

Spotlight on Syria

**A Gender Perspective on the
Status of the Political Process**

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**MEDITERRANEAN
WOMEN MEDIATORS
NETWORK**

OPENING REMARKS



LOREDANA TEODORESCU

Head of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN) Secretariat

KEYNOTE SPEECH



MIN. STEFANO RAVAGNAN

Special Envoy for Syria of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

DISCUSSION



Chair

FRANCESCA CARUSO

MWMN Policy and Mediation Expert and IAI Researcher



RAJAA AL TALLI

Co-founder of Center for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria (CCSDS) and member of the Women Advisory Board



NIVIN AL HOTARY

Chair of the Board of the Women Empowerment and Support Unit



HUDA SARJAW

Head of the Gathering of Syrian Women Association



RIM AL JABI

Regional Gender Advisor for MENA at Search for Common Ground

Q&A SESSION

A Gender Perspective on the Status of the Political Process

On Wednesday April 13, the webinar "**Spotlight on Syria: A Gender Perspective on the Status of the Political Process**" was organized within the framework of the **Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN)**, an initiative launched by the **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation** and implemented by the **Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)** and **Women In International Security (WIIS) Italy**. The aim was to bring back the light on the Syrian crisis and analyse the state of play of the political process and a direct account about the life of many Syrians, still living in the country or abroad, with a specific focus on past and current challenges faced by Syrian women.

Yet, as the crisis continues, the international community, together with the general public opinion, seems having lost hope and concern in contributing to the peaceful resolution of the conflict, especially after the Ukrainian war's outbreak. However, as the Syrian conflict entered its twelve years, prospects for peace seem to be still far away and the humanitarian cost is immense. According to the U.N., more than 6 million are internally displaced and another 6.8 million are refugees or asylum-seekers abroad. As of today, 14.6 million people are currently in need of humanitarian and protection assistance among which half million children who are chronically malnourished.

The event was also an opportunity to share the first results of the initiative "The role of women in developing durable solutions to the Syrian crisis" launched by the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network in collaboration with Search for Common Ground and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The webinar started with the **opening remarks of Dr. Loredana Teodorescu**, Head of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and President of WIIS Italy, who stressed the importance of supporting women, amplifying their voices. This is particularly central during peace processes, where it is essential to create safe spaces for women to discuss their ideas and give a gender perspective, which is often missing.

The floor was then given to **Minister Stefano Ravagnan**, Special Envoy for Syria of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who underlined the necessity of having a table where institutions, UN agencies, and CSOs can gather and have a dialogue. With Russia investing less now in Syria because of the war in Ukraine, it is necessary for the other governments to invest more and to support the development of new scenarios about the Syrian crisis and its future progresses, taking into consideration the possible Western impact.

Then Ms **Francesca Caruso**, MWMN Policy officer and IAI Researcher, recalled the UN Secretary General Guterres' words about Syrians feeling abandoned, with lots of Syrian cities and infrastructures being destroyed and many people in need of humanitarian aid. The Syrian crisis is at the forefront with huge humanitarian costs of war.

Ms **Rajaa Al Talli**, Co-founder of Center for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria and member of the Women Advisory Board, stressed how women in the institutional committee gave a concrete contribution to the peace process. Three years ago, they suggested a plan to move forward in the political process, making sure that all hostilities are considered, including sexual and gender-based violence, which still represent a big issue. She also emphasized the need of developing an approach which encourages the release of all Syrian detainees, supports refugees and voluntary returns (where security and real willingness are the fundamental principles). In all these steps the gender perspective needs to be central: women rights are to be protected and safeguarded- also in the Syrian constitutional process, which in March was at its 7th round.

Ms **Nivin Hotari**, Chair of the Board of the Women Empowerment and Support Unit, remembered the importance of supporting the women's work in Syria from a humanitarian perspective. She highlighted the need to provide women with training to be prepared and more involved in the political life. Furthermore, it is crucial to remove lots of internal restrictions that are preventing women from gathering all together.

Ms **Huda Sarjaw**, Head of the Gathering of Syrian Women Association, underscored that the biggest need for Syrian women is to be more politically engaged. Women have started to be engaged in local councils and trade unions. They are taking an active part in these realities but what is needed is more support of these activities as there are lots of challenges for women. Among them, there is the security issue, linked to women's restricted mobility and lack of economic independence. This prevents women from connecting with other women. The quota system could also be useful to underline the importance of women's roles in the society.

Finally, Ms **Rym Aljabi**, Regional Gender Advisor for MENA at Search for Common Ground, presented the final recommendations of the initiative "The role of women in developing durable solutions to the Syrian crisis". The recommendations, focused on the role of women in the peace process, the obstacles to their participation and the situation of refugees, represented the result of the joint work of Syrian women working in the country and within the diaspora. All these women came with their different background and brought their diversity as added value. Among the recommendations the need to work following the UN resolution 1325 so to have a full representation of the whole Syrian community, to support education projects and to guarantee rights to Syrian refugees.

After the presentations, a rich debated followed where the keywords were supporting the Syrian population with a long-term perspective, with women and youth empowerment being among the most urgent priorities.

By Ilaria Bertocchini





www.womenmediators.net
info@womenmediators.net
+39 0669768315

