

Women's Role in Maintaining Peace and Security in OIC Member States'

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Today we are here gathered in Ankara for one day long workshop on the role of women in the development of OIC member states that is organized by SESRIC in coordination with OIC. This important gathering is surely a very positive and constructive initiative that aims to find creative ways and means to improve the status and conditions of women so that they can become able effectively to participate in the political, economic, cultural and social spheres of life and hence make at most contribution of the creation of peace, prosperity and well-being.

United Nations Former General Secretary Kofi Annan once said that 'we cannot afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peace-making, peace-building, peace-keeping and reconstruction process'. He further added that; sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men. As women and mothers, we know this is logical and true, however putting theory into practice is much more difficult-not only in Muslim societies also in others as well; it is a worldwide challenging Job. Seeing the world of ours and especially the geography I live in that is embedded with continuous conflicts and wars women's peace-building efforts must be supported, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because any nation experiencing conflict needs the strength of women. As we know women are the one who hold their families and communities together during the worst times of the conflict. They keep a measure of stability during chaos and during the displacement.

Likewise, on the 8th of March 2016 due to the international community celebrating the International Women's Day, the General Secretary H.E. Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani of the OIC has also touched on the importance of the pivotal role of women in social, political and economic spheres of life and the need of prompting the international commitments towards women. He further has underlined the necessity of using every opportunity to evaluate women's advancement and empowerment plans,

programmes and activities. Under his presidency, one of the institution of OIC's top priority is to achieve women advancement. OIC as an institution is in the conviction that strengthening the role of the women is a comprehensive process and hence it requires practical necessary measures to be taken at all levels. That is why OIC is supporting the decision makers to give special care for adopting policies that would be guaranteeing maximum participation of women in various fields. Likewise, OIC is also motivating the member states to intensify their efforts in the areas of education, training and capacity building for women. These efforts surely are expected to empowerment of women in time so that they would become more participating and their numbers can than expected to rise in respect to male representation in their own societies.

OIC believing and supporting the idea of raising women's participation in decision making mechanisms with this mind set has very recently taken in appointing four women to leadership positions. This is a clear reflection of how OIC is supporting to raise the important role of women in decision making processes and also hoping and expecting to see the same efforts are happening across the OIC countries.

The world of ours today is not immune from the rise and the spread of new set of globalized traditional and non-traditional security threats where this situation often has given way to continuous wars and conflicts taking place in different parts of the globe. That is why; the efforts of launching both conflict resolution and peace-building have become the urgent necessity of all communities. Conflict resolution and peace-building from a gender perspective means changing the system and power dynamics that led to war or conflict. I fully agree with the view point that *sustainable peace* requires fully including women and all segments of society as politically viable citizens. Women's participation in resolving and preventing conflict is not an optional, but a rather an essential ingredient of peace-building. Pain and suffering, fear and loss, hate and despair, rage and sadness; these are the emotions that women as well as men feel during the conflict. But, women also have an immense capacity to transcend their sorrow and look beyond the hatred and bitterness and to build a new

and a secure future for their families and communities. Women when find the chance of making leadership is really making a difference throughout the whole phases of peace construction. One can find solid examples in UN statistical data where women has been shown the key drivers of economic growth. According to these statistical data it has been proved that with the active participation of women in economic life both peace building and recovery efforts becomes more sustainable. In this regard, we know that women participation has increased the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent likewise the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years has been increased by 35 percent. Other than that, there is a growing evidence that large-scale investment in women's economic empowerment really pays off both in the immediate and long term social dividends. This situation also accounts for post-conflict situations too. It is true that women in general in our part of the world in comparison to men tend to spend much more of their time and income on family and community well-being. So, when women in our region is given the chance of economically empowering herself than the living conditions of hers and her family's naturally gets better where naturally their reliance on external aid decreases and hence ultimately women will start contributing to the growth of both local and national economies.

Moreover, recent efforts of empowering women status in OIC countries gains a great value in the creation of a counter movement at a time where radical extremists whether be it DAESH, Boko Haram etc. are consciously trying to give false interpretation of Muslim beliefs and values and hence they mostly igniting/exploding conflict in places like Iraq, Syria, Nigeria etc.

UN Security Council has already adapted resolutions like 1325 and 2242 that their implementation requires and commits its member states to not only use the power of women as profound, effective