influence these three PLO components. This requires the following:-

A. To mobilize the women and the youth to defend their rights through a continuous and permanent (and not seasonal) work programme.

B. To have the women and youth movements introduce a new discourse, agenda, strategic work programme and an action plan for achieving clear objectives and demands with the use of specific tools and a budget. This should be done separately from the political parties in order to promote the access of women and the youth to influential decision-making positions regardless of their factional affiliations.

C. To establish a programme for societal transformation and to have women and youth organizations play a leading role in introducing practical ways to partner with the largest possible number of supportive civil society organizations, youth organizations, legal institutions, social activists, media persons and other influential parties on the regional and international level in order to coordinate with them and benefit from their experiences.

D. To agree on having a certain body sponsor this programme - such as the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs - and to choose a certain mechanism for coordinating with the various women organizations which are not affiliated with the GUPW.

E. Support the efforts of educational and media organizations which aim to develop progressive and revolutionary orientations inside the educational curriculums and media and which raise awareness about important social issues such as pluralism, equality, acceptance of the other, etc.

6. To agree on the exact demands of women and the youth and to divide these demands to long-term and short-term ones. It is also important to specify attainable demands which boost the people's

confidence in this programme, increase female participation and lead to the accumulation of small gains [step-by-step] which can pave the way for making great and important achievements.

7. Perform an integrated, thorough and objective assessment of the Quota experience and examine the ways of maximizing the Quota's strengths, minimizing its weaknesses and enhancing its benefits in promoting the women cause. This assessment should also help in selecting the suitable controls and procedures to ensure the Quota's fulfillment of its specified objectives.

8. To cooperate, coordinate and interact with the various factions, civil society organizations, social activists and influential activities in order to review the statute of various PLO bodies and introduce democratic processes for selecting new representatives and influencing the parties which formulate the reform strategies of the PLO.

9. Support the preparation of specialized studies to specify the ways of reactivating the PLO based on the principles of human rights, equality, justice and political and democratic participation. These studies can constitute an important basis for a comprehensive discussion to determine the reform orientations of the PLO instead of narrowly being limited to the political Quota system. These studies can also produce **great ideas for improving the various popular unions affiliated with the PLO and the introduction of new mechanisms for integrating the youth and women inside the PLO system.**

10. To establish an internal framework for the youth movement by coordinating and cooperating with the various youth organizations and laying out a youth-related agenda and discourse. It is also important to have a crystal-clear work programme to establish a Quota for the youth inside the various PLO bodies, as well as implementing the various international conventions and laws which protect the rights of the youth and specify mechanisms which the Palestinian Authority must abide by.

11. To coordinate and form alliances to press for the implementation of democratic processes during the selection of members inside the various bodies of the PLO and its factions/parties, as well as introducing Women and Youth Quotas to restructure the PLO organizations and political parties and prevent the exclusion of women and the youth.

12. To urge political parties and factions to promote their political, factional and societal programmes in a manner which includes the following:

- ◆ Factional education and mobilization;
- ◆ Raising the awareness of women inside the political parties;
- ◆ Urge the factions to adopt a democratic societal programme which promotes the representation of women and the youth;
- ◆ To modify the internal regulations of the political parties in terms of the allowed age and gender equality in joining their membership and being nominated for higher positions.

13. Coordinate and cooperate with youth institutions, women organizations and other [selected] allies in order to exert strong pressure for the fulfillment of the various demands.

14. Introduce programmes for developing women and young leaders.

15. To call for the formation of a special body for monitoring, follow-up and accountability with regard to the rights of women, obligations of the Palestinian Authority, implementation of the Women Quota, etc. This body can be supported by the strong mobilization of women inside the society in order to monitor the required legislations and obligations of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO and to ensure the fulfillment of international commitments. These commitments resulted from signing and ratifying a number of international agreements and conventions (such as following up the implementation of the CEDAW convention and monitoring the level of progress made by the Palestinian Authority with regard to its implementation).

## **2. Unique Opportunities**

A number of unique opportunities are available for the women and youth movements as important entry points for achieving strategic gains; the most important of which are the following:-

### **A. Opportunities related to the Palestinian commitment to implement international conventions**

As a result of the great efforts and struggle of the women movement and the Palestinian civil society, several gains were achieved by requiring the Palestinian Authority to adopt certain policies and legal reforms to promote gender equality and female political participation and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was endorsed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on 8 March 2009 and this is one of the most unique opportunities for women and legal/human rights organizations as an important step for obliging the Palestinian Authority to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination.

