

Women's Political Participation in Yemen

Towards Active Participation of Yemeni Women in the Political Process

What are the Reasons for the Weak Political Participation of Yemeni Women?

Little Presence of Yemeni Women in Important Ministries and Sectors

WWDPP

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Al-Khamri: "Yemeni women have left the political field due to the conflict"

Jarhoum: "Men's unwillingness has led to the loss of women's political rights"

Women's Political Participation Entails Guaranteeing Their Rights as Stipulated by the Constitution

23 Years Since the Adoption of Resolution 1325, Is it Time to be Implemented in Yemen?

Political Participation of Yemeni Women: Wasted Rights & Gains

According to Article (13) of the Yemeni Constitution, “Women are the sisters of men, and they have rights and duties that are mandated and required by Islamic Sharia and stipulated by law.” Regarding political parties and organizations, Article (8) of Law No. 66 stipulates that no party or political organization should be established on the basis of discrimination between citizens on the basis of gender. Meanwhile, Yemeni women continue to be the least represented segment of society in political life, and women’s participation is still one of the most controversial issues in society.

By: Alia Muhammed

Given the prevalent societal and political culture in Yemen, women are unable to be decision makers. In spite of the fact that Yemeni women were among the first to join the political movements that succeeded in causing a paradigm shift in the country, they still hold the lowest ranks among all the countries in the world with regards to women’s participation in politics.

The Conflict: The Greatest Political Challenge for Women

According to Nabila Abdullah, a social activist and a member of the bloc of women members of political parties (Takattul al Nisaa al Hizbiyat), “The conflict has left behind the gravest and worst humanitarian disasters. This damage has affected women in particular, impacting their political empowerment, participation in decision-making, and involvement in peace negotiations and the political process. This compels us to create peace that is comprehensive and just for all, while taking into account women’s political empowerment.”

“The lack of representation of women in government formations leads to ignoring the representation of women in any future positions, and this is a dangerous indicator of what Yemenis have achieved in terms of democracy throughout the period of struggle. Accordingly, achieving a modern civil country in which women will have real national participation on the ground will be a great battle for us,” she added.

Arwad Al-Khatib, a human rights activist and a peace-building specialist, confirmed that Yemeni women faced many challenges throughout the years of conflict, but the political challenge posed by the conflict constituted one of the most difficult confrontations that women in Yemen had to go through. “Prior to the beginning of the conflict, all political forces that participated in the National Dialogue Conference agreed that women should be represented by at least 30% in all national institutions, including parliament membership and ministerial posts. This is regarded as Yemeni women’s most significant accomplishment since the 1960s due to their great efforts,” she added.

However, the conflict came to eliminate this gain, or perhaps it provided the right atmosphere for the political forces to evade this commitment. Moreover, women lost additional gains that were difficult to imagine could be

lost because they were the result of a constant struggle over a period of five decades, including the right to movement, travel, work, and education without restrictions. Accordingly, the main challenge facing the women’s movement today is how to restore the gains they lost, strengthen positions that reject the confiscation of women’s rights, strengthen alliances, and take advantage of international trends to compel political forces to fulfill their commitments.

Al-Khatib indicated that talking about empowering Yemeni women in decision-making positions is with the greater aim of bringing about a clear qualitative shift in women’s issues and not just to increase the number of women in leadership positions.

A research study titled “Yemeni Women and the Electoral Experience”, published in 2006 by the researcher Ibtihaj Al-Kamal, confirmed that the issue of Yemeni women’s political participation is one of the issues that faced many difficulties and obstacles.

She pointed out that despite Yemen being one of the first countries in the area to grant women full electoral rights in terms of the right to run and vote on an equal basis with men, the level of women’s political participation in Yemen remains quite low.

Hamama Al-Sanwi, director of the Women’s Department in the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, believes that Yemeni women have obtained many rights and political gains as stipulated in the outcomes of political dialogues and programs of political parties. However, unfortunately, these rights and gains were wasted due to the fact that women did not benefit from them or enjoy them.

She emphasized that the gap between the agreed upon acquired rights and their application is significant. It is also still one of the existing problems for which we have not found a solution. This prompted many components and local as well as foreign organizations to hold a large number of seminars, workshops, meetings, dialogues, discussions, and various activities. All of them were committed to the political empowerment process of Yemeni women, but the results of these activities and events were not compelled to be observed in practice.

She noted that the Women’s Department in the Presidency of the Republic issued an agreement document for the political empowerment of women to bridge the gap between theory and practice, between what is said and what is done, and between what is written on blogs and reality. She also believes that the document, which will serve as the main guarantee for implementation, contains nothing new and is simply an agreement requiring the parties to implement what they agreed upon.

She stressed the importance of realizing that the representation of political parties in most countries, including Yemen, requires more effective political structures through which women are included in politics and hold political and parliamentary positions.

She explained that the parties’ practices, policies and values have a profound impact on women’s political participation and representation. This is through the nomination of the political parties’ candidates in local, parliamentary and national elections, in addition to their role in providing funding for electoral campaigns, gathering voters, setting policy and governance

priorities, and forming a government.

Since the procedures for forming parties mandated the presence of women in senior leadership, government positions, and local councils, with a quarter of the candidate lists being females, as well as the 30% quota mandated in the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, the parties must generally abide by the law, as indicated by Abdulla. She stressed that we need a general and electoral democratic culture in particular, due to the lack of awareness among some women about the conditions for candidacy, the procedures for ratifying candidate lists, counting and sorting, and electoral appeals.

She added that there is a missing link in terms of documenting the cooperation between all the partners in the political process. Therefore, in order to enable women to exercise their political rights and participate effectively in public life, it is necessary to impose the 30% quota and for the electoral system, the laws of political parties and organizations, and to adopt the representative system in electoral law and taking legal measures.

Percentage of Women Registered in the Voter Lists

The research “Yemeni Women and Electoral Experience” issued in 2006 indicated that two women succeeded in reaching parliament out of 48 women who ran in these elections in 1993. In 1997, out of 23 women candidates, two succeeded. In 2001, women achieved great success in the local council elections, winning 26 seats in governorate and district councils.

According to the field research “Women in Yemeni Local Councils,”

issued by the Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights in 2005, the number of registered voters in 2001 was 5,621,829 voters, an increase of approximately 200%, and women’s participation in the registration tables increased to 30% of the total number, resulting in a total increase of 100%.

The following table shows the number of registered voters and the number of participants in the local elections:

The final report of the April 27, 2003 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Yemen indicated that 19 political parties and organizations participated in the elections with about 991 candidates, who, along with 405 independent candidates, competed for 301 parliamentary seats.

Over 8 million Yemeni citizens registered to vote, and the number of registered women voters increased from 1.8 million in 1997 to 3.4 million in the 2003 elections.

Possible Solutions

Nabila Abdullah believes that it is necessary to build and improve the capacities of women leaders who are engaged in political work, and to address discrimination-based violence that impedes women’s participation in political life, in addition to real representation in state facilities.

This is not an end goal in itself, but rather a means to give women the opportunity to assume leadership and decision-making positions and change the deeply entrenched stereotypes about them which govern the social structure. This can be achieved through highlighting their capacities in assuming leadership positions (same as men), educating the community in general, and women in particular to enhance women’s political participation, and highlighting the role of local and international organizations in this.

The issue of women’s political participation still needs to develop clear plans and programs based on the principles of equal rights and duties between men and women and to expand and enhance their participation in public life in general and in politics in particular.



Details	Male	Female	Total
Number of those registered in the registration tables until the end of 2000	3,918,698	1,703,132	5,621,829
Percentage of registered	70%	30%	100%
Number of participants in the February 2001 elections	-	-	2,762,587
Percentage of participants	-	-	49.3%

Yemeni Women's Political Participation Undergoes Many Transformations.

Due to the prevailing societal viewpoint, women's political empowerment is one of the most controversial issues in Yemeni society. Many women's activists believe that their political participation is a necessary national requirement to achieve equality in society. Moreover, a number of conventions and treaties - such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - stipulate the importance of women's participation in political life.



By: Alia Muhammed

Due to the prevailing societal view, women's political empowerment is one of the most controversial issues in Yemeni society. Many women's activists believe that their political participation is a necessary national requirement to achieve equality in society. Moreover, a number of conventions and treaties - such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women - stipulate the importance of women's participation in political life.

What are the main obstacles facing Yemeni women in the field of political participation? What is the actual situation regarding women participating in Yemen?

Rosa Al-Khamri, who holds a Ph.D. in civil law and serves as the Director General of Legal Affairs at the National Committee for Women, clarifies all of these issues to us during the interview.

Could you first tell us about the main challenges that women encounter when trying to participate in politics?

There are several issues, the most significant of which are those raised by the law, particularly the section related to legislation. The General Elections and Referendum Law No. (13) of 2021, for instance, promotes women's political participation, but it is evident from this text that the presence of women here is as voters, not as candidates. That is, they only provide their electoral votes, and they are also present in the women's committees that register the names of female voters.

Some of the obstacles and challenges are also the lack of conviction among political parties and organizations of the need for women's political participation, and the failure to implement the quota system. This reflects the imbalance in the institutions regarding the positive role of women, and the issue of discrimination that is imposed on the reality of many parties.

Women's participation in politics has been impacted by the security situation, political, social, and economic instability, and the parties' lack of confidence among themselves. The process of joining parties has declined, as many women refrain from joining because they do not realize the reality of their effective role.

On the other hand, the social variables in Yemeni society, represented in the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs which we notice moving backwards, are among the things that reflect negatively on the performance of women themselves and the performance of parties. As a result, we see many women turn to civil society organizations for work.

- Recently, we have not seen women's political participation in political parties and organizations, so why has their partisan activity decreased?

Because of disputes and conflicts, partisan women's political involvement in parties as a whole has stopped, which has resulted in a decline in women's political participation at the level of parties and official authorities. These conflicts have also led to violence escalating significantly. Thus, this situation was reflected in partisan women and created before them many new challenges, tasks and priorities that forced them to engage in community activities, peace building and mediation, which reduced the scope of their partisan activity. Consequently, partisan women feel that there is a significant decline in their partisan activity that was previously available during periods of peace, albeit within a narrow framework, but it disappeared during the period of conflict, and activity has declined at the leadership level of political parties and organizations.

If we assess the reality of the situation, there are currently no women serving in the government, which is unjustified. As in light of the emergence of other groups mobilizing for conflict, women are the ones most capable and most potent at creating

an atmosphere of peace through empowerment and sustainable development. Regardless of whether there is conflict or not, women have a meaningful and active role in society, so they should take advantage of this status and be empowered.

- How do you assess the Yemeni Constitution's position on women's political participation?

The Constitution guarantees equality between men and women with regard to political rights, and also guarantees - in Article (24) - equal opportunities for all citizens, politically, economically, socially and culturally. According to Article (30), "The government protects motherhood and cares for children and youth," in addition to "all citizens are equal in rights and duties," according to Article (41). According to Article (43) "the citizen has the right to vote, to run, and to express his opinion in the referendum." Despite these articles that stipulate equality, they do not provide much for women, nor do they help them in political participation, as stipulated in international conventions, especially the Convention on the Elimination of Forms of Discrimination against Women. Thus, we can say that the rate of women's participation has not been achieved, but rather it has become sub-standard or at its minimum level. This is due to the fact that the representation of women in decision-making positions is not actually achieved, and women did not even occupy the 30% quota.

What are the main factors that contribute to increasing women's political participation?

The quota system or positive discrimination must be applied with clarity in order to increase the participation of women in the political process. Additionally, at least 30% of women should hold leadership positions across all sectors of the economy, in accordance with the Constitution and with the government's confirmation of international agreements.

In addition, political parties and organizations must implement internal reforms aimed at equal opportunities between the sexes and equality within their parties in order to advance the conditions of women within the political parties. Therefore, they must carry out the process of qualification, training and support for their political empowerment. Moreover, efforts to rehabilitate and activate their leadership roles within the parties themselves must be intensified. It is also essential to monitor cases of exclusion, marginalization, and violations against women parties, and to advocate for these issues.

- What is your assessment of the current status of Yemeni women in political life?

Over the decades, Yemen has witnessed many political transformations that have imposed themselves on the reality of Yemeni women's political participation. These transformations led to a great deal of marginalization and weakness in the level of their participation during the period of peace, and naturally only worsened during the period of conflict. Due to the consequences of the conflict, we find that the real political will for women's political participation is completely absent.

During the period of peace, women's participation in politics has declined, whether it is in elections or when parties place female nominees at the bottom of the list and give male members of the party a priority.

Regarding mobilization and outreach, what we always find in the electoral stages is that it goes to men, while the women are mostly used to cover the elections. This is at a time when women are clearly underrepresented, and political leaders do not encourage actual and fair representation of women, except in small proportions.



Rosa Al-Khamri

The Director General of Legal Affairs at the National Committee for Women

This period of conflict is marked by the absence of political will to empower women and their political participation. Over time, the conflict and the successive political forces and regimes contributed to consolidating the exclusion and marginalization of women imposed by social and cultural traditions. Moreover, it has brought about other concepts and behaviors that ignored the real existence of women to advance the peace process in the hopeless reality. Nevertheless, women were present, supporting and helping, and they participated in mediations, negotiations and in many matters that are among the frameworks and basics of politics.

- From your point of view, is there a relationship between the economic empowerment and political participation of women?

Of course, there is a relationship, and it's highly interconnected for many reasons. When women are economically empowered, they are able to create their own entity and will. Hence, they can impose their existence on society by being able to work with their academic and professional competence.

As a result, society's traditional perception of women completely changes from viewing them as weak, to viewing them as possessing the abilities, capabilities, and competencies. This, in return, will qualify them to obtain decision-making positions and allow them to be present and impose themselves on the reality of their political parties through true will and realism. Therefore, decision-makers must take into account this issue and empower women economically, which in turn helps to advance their political empowerment.

Since it's impossible to achieve economic empowerment without achieving cultural empowerment, the education process is integral. Therefore, in order to ultimately promote the process of women's political empowerment, care must be made to support and rehabilitate them.

Al-Khamri: "The conflict has removed Yemeni women from politics."

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A society that believes in the importance of women in establishing peace and raises their public awareness. Therefore, they become able to participate in all areas of building and developing the society.

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Despite Social Restrictions, Yemeni Women Fight for Their Political Rights

Women have always played a significant role in the growth of both ancient and modern societies through their ability to positively change all aspects of social and political life, and they have had a distinct impact in bringing about that change. Throughout the ages, the development of civilizations was largely dependent on the women and their capacity to fulfill their roles.

By: Ahmed Omar

Due to the accessibility of media and social media, as well as the information and knowledge provided by universities with the aim of promoting and empowering women and strengthening their engagement in public life, women today are aware of their political role. Nevertheless, Yemeni women face numerous obstacles that hinder their political participation alongside men as their significant social role served as a barrier to their political participation. Therefore, they remained preoccupied with performing their primary role of building and caring for the family as wives, mothers, and educators for generations to come.

The Social Impact of Women's Participation in Politics

The presence of several factors controlling and impacting the issue of recognizing the participation of Yemeni women in politics has resulted in women moving away from political appearances. The exceptional situation that the nation is going through, i.e., the armed conflict, excluded women and acted as an additional pressure factor exploited by the parties to the conflict to restrict women's roles in society. In addition to the tribal norms that kept them within the confines of the home and family, and stood as an obstacle preventing them from practicing their legitimate roles in politics.

The "Arab Reform Initiative" website states that there are roles played by women in all Arab countries, through social movements and peacebuilding and reconciliation processes since 2011, which support women as an essential pillar of political participation and inclusive equal-gender citizenship. Among those roles is the establishment of sustainable channels and mechanisms to consolidate women's influence in decision-making and political life.

Al-Rased News 24, an independent Iraqi news agency, confirmed that women in Yemen have distinguished capabilities of giving in their society. This enhances their ability to actively engage in a range of sustainable development initiatives and to benefit those around them in multiple ways. The agency indicated, in its report on August 13, 2022, that there is a need to take measures to support Yemeni women and enhance their ability to participate in society, in addition to enhancing their ability to integrate politically and reduce the obstacles they encounter.

According to a study published by the "Arab Center for Research and Studies" in January 2019 on women's political participation after the process of political change in Yemen, Yemeni women had a remarkable presence alongside men in various public events in the post-2011 period. They imposed themselves as an important component of society in the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, where



the women's participation made up 30% of the 565-member conference representatives.

The study indicated that Yemeni women had a good share in the new Yemeni government - at that time - by occupying three ministerial positions for the first time (the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Social Affairs), as well as the Minister of the State, according to Republican Decree No. 240 of 2014. The appointment of the four Yemeni women was widely welcomed by Yemeni people. Despite women's access to these positions, some believe that the stereotypical image of women, the one unable to make decisions, still exists in Yemeni society. Despite their presence in the government, they were unable to present a new image of women that reflects their aspirations.

In a briefing by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Women, Peace and Security", it was stated that the component of the "Yemeni Women's Group" that includes members from different disciplines, such as economics, human rights, the political field, and governance, eight members of it were included in the Geneva consultations in September 2018. Through their participation, they presented three papers that contribute to solving the economic situation and political issues.

