

Women's Voice
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Conference on Women in Politics and Decision-Making

A conference was held between the 25th and 27th of February, 2004, in Turkey titled *Women in Politics and Decision-Making*. It was sponsored by the International Democratic and Local Councils Academy and was attended by several groups from Arab and Islamic countries, including Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunis, Yemen, Morocco, Iran and Turkey. The Women's Affairs Technical Committee coordinated the participation of the Palestinian delegation, comprised of female leaders representing various organizations. The Palestinian delegation gave lectures on the situation of women in Palestine and the obstacles to reaching decision-making positions, whether because of the Israeli occupation or because of issues within Palestinian society.

At the opening of the conference, participants gave speeches on their experiences in their own countries and the issues that hamper women's effective participation in politics and decision-making. Then female members of parliaments and representatives of local councils talked about their personal experiences and how they reached such positions.

The participants were then divided into four different workshops: the first one dealt with legal issues concerning promoting women's participation; the second one worked on networking; the third workshop worked on action plans to improve women's active participation in administration and local and legislative councils and the fourth workshop revolved around ways to support women under severe conditions, such as occupation, armed conflicts and crisis.

At the end of the conference, a report was issued documenting decisions and recommendations that will be followed up by the International Democratic and Local Councils Academy. Among the recommendations the delegations came up with is the establishment of a regional network to support and develop women's participation in local authorities and decision-making positions.

Statistics on women's time management

Palestinian women spend 56 hours a week on household maintenance and management. According to the Time Use Survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in 1999-2000, there is a large gap between the roles of men and women in the home. The study shows that 91% of women (aged 10 and above) spend their time in household management, while only 40% of men manage the household.

The study also reported the following findings.

Average time spent each day on various activities:

- The average amount of time spent on employment in establishment is 1 hour and 51 minutes (for individuals aged 10 years and above); 3 hours and 21 minutes a day for males and 19 minutes for females.
- The average time spent on primary production activities outside the establishments is 16 minutes; 24 minutes for males and 7 minutes for females.
- An individual spends in average of 2 hours and 8 minutes daily on housekeeping, house management and household related shopping, with a significant gap between men and women; **men spend 32 minutes daily on average, while women spend 3 hours and 44 minutes.**
- The average time spent on childcare, and care for sick and elderly household members amounts to 39 minutes daily; 12 minutes on average for males, and 1 hour and 7 minutes for females.
- The average time spent on educational activities is 1 hour and 37 minutes, with no significant difference between men and women.
- The average time spent on personal care activities, such as sleeping, eating, drinking, praying, and other related activities is 11 hours and 7 minutes; 10 hours and 50 minutes a day for males and 11 hours and 25 minutes a day for females.

Percentage of persons carrying out activities:

- 25% of the individuals aged 10 years and above spend their time working inside establishments, this percentage is 44% for males and 9% for females within the same age group.
- 8% of the individuals spend their time in primary production activities outside the establishments. This percentage varies from 9% among males to 6% among females.
- 9% of the males aged 10 years and above and 78% of the females in the same age group spend time in meal preparation.

- 23% of the individuals aged 10 years and above spend their time in educational activities, with no significant difference between males and females.
- 12% of the individuals aged 10 years and above practice spend time reading, 10% for males and 14% for females.

Greater Female Representation in the Palestinian Working Health Committees

The recent board elections at the Working Health Committees provide an example for governmental as well as non-governmental institutions to follow. Dr. Ahmad Maslamani, director of the WHC, considers the elections a victory for democracy, paving the way for transparency and accountability in the organization.

It is worth noting that the results of these elections raised women's participation by a third. Participants have expressed their wish to see free elections in local government as a step towards the creation of an independent and democratic Palestinian state.

The Deputy Minister of Health said that such civil society organizations are not simply structures, but the birthplace of vision for a more democratic society.

Dr. Jihad Mash'al, representing the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGO) described the Working Health Committees' election as an important step paving the way for transparency and accountability, which the cornerstones for the professional, civil and democratic work.

Young Palestinian woman receives the

Youth Achievement in Electronics award in Dubai

Despite the difficult conditions that have existed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for decades, scientific development has remained one of the top priorities. During the current intifada, Palestinian youth continued to develop their creativity wherever they were: in cities, villages or refugee camps. Palestinian women have made achievements in these areas as well. Rana Qutteineh, a twenty-year-old Palestinian woman from Jerusalem, was awarded the prize for Youth Achievement in Electronics at the Gitex exhibition in Dubai. "It was a big success and victory for me and my nation to be present at such an important event, which encourages us to pursue our development in the IT sector despite all the difficulties we are going through," said Rana.

UNICEF says Palestinian women are paying the price of occupation

Mr. David Bassyouni, the special representative of UNICEF in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, declared that closures imposed on and affecting freedom of movement, as well as the continuing Israeli invasions and home demolitions, especially in Rafah area, have all led to the degradation of conditions of women.

In a statement published by several media outlets, Mr. Bassyouni announced that the continuing conflict has led to an increase in home delivery from 8.2% before the start of the second Intifada to 14% and that the percentage of women receiving medical care after delivery has decreased from 95.8% to 84%. Since 2002, 52 women gave birth on Israeli occupation checkpoints, 19 of these women passed away at these same checkpoints and 29 babies died during the period between September 2000 and December 2002.

Such statistics underline the clear degradation in women's health due to the Israeli policies and aggression against the Palestinian people.