Despite the importance of this endorsement by the Palestinian President, the CEDAW notes that in order to correctly implement this convention there is a need to amend the national legal system and provisions and to take various legal measures and procedures to ensure the implementation of this convention in order to become more gender-sensitive and work in accordance with the international standards and provisions mentioned in the CEDAW.

Any review of the Palestinian legal system shows the need to make some drastic legal amendments and reforms in order to fulfill the requirements of the CEDAW convention. For example, there is an urgent need to develop the Palestinian Personal Status Law, Penal Code and other important laws which promote gender equality and justice. However, the Palestinian Authority's delays and inefficiency in developing these laws to avoid confronting the society constitutes one of the main obstacles for achieving tangible results on different levels.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See: "مركز جنيف للرقابة الديمقراطية على القوات المسلحة، 2010 ص4." See:

“Article (3) of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) mentions the following:<sup>16</sup>

- To integrate the principle of gender equality in the various national constitutions and legislations if this were not already done, and to ensure the practical application of this principle by introducing legislations and other appropriate means;
- Adopt the suitable legislative and non-legislative measures – including the imposition of proper penalties – in order to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women.
- To provide legal protection for women’s rights, promote gender equality and to effectively protect women from all discriminatory acts through specialized courts and other public institutions in the country.
- To refrain from perpetrating any discriminatory acts or measures against women, and to ensure that the authorities and public institutions act in accordance with this commitment.
- Adopt the various necessary measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women from the side of any person or organization.
- To take all the necessary measures, including legislative ones, in order to amend or nullify all the laws, regulations, customs and practices which discriminate against women.
- Cancel and nullify all national penal provisions which discriminate against women.

On the other hand, Article (10) of the Palestinian Basic Law states that Palestine shall work without delay to become party to regional and international declarations and covenants that protect human rights. Also, the decision of the United Nations General Assembly (in November 2012) to adopt the resolution to recognize the State of Palestine as an Observer Member in the United Nations paves the way for Palestine’s joining of several international conventions and agreements which would further protect the human rights of Palestinians. If Palestine ratified more international conventions and agreements, it would be more obliged to take the various necessary

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[Arabic source: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)]

<sup>16</sup> See: "طاقم شؤون المرأة، ص 15" [Arabic Source: Staff of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs]

legal measures and procedures to fulfill its commitment to protect human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

### **Follow-Up**

1. The follow-up of the President's endorsement of the CEDAW convention provides a unique opportunity to translate this endorsement on the ground by specifying the issues that are required by this agreement. These issues include providing the suitable legal environment which fulfills the requirements of the endorsed CEDAW agreement.
2. There is a need to review the various international conventions related to the rights of women and the youth and to suggest that the Palestinian Authority would sign these international conventions and adopt the necessary measures for implementing these conventions on the ground.

## **B. Opportunities related to the Ratification and Implementation of the Women Quota**

The experience of the Women Quota in the Legislative Council and local council elections is considered one of the most important bases that we can build on and develop for the future. Also, the Central Council's decision to adopt a Women Quota of 30% is considered a golden opportunity to develop the Quota system and make great achievements for the equal representation of women and promoting their access to decision-making positions.

### **Follow-Up**

1. To follow up and build on the Central Council's decision to adopt a Women Quota of 30% in the various PLO bodies and organizations. This would help in institutionalizing this decision and guaranteeing its implementation by issuing clear and binding laws, regulations and executive procedures, as well as introducing a monitoring system to ensure the Quota's actual implementation.
2. To conduct a holistic assessment of the Quota system in the Legislative Council and local council elections for the purpose of specifying their strengths and weaknesses in order to enable these systems to become an effective framework to enhance the political

participation of women and uphold the principles of equality, equal representation and access to decision-making positions.

3. To benefit from the Women Quota system and to build on this system to develop another Quota system for the youth in order to enable the latter to access leadership and decision-making positions.

### **C. Opportunities related to the Efforts of Reforming the PLO**

The discussions, agreements and meetings between the various Palestinian factions and the continuous efforts to reform the PLO are considered another beneficial opportunity by working with and communicating with the various stakeholder parties; and especially those who were assigned by the Beirut meetings to restructure the PLO system (including the electoral system of the Palestinian National Council and the PLO bodies). These communications should focus on the importance of considering women and youth issues and introducing different procedures and laws which promote their right to political participation as part of reforming the PLO. The delay or ineffective action pertaining to this aspect can easily lead to developing a new system which promotes injustice and prejudice against women and the youth and prevents their right to equal representation and access to decision-making positions.