The report emphasized that Yemeni women have the right to contribute to shaping the future of their homeland, because they have shown a

willingness to work toward a comprehensive peace that meets the aspirations of the Yemeni people, as well as their efforts in armed conflict resolution and peace processes. The office stressed in its report, that women should be represented by no less than 30% in any discussions or meetings led by the United Nations.

Obstacles to Yemeni Women's Participation in Politics

According to Rana Al-Ja'adi, a women's rights activist, "Yemeni women have shown an honorable model in political participation in the Gulf region and the Arabian Peninsula. This is through their effective presence in parties and civil society organizations and in reaching parliament and the Shura Council. However, they were absent from political decision-making because political participation is still monopolized by men who view women as incapable and weak in decision-making and consider them unfit for political and social action. The masculine mentality does not accept their political presence except in a limited way, despite the national laws that grant women the same political rights as men."

Amira Ba-Zaher, a social worker, attributes the absence of women from decision-making positions to "society's weak culture of the importance of the role of women in political and societal life, and their lack of awareness of their

political rights as a result of family upbringing and school education which are governed by customs, traditions and societal norms that keep them within the confines of the home and family."

Solutions and Suggestions

Al-Ja'adi emphasized that raising society's awareness of the need for women to participate in all fields equally with men, including politics, is the most crucial step for Yemeni women to overcome the social constraints that limit their ability to influence political decision-making. She emphasized that this awareness requires sufficient time for society to accept these ideas and conform with them properly.

She stressed that civil society organizations, whether local or foreign, must work to raise the level of society's acceptance of women and enhance their capabilities and support them so they can participate in political and leadership positions far from discrimination and prejudice.

In the same context, Ba-Zaher said, "Continuous awareness of the importance of women's roles and their rights must be followed through rehabilitation and training

to be able to influence society in all aspects of life, including the political aspect. In addition,

equal opportunities for both sexes is a fundamental pillar in qualifying women for leadership positions and pushing them to participate in all political events and forums."

Ba-Zaher called for amending the law that guarantees political participation in general, for women in particular, and easing the family responsibilities that fall upon them, which affect their lack of development and limit their capabilities in terms of exercising their normal rights.

Mohammad Ba-Shamkha, a journalist, stated that the removal of social customs and traditions, women's involvement in political parties and blocs, as well as their career progression within the party are the most important solutions for women to reach political positions with sovereign decisions in the government. This is in order to gain leadership experiences and become qualified to participate in the political process and advance women's representation in any internal or external consultations.

Although Yemen has ratified national legislation and international agreements promoting gender equality in rights and freedoms, foremost of which is the right to political participation, these issues are raised with caution and with a barely audible voice in Yemeni society. Moreover, women's participation in politics has been criticized because of the low involvement of women in positions of decision-making. According to many specialists, the role of Yemeni women in politics and decision-making requires their empowerment and support in the human rights and social fields, among others, so that they can benefit from the options and opportunities guaranteed by the Yemeni law and Constitution.

Women are an essential component in both international and civil society, serving as educators, teachers, and role models for people. Therefore, their participation in political life is a sign of development and urbanization, as well as one of the key indicators of a civilized country.



What are the Reasons for the Weak Political Participation of Yemeni Women?

By: Afrah Ahmed

Despite the fact that women are capable of making decisions, they are underrepresented in politics for a variety of reasons, including social reasons such as customs and traditions which believe that women are unfit to hold political positions, share opinions, or negotiate to find solutions to any political crisis. This is due to the fact that Yemen is a tribal society that rejects the presence of women in political life, in addition to a number of other reasons and challenges that hinder the active participation of women in politics.

Cultural & Religious Heritage

Dr. Mohammad Al-Taweel, a professor of journalism and electronic publishing at Sana'a University, believes that the primary reason for the weak participation of women in political life is the cultural, religious and social heritage in third world countries, especially Arab and Islamic countries. This is because certain roles are defined for women and men, with men's roles set outside the home, while women's roles are limited inside the home. Women are expected to take care of the family and provide for its needs, thus hindering their participation in fields outside the home, such as politics, which requires specific qualities, characteristics, and advantages.

Poverty and the Lack of Political Culture

"Poverty is one of the main reasons for the weak participation of women in the political field, and it is well known that classes in third-world societies, like those in Arab and Islamic countries, are overwhelmed by poverty. That is why, to them, women's political work is a luxury, since there is an absence of political institutional culture in society in general. So, we notice that societies, particularly the political parties and civil society organizations, do not prioritize the needs or concerns of women. For instance, during parliamentary or presidential elections, all political parties and components tend to elect and nominate men, while the presence of women is very low, thus impacting women's engagement in politics," Dr. Al-Taweel added.

He noted that women do not receive support from the general public, because - as observed - they do not advocate for them nor do they elect them. Society in general is interested in male political figures who will achieve their interests.

Rural Women Are the Weakest

According to Nabil Al-Amiri, a journalist, "Yemeni women are considered the weakest link in all aspects of life, especially when it comes to politics and decision-making. This is because they are largely absent from even participating in elections, which is the minimum level of political participation.

The majority of Yemeni women do not have this right [to vote], especially in rural areas, because most of them do not have electoral cards or even personal identity cards."

"Regarding Yemeni women's access to higher levels in the political hierarchy, the situation is very complicated, as there are significant obstacles and challenges that have contributed in one way or another to the weak participation of women in political life. They can be classified into social, cultural, legal, political, and economic obstacles," Al-Amiri explained.

Restricting the Role of Women to the Family

On the social and cultural level, Al-Amiri explained that we find that the set of customs and traditions prevailing in Yemeni society were dominated by the patriarchal system, which views women as second-class citizens. This has led to restricting their roles within the family's scope, i.e., within the limits of childbearing and family care, while, for men, the situation is different, as they have the freedom to participate in public and political life. "Therefore, women opposing these customs and participating in public or political life is a break from the norm and is not socially acceptable. Many people believe that combining work inside and outside the home increases the burdens on women, and the situation would be worse if they participate in public affairs. This is due to the fact that their reproductive roles burden them, making it harder for them to develop their roles in this field," he added.

Gender-Based Laws Do Not Reflect Reality

"Regarding the legal obstacles that limit women's participation in politics, we find that the Arab constitutions in general, and the Yemeni Constitution in particular, do not provide, directly and explicitly, equality between women and men. Rather, they stipulate equality before the law only. Even if these laws are interpreted as being based on gender equality, they remain nominal interpretations that have nothing to do with reality. We

also note that there are many laws that promote discrimination between men and women in the public and private spheres. For example, personal status laws deprive women of all political rights at the individual level and treat them as second-class citizens who should stay under the guardianship of men. In addition to penal laws that tie women's behavior with men's honor and even grant males the right to defend that honor. Moreover, women are not treated as citizens, because they are not entitled to give nationality to their husbands and children according to the law," according to the journalist, Nabil Al-Amiri.

He stressed that the field of political action, which is characterized by male dominance - as he described - is one of the main challenges facing Yemeni women's participation in political and public life. In addition, there is an absence of democratic mechanisms, as well as the prevalence of a culture of tribal mentality in political decision-making, especially since the nature of electoral competition is tribal and political, which prevents women from reaching decision-making positions.

Weakness of Women's Financial Independence

The economic conditions in Yemen have limited women's participation in political life, as unemployment has spread, and women have borne the consequences of that. In addition, there is a lack of financial independence for them in light of the patriarchal society in Yemen which prevents women from participating in the elections because they lack the funds needed to pay for the costs of election campaigns. Al-Amiri added that women themselves represent the main and biggest challenge that limits their participation in the field of politics. Furthermore, women's lack of awareness of the importance of their role in life, their low self-confidence, their high illiteracy rate, their weak experience in the political field, and their lack of attempt to develop their abilities and selves all lead to their weak political participation.

Ali Rashid, a lawyer, said that there are factors

that led to the weak participation of women in political life, including social ones, as it is rooted in Yemeni culture that the role of men (i.e., fathers, brothers, and husbands) is in protecting women, and this extends to political life where the guardian must be a male.

Weak Political Will to Promote Women's Participation

"There are political reasons for the low representation of women in politics, which is reflected in the lack of political will to advocate for their participation and representation in political life," Rashid continued. However, women have made a qualitative leap in obtaining their political rights, even though it was not in the proper manner. After the declaration of the country's unification, women started to obtain some of their rights. In this regard, the constitution of the country, after its unification, protected their rights by setting a number of rules meant to end gender discrimination. He added that the Yemeni Constitution issued in 1994 stipulated that women are the sisters of men in terms of rights and duties. Likewise, after 2010, women obtained many of their rights and participated in political life, elections and the National Dialogue Conference, and they played an effective role. They also participated in leadership positions by 30%, according to the outcomes of the National Dialogue.

Solutions for Improvement

Regarding the solutions that can raise the level of women's participation in the political field, Rashid believes that it is necessary to break the social and cultural restrictions that prevent women from obtaining their full political rights, issuing binding constitutional legislation that enables them to practice their political rights and actively participate in decision-making, and community awareness of the importance of the role of women in all developmental and political fields as partners with men.

Marginalization of Women's Attempts at Political Participation

Yemeni women try to be a key partner in many political activities in a country where political participation is monopolized by men. These attempts have resulted in assuming leadership positions. Their efforts to be present in the political scene stem from their belief that their involvement in this field is a crucial component and requirement of democracy and that their contribution to policymaking is a valuable complement to successful political work.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez

Women's political engagement in the country began when they joined a variety of political parties and blocs, which allowed them to occupy various positions and roles and proved that they are distinguished decision-making partners.

In her speech about women's political participation in Yemen, Aida Ashour, a member of the Party Women's Caucus, stated that "political participation is the highest level of democracy, a national right, and a manifestation of equal citizenship that expresses the involvement of women in the political process as an essential partner in the development process. Women have the ability to interact with local communities and propose policies that enhance their presence."

Ashour believes that despite legislation and policies aimed at empowering women politically, their participation in decision-making is currently weak due to the impact the conflict in the country has had on political and partisan life.

Unbalanced Political Participation

In a field survey conducted by the "Women in Development and Peace" newsletter, many activists agreed that although many women's names have emerged in political life, there is still a gender gap in participation and that the proportion of Yemeni women's participation is still small compared to men.

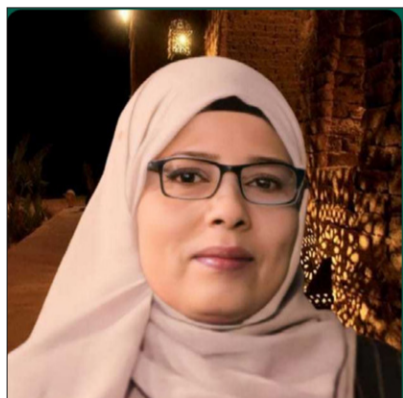
This was confirmed by Sabah Al-Sharabi, head of the National Committee for Women in Taiz Governorate, saying, "There is no balance between women and men in political participation. This is due to male domination, marginalization of women and the practice of political violence against them, as well as diminishing their ability to participate in political work."

In her interview with the newsletter, Al-Sharabi mentioned the role played by women in the field of political participation in the country, confirming that they had played prominent roles since ancient times, and in some stages, they had reached the highest positions in the country, such as Queen Bilqis and Arwa bint Ahmed.

"Women played political and nationalist roles during the early stages of independence, whether in the north or the south. Many active women emerged in the field of politics, but due to the conflict, this has significantly decreased in recent years," she added.

This, according to Al-Sharabi, is due to the divisions and quotas over sovereign positions as well as the lack of a political role in which women should engage. In addition to the women's role focusing mostly on community and humanitarian relief as a result.

According to Madina Adlan, head of



Madina Adlan



Aida Ashour

the youth department for the Yemeni Socialist Party in Hadramout, there is no equality between males and females in political life in Yemen, and there is no balance even within the parties, especially those with progressive ideology.

Adlan attributed this to the masculine mentality of some parties that do not support the inclusion of women in leadership positions within the party except within the women's sector, which has become a feminist civil society organization that is not concerned with the decisions taken within the other bodies of the party.

"Many parties have reduced the presence of women in their structure, and we also note that the parties did not nominate women to hold leadership positions in the previous government, even though some parties have female members who deserve to have a place in political decision-making within their parties or in government in general," she added.

Studies and Research

A report issued by Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, titled "One Cannot Applaud with One Hand": Partisanship and the Dual Challenge of Women's Inclusion in Yemen," published in December 2021, revealed that some Yemeni political parties are working to exclude women from participating in decision-making within their entities. Additionally, they try to confine them to specific roles that serve the party's interests by not giving them the assistance they need and by excluding them from representing the party at political events.

The report confirmed that there are parties against women's candidacy considering it to be a man's issue and that they have this right. In addition, there is also no empowerment of women to hold leadership positions within the party itself,

but rather they are exploited as voters instead.

Marginalization and Exclusion of Women

Aida Ashour believes that women in Yemen have contributed to the success of the electoral process, and that they have embodied the best and highest values of democracy through their involvement in party work. They also represented their parties well in political events, both internally and externally, especially through their participation in the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference.

"Women have held some ministerial positions and have been involved in the diplomatic corps as well as in local councils at the governorate level. Thus, they have proven their worth in holding responsibility. Nevertheless, the parties abandoned them when forming the government of parity and quotas. This is considered a rejection of everything that women have contributed and of their right to participate actively in deci-

sion-making," she continued.

Activating the Role of Women

Based on these efforts in favor of women, in a working paper presented by Lubna Al-Qadasi, secretary of the Women's Department in the Nasserite Organization, it was stated that the leaders of political parties and organizations must support the presence of women in any political work and participate in any negotiations or political dialogues at the national or local level.

In the paper, Al-Qadasi also stated that the parties must activate the role of women by including them in the committees that are formed, whether they are committees of understandings, opening roads, exchanging detainees and prisoners, or fact-finding committees. The paper also states that women must be involved in political events in which parties participate, and to not be confined to women's sectors, as this leads to isolating women from political involvement.

According to an academic, who preferred not to be named, Yemeni women have a remarkable political presence inside and outside parties after the events of February 2011 that toppled the previous regime. However, the conflict that erupted in 2015 wiped out all the political gains that Yemeni women had achieved in the past period.

He believes that the conflict dominated the Yemeni scene and the entire civil and political work in Yemen collapsed, which affected the role of women and parties alike.

Demand for Equal Participation

According to Basima Ibrahim, a member of the Women's Party Bloc, women

should demand activation of their role in all political activities, because they are important, active and essential partners in political transformations and changes. They also have to prove their position and presence in all fields because they represent nearly half of the country's population.

She added that women represent the basic and most effective structure of political parties, since they have a huge impact on women's representation and political participation, especially in elections.

"Parties must include women at all levels, provide them with appropriate support, and include them in events organized by organizations supporting political affairs and party work," she added, considering it a national necessity.

Media Awareness

Regarding the media's role in promoting women's participation in political life, Mansour Al-Qadasi, an academic at the University of Al-Hodeidah, stated that Yemeni media is known for siding either with or against the parties to the conflict. The volume of media coverage of women's issues in Yemen declined significantly, which limited the performance and political role of Yemeni women.

According to Samia Al-Aghbari, a professor of journalism at the Faculty of Mass Communication at Sana'a University, "The role that the media plays in raising awareness about the importance of the political participation of Yemeni women is non-existent at the current stage, and there is no significant role for the media in this regard."

Al-Aghbari emphasized that the media's focus has been on issues about domestic and social violence against women as well as cyber-bullying, and that there is no longer anything to make the media focus on the issue of women's political participation. She added, "This came about because there are no appointments or elections in which women can participate in order to be represented or shown in the media."

According to a media activist, who refused to mention her name, the role of audio-visual media in promoting women's political participation is very weak. "Those who raise awareness of women's issues usually face severe sarcasm and ridicule when talking about the role of women in politics. In addition, some social media platforms are active in discussing these issues, but they receive more criticism than encouragement," she confirmed.



The Economy and Women's Political Participation

Economic changes affect women and limit their participation in public life. High prices, unemployment, poor living conditions, and depriving girls of education, training, and work, etc. are all obstacles to improving the status of women and occupying political positions. Economic changes are an obstacle to the human development of women, especially during conflicts.

By: Hebah Mohammed

Economic changes affect women and limit their participation in public life. High prices, unemployment, poor living conditions, and depriving girls of education, training, and work, etc. are all obstacles to the improvement of the status of women and to women occupying political positions. Economic changes stand in the way of women's human development, especially during conflicts.

Women's Development Is a Path to Political Participation

Promoting a comprehensive sustainable development for Yemeni women in all areas of health, educational and economic fields and integrating girls with educational and work opportunities are key to the participation of Yemeni women in political decision-making, according to specialists and researchers. This is because women possess distinct capabilities in giving and producing within the family and society, which the living and societal conditions prepared them for.

Obstacles to Fulfilling the Dream

"Yemeni women struggle with obstacles that prevent them from taking part in economic activities. Such obstacles include the high rate of unemployment and the lack of opportunities for women to work or join the labor force as a result of misguided societal customs and traditions that prevent them from an education and work. More than 95% of Yemeni women of working age are denied access to the labour force and confined to housework," stated Noura Al-Saqqaf, the Director General of the General Administration for Women in Ibb Governorate.

Al-Saqqaf enumerated the factors that limit the political participation of Yemeni women saying, "the economic and societal challenges that rural women, who represent more than 50% of society, face which prevent them from education and work, societal norms, raising fear and concern about women's honor, and restricting them to work in the home or do unpaid agricultural or logging work all constitute a major obstacle to their development and impede their direction towards political action."

"Despite all these obstacles, there are rural women who have emerged in the political arena. For example, Ghania Dirham, an illiterate woman from Thi Al-Sefal district in Ibb, ran for the local council elections in 2010. She succeeded and made many developmental and charitable contributions to the people of her area. She built a road in the area to make it easier for the people to move from one place to another. She also connected electric power to everyone in the village. As such, there are many rural women who appeared despite the dark reality in their communities," Al-Saqqaf added.

Low Indicators

According to official data published by "Yemen Information Center for Studies and Research" in its publication "Women in Development and Peace", 7.23% of the workforce are women. The unemployment rate among women is 8.2% and 12.5% among men. Women constitute 8.2% of the total wage earners. In addition, wom-



Women's political participation has declined due to political tension and exacerbation of the conflict.

en represent 28.3% of the workforce in the private sector and organizations, and 9.3% in the public sector.

In addition, women working in the agricultural, fishing and forestry sectors constitute 94.7% of all female workers in the private and public sectors. Women also constitute 18.3% of the total female workers in education, and 24.9% in health and humanitarian work.

Past and Present Employment Opportunities for Women

Yemeni women, at all times and places, used to take advantage of every opportunity given to them in education, work or defending their rights. On job and education opportunities in the 1970s and 1980s, Salma Al-Masabi, Media Department Official of the Executive Office of the Yemeni Women's Union, said, "when the revolutions took place and the country was liberated and educational opportunities increased, girls eagerly enrolled in education and work. There were many job opportunities in Yemen during that period, even for those with basic qualifications, such as middle school or high school certificates, which contributed to their involvement in the labor market. In the 1990s, more fields opened up, including self-employment, the trade market, marketing of products and handicrafts, etc. Education progressed and universities were opened. Therefore, women enrolled in universities and became university professors, ambassadors, ministers, and parliament members. Women in Yemen constitute more than 50% of the population. Access to education has been facilitated everywhere, thanks to international feminist efforts and their interest in educating women in the Middle East."

Economic Recovery Is a Gateway to the Future

Majed Al-Daari, a journalist interested in economic affairs, explained that empowering women economically and providing them with job opportunities in an equal and meaningful way contributes to building the personalities of women on strong

foundations. They also enable women to lead, make decisions, and qualify them for political action. He also stressed the importance of integrating Yemeni women into economic recovery as a major part of the requirements for achieving sustainable development that contributes to the country's renaissance, and striving to create fair competition that would provide the country with enormous human potential.

Al-Daari pointed out that there are recent studies stating that real investment in women's economic empowerment has many benefits for poor countries. He believes that Yemen is one of the countries with a large number of women who suffer from economic marginalization, unemployment and distance from the labor force. Moreover, they are more vulnerable to repercussions of the conflict, despite the fact that Yemeni women spend a lot of money on family needs to improve their family's economic conditions, and in doing so, they contribute significantly to the economic recovery. He added that without economic reform for women and men alike, women will not participate politically because empowering women economically contributes to raising the level of development in the long or short term, and enhances their opportunities for political participation, peace-making and conflict resolution.

Racial Selfishness

Salma Al-Masabi said that the economic situation is not an impediment to women joining the political field, but rather the customs, traditions and society's view of women, and the selfishness of their male colleagues. Al-Masabi indicated that Yemeni women are economic by nature, able to manage and take responsibility, and able to overcome the difficulties of life. However, it is the law usually legislated by men that encroaches upon women's rights. It is the conflict fought by men that renders women displaced, impoverished, homeless, deprived of an education, and subsequently deprived of political participation in the

country.

The Effect of the Conflict on Women's Political Participation

Political conflicts influenced almost all walks of life, including women's economic, political and social participation. Women are most affected by the conflict in many ways, such as displacement, poverty, and deprivation of education and services. They find themselves in the middle of armed conflicts. Their biggest concerns have become securing shelter, food, health, and living stability for themselves and their families. As such, they refrained from political participation.

Hayat Al-Kinai, the former head of the Yemeni Women's Union in Ibb, reports that many women have assumed political positions in the country. However, after the outbreak of conflicts, lawlessness, and the interruption of salaries, they left those positions in search of jobs to make a living. Some women leaders have also traveled outside the country in search of security and stability.

In addition, Faiza Al-Badani, a member of the local council in Ibb, said, "In the current situation, Yemeni women have not participated politically in any government, whether in the north or the south. Women's political participation has declined due to political tension and the increasing conflict. Women's participation issues are no longer priorities for the government. They have been marginalized even more than they were before the conflict." She added, "There is no living or economic stability for women to think about political participation. What is worse is that poverty has worsened among women. The number of female breadwinners has increased, and many women who have been victims of the conflict have turned to developing their life skills and learning crafts to improve their living conditions. All the achievements they made in the past have vanished. They no longer think about political participation, but only seek peace and stability."

Al-Badani stated that in the political reconciliation negotiations in February 2014, all parties refused the representation and participation of women. After pressure from the participating components, a woman from the north and another from the south were accepted. Although they were accepted to be included in the negotiations, their role was limited to monitoring only,

and not to participate in representing women in those negotiations.

Overcoming Difficulties

As a result of the awareness of the economic, social and living challenges that Yemeni women have been going through for decades, which constituted a barrier between them and their legal right to political participation, some appropriate solutions that might alleviate the dark reality of Yemeni women during the conflict are recommended with the cooperation of all.

The lawyer and human rights activist Walid Al-Kathiri presented some solutions to overcome these difficulties. They include creating a broad economic renaissance following the end of the recent peace negotiations, which heralded the end of the armed conflict, in which equality between men and women would prevail, and women and girls would be a major focus in the economic reform process. This requires the participation of women and women's organizations and unions in setting plans for economic development and in adopting the legal and organizational aspects related to women's empowerment and stimulating their economic participation.

Al-Kathiri stressed the need for the understanding and interaction of the competent authorities and society as a whole by empowering Yemeni women economically and achieve de facto equality with men. Job opportunities must also be provided for the displaced and those affected by the hardships of the conflict. The private sector should also partner with ambitious female entrepreneurs to create job opportunities for women and girls affected by displacement and poverty. Peace, economic and social security must be rebuilt simultaneously with the reconstruction of the country.

The world has been talking about women's political, social and economic rights for decades, but until now, it has been unable to do anything to achieve that. Women's movements in all countries remain the main force for women's integration and real participation in various fields, the enactment of legal legislation criminalizing anyone who seeks to marginalize or exclude women, and the opening of adult education institutions and literacy centers to impose and spread education by force of law and order.

Living and economic instability prevent women from political participation

Women's Political Participation: Challenges and Obstacles

There are many challenges concerning women's political participation in Yemen. Empowering women in decision-making is still one of the most controversial issues in Yemen.

By: Alia Muhammed

To enable women's participation in political life, a different approach to reconcile different viewpoints and standpoints is required. In this way, women's political empowerment will be achieved, and their political presence will be guaranteed.

A member of the Community Committee for Women and Children, Fikriyah Khaled, believes that there are a number of obstacles facing women's political participation. These difficulties are related to society on the one hand, and to political parties and power within the state on the other. This shows women's low participation and underrepresentation in political bodies within the state, such as the government, parliament, and political parties and unions.

She emphasized that there are factors that stand in the way of women's effective participation, such as social and political upbringing. Women have always been perceived as unable to engage in politics or make decisions as a result of the widespread belief that women are more emotional—and therefore less rational—than men. Political parties do not trust women to assume leadership positions. Moreover, women themselves trust men's political performance and decisions, and thus do not vote for women. As such, men are more likely to obtain electoral votes and reach decision-making positions within the state.

She noted the importance of activating UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on the protection of women, which stipulated the importance of completely eliminating all forms of discrimination against women that hinder their progress in decision-making.

"Yemeni society views women and their roles in a very stereotypical manner. In addition, social upbringing plays a key role in defining women's roles in a narrow family and tribal environment, which negatively affects women's political participation," she added. She also



stressed the importance of eliminating all forms of violence against women, as they prevent women from participating in politics.

Sabah Badri Bakir, a member of the Yemeni Women's Pact for Security and Peace, indicated that although they have demonstrated remarkable competence in some areas of intervention, and have mediated to end the conflict, there is no database for women who possess capabilities in political action.

Although community committees have been formed in all villages in all districts, women do not exercise their right in decision making. Their participation is only a formality, according to the classification of the scale of active participation.

On the most important challenges facing Yemeni women in the political process, Bakir pointed to the most prominent ones, including the decision-makers' lack of trust in women's capabilities and lack of community solidarity in pressuring decision makers. This is evident in the formation of the ministries, or even their absence as a main party in negotiations.

Political, Cultural and Economic Challenges

The Yemeni Constitution stipulates a set of decisions that give women the opportunity to exercise all their rights in various fields. However, these decisions have not been implemented yet. Therefore, Yemeni women's participation in the local political arena is low. Economic journalist Farouk Al-Kamali said, "the biggest and most prominent challenges – past and present – is illiteracy and women's economic dependence on men, and

subsequently depriving her of political participation and subject her to men's decisions."

"In the past, women in southern Yemen had a prominent participation in politics, as there was no economic dominance by men. This gave women the opportunity to access education and participate in politics," Al-Kamali said.

The Secretary-General of the Women's Development Association in Shabwa Governorate, Thekra Abu Bakr, said, "the importance of women's participation in political life lies in the fact that they are half of society, so they are essential participants in managing and resolving key issues in various fields. Unfortunately, women's participation in the political process faces many challenges."

In addition, Buthaina Al-Maamari, a peacebuilding and gender trainer, explained that the unstable security situation due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen has become a pretext for preventing women from participating in the political process. She continued to say, "the conflict has greatly affected women and doubled their responsibilities. They have become the main breadwinners in many families due to the absence of the head of the family or his death in the conflict."

Al-Maamari emphasized that a large number of parties participating in the political process reject the presence of women, and do not consider them leaders. This is evident when all parties ignore women's participation in political consultations. She also stressed the importance of ending the conflict as a prerequisite for granting women the right to political participation and raising the level of community awareness of

women's political participation.

Rosa Al-Khamri, Director General of Legal Affairs at the National Committee for Women, stressed

the importance of ensuring the activation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and other relevant resolutions, particularly during armed conflicts. Women are ignored, marginalized, excluded from decision-making positions, and deprived of their rights that are guaranteed by the Constitution and the law. She indicated that this resolution supports the participation of women in decision-making positions.

She added, "many challenges and obstacles that stand against women's empowerment in politics – whether from a social or an administrative-organizational aspect in state policy – need to be considered in accordance with the Constitution and laws that ensure gender equality and guarantee equal opportunity for all."

Al-Khamri explained that despite all the challenges women face, including customs and traditions, lack of support by parties and religious currents, the large number of economic changes reducing women's employment opportunities, high prices, increased inflation, and unemployment, women are still present and active in all sectors. We find them working, striving, and struggling to obtain their rights, and this requires that there be great attention to the needs and demands of women, applying, activating, and even amending many laws. All of this will

Al-Kamali:
"the biggest challenges are illiteracy and women's economic dependence on men. This deprives them of political participation, and makes them subject to men's decisions."

only come through amending the law (e.g., the electoral law and the local authority law) and focusing on agreements, the women's role and her presence and efficiency, and implementing real decisions by empowering women by at least 30%.

Possible Solutions

Fikriyah Khaled insists that we need a fairer and less biased political decision to apply the quota system, which is one of the mechanisms for changing the rules of politics at the party level. "To increase women's participation, there must be real political will on the part of the ruling authorities. In addition, a decision must be issued to politically empower women from across the political spectrum in order to build a real democratic state," she said. She pointed out the importance of the role of official institutions and civil society organizations in creating societal awareness, taking the issue of women's participation seriously, and providing an opportunity for their participation in decision-making.

Sabah Bakri indicated that it is important to go back to UNSCR 1325 to increase women's participation at all levels of decision-making, such as conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and political negotiations, and for women to contribute to the absorptive capacity of gender issues among personnel working in peacekeeping and in training them.

Poor Presence of Yemeni Women in Ministries and Important Sectors

Despite the numerous constraints and obstacles imposed by the conflict on the one hand, and society on the other, Yemeni women continue to achieve success and hold significant positions. The last of these achievements was the appointment of five women to high positions at security institutions in Taiz governorate. These appointments were widely welcomed by influential figures in society, especially those who have long advocated for empowering Yemeni women to hold leadership positions in their communities.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez

Many Yemeni activists have expressed their pride through media and social media in being given this honor, saying it is a sign of hope that women will be able to exercise their rights and be an active element in various fields of life and decision-making.

The participation of Yemeni women in many governmental bodies is still weak, especially in ministries and presidential offices, and in some prominent sectors, which in society's view, are exclusive to men. Women face marginalization and exclusion in terms of gaining confidence to work in these institutions.

Women's Participation in Ministries

According to Nadia Abdullah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Government of Aden, the participation of women in ministries is very limited, although the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference stipulate that women should represent 30% of leadership positions. Yet, women were excluded from the last Yemeni government and no women were appointed. Additionally, the presence of women in ministries is still little compared to the presence of men.

"Yemeni women face many challenges and difficulties, the most important of which is the inferior view as well as some customs and traditions that are practiced against them. This occurred in spite of the fact that they have proven their ability to endure the worst conditions in light of this conflict and have endured most of the economic and social burdens of the family, especially after they lost their breadwinners in the conflict," she added.

Women's Participation in Presidential Offices

Afaf Noman, a member of the Working Group for the Women and Peace Agenda in Aden Governorate, stated that women's participation in presidential bodies is essentially non-existent, and even when it does exist, it does not have a significant impact on the ground. She confirmed that the rate of women working in the office of the Presidency of the Republic does not exceed 1%. The country's current conditions and the repercussions left by the conflict are the main causes for the low growth in the rate of women working in the offices, which affected women's participation to work in governing bodies.

Nguyen Ghanem, a central committee member in the Justice and Construction Party's Aden branch, believes that there is a great deal of unfairness on the part of the authorities affiliated with the Yemeni Presidency regarding the participation of women in its affili-



ated bodies. The lack of connections to help women access these agencies is the cause of this. She also believes that one of the solutions to empower women in these agencies is to give them the right to employment and to respect the laws in force regarding this right.

Women in the Diplomatic Corps

On women's participation in the diplomatic corps, a political activist who is interested in women's issues who asked not to be named, said that the participation of Yemeni women in the diplomatic corps is still limited compared to the scale of the role they play in other fields. Yet, there are good signs that they have represented themselves actively in this field, especially since they are more sincere and able to perform their tasks and duties to the fullest.

He believes that one of the most important challenges facing women's work in the diplomatic corps is represented in the current political situation, in addition to society's perception of them and the repercussions of the ongoing conflict, which has negatively and significantly affected the status of women working in various fields in Yemen, including the diplomatic corps.

He suggested that the solutions lie in giving women the opportunity to fully exercise their leadership roles in this field, and there is no doubt that they will achieve great success. He stressed that positive action must be taken by the concerned authorities to provide women the opportunity to perform their roles same as men, in addition to activating the media's role, and holding seminars and events that adopt such issues so that they become a matter of public opinion.

Women in the Judiciary

Judge Sabah Ahmed Saleh, a member of the Supreme Judicial Council, talked about the situation of Yemeni women working in the judiciary and said that they encounter numerous challenges that prevent them from occupying high positions in this field. Among these obstacles is the lack of confidence in their ability to hold judicial affairs or any

leadership position. She emphasized that society's perception of women working in the judiciary is also one of the challenges they encounter, owing to misguided social upbringing.

Regarding the solutions and opportunities available to Yemeni women to participate in the judiciary, Saleh said, "This can be achieved through political leadership supporting them and developing a strategy to involve qualified women in the judiciary and empowering them in decision-making positions, as well as gender equality, and differentiation during recruitment and selection."

Available Opportunities

"The political leadership's conviction of the importance of women's participation in the judiciary and in leadership positions is one of the opportunities available to Yemeni women. These opportunities resulted in the appointment of a female judge to the highest position in the judiciary, which was exclusive for men, as well as the continuation of the feminist movement of activists and women's rights defenders, and their continued demands to increase their involvement in the judiciary and in leadership positions," Saleh continued.

"There is a strategic plan in the Judicial Council to include them in the

Supreme Court, the Judicial Inspection Authority, and the Higher Judicial Institute in order to qualify as many of them. This is an important opportunity for them and a positive step in the right path to increase their empowerment in the judiciary," she continued.

According to lawyer Dhia'a Al-Owaini, "The main barrier to today's progress for women is the concept of shame, customs and traditions, and the perception of social roles based on gender that the patriarchal society imposed on women. To be fair, after practicing the profession, I discovered that male employees in this sector, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and workers, are very accepting of the presence of women in the judiciary."

"Even society has begun to gradually change its view, especially when they see the progress of women in this field, as was the beginning of women's work in education and health. Therefore, they simply need to overcome their fears and be able to master the profession," she continued.