#### **Follow-Up**

Despite the slow progress in preparing the new reformed system for the PLO amidst the internal divisions and other factors, the heavy involvement of women and youth organizations in various PLO bodies and their participation in meetings can help in presenting the demands of women and the youth in the various reform-related discussions. This can also help in translating these demands into updated laws and regulations which enhance the representation of women and the youth and promote their access to decision-making positions.

### **D. The Code of Honour Signed by the Palestinian Factions**

The *Code of Honour* signed by 9 Palestinian factions in 2012 for enhancing the participation of women, supporting their demands for

political representation and increasing the Women Quota from 20% to 30% is considered an important document that can be built on. However, there has been no follow-up related to this Code of Honour and it was not verified whether this code has been transformed into binding laws and procedures inside the different factions and parties. For this reason, the code remained as “mere ink on paper” (i.e. words without action) as the local expression goes, and several factions avoided its implementation.

### **Follow-Up**

To organize meetings with the factions that signed the Code of Honour and to ask them to transform their commitments into executive regulations and procedures to ensure the implementation of what was agreed upon and to introduce a certain mechanism for monitoring and follow-up.

## **E. The Higher Council for Youth and Sports**

The Higher Council for Youth and Sports, which is affiliated with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), is considered one of the most important organizations that can effectively contribute in improving the condition of the Palestinian youth. During the field work part of this study, a number of participants commended the great role of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports; and especially in the field of Sports through which Palestine was put on the international map and participated in international sports activities which carried a great symbolic value for the Palestinian people, in addition to advancing the general level of sports in Palestine and especially in football (soccer). Also, several participants made positive remarks about the Council’s formulation of a strategy for the youth with the participation of the youth themselves. Many study participants also stressed the fact that this Council represents an important entry point for representing the youth inside the PLO and influencing the PLO’s orientations regarding the youth.

Nevertheless, a number of study participants criticized the manner in which the Council tried to embrace and represent the youth and enhance their access to decision-making positions. Among the most important comments/criticisms related to this are the following:-

1. The membership of the Board of Directors of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports (which was established through a Presidential Decree) is for people who are over fifty or sixty years old. Also, most of the members of this Council do not have any knowledge or experience in youth-related activities. At this point, there is not a single member in this Council who is from the youth segment (i.e. between the ages of 15 to 29). The lack of youth representation inside the Higher Council for Youth and Sports prevents the youth from expressing their concerns, demands and priorities; and especially amidst the ever-widening generation gap which was discussed before. Please see Annex 5 for more detail regarding the Presidential Decree.

2. Among the members who were named by the Presidential Decree are eight women from a total of 25 members. This is considered a positive thing because female representation is approximately one-third the total number of members. However, just like the male Council members, these women are not from the youth segment and most of them do not have any experience in the youth-related work.

3. The Presidential Decree did not specify a certain internal system (rules of procedure) for guiding the work of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports and building a legal and procedural reference point for guaranteeing efficiency, transparency and integrity and specifying particular mechanisms for the rotation of power. Article (2) of the Presidential Decree entitles the Higher Council for Youth and Sports to formulate its own rules and regulations and to present them before the Chairman of the Executive Committee for authorization. However, after the passage of about six years from the issuance of this decree, no integrated rules or regulations have thus far been formulated or ratified inside this Council neither on the level of the Council's administration (Board of Directors) nor on the level of its governing body.

4. The Presidential Decree did not mention the mandate/period of legal validity of the Board of Directors members and this prevents any positive change on the short and long terms. This is because the Presidential Decree's failure to specify any time period/mandate for the Council's membership or any standards for selecting members is

not reassuring for anyone who is keen on implementing the principles of Democracy and the Rotation of Power. A number of participants also raised questions about whether the current Board of Directors [which was selected by the President and does not have any youth representation] will remain a permanent body dominated by older persons or if there are any prospects for admitting young members inside the Board. In other words: Is there any hope for the youth to be represented as members inside this Council's Board of Directors or is this impossible and things will remain ineffective like many other PLO organizations??

5. Among the most important points noted by the study participants is that, in addition to all the comments about the current members of the Board of Directors and the absence of youth representation in it, the Board of Directors did not perform the role envisaged for it, failed to develop any policies for the Council, did not review any plans or programmes, imposed no accountability on the executive body, failed to monitor the administrative and financial performance aspects and failed to hold regular meetings.

### **Follow-Up**

To communicate with the different stakeholders related to the Council, including the Board of Directors and the Executive body, in order to discuss the effective ways, opportunities and steps for involving the youth in developing the Council's rules and regulations, enhancing their participation in the Council's administration and enabling them to be represented inside the various bodies. This is especially true on the level of decision-making positions in order for the Council to express the views, ambitions and demands of the youth and to deal with their various concerns. This also requires paving the way for discussions and follow-up.