In Numbers

According to a report issued by the National Information Center in 2006 titled "Yemeni Women Actively Participate in Elections and Have a Significant Role in Change," the number of women

working in the diplomatic corps is 123, six of whom have held leadership positions in ministries, and 97 in various state agencies.

Women's Political Participation

In 2018, Yemeni women participated in the negotiations held on December 12, and had formed a group of eight women, namely: Afra Al-Hariri, Afrah Al-Zouba, Asmah Al-Allas, Balqis Abu Osbu'a, Enas Al-Arashi, Maeen Sultan, Najat Jama'an, and Sumaya Al-Hussam.

The formation of the group came in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 and the outcomes of the National Dialogue, which gave Yemeni women the right to participate in negotiations and formations that would establish peace and security in the country.

Regarding the political participation of Yemeni women, the most prominent provisions of the outcomes of the National Dialogue were that women have the right to be active partners in political life and to exercise their electoral right through candidacy and referendum, whether in presidential elections or on a local scale.

The UN's Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, had stated in his briefing to the United Nations Security Council on November 11, 2020 that the role played by Yemeni women in the Yemeni negotiations is clear evidence of their desire to actively participate in the peace process and end the conflict. Thus, this has strengthened their important role in political life.

In his briefing, he stated that he had met with 30 women from all political blocs, and that they had affirmed their desire to play a major role in resolving conflicts. He affirmed his desire to expand the participation of women in the political components and give them the right to make their participation rate 30% of the party teams. He also indicated that Yemeni women have achieved successes in various fields, including the political field.



Rasha Jarhoun: Men's Unwillingness Undermined Women's Political Rights

Rasha Jarhoun, an independent feminist social researcher who defends women's rights, may not be known to many people. She holds a master's degree in international business administration from the University of Nottingham in Britain, and a fellowship from Aspen Institute in the United States of America.

By: Afrah Ahmed

She also co-founded the "Women Solidarity Network". According to Wikipedia, "This network includes more than 250 women inside and outside Yemen who defend women's rights, combat violence against them, and work to protect women's rights defenders at risk."

Jarhoun was, and still is, interested in researching and investigating the conditions of women in conflict and war zones. She also defends them and helps them escape their current conditions, for which she won the Anita Augsborg Award for Rebels Against War in 2019.

Now, let's go to interview Ms. Rasha Jarhoun, a guest of the "Women in Development and Peace" newsletter.

How would you describe the beginning of your political involvement?

While I love arranging flowers and roses because of the way it impacts the soul in bringing joy into people's lives, I got involved in the political field because I felt that it is my duty to enter this field with all its caveats and the risks we face to suppress our voices and our participation. Empowering women politically is the first step towards building peace and a civil and democratic life based on the values of justice.

Ms. Jarhoun, what's your opinion about the current situation regarding women's political participation?

In general, the country's overall participation rate for women does not reach 1%; women are not fully represented in the current government nor in parliament.

This occurred in spite of the fact that there have been relative improvements. For example, we find that there are women joining the support bodies of the Presidential Leadership Council, like me and my female colleagues; five women at the Consultation and Reconciliation Committee. Additionally, Sabah Al-Alwani, a judge, was recently appointed - after tremendous efforts - to the Supreme Judicial Council for the first time since Yemen's reunification. Despite the fact that these are considered positive steps, they are insufficient to achieve fair representation of women in accordance with the terms of reference of this stage, the National Plan for Women, Peace and Security, and our commitments to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in Yemen.



curity, and our commitments to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in Yemen.

Could you tell us about how you first got involved in politics?

I got involved in political work independently since early on, as I am one of the women's rights activists who defend women's political rights.

In 2006, I remember that I strongly supported the quota system in order to raise the rate of women's participation in those elections. In 2010, I changed my field of work from supporting girls' education to democratic assistance by providing technical support to the Supreme Elections Committee in order to be a member of the development program team. Specifically, to support the elections process that culminated the transitional period at the time by developing a campaign to encourage male and female voters to vote.

During the period of struggle, I was a member of the women's delegation participating on the sidelines of the Kuwait negotiations in 2016. I also worked to revive the feminist solidarity network with other feminist leaders and established the "Peace Path Initiative" in 2017 with feminist partners. Since that time, we have been supporting the second diplomatic track to consult on the issues raised in the agenda of the peace process, and we have

worked on preparing the feminist road map. More than 100 women and men were involved in its preparation from different governorates and representatives of political and civil leaders. Its outputs were reflected in the outputs of the Riyadh-Yemeni consultations sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

- Where have Yemeni women reached in terms of political participation, from your point of view?

There is still more to be done to ensure that women are fairly represented in all positions of decision-making, since they won't be happy until they reach the required minimum level of representation in these roles with a share that is not less than 30% in order to achieve full equality. Usually there is systematic exclusion of women in peace negotiations, and the number of women is very limited or non-existent in negotiating delegations. In an effort to support women's participation, the Office of the UN Envoy has previously worked to push them to these negotiations and consultations. However, these efforts usually become mere actions that are done in order to "not to be blamed" rather than actions to create space for effective participation.

Why are women not active in politics?

I do not know the main reason why women are not active in politics, but we have ad-



Rasha Jarhoun

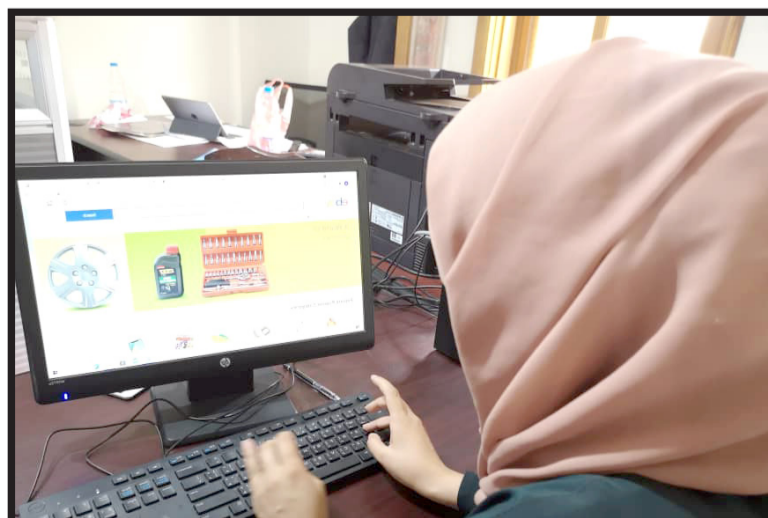
dressed this exclusion by sending our own independent delegations during peace processes. We have always worked on preparing joint messages and recommendations to be presented to the parties, and we also created our own spaces and brought everyone to hear our messages. For example, every year, we have been holding a high-level conference for feminist peace since 2019, where we invite all influential parties at the local, national, regional, and international levels. The current envoy shared his feminist roadmap with us and told us that he had used it extensively.

- What about your participation in the Riyadh negotiations?

I am a member of the Consultation and Reconciliation Commission, and the Commission's presidency formed a temporary committee to prepare a comprehensive peace vision headed by Dr. Abdul-Malik Al-Mikhlafla, and I am a rapporteur in this committee. We are currently working on completing the comprehensive peace vision.

Finally, why do you think women are excluded from political participation in Yemen?

There is an absence of political will. When there are leaders who respect women's rights and work to empower them, they are violently attacked in order to make them neutral and un-supportive of women. Therefore, male leaders should be aware of these practices and not be influenced by them.



The Role of International Organizations in Supporting Yemeni Women's Political Participation

International organizations play a prominent role in supporting and adopting efforts to provide Yemeni women with opportunities to participate politically, as these organizations are the main sponsors of many political events and peace efforts. They support women by involving them in consultations and peace talks aimed at bringing peace and security to the country, or by inviting them to attend international events and honoring them for their national efforts to demand rights and exercise freedoms and peaceful demonstrations.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez

The United Nation's Women's Organization (UN Women) is one of the international women's organizations that provides support to Yemeni women in the field of political participation. At a time when Yemeni women were marginalized and absent from the local political map, it contributed to the formation of a group of 60 Yemeni women to exercise their right to political participation in the state.

There are other UN efforts to support Yemeni women and enhance their participation in the political file. For instance, the Office of the Special Envoy, with support from UN Women, formed the Yemeni women's Technical Advisory Group (TAG). It is comprised of eight Yemeni women. The aim of its formation is women's participation in political issues.

International Efforts to Develop Women's Capabilities

International efforts are not limited to supporting Yemeni women by creating formations and groups to ensure their active participation in the political process in the country. Rather, they also include efforts to organize training courses to develop women's skills and employ their efforts in the desired peace and security process.

Among these events was the Enhancing Yemeni Women's Political Participation workshop which took place in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, in 2017. This workshop aimed at providing Yemeni women with skills related to political issues and the peace process and strengthening their capabilities in this area.

Aspects of International Organizations' Support for Women

"Yemeni women and international organizations alike must realize that no real change towards the future can be made without the real participation of women, given that international organizations are considered coordinators and facilitators of many political events that influence decision-making," said political activist Samah Radman.

In an interview with Women in Development and Peace Bulletin, she said, "there is a great burden on women in Yemen, so they must demand their right to participate in the local political arena in accordance with the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and the many agreements signed by Yemen."

"Women must have a strong presence within the political parties they are affiliated with and a loud voice to demand their political rights, and international organizations must support them," she further said.

According to Samah, international organizations' support for women's political participation is either to support the emergence of young leaders on the scene through the involvement of women's civil society organizations, or to make those leaders prominent. She believes that due

to the conflict, Yemeni women are shouldering many burdens, and as the main person affected, their involvement will have a positive impact in reaching solutions.

She stressed, "international organizations must know that among the obstacles facing women is that the organizations hold direct talks with men more than women. Therefore, they must involve them in these talks, especially since many Yemeni women have legal backgrounds making their presence meaningful and effective in this aspect. International organizations should encourage and support women to participate in all political activities, whether through their political components or through other available channels and should also have a clear vision of peace-making in the country, according to actual living circumstances in Yemen."

She pointed out that the pressure on the political components to include women in the political process resulted in their participation in the National Dialogue Conference, which was a successful experience achieved by Yemeni women. She stressed that there can be no sound and complete political agreement if there is no real involvement of women. Women's participation must be meaningful and effective, especially in decision-making committees.

The Role of International Organizations in Supporting Yemeni Women's Political Participation

Bahia Al-Saqqaf, Executive Director of Peace for Sustainable Societies (PASS) Foundation, believes that the role of international organizations and the United Nations, as sponsors of the peace process and supporter of women's political participation, lies in empowering partisan women by qualifying them and making their voices heard within their partisan components. "They must be involved in the political process, especially since they endured marginalization by their parties, and were excluded from participating in any political action or event. Also, the role of international organizations is to encourage women politicians in independent components by empowering them and making their voices heard, or by forming independent components as a negotiating party, an observer party, or an advisory party."

For her part, Nadia Saleh, a member of Southern Women for Peace, said that international organizations have played important roles through the representatives of the UN envoy to Yemen in frequent meetings during and after conflicts with all parties. They called on all parties to agree on engaging women in political negotiations during conflict, representing them in the political field, and giving them



Bahia Al-Saqqaf

opportunities to participate in the peace-building process.

Nadia noted that the Office of the UN Special Envoy sought to understand and support the participation of Yemeni women in achieving a just peace. "The Office of the Special Envoy focused on understanding gender analysis and women's perspectives in peace processes through negotiation with UN Women. This was for the purpose of creating the Yemeni Women's Pact for Security and Peace which included an advisory board of 60 women by late 2018," she said.

She further went on to say that in 2019, the United Nations office invited a delegation of seven Yemeni women from the Women's Pact to Kuwait, even though they had no direct role in those negotiations. She also indicated that the Yemeni advisory group for the envoy's office consists of women with diverse backgrounds such as economists, human rights activists, women from the government, and women with experience in politics. This group often engages in consultations on political issues based on their own experience.

On the other hand, Salma Al-Masabi, Head of the Media Department in the Executive Office of the Yemeni Women's Union, believes that international organizations work in light of the laws and agreements signed by our country and other countries in the name of women's rights and participation. Nevertheless, they cannot impose on decision-makers any political participation of Yemeni women, nor can they implement those agreements and impose them on decision-makers in Yemen. For Yemeni women to obtain their rights and political participation, they rely on their own efforts.

The Vital Role of International Organizations in Supporting Women

For her part, Iftikar Sorour, Head of Women Nasserite Popular Unionist Organization in Lahj Governorate, said, "international organizations play a vital role in supporting women's political participation at the level of party leadership or allocating positions for women in parliament or in the government. These efforts in previous years have yielded significant, albeit minimal, steps. However, we have begun to see women's participation in political life at the level of parties, parliament and government. The United Nations Development Program, along with many donors and international organizations, has had a positive impact in supporting women's political rights."

The Role of the International Community

Human rights activist Manal Al-Dhubhani said, "the international community has been and continues to play a fragile and weak role in supporting women's representation in the decision-making process. This was evident to everyone in all the negotiations that took place between the two sides of the conflict, as we saw no presence of women other than one female representative in the Stockholm Agreement."

"This demonstrates the ambiguous and non-supportive attitude towards women by international organizations under the pretext that representation must be among the representatives of the parties to the conflict despite the ability of international organizations to compel those parties to include women representatives in the negotiation, dialogue, and peace process," she continued.

"Regarding the advisory women in the office of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, unfortunately, they do not have any actual and real role in the Yemeni file, and their presence is only a formality or 'decoration', and nothing more."

Conducting Studies and Reports

Speaking to "Women in Development and Peace Bulletin," Al-Dhubhani said, "it is the duty of international non-governmental organizations and international human rights mechanisms to monitor violations and abuses committed against women. They should be subject to a neutral and rigorous approach, through which they can develop a special vision of the most important obstacles and challenges facing Yemeni women in political participation."

Al-Dhubhani believes that when studies, reports, and investigations related to the coverage of issues and events related to women's political and civil rights in Yemen are initiated, monitors need a com-

prehensive compilation of information on the status of women. She noted that most of the women's voices and opinions were found to be absent in many studies. The reason was attributed to the lack of access to basic sources that can be relied upon when preparing reports or studies.

She stressed that exaggeration of studies or reports leads to the use of data to serve the political agendas of a particular party. She said, "a citizen who follows public affairs or a researcher in the field may ask, shouldn't the information in their reports and data be verified and investigated to reveal its background?!"

Other activists believe that the reports issued on the participation of Yemeni women still emphasize their weak political role and complete absence, especially in the recent period in which the country witnessed an armed conflict.

The Role of International Organizations in Awareness Raising

The Head in the Nasserite Unionist Organization, Iftikar Sorour, said that international organizations are still making significant efforts in raising awareness of women's political role. They do this by holding training workshops to achieve this, organizing meetings with representatives of the government and political parties, and working well with local organizations to raise community awareness of the importance of women's political participation.

For her part, activist Manal Al-Dhubhani believes that international bodies and organizations play a major role in ensuring that these women's organizations and mechanisms have sufficient resources to enable them to participate. They are a means to advancing the role of women by emphasizing the development of their political work capacities and by adopting effective and positive plans for the development of their situation.

"Working to provide the necessary conditions to create a suitable cultural and social environment for the development of mindsets and cultures, and empowering women in crises and conflicts are among the most important tools in the peace process," she continued.

In conclusion, the efforts of international organizations to involve Yemeni women in political life are still important. Women in Yemen took the first step to obtain their desired rights towards active participation within society and in the various political events in the country. Thanks to the efforts to support women's political participation in Yemen, many feminist models, who have the ability to efficiently enter the arena of political life, have emerged.

Social Media's Role in Enhancing Women's Political Participation

The media in general and social media in particular are essential channels and means of enhancing women's political participation. They play an effective and important role in supporting women's rights politically, raising public awareness about women's political participation, and influencing public opinion and local decision makers to create a suitable environment for Yemeni women's active and balanced participation in the local political arena.

By: **Afrah Ahmed**

Women's initiatives have an impact on civil society because they support peace in society and spread a culture of tolerance among people. Given this, the media, in all its forms, kinds and methods of presentation, has clearly and effectively contributed to raising women's awareness, supporting and encouraging them, advocating for their rights, and making their issues a public opinion.

Social Media and Women's Political Advocacy

Dr. Abdulkarim Ghanem, a researcher in political sociology, believes that social media has changed some of the concepts and roles of traditional media. The role of social media is no longer limited to only conveying news and information, but it also has political implications. Social media platforms have become sites for expressing the various political views and orientations of these platforms' users, especially the social groups that were on the sidelines of political life. A large number of women have thus moved to the level of influence and effectiveness. Many political parties, groups, and activists, particularly women, have begun to take advantage of the media to communicate their voices to the public.

Dr. Ghanem added, "social media has become a means to attract supporters of different political orientations, enhance political participation, create a consensus around specific political issues, and conduct pressure and advocacy campaigns on many issues, including women empowerment." He emphasized that women have access to social media platforms. It was only natural to seek to attract women to participate in political action by various political parties and groups. However, the impact of these platforms in activating women's role in the Yemeni political scene went through several stages during the period from 2011 until the end of 2014. The level of influence of the media on the promotion of women's political participation increased in parallel with the increase in the in-



fluence of women in political public events during the same period, and decreased since the conflict has turned into an armed conflict. As the democratic margin has begun to narrow, women's chances of political participation have decreased. This was manifested through the limitation of women's empowerment of political positions in the country and through the exclusion of women from participating in most dialogue rounds.

Dr. Ghanem noted, "despite the impact of the conflict on exacerbating political indifference of both women and men, social media platforms have continued to limit male dominance, create a channel for women to make their voice heard in the public space, and have influence in political life, even if the scope of this influence is narrow."

The activist Shorouq Al-Rifai said that as decision-makers are also social media users, influential women and their supporters on social media have managed to communicate their issues to decision-making centers, and they have had a positive influence on them. She added, "in fact, the matter has

surpassed the pressure phase, so that women can participate politically and be decision-makers in critical and important positions."

The Impact of Social Media on Decision Makers

Al-Rifai pointed out that there are recent decisions issued by the Taiz Security Department to appoint some women to leadership positions. Social media users strongly welcomed these decisions. This prompted decision-makers to issue new decisions accurately describing these new positions for women who have been appointed in the Security Department and police stations. Issues concerning Yemeni women are being discussed or put forward as statements in the Security Council, such as the issue of Yemeni women obtaining a passport without restrictions or conditions. This issue was presented by the UN envoy to Yemen in his briefing and discussed within the Security Council.

Al-Rifai continued, "there is an attempt to communicate the efforts of a number of women who are voluntarily and independently engaged

in peacebuilding and mediation, and have made great sacrifices inside Yemen, especially at this critical stage, to international, local and other relevant bodies. This prompted these bodies to narrate and present some of the success stories of these women, to highlight and disseminate them widely."

"We can say that the role of social media platforms is very important, as it is the only accessible and available outlet for all Yemenis," she added. Therefore, women should make the utmost use of social media platforms to advocate for their rights and enhance their political participation, creating pressure on the relevant authorities to take the most appropriate decisions.

Obstacles and Difficulties

Activist Eftan Al-Mashari said that although there have been some gains made recently by women in many social, economic and practical fields, there are still many obstacles and difficulties that prevent women from real participation in politics. Yet, this participation is an indicator and a measure of the progress and civility of society.

"The pressure on women has not prevented them from participating in politics. The importance of the media lies in highlighting the issue of women and pushing them forward by highlighting their role and their rights to an education, social and political participation, and public positions," Al-Mashari added.

Al-Mashari emphasized that it is important to contribute to changing the stereotyped image of the role of women, highlighting the importance of their representation in politics, addressing and covering their issues in formal and informal media (visual, audio, print, and electronic), as this will reduce gender-based discrimination. The media is an important means for influencing public opinion and promoting justice, equality, and equal opportunities.

The role of social media continues to be important. Social media platforms have contributed to highlighting the role of women more than ever before. Through them, women have been able to express their opinion, and find advocates for their issues, socially and politically.



Women Pioneers in Political Life in Yemen

Many women have emerged in Yemen's political life. Many of them have fought and strived with all their might to obtain their right to political participation, either by attending negotiations, consultations, and other political events, which would consolidate peace and end conflict, or by joining political blocs and engaging in partisan activity.

By: Yasmine Abdulhafeez

Nadia Mohammed Naji Saleh, one of the pioneers in the political process in Yemen, has held many leadership positions, making her an active partner in Yemeni political action. Her political life's journey is full of struggles and triumphs.

Nadia, who is married and a mother of three children, hails from Caltex (currently known as the Free Zone in Aden Governorate) in southern Yemen. She holds a master's degree in social sciences from Bulgaria. She worked as the Head of the Protection Department at the SOS Center for Youth Capabilities Development and as a coordinator for the Civic Democratic Initiative Support Foundation (MADA). She was a member of the Yemeni Socialist Party (1974 to 2007), and a founding member of Yemen's Southern Women for Peace Group, which was established on April 17, 2017 and composed of 23 members from southern governorates. In addition, she is a former member of the Yemeni Women's Union, a former member of the Advisory Committee of the National Committee in Aden Governorate, and a member of the local council in the first session (2001-2006). Nadia summed up the status of Yemeni women in political life saying, "we are striving hard for women to achieve political participation in the three tracks, humanitarian, social and political."

Political Contributions of Women

On Yemeni women's contributions to political participation, Nadia said, "despite their marginalization and exclusion from formal politics and political institutions, women actively participated in the National Dialogue Conference. They contributed substantially to peace-making at the local, national and international levels, such as evacuating civilians and the wounded from conflict-affected areas, negotiating humanitarian access, the release and exchange of prisoners, demanding a ceasefire, and helping to limit the spread of Covid-19."

Many Yemeni women, who are active in political life in Yemen, have faced many challenges and obstacles, to the extent that some have ceased their activities, some moved from one party to another according to the circumstances they went through, and others were subjected to harassment and did not obtain their rights within the parties they were affiliated with.

A Glimpse of Her Life

Nadia comes from a struggling family. She has four sisters and two brothers. Her father worked as a guard at a textile factory, and her mother worked in preparing and selling moufy bread with grilled



fish and tea, which Nadia and her siblings would sell from home or at the market. The family lived near the Fish and Wood Corporation in the Free Zone, which encouraged them to continue this work in order to improve their income.

Her insistence on studying, the availability of transportation, and the support of her mother, helped her achieve her ambition to complete her education. Most of her friends in the neighborhood had to drop out of school and work in the factory because they lived far from the school.

Nadia said that she too was told to work in the factory, but she was adamant not to drop out of school. She was encouraged by her mother, who regretted marrying off her older sister before she completed her education. The family learned a hard lesson from that experience and insisted that Nadia and the rest of her sisters complete their education.

A Passion for Politics

Once Nadia reached middle school, her ambition to enter politics began to appear. She began talking about her passion at that time for lawyer Anisa Abbas, who was a member of the People's Union. With the consent of her parents, Nadia joined the Yemeni Socialist Party, which was founded in October 1978.

Nadia recounted the events after high school saying, "after I finished high school, I joined the Yemeni Socialist Party in Al-Sha'ab district with a group of friends. I was appointed as secretary then head of the Department of Statistics and Party Card."

Nadia married her colleague Jamil

Al-Khamri, after which he traveled to study partisanship in Bulgaria. Nadia traveled after him and worked at the Yemeni embassy in Bulgaria for a year. Her pregnancy forced her to return to Yemen. Two years later, she won a scholarship to complete her master's degree, graduating in 1982.

Challenges

Nadia worked in Aden as head of the Department of Statistics and Party Card until 1990, and after Yemen's unification, she was transferred to government facilities. She worked as a civics education teacher and then taught Qur'an and Islamic education. She then became a first-grade teacher and then a social worker.

When the first local council elections were held, Nadia was among the candidates for the local council in Sheikh Othman district in Aden. She won the elections, giving her great motivation to work. Her husband was her first and staunchest supporter.

"In the membership of the council, there were four women candidates - three from the General People's Congress party and me - and almost all of us were of the same level, except for our party affiliation. At the first meeting, which was prepared in advance by the majority party, we were asked to nominate for leadership positions. I nominated myself for the Department Head of Social Affairs and Labor. There was a male candidate from one of the parties, and since the majority of the members were from his party, he was chosen. I had hoped that the women would support me, but I only got the vote of my

friends," she said.

She added that in the second round of the elections she was nominated again. She expected to get more votes, but she didn't win. Such experience made her realize that there was no way she could fill that position.

About Nadia

Her fellow activist, Halima Mohammed, said, "Mrs. Nadia is well-versed in political and humanitarian work. She has an active role in women and peace issues. We worked together with other female colleagues. The result of these works was the establishment of the Yemen's Southern Women for Peace Group, which adopted Resolution 1325 as its reference in 2017. Mrs. Nadia had a role in working with the local councils in many districts, especially Sheikh Othman, and in networking with the local authorities."

Nadia had many active participations in the development of women at the political level to push them to participate in the political process. Based on her role and great experience working in local councils and in the Yemeni Women's Union, she contributed significantly to this field.

Her Remarkable Traits

"The most important and notable quality that Nadia is distinguished by is probably modesty. For two decades, Nadia has been dealing responsibly with public and private events and developments. I feel when I deal with her - as the head of the group - that she has a deep sense of responsibility," said her friend Radhya

Shamsheer, head of Southern Women for Peace.

Nadia is also one of the first members of the group. She continues to raise the slogan "No to War, Yes to Sustainable Peace" in light of the tragic conflict that the country is witnessing in the south and north. "I commend the role of Nadia and all other group members in not giving up their role in making a comprehensive and lasting peace and establishing a civil state, ensuring security and stability and guaranteeing human rights. Nadia greatly contributed to defending humanitarian and ethical principles," she continued.

Her Vision

Nadia believes that there must be a women's organization that includes effective women leaders. Women must return to political activity. In addition, there must be media programs that focus on women's issues and highlight the importance of women political empowerment.

According to some women activists, Yemeni women have encountered many difficult challenges, especially political activists, the most prominent of which are the patriarchal view and social customs and traditions. Despite this, there are women who have achieved success and made their mark. Many women demanded their empowerment in politics and called for supporting them to assume leadership and sovereign positions in decision-making. As women are an integral part of society, the ones most affected by the conflict, and the keenest to end the fighting, it is necessary to activate and strengthen their role in political participation.



Development is inextricably linked to the extent of awareness and cohesion of societies and their real and effective partnership and contribution to advancing the development process. Societies should bring about a positive change that is reflected in the levels of growth and development and should make a qualitative transformation in the various fields.



Yemeni Women's Political Involvement Paves the Way for Development

By: **Hebah Mohammed**

Undoubtedly, women's participation in the political process will create a competition to present novel reform visions and unconventional development ideas. This could achieve a kind of integration, which is the essence of coexistence, progress, and sustainable development.

Dr. Ghada Abu Talib, Chairwoman of the National Committee for Women in Sana'a, believes that there is no development without real participation of women. Their participation achieves balance and reflects the natural composition of society whose core is women. It is from women that society derives some of its visions and productive ideas. Women have demonstrated unparalleled success in small projects in most Yemeni governorates.

A Relationship of Building and Development

Journalist Mohammed Al-Dahiya believes that women's political participation has a positive impact. Women bear responsibility towards the country and people. He added, "the relationship between women's political participation and development is one of building, development, and intellectual partnership from the perspective that women and men are permanent partners in life. Women have their own logical vision of development."

States Disregard for Their Constitutions

Samah Mohammed, a human rights activist, stressed that the country needs to make optimal use of all its material, financial, and human capabilities, without any gender discrimination, especially since women represent half of society or even more in some regions and governorates.

The activist Samah pointed out that societies which do not believe in the developmental and productive roles of women and confine them to their reproductive, social and educational roles in the family circle, further complicate the issue and hinder the country's social development

process. The catastrophe lies in the fact that these societies grow indirectly in countries that transgress the provisions of the constitutions that they have enacted and ratified, on issues of gender equality in rights and duties, and in ignoring the growing roles of women in the field of development.

Marginalization of Women Hinders Development Projects

Naglaa Mohammed, the Director of the Safe Space Project at the Yemeni Women's Union, believes that marginalizing the role of women and excluding them from political participation negatively affects the national economy and the development projects of any country. Homelands can only be built with the effective partnership of men and women, their mutual respect, their shared responsibility, and their involvement in the development and construction process through their ideas and close reading of the public scene.

Naglaa indicated that all concerned authorities should know that women's participation is a constitutional and legal right, or as she described it, "a transcontinental right." International laws oblige the signatory countries to treaties and agreements to implement all societal reforms, involve women in politics, and to allow them to contribute to advancing development for the better.

Political Cover

Bashir Al-Badani, a youth activist, pointed out that the relationship between women's political participation and development is direct and complementary. Whenever women are effective partners in decision-making, they contribute to making their mark in improving development frameworks and contexts. They could also prove their ability to manage and control the institutions they work in.

"Recently, many women entrepreneurs and women-owned small businesses have emerged, but they all lack political cover in order for it to be considered national development support and not be marginalized or excluded by competitors," Al-Badani continued.

Ishraq Al-Sabri, Head of the Sky Organization for Sustainable Development, confirmed that women have gained increasing importance in recent years as a response to the revolution in women's rights issues worldwide, and in response to the global conferences for women. Al-Sabri said, "we chose women's political participation for many considerations, including they are half of society, they contribute to its construction, development, and progress, and they play an important role within developing countries. In addition, if their rights were guaranteed and their creative capabilities used, they would be able to change the balance of political power, work for the success of the best parties, and choose the best representatives. Furthermore, they are considered part of the legislative structure in the country."

Al-Sabri continued, "women contribute to advancing the development process in the country. Most experiences have proven that women are a key element in making the future. Therefore, women's political participation has become one of the most important issues that are not limited to the local Yemeni or Arab arena. Rather, all countries tended to stress the importance of the woman's role and encourage them to participate in society at all levels. However, women still encounter many challenges and obstacles that necessitate effort, will, and sincere intention to overcome them."

Development Leadership Capabilities



Amani Al-Saedi, an educational worker, indicates that most successful educational projects, whether governmental or private, are led by women. This indicates that Yemeni women have tremendous capabilities in managing and developing small projects. Women who are involved in political activity enjoy a space of creativity and innovation. Al-Saedi confirmed that women's political participation is imperative to contribute to economic support, which leads to high development performance, creates profitable economic opportunities, and activates the commercial market benefiting the state and the citizen alike.

Ishraq Al-Sabri indicates that women's leadership is an ultimate necessity to achieve development and progress in the country, especially in the governorates that suffer from the scourge of conflict and its consequences or those in which women are still resisting marginalization to become key in decision making.

Al-Sabri believes that over the past two decades, Yemeni women have received many rights due to their continuous struggle particularly in the fields of education and work. Recent years have witnessed a dramatic increase of women who won international awards in human rights, journalism, and peace.

"Yemeni society is still in its early stages of understanding the necessity of empowering women and their presence in decision-making positions. Therefore, it is difficult to easily change the way so-

ciety thinks. However, all efforts can succeed in setting the right steps for change in the near future," she added.

Future Expectations

The journalist Al-Dahiya expects that women's future political participation will be too little because it has become a societal issue. In light of the division, fragmentation, acceptance, opposition, outbidding, and scheming, women's political participation faces many challenges and complications, in addition to the blurred political vision for the coming periods.

The activist Bashir Al-Badani expects a breakthrough in the near future for women's political participation. He explained that all peace projects so far require women's presence, and this is what international institutions insist on.

Human rights activist Naglaa Mohammed believes that there is no present without women and no future without their participation. No matter how much women are ignored, they will inevitably find their opportunity to participate. She also affirmed that systems that ignore women's political participation will fail miserably, and will inevitably demand their participation, as women represent half of society and its vibrant heart.

Ishraq Al-Sabri, Head of the Sky Organization for Sustainable Development, said, "we women must take important steps towards development. We are still very much striving to work and participate in development. It is not possible to wait for the end of the conflict without striving towards building and empowerment. Peace cannot come at the expense of women's rights and the marginalization of their role. Preserving women's rights and ensuring their participation in political decision-making are crucial for preserving security and economic stability in Yemen."

In conclusion, women are half of society and the cornerstone of its economic development and growth. Non-involvement of women exposes the process of construction and development to general suspension leading to catastrophic failure in crucial national projects and harming the future of the people and the country.

Women tend to live a positive and peaceful life, far from the conflicts that many countries around the world are witnessing, including Yemen. Many believe that Yemeni women's participation in political life, whether before or after the conflict, is almost negligible. This can be ascribed to the lack of an appropriate environment, where women can play their effective role in politics and state service.

Tribal Society and Conflict Prevent Yemeni Women from Obtaining Ministerial Positions

By: Ahmed Omar

Between a tribal society and a complex political situation, the opportunity for Yemeni women to actively participate in politics has not yet come. Although Yemen signed agreements and constitutional articles on women's equality with men in rights and duties, most of the ministerial positions during the past decades were held by men.

Yemeni Women Ministerial Positions

Mufeed Ali, a researcher in international development and gender at Sana'a University, explained that women's participation in the decision-making process is very low. He noted that women's low participation was not a spur of the moment and has existed since earlier political periods.

In his master's thesis, titled "Citizenship Values and their Role in Enhancing the Political Participation of Yemeni Women" in 2023, the researcher Mufeed noted that the number of ministerial positions over thirty years amounted to 444 positions, 95.5% of which were held by men and 4.1% by women. The underrepresentation of women in governments changes over time, according to the time period and the prevailing political situation.

He added, "in January 2012, the number of ministerial positions in Yemen reached 35, of which women held 3 positions (i.e., 9%), and men 32 positions (i.e., 91%). In 2014, women held 4 ministerial positions out of 36 positions (i.e., 11%), compared to 32 positions for men (i.e., 89%). However, those rates fell again in 2015, with women only getting one ministerial position out of 13 positions (i.e., 8%), compared to 12 ministerial positions for men (i.e., 92%)."