## **F. The General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS)**

Despite our ongoing attempts, the research team was unable to meet with the head of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). This union has a very important role because it constitutes one of the main entry points for the youth to be admitted inside the Palestinian National Council and to boost their representation inside the decision-

making positions. This is because in order to become a member inside this union, a person must be an student in one of the universities or institutes and most of the people attending them are from the youth segment.

### **Follow-Up**

To communicate with the leading body of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) to discuss the issues which concern women and the youth; and especially those which are related to their representation inside the various boards of directors and decision-making levels.

## **G. General Union of Palestinian Journalists**

The General Union of Palestinian Journalists is considered one of the most effective and professional unions in the country. The Head of this union has stated that their internal elections take the issue of female and youth representation very seriously and that in the upcoming elections they will voluntarily implement a minimum Women Quota of 30% and will take youth representation into consideration.

### **Follow-Up**

To communicate with the Board of Directors of the General Union of Palestinian Journalists to discuss the issues which concern women and the youth; and especially those related to their representation inside the Board of Directors and decision-making levels, as well as urging this union to introduce a Youth Quota and to implement the Women Quota in the next elections. Also, there should be some joint steps to have the journalists support the efforts and activities of raising the level of community awareness regarding the issues and rights of the youth and women and building a supportive public opinion.

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# **ANNEXES**

## **ANNEX 1: The List of Reviewed Documents to Discover the Presence of any Discourse, Language or Wording which Discriminates against Women**

1. The “Declaration of Independence” Document, issued by the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Palestinian National Council, 1988.
2. Amended Basic Law of the Palestinian National Authority, 2008.
3. Palestinian Women’s Bill of Rights (2008).
4. Draft Regulations (Draft Rules of Procedure) of the Sixth General Conference of Fateh Movement
5. Proposed Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of Fateh Movement, which was presented in the Seventh Conference
6. Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of the Palestinian Arab Front (PAF)
7. Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of the Palestinian People’s Party (PPP)
8. Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate (PJS)
9. Statute of the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS)
10. Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
11. Statute of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
12. Statute of the Palestinian General Union of People with Disability (GUPWD)
13. Draft Statute of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists
14. Constitution of the General Union of Palestinian Workers
15. Statute of the General Union of Palestinian Lawyers
16. Regulations (Rules of Procedure) of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS)

## **ANNEX 2: List of Persons who participated in the In-Depth Personal Interviews and Phone Interviews**

1. Mrs. Khalida Jarrar
2. Mrs. Zahira Kamal
3. Dr. Hanan Ashrawi
4. Dr. Azmi al-Shuaibi
5. Mrs. Ibtisam Zidan
6. Mrs. Mona al-Khalili
7. Mrs. Majida al-Masri
8. Ms. Haitham Arar
9. Mr. Muharram al-Barghouti
10. Mr. Jamil Hilal
11. Dr. Nader Saeed
12. Mrs. Soraida Hussein
13. Ms. Suha al-Khateeb
14. Ms. Fayza Abu al-Haija
15. Mr. Razi al-Nabulsi
16. Mr. Naser abu-Bakr

### **ANNEX 3: Executive Committee Members who participated in the First Focus Group**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Political Faction</b>
1	Haneen Zidan	Palestinian People’s Party (PPP)
2	Majida al-Masri	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).
3	Mona al-Khalili	Fateh/General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
4	Rima Nazzal	General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW)
5	Margaret Husary	Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
6	Siham al-Barghouthi	The Palestinian Democratic Union – FIDA.
7	Yazan Ghneim	The Student Union Council of Birzeit University
8	Abdallah Qaddah	Leaders of Tomorrow/MIFTAH
9	Yazan Ghneim	Member of the Student Council of Birzeit University
10	Lamis al-Shuaibi	MIFTAH
11	Hassan Mahariq	MIFTAH
12	Muhammed Abed Rabbo	MIFTAH

## ANNEX 4: Other Participants in the Focus Group

Name	Field of Work
Ms. Farah Ahmad Saeed 'Abed	Volunteer at Sharek Youth Forum
Ms. Asala Abdul-Aziz Karraja	Volunteer at Sharek Youth Forum
Ms. Rateeba al-Natsheh	Social and Political Activist
Ms. Mirvat Barghouthi	Student in Al-Quds Open University
Mr. Turki Youssef Barham	Youth Activist
Ms. Bisan Rantissi	Student in Al-Quds Open University