Women's Inclusion in Political Parties

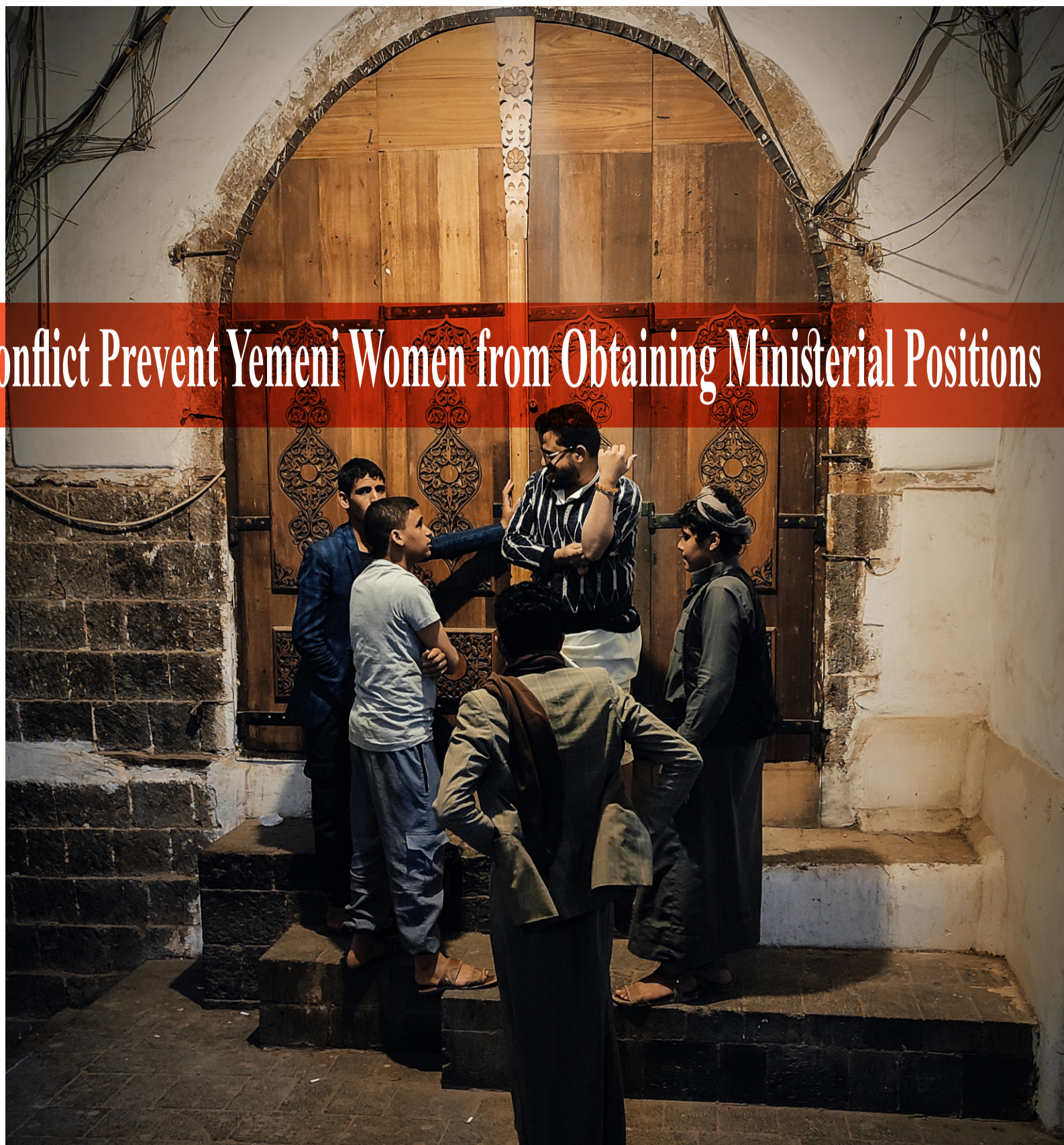
After the unification of the two parts of Yemen, Yemeni parties paid attention to the participation of women in party activity, but only in theory. In practice, the parties' encouragement of women to participate in elections and reach political positions was very limited. In its 2011 report, Voice of Germany showed that all parties are just interested in women's political participation to win over a large popular base of women to increase party votes at the time of elections.

In addition, the National Information Center stated in its latest statistics in 2006 that the number of female voters in the records of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum reached nearly four million voters (i.e., 40% of the total number of voters in the Republic of Yemen at the time.) This indicates that the rate of women's participation in political life increased. The number of female candidates in the local council elections of the same year reached 185, before 11 female candidates withdrew.

Models of Inspiring Women Leaders

For the first time in Yemeni history, Sabah Al-Alwani was appointed as a member of the Supreme Judicial Council, the highest judicial authority in the country, on August 4, 2022. This decision was highly praised by Yemeni female activists. It was considered a great gain achieved in light of the years-long struggle of women to ensure equal rights of men and women, including the right to political participation and access to leadership positions with a sovereign decision in the state. In 2017, Judge Al-Alwani was appointed by a presidential decision as a member of the National Commission to Investigate Alleged Violations of Human Rights.

Political researcher Mohammed Bafqir, co-founder of the Political Forum at Hadhramout University, stressed the importance of women's participation in political life. Women's participation is widely debated in the Arab world. There is a division between supporters and opponents of women's participation in the decision-making and implementation process. Women's participation in political life is one of the indicators by which the state's interest in human rights and its commitment to interna-



tional treaties and conventions, which provide for the support of women in the political process, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are measured.

Bafqir pointed out the importance of the outcomes of the Beijing Conference, which is one of the most important agreements concerned with women's rights at the general levels, as well as the articles in the Yemeni Constitution that stipulate equality among all citizens in terms of rights and freedoms without discrimination in color, gender, language, and religion.

As for the role of political parties, the politician Bafqir explained that they do not take into account the principle of women's empowerment. Furthermore, these parties do not adopt the "quota" system for party memberships, which negatively affects women's access to leadership positions in the country.

He continued, "due to Yemen's commitment to international treaties and conventions, the country witnessed an intensification of efforts to encourage women to participate in state apparatuses before 2011. Women's participation thus significantly increased. However, the conflict events negatively affected the status of women. Exclusion and marginalization are prominent characteristics against them. Despite campaigns led by women to put pressure on political decision-makers to push women into decision-making positions, women's participation in the political process remained relative."

On the same level, Nassima Al-Aidarous, a women's rights researcher, stated that no democratic change will be achieved in the country unless there is political equality between men and women at the level of sovereign decision-making. Also, women's political participation is a high indicator of democratic development and integrity.

Al-Aidarous pointed out that the Yemeni parties' undervaluation of women is due to the party's lack of proper understanding of the role of women. She noted that the



Nassima Al-Aidarous

main obstacle facing Yemeni women is the tribal components to which most of the population of Yemen belong. These components refuse to have women hold sovereign leadership positions in the country.

Mechanisms for Women's Return to Political Participation in Yemen

Yemeni women's return to political life is extremely important because of their significant impact on the changes taking place in the country at all levels. Along with men, women play a prominent role in the arenas of

struggle in Yemen, including conflicts. According to the Arab Center for Research and Studies, women are the icon of the revolution and its symbol of civilization.

In the same context, political researcher Mohammed Bafqir said, "all active forces are supposed to push women to participate in political life based on what Yemen committed to at the Beijing Conference and what was stated in UN Resolution 1325 that obliges Yemen to encourage and involve women in the decision-making and implementation process, in addition to negotiation processes during conflicts."

In a post on Facebook, the Women National Committee stated that during her meeting with Ms. Vivian Deberry, the Head of the United Nations Mission, on November 6, 2023, Dr. Shafiq Saeed, Chairwoman of Women National Committee, called for women's involvement in any upcoming peace negotiations, and monitoring the implementation of the international truce between the conflicting parties.

Solutions For Women's Political Inclusion

Regarding solutions for women's inclusion in political life, Nassima Al-Aidarous, a women's rights researcher, explained that in parallel with spreading community awareness of women's rights, women need rehabilitation and support from the government to be able to hold political leadership positions.

Al-Aidarous believes that giving both men and women the opportunity to participate in politics contributes to sparing the country a lot of the complexities facing Yemen today.

Women need a fertile ground for peace and democracy away from factional conflicts and complex circumstances to be able to participate in the political life in legislative, executive and judicial powers, and push the country towards development at all levels.

Women's Political Participation Entails Guaranteeing Their Rights as Stipulated by the Constitution

The Yemeni Constitution guarantees women's rights and freedom in various areas of life, including their right to political participation and access to the highest leadership positions of sovereign decision-making through smooth democratic elections. The Constitution also states that women are partners with men in building the modern state. However, the reality is completely different from what was stipulated in the constitutional articles and treaties which Yemen signed with both the United Nations and the superpowers.

By: Ahmed Omar

Divisions in all state institutions in recent years and the raging conflicts between local factions are crucial reasons for excluding women from the political scene. Adherence to tribal customs and traditions prevalent in most Yemeni governorates is another problem impeding women's political rights.

In a press statement, political activist Atiyat Abboud said that political participation is the basis of democracy and an essential aspect of citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution. Women's participation on the ground needs real empowerment as an urgent necessity to keep pace with global changes in political landscape. Women's political participation is part of their rights guaranteed by the Yemeni Constitution and international laws. She emphasized that women were excluded from running for high positions in the 2006 elections, and this is like undermining the fairness of the election process, as she described it.

The Constitution and Women's Status in Yemen

Women's rights activist and lawyer Rawia bin Habash cites some constitutional articles that guarantee women the right to participate in political life, most notably: Article (24) by which the state guarantees equal opportunities for all citizens politically, economically, socially and culturally; article (31), which stipulates that women are partners of men, and they have rights and duties guaranteed and assigned by Sharia and stipulated by law; article (41) by which citizens are all equal in rights and duties; and article (43), by which every citizen has the right to elect and nominate himself as a candidate in an election, as well as the right to demonstrate his opinion in a referendum.

In addition, lawyer Omar Ba Rashid, a human rights violations monitor, said that the Yemeni Constitution contains many articles that ensure women's effective participation in all state affairs. One of the articles stipulated that women are the partners of men, and they have their own rights and duties. This implies that the Constitution guarantees the right of women to participate at all levels.

Ba Rashid pointed out that Articles (44) and (43) of the Constitution guaranteed the right to participate in political life. If these two articles were properly applied on the ground, we will find that women have held many positions, whether at the level of ministerial positions or executive offices in the governorate or at the level of civil society organizations.

Ba Rashid explained that the ongoing conflict in Yemen has cast a shadow over all groups of society, including women, who have been particularly affected. However, there are women who have made a breakthrough during this difficult crisis and have participated in many international, local and regional events. These are great success stories for many Yemeni women, according to Ba Rashid.



lawyer Rawia bin Habash

International Interventions on Women's Politics

Yemen was ranked bottom of the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index for 13 consecutive years. In addition, women suffer from inequality, whether in politics or other fields, and are still not represented in any peace talks. The United Nations Security Council emphasizes in several resolutions the importance of women's participation in any talks calling for an end to violence, or in any political negotiation process, according to the Amnesty International report.

The report, published by Amnesty International on December 16, 2019, stated that the "Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security" was created to be a consultative mechanism that enjoys support from the United Nations. The Pact includes 60 women who seek to lead women with the aim of increasing their participation in negotiations. The Pact also serves as a consultative mechanism for the UN Envoy Office in Yemen.

The International Crisis Group Organization believed that the UN envoy to Yemen should ask the Security Council to set quotas for women's participation, set a larger number of women in direct peace talks, provide a process parallel to the UN-led political deliberations, and clarify the mechanisms it will put in place to protect politically marginalized women.

The International Crisis Group, an independent organization that works to prevent conflicts, stressed in its report on March 18, 2021, that women's organizations, civil society organizations, and political parties, which feel excluded from the UN-led peacebuilding efforts should exert more pressure until they are positively and meaningfully involved in any future peace talks.

Obstacles to Women's Political Participation

Women's rights activist Rawiya bin Habash explained that the most significant obstacles that stand in the way of the participation of Yemeni women in politics are customs, traditions, and a patriarchal society which stands in the way of women in politics, except during elections where they are only allowed to vote for males. She emphasized that women in political parties and blocs were exploited for propaganda purposes as fronts and not as leaders.

Lawyer Omar Ba Rashid believes that the main obstacle that stands in front of women's participation in the political process are the women themselves. There are women who place obstacles in the way of obtaining their rights that are guaran-

teed by the law and the Constitution. At times they say it is because of customs and traditions, and at others they claim it is because they are incapable, weak, or inexperienced.

He stressed that what happened in the National Dialogue Conference and the adoption of the 30% quota for women's representation contradict what is stipulated in the Yemeni Constitution, that women are equal to men. This was considered an underestimation of the role of women in life at all levels.

Political activist Attiyat Abboud indicated that the conflict that has been raging for eight years has a negative impact on the situation of women. Women have lost their rights in more than one area (e.g., education, economics, politics), and have increasingly become the breadwinners of their families. As a result, many women have been enduring psychological pressures.

Human Right Activists' Opinions about Women's Political Participation

For women to be able to practice their political rights as guaranteed by the Yemeni Constitution, lawyer and human rights activist Ba Rashid pointed out that women should first open up to everyone. In addition, they should be constantly qualified and granted progression in the career ladder to hold high decision-making positions. Furthermore, it is necessary for women to vigorously demand their political rights in accordance with what was guaranteed by Islamic law and the Constitution.

The human rights activist Rawiya bin Habash commented that raising political awareness, educating women about their rights and duties, and establishing training institutes for women in politics are key for women to return to political life. Bin Habash called on parties to get rid of patriarchal thinking and encourage women to hold leadership positions.

Political activist Attiyat Abboud stated that the

most important strategies for women's visibility in political participation are conducting a comprehensive study of women's needs in all educational, health, economic and political fields, implementing the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, adopting the quota system, highlighting the active role of women, and achieving gender equality.

Attiyat Abboud presented several recommendations to achieve fair gender representation, including representation of women in leadership positions in the executive power and encouraging them to reach decision-making positions. Furthermore, the representation of women in the police, security, and armed forces is considered one of the most important recommendations for achieving gender equality and women's participation in negotiations and the peace process.

In its report, the World Bank refuted the percentage of Yemeni women's political participation in the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. Most of the political blocs and parties had agreed on the need for women to participate in the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Article (6) of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference obligated all political components to ensure that women's representation in their electoral lists should reach 30% at least.

The report, published by the World Bank, on February 24, 2014, stated that male decision makers still have a narrow view of women's role. The report stated that a woman participant said that parties and blocs are not convinced of the representation of women by 30%, and clear evidence of that is the percentage of women's representation in the regions committee, which did not exceed 7%.

The Yemeni Constitution in many articles guaranteed the right of women to participate in political life and other areas. However, these constitutional articles are currently disregarded, thereby completely marginalizing women and widening the gender gap.





Towards Active Participation of Yemeni Women in the Political Process

By: Hebah Mohammed

Yemeni women face many obstacles regarding their participation in political life. This is due to society's patriarchal system that undervalues women and to the reluctance of some women to actively participate and prove their presence despite the support of the law and the constitution regulating public life in the country.

Yemeni women have recently had successful life experiences, most notably in business and in competing in public and higher education. However, there is an attempt to impose the general pattern of thinking that politics is exclusively for men and not women. This is what women today are trying to fight, as is evidenced by the role of many women's organizations, unions, and authorities dedicated to promoting women's political participation.

Women's political participation during the past two decades was not encouraging and was limited. It also failed to provide encouraging signs in light of a favorable political climate and laws that guarantee women full participation and influence in decision-making that help them to bring about a positive change in the course of national action in the country.

Yemeni Women and Political Life Before the Conflict

According to a report published by the United Nations Office for Women, Yemen ranked penultimate (i.e., 151) in 2019 out of 152 countries in terms of women's political empowerment at the Arab level. During the pre-conflict periods, women in Yemen began to move towards political action and participated in political parties and in decision-making positions, including the National Dialogue Conference. Despite their limited presence in political life - which remained in the process of growth - it completely disappeared during the ongoing conflict in Yemen due to the presence of other women's organizations and unions that support women's issues.

Prior to the country's ongoing conflict, according to Hayat Al-Kain'ai, the former head of the Yemeni Women's Union's Ibb branch, "There was a strong tendency from the government and from all political parties as well as local councils to empower women politically and involve them in the country's ministries. The number of women in each political party was also a point of competitiveness among them, and they all supported women in that."

"This continued until women got the opportunity to join the political side. There were also many training courses and workshops that were held under the auspices of Yemen's partners and the American Democratic Institute in Sana'a in 2011-2012 aiming to qualify and educate women and empower them politically so that their personalities become empowered to occupy any political position in the country, whether it is in the Shura Council, the House of Representatives, or other positions," she added.

Al-Kain'ai participated in the Arab Women's Conference in 2010, held in Bahrain, and discussed the situation of Arab women in political participation. She added that, during those years, Yemeni women witnessed a significant improvement in the political field, especially women in southern Yemen who participated in lots of Yemeni negotiations for peace.

"The role of the union was to nominate many women for the National Dialogue Conference and to support them in joining the national reconciliation. There was also a signif-

icant role for civil society organizations in women's political participation and involvement in the National Dialogue Conference," she continued.

According to Amna Mohsen, Goodwill Ambassador and President of the Yemeni Women's Union in Abyan, "There were many participations of Yemeni women in making political change, most notably their participation in the post-2011 comprehensive National Dialogue Conference, in which women's participation was imposed on political parties at no less than 30% of the number of women's representatives in the conference. One of the most important gains achieved by the National Dialogue Conference for women was to increase their political participation, in addition to their representation in government authorities and local councils."

"This period witnessed the appointment of a number of Yemeni women in various ministries in the government, including Amat Al-Razzaq as a Minister of Social Affairs, Jawhara Hammoud as a Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and Houria Mashhour as a Minister of Human Rights. This marked the start of Yemeni women rising to positions of leadership," Amna explained.

Regarding the presence of women in decision-making positions in Ibb Governorate, Khawla Al-Sharafi, head of the National Committee for Women in Ibb Governorate, stated, "Only three women are present in executive offices including, the Director General of Women's Rights, the National Committee for Women, and the Director General of Human Rights. Additionally, the presence of women expanded into all of the offices of the governorate after the decision was issued to integrate and accommodate gender in those offices and for equal job opportunities in governmental offices. The Minister also announced decisions regarding the equality of political positions between men and women. Hence, the number of women in the provincial offices has increased."

Al-Sharafi noted that after four years, the National Committee for Women demanded the promotion of women in those offices to decision-making positions, each in accordance with her qualifications." When the human resources plan would reach the committee requesting male employees, we would reject those plans due to the lack of equal job opportunities between men and women. Then, those plans would be submitted to the governor to be modified and both males and females would be chosen equally in executive office positions. The decision would then be circulated to all governorate offices to accommodate females, each according to their specialization and competence," she said.

The Role of Women's Organizations and Unions

The former head of the Yemeni Women's Union's Ibb branch, Hayat Al-Kain'ai, confirmed that the conflict that has been going on in the country for eight years has affected the mental state of women and children. After the end of 2014, the Yemeni Women's Union's goal was to create safe spaces that would be an outlet for women and children to address the psychological and livelihood repercussions of the conflict on Yemeni women, and to enable them to acquire life skills that would help them have a decent life in conflict areas.

She explained that the role of the union is to alleviate and address the damage brought on by the conflict, and this can be achieved by giving special consideration to the needs of mothers and children. "Currently, we will not be able to empower women politically, due to the unstable security, political and economic situation. We are first addressing the effects of the conflict on the mothers and children, and then



Hayat Al-Kain'ai
The Former Head of the Yemeni Women's Union's, Ibb branch

turning to other aspects," she said.

Sondos Al-Attab, a human rights activist and a lawyer, has a different point of view, saying, "Unfortunately, women's organizations have diminished since 2011, at which point they proliferated in an indiscriminate and unorganized manner. The suddenly, with the conflict, they disappeared, and we now only see the Yemeni Women's Union, which has turned into a helpless union that seeks to fulfill the donors' goals for societal disintegration and preventing women from realizing their political and social destinies."

"During that period, women's jobs and political rights were violated, and no one could object or complain. Moreover, there was deliberate marginalization, because the majority of women leaders are either at home or abroad owing to harassment based on political strains that are completely unrelated to society and public interest," Al-Attab added.

Majed Al-Da'ari, a journalist interested in political affairs, stated that women's organizations and unions play no role in providing any political support for the political empowerment of women in any area, justifying that the existence of two governments (in Sana'a and in Aden) is the main reason for that. Therefore, their marginalization and the absence of their role in development and the economy are not expected to change. This is due to the ongoing conflict and its repercussions, the exclusion and undervaluing of women by those taking advantage of the conflict, and partisans who aim to share power in a way that excludes all independent national competencies and all the societal, developmental and political roles of women.

Al-Da'ari added that due to the ongoing conflict, women are now entirely dependent on their families due to lack of job opportunities, the suspension of the salaries of employed women, and the imposition of unprecedented exclusionary measures on their work under the cover of strict religion that worsened their situation and deprived them of their most basic rights of political participation, setting them back decades. Accordingly, society was deprived of their significant contributions to political life. Women should not be oppressed or excluded from society because they are important members serving as mothers, teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, journalists, and politicians. In addition to other duties, where without their presence and participation, society's stability, political and democratic maturity, and any advancement or economic movement in any country would not be accomplished.

Regarding the role of the National Women's Committee in terms of supporting women's political participation, Khawla Al-Sharafi, head of the National Committee for Women in Ibb Governorate, said, "The National Committee for Women has amended approximately 61 legal texts in the matrix of women's protection. Regarding women's political empowerment and their assumption of ministerial portfolios in the country, this was reviewed and submitted to the House of Representatives. However, due to the outbreak of the conflict at the end of 2014, these laws regarding the matrix of

women's protection were not adopted."

"The annual plan of the National Women's Committee in Sana'a was submitted, and it included the need for a deputy governor for women's affairs, and an assistant deputy in the governorate. This is because there are many women who turn to them when they are experiencing injustice, such as troubles with inheritance, which requires the presence of a woman to handle these problems and issues specific to her female counterparts," Al-Sharafi stated.

Likewise, in 2015, the National Committee for Women, with the support of the Dutch project, implemented a training course with 20 participants representing the office of the National Committee for Women in Sana'a, the offices of the Women's Department in a number of Yemeni governorates, and a number of researchers and specialists. The main objective of the project was to enhance the capabilities of the National Committee for Women to integrate men and women into the Yemeni government in coordination with the leaders of the governorates and the relevant authority.

Future Expectations

Women's participation in political life and political decision-making was not better off than the current situation. However, it worsened after the conflict between the various parties across Yemen. Regarding future expectations for the status of women in political participation, Sondos Al-Attab, an activist, said, "my future expectations are not promising. The women we see in leadership positions did not reach these positions because of their experience or competence, but rather for other purposes."

"Men's control of all positions and their denial of women's rights is the reason for the decline of women's political participation. Today, we are witnessing attempts to slander the honor of many women in recent years, with the aim of intimidating women from participating in various fields," she added.

Regarding the impact of the ongoing conflict in Yemen on women's perception of the political field in the future, Hayat Al-Kain'ai said, "the remnants of the conflict and its psychological consequences for women will remain with them even in the future. They will also refuse to join political life in the future because of the negative perception towards politics because of the conflict, whose victims were mostly women and children."

Suggested Solutions

Many people agree that unless the current situation is completely changed, Yemeni women will not regain advancement in life and decision-making positions unless there was a comprehensive change in the current situation and higher leadership authorities recognize and believe in the need for women's political participation alongside men.

According to Hayat Al-Kain'ai, only a political reconciliation between the parties and a stable security situation will free the country from the scourge of the conflict, which has killed women and children along with it, and allow it to emerge from the tangles of politics that have directly affected women and restricted their role to providing a living for themselves and their children.

She stressed that the first solution to the development and growth of women's political participation is to achieve security and economic stability from the north to the south. For in the midst of the conflict's coils, everyone is a loser. After that, women will begin their role in political participation, since the more women represent themselves properly, the greater their chances in political life.

On the other hand, Al-Da'ari believes that the political empowerment of women in Yemen will only succeed through comprehensive sustainable development for the entire society, in addition to improving the lives of individuals economically, intellectually and developmentally. Accordingly, the reality of women will be developmental, and everyone will view them as equal partners with men, and as a productive and integral part of society.

Yemeni women make the most sacrifices and the last to benefit from settlement.

23 Years since the Adoption of Resolution 1325. Is it Time to be Implemented in Yemen?

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), adopted by the Security Council, the Secretary-General, and Member States in 2000, is highly significant for women in conflict-affected countries in general, and Yemeni women in particular. It ensures respecting their rights and involving them in peace negotiations. It is the first formal and legal document adopted by the Security Council that urges all countries to increase women's representation in decision-making.

By: Ahmed Omar

The enforcement of UNSCR 1325 in most developing countries, including Yemen, faced many obstacles. The most notable of which are exclusion and marginalization of the political role of women by the Yemeni political components, the conflict that has been going on for eight years, rejection of the conservative tribal society that women take up leadership positions under the pretext of perhaps being more backward and reactionary.

How Do Yemeni Women View UN Resolution 1325?

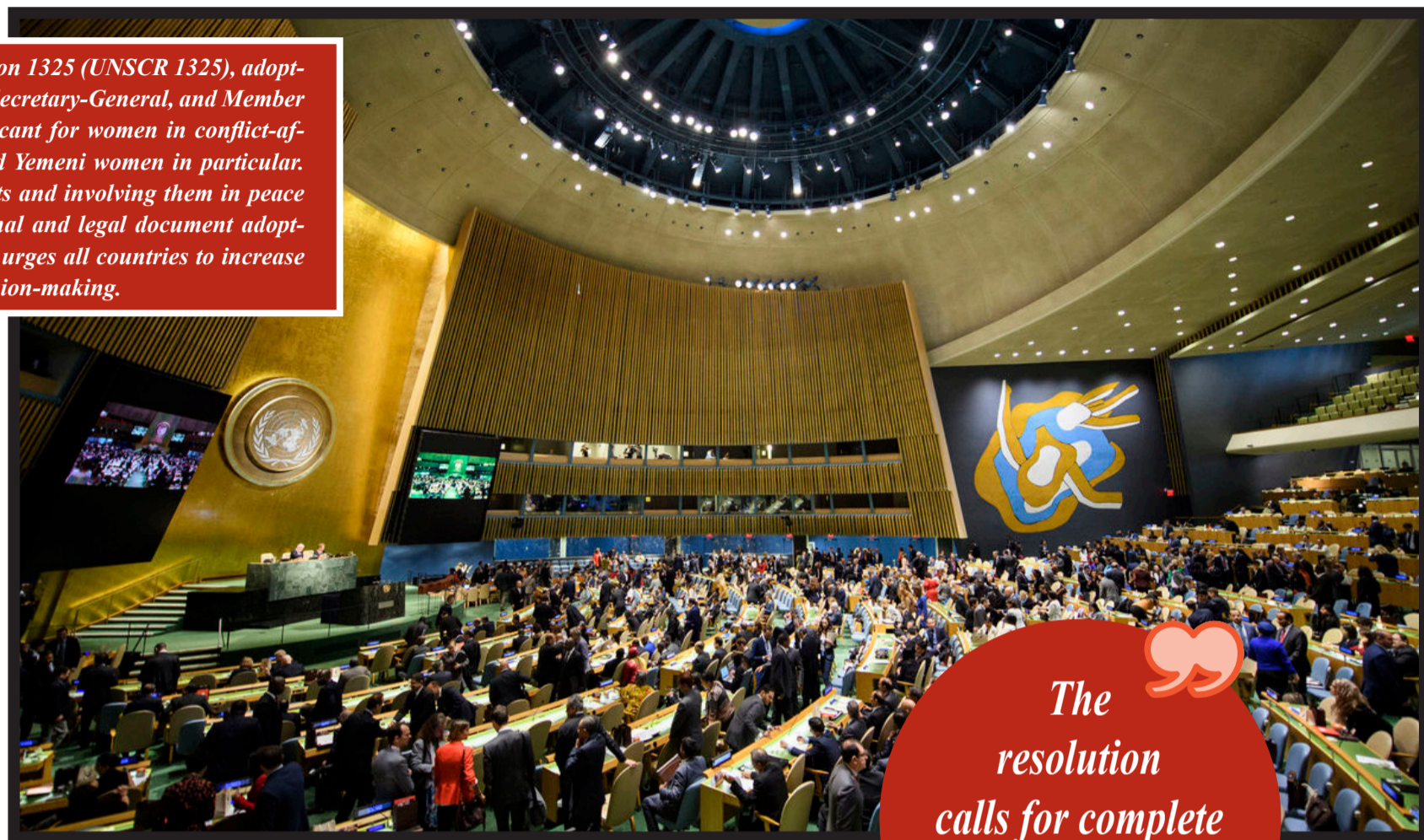
Madina Adlan, a researcher in political science and crisis management, said, "since the issuance of the UN resolution [1325] and the resulting strategic provisions for the active participation of women and their political and economic empowerment, the Women's National Committee has been assigned to follow up on the implementation of the resolution by developing a national implementation plan. However, the conflict in Yemen has prevented this from being achieved."

Adlan emphasized that UNSCR 1325 was issued to achieve justice and provide protection for women in times of conflict. Yemeni women hoped that the provisions of the resolution will be implemented, which would be considered a win for them. She indicated that women play a key role in their political and community activities. Therefore, women are encouraged to engage in political and community work and are empowered politically in decision-making positions within the parties. She also noted that the plans of civil society organizations towards implementing the resolution were not as required.

Similarly, the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies published an article by Fatima Mutaheer on October 15, 2021. The article shows that some of the women-led entities that have emerged amid the conflict, including Yemeni activists and many prominent networks, have contributed to many initiatives and political negotiations, and successfully advocated to reopen key roads and Al-Riyan airport.

International Efforts to Activate UN Resolution 1325

The United Nations has published a report confirming that it works at a high pace to ensure that women's priorities are central to peace and security decisions at all levels, and that it addresses all kind of barriers and protection risks that limit women's full participation in achieving and sustaining peace. The report also indicated that women are active agents of peace in armed conflict. Therefore,



The resolution calls for complete protection for women.



Activist: Samira Yaslam

acknowledging and integrating the different understanding, experiences and capabilities of women into all aspects of UN peace operations is essential for the success of UN peacekeeping efforts and in sustaining peace.

UN peacekeeping processes are mandated by the Security Council to implement the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The report also stressed the importance of empowering and activating women's role in leadership positions and their effective participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

The National Information Center explained the role of local community organizations in activating the Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security through programs and induction workshops.

The Center stated that the Supreme National Committee for Women organized a workshop on June 16, 2014. The workshop aimed to familiarize the participants and representatives of civil society organizations with UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security, enhance the status of women, and involve them in sovereign decision-making. The workshop also discussed various research working

papers on legislative gaps and experiences of some countries on how to implement the resolution.

The Yemeni Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor published a book, titled "The National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Security and Peace 2020-2022," which clarified the programs and mechanisms for enhancing the status of Yemeni women, promoting their participation in peacekeeping and economic and social development, the objectives of the national plan for empowering women's participation at all levels in decision-making positions protecting women from all forms of violence and social discrimination, and the humanitarian response for women during and after the conflict.

In its report, the ESCWA stressed that conflict leads to gender inequality, especially as women in conflict areas suffer more than men, and their suffering is exacerbated due to negligence during and after the conflict. The report indicated that there are efforts being made in the field of women's rights, and that governments, civil society organizations, and international organizations should make more efforts to face any challenge that impedes the promotion of women's role in decision-making regarding conflict resolution and building lasting peace.

On the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, a joint press release was issued by UN Women and the Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen on October 29, 2020. In the statement, both of them renewed their commitment to enhancing the effective participation of women in the peacebuilding process in Yemen. They emphasized that having Yemeni women at the negotiating tables consolidates peace. Women's participation also makes peace more inclusive and sustainable.

Obstacles for Women in the Peace Process

Despite women's role in official and private initiatives and peace negotiations to bring peace to the country, there are many gaps. The London School of Economics (LSE) blog, which is interested in research on the Middle East and North Africa, reported in February 2021 the obstacles facing women peacemakers in Yemen. The report indicated that as these women are in the international response lines in conflict areas, they are exposed to threats and acts of violence, and called for the protection of these women through integrated protection mechanisms. LSE's report added that there are many attempts to stop the continuation of the conflict in Yemen by signing international agreements between the parties to the conflict. However, the path to sustainable peace is far from being reached.

Recommendations for Women's Adoption of the Peace Process

Researcher Adlan said that there are several proposals and recommendations to activate UNSCR 1325 for the post-conflict period for women to adopt the peace process, including the formation of committees with new structures and regulations in the governorates and the inclusion of all groups, including representatives of civil society organizations, political parties, people with special needs, and academics. She indicated the need to develop and circulate a national strategic plan in partnership with women activists, advocates, and participants in initiatives and negotiations in all governorates. The plan should be commensurate with Yemeni reality.

She also highlighted the need to educate and pay great attention to women in parties, so that their role in partisan decision-making becomes a

pillar towards state building, stability, and peaceful transfer of power. She also called on the international community to

put pressure on the country to include women in the formation of the Transitional Government by at least 30%, and to impose this on the participating political parties to nominate women for ministerial positions.

Human rights activist Samira Yaslam demanded the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on the ground to achieve international peace and security due to women's contributions to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. She said that UNSCR 1325 provides protection for women in conflict areas by involving women in all peace processes and by enhancing the women's status and role.

She explained that one of the most important proposals to activate UNSCR 1325 is women empowerment in positions of political decision-making. This will increase women's participation at all levels, protect their rights, incorporate gender-based analysis into the scope of international peace efforts, promote gender equality in the field of humanitarian aid, achieve effective participation of women in conflict prevention, increase women's participation in peacebuilding, and train women military officers in professional development.

UNSCR 1325 is the most prominent solution to eliminate the exclusion and marginalization practiced by many developing countries, including Yemen, against women in all areas of life, especially politics. Its implementation, according to many in those countries, will push these countries towards peaceful coexistence, reduce armed conflicts, and create a safe environment for women and girls.



Yemeni Women's Political Participation: Between a Liberal Past & Constrained Present

While the developed world is proud of the role that women play as educational, intellectual, cultural, and political main components of society, there are still many barriers that prevent women in our country from fulfilling this function. This is because they are sometimes constrained by customs and social norms at times, and at others by the security and political conditions, while the society's elite are content to remain silent on this matter.

By: Afrah Ahmed

While women in many parts of the world suffered from intellectual, cultural, and political restrictions during pre-Islamic times, Yemeni women have long served as role models and as symbols of giving. This is because they lived honorably, and they held the most prestigious political, religious, military, social, and cultural positions, placing them at the top of the list of women of their time reflecting the civilization of a country described as 'The Happy Land' (or Arabia Felix in Latin).

Up until recently, Yemeni women maintained their high position, preserving their rights and protecting them. Throughout history, notable Yemeni women models also appeared and followed in the footsteps of Bilqis, the queen whose fame overshadowed them all, as mentioned by hundreds of Musnad scripts.

During the past decades, the situation has been turned upside down, and the status of women has been levelled to the ground, since they have been reduced to mere belongings. Moreover, they were deprived of their basic rights, which they enjoyed during Yemen's ancient times and which the Islamic Sharia commanded for all people equally. Perhaps one of the simplest of these rights is to participate in politics as active partners in public life and as a basic component in society.

In this report, we will try to identify the political participation of Yemeni women throughout history and up to the present era.

Political Women in Ancient Yemeni History

In ancient Yemeni history, women played a significant role as active participants and contributors in all spheres of political and public life.

They have also provided the best examples of skill and leadership, including those that were documented by ancient historical references, such as those who were mentioned in the heavenly books, including the Queen of Sheba, the Queen of the South, and the Owner of the Great Throne who was given everything. The Holy Qur'an also made a reference to this queen in the story of the Sabaean queen "Bilqis" in Surat Al-Naml. Other heavenly books such as the Old and New Testaments also mentioned her.

In ancient Yemeni civilization, women and men co-existed peacefully side by side without any disrespect or contempt for either gender. Thus, they engaged in public works such as trade, agriculture, etc., and women lived as crowned queens who commanded and forbade. Furthermore, the heavenly books presented these noble models in their holy books, which indicates the great position that women reached in the past and reflects what society has achieved in terms of sophistication and civilization.

The fact that the relationship between the people and their kings was almost like a peer to peer relationship is one of the signs of civilization that the ancient Yemeni civilization had reached, as was confirmed by the historical Musnad scripts. This is because any citizen, includ-

ing women, was considered in the eyes of the king as the sons of the god "Amm" among the Qatabanites, the sons of the god "Ilamqah" among the Sabaean, and the sons of the god "Wad" among the Maeanites. Therefore, the principle of Shura was manifested among them, and perhaps what the Holy Qur'an referred to, in the words of the Queen of Sheba, is the clearest evidence for confirming the principle of Shura in the ancient civilization of Yemen.

Yemeni Women After the Islamic Era

The presence of Yemeni women in the local political scene after the Islamic era did not differ from their presence in ancient times. During the Islamic period, some women emerged and played pioneering heroic roles despite the obstacles, challenges and restrictions that they had faced.

Bilqis Al-Sughra (The Little Queen, Arwa bint Ahmed Al-Sulayhi)

Yemeni women in Islam enjoyed a high and prominent position. When you ask Yemenis who is "Bilqis Al-Sughra," they will immediately respond that she is Queen Arwa bint Ahmed Al-Sulayhi, who ruled Yemen in the fifth century AH (corresponding to the end of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth century AD). She was appreciated and respected by her people, and people witnessed during her reign a state of economic and political prosperity which was not witnessed in subsequent ages after that.

According to researcher Effat Wessal Hamzah's book "Women Ruled Yemen," Queen Arwa ruled Yemen with enlightened leadership and worked to improve the nation's economy because, in her opinion, the economy is just as important as national defense and political stability. The clearest example of this is perhaps her selection of the capital, the city of Jabbeh in the central Yemeni governorate of Ibb. She chose this area because its residents were committed to cultivating the land, using its resources, and focusing on developing their economy.

She also paid attention to trade by opening and paving roads, and paid attention to education by establishing many schools and mosques, expanding the Great Mosque in Sana'a, and building many historical mosques as well as other schools of knowledge. Sufficient resources were also allocated to pay the salaries of scholars, guides and teachers. In addition, the road of the city of Jabbeh was paved with stones and qadad, and she paved the Samara road to Al-Sayani, which connects the governorates of Sana'a, Ibb and Taiz.

In subsequent periods, Yemeni women dominated the political scene, such as the Rasulid, Ziyadid and Najahid states. Perhaps Hind Bint Abi Al-Jaish bin Ziyad, the guarantor of her nephew (the minor prince), is the most prominent example of the status that Yemeni women reached in that period, since she possessed real power in the country for forty years.

Decline of the Political Role of Yemeni Women

Yemenis, throughout their country's history in Islam, have shown clear indications of their acceptance



Fatima Muraisi

of women and granting them great status in various fields. This happened despite the negative images that prevailed in the pre-Islamic period when Yemen was under Persian control, whose religion was "Zarwaniyah" (a jurisprudence from Zoroastrianism), which saw women as Satan's main instrument for temptation and misguidance.

Women's roles declined during later Islamic eras, particularly with the development of cultural, religious, and traditional ideals brought about by the first and second Ottoman rulers. This occurred as a result of the interpretations by some scholars of religious texts that are related to women; some of them imposed further restrictions on women that impeded their creativity and distinction. Women also witnessed a new historical turning point characterized by repression, contempt, and a diminished status.

A New Outlet, But...

After the revolutions of September 1962 and October 1963 and the establishment of two republics in the north and south of Yemen, the country witnessed many economic, political and social changes. In the seventies and eighties, there were periods of conflict between the two parts, but some regional and international factors, as well as dialogues between political parties, led to the unification of Yemen in May 1990. One of the most prominent results of the unity was the adoption of the democratic system as a formal ruling system of the government. According to what was included in the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen for the year 1991, Article (27) states, "All citizens are equal before the law, and are equal in public rights and duties. There is no discrimination between them on the grounds of sex, color, origin, language, profession, social status, or creed."

Yemeni women had found a new outlet for themselves, and their role has been increasing on the ground in more than one field, the most important of which is political participation. This occurred in spite of the fact that this involvement remained framed by restrictions and provisions that are subjected to customs and traditions more than being subjected to what is included in local and international laws and legislations.

According to a report issued by the International Insti-

tute for Democracy and Elections in 2003 on enhancing women's participation in politics, titled "Democratic Development in Yemen," the percentage of registered female voters amounted to 42% of the number of those registered in parliamentary elections in April 2003. However, the results were disappointing, since only 11 women were nominated, and only one of them won.

This indicates the existence of a gap between legal legislation and society's negative view towards women, as well as society's inherent value and tribalism system.

In this regard, Professor Houria Mashhour, former Minister of Human Rights, said, "After unification was established, the presence of women was very little compared to men. This occurred despite the existence of the Constitution that affirmed the political participation of women in general, as well as the emergence of political parties that include many women in their membership". Moreover, their participation was in the form of elections only.

"In the 2003 parliamentary elections, women represented only one out of 301 seats, despite the participation of 11 women in the elections. However, also in that year, the first ministerial position was given to a Yemeni woman, Ms. Wahiba Farea, who was appointed Minister of Human Rights. In addition to the appointment of Ms. Amat Al-Alim Al-Souswa as Ambassador of Yemen to the Netherlands. This was one of the most important political achievements of women in that period," Mashhour added.

"In recent history, Yemeni women did not reach leadership positions in the country except in some ministerial appointments for two ministries only, namely the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. This indicates the discrimination that is practiced against women [by limiting them] to these two ministries only," Mashhour added.

Post-February 2011

According to Professor Fatima Muraisi, head of the Yemeni Women's Union branch in Aden, "The first actual participation of women in the political field was in the National Dialogue Conference in 2011, where they made up 28% of the 565 members. This is a good percentage if we compare it to the participation of women in the current Yemeni parliament, in which they are represented by only one member out of 301 members."

"The women participating in the National Dialogue Conference achieved remarkable superiority in the sub-committee elections, and two women won the presidency of two committees, which are the Rights and Freedoms Committee and the Sa'adah Issue Committee. This percentage is greater than what was obtained by the largest political parties, which indicates that there has been a remarkable development in women's attainment of their rights during this period," Al-Muraisi continued.

Yemeni women still have a lot to do before they can achieve what they aspire, since the signs on the ground limit their role and exclude them from political participation. However, the most crucial concerns still revolve around Yemeni women's ability to overcome the social constraints that restrict their role. However, the question remains: Can Yemeni women remove the social constraints that restrict their role? Can we see initiatives by men to allow Yemeni women to participate in political life like the queens Arwa and Bilqis? Perhaps these questions could be answered in the near or far future.

Mashhour:
"Recently, Yemeni women have not occupied leadership positions in the country except in two ministries only".



77% of Participants: Yemeni Women Are Capable of Playing Key Roles in Seeking Political Settlement and Ending the Conflict in Yemen

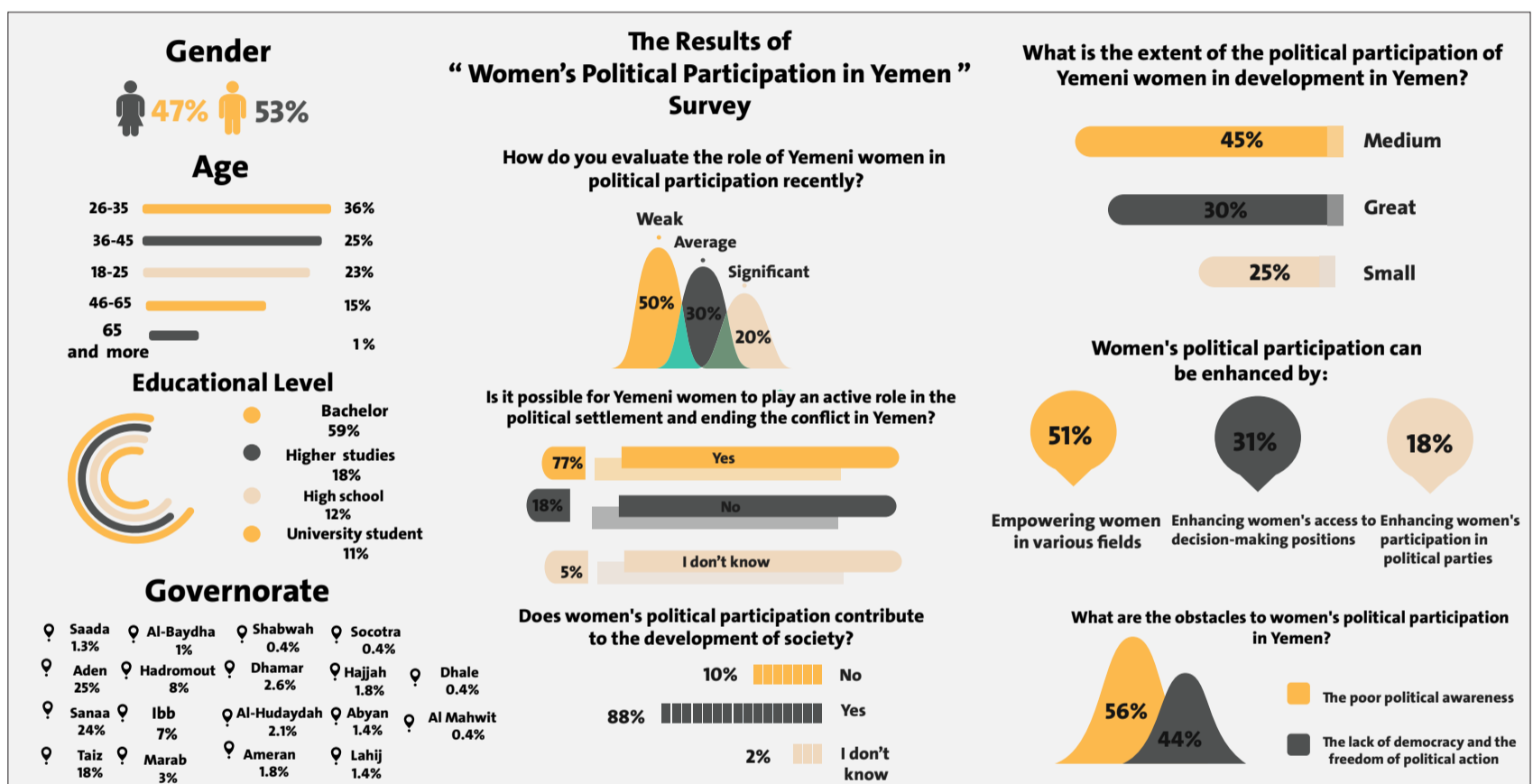
By: Yomna Ahmed

Political participation is the involvement of citizens and the activation of their role within the political system, or more precisely the activity undertaken by ordinary people with the aim of influencing the decision-making process. This participation comes within the state democratic system of governance in different forms and patterns, represented in the citizen who casts his vote in the general elections or runs for a political position, and in the politicians and party members who have an organizational relationship that affects state political system. What makes the participation of all members of society in the political process important is that they have civil and political rights, which imposes their involvement in the various levels of work and the political system, especially in countries experiencing conflicts and armed conflicts to find peace-making solutions.

Women's participation in politics is highly important because they represent half of society, but their political participation is still contingent upon the society in which they live, whether it enjoys freedom and democracy or not. Despite the importance of the role that women play in politics, women's political participation in Yemen remains scarce, especially in light of the conflict that has been going on for more than nine years, and the women's poor access to decision-making positions.

In view of the above, the Information and Opinion Survey Unit at Yemen Information Center (YIC) conducted a survey on the importance of women's political participation in reaching a political settlement and ending the conflict in Yemen, the extent of their participation, and the most prominent obstacles and challenges that prevent Yemeni women from participating in politics.

The survey was conducted on a research sample of 513 participants from 18 Yemeni governorates; 52.8% were male and 47.2% were female. 36.1% of them were 26-35 years old, 24.5% were 36-45 years



old, 23.2% were 18-25 years old, 15.5% were 46-65 years old, and only 0.7% were 65 years of age and over.

Regarding the academic qualification, 58.8% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, 18.5% had postgraduate degrees, 10.3% were university students, 3.8% had high school diplomas, and 1.7% had only a middle school certificate.

The sample of the survey was from the following governorates: Aden 25%, Sana'a 24%, Taiz 18%, Hadramout 8%, Ibb 7%, Marib 3%, Dhamar 2.6%, Hodeidah 2.1%, Hajjah 1.8%, Amran 1.8%, Abyan 1.4%, Lahj 1.4%, Sa'ada 1.3%, Al-Bayda 1%. Regarding Shabwa, Al-Mahwit, Al-Dhalea, and Socotra, they represented only 0.4% of the participants.

Main Findings

According to the survey, 49.5% of respondents ranked Yemeni women's political participation in recent years as weak, while 30.3% of the respondents gave it a medium rating. Only 20.2% of the respondents think that Yemeni women have played a major role in terms of their political participation.

However, 77.3% of the respondents believe that Yemeni women will be able to play a significant role in the political settlement and ending the conflict in Yemen if they are politically empowered and included in the peace-making process. On the other hand, 17.6% of the respondents think that their presence in the political field does not make a difference and that they will not be able to contribute significantly to the political settlement. Whereas 5.1% of the respondents said that they have no idea whether Yemeni women are able to contribute to the political settlement and end the conflict or not.

87.6% of respondents believe that women make a significant political contribution to society's advancement and development because they see women as essential to societies' renaissances, and they believe that the advancement these societies seek is heavily reliant on the position of women and the degree to which they can fulfill a variety of roles in society. Whereas 10.3% of the respondents disagree with that opinion, and only 2.1% said that they do not know whether women's political participation

will contribute to the development of society or not.

Regarding the role of women and their contribution to development, 41.5% of the respondents believe that their contribution is medium, 34% of the respondents think that it is significant, and 24.5% of the respondents think that it is weak.

Regarding the role played by international organizations and civil society organizations working in Yemen in terms of promoting political participation and empowering women, 44.6% of the respondents believe that their role is medium, and 30% of the respondents think that they have a major role. Whereas 25.4% of the respondents believed that their role is very weak.

According to the respondents, the advancement of women's roles in society, particularly in politics, must be given the utmost significance and care. This is due to its importance and its positive impacts on the various social, economic and cultural dimensions of society. 51.5% of the respondents believe that this can be achieved by working to empower women in various fields. On the other hand, 30.6% of the respondents believe that enhancing the role of wom-

en in political participation comes through enhancing their access to decision-making positions, while 17.9% of the respondents believe that enhancing women's participation in political parties is the best solution to empower women politically and enhance their role.

The respondents also claim that Yemeni women's political participation is still long, arduous, and fraught with difficulties. This is due to many reasons including, the nature of the societal formation in Yemen, the impact of the conflict, the lack of strategic visions for the development of women, the lack of activities that enhance the women's political participation, the lack of efforts being made to empower women economically and socially, in addition to ignoring their role in various fields.

In conclusion, when the respondents were asked about the main obstacles that hinder women's political participation, 55.8% of them believe that this is due to weak political awareness, while 44.2% of the respondents believe that the main obstacle to women's political participation is the lack of democracy and freedom of political action in Yemen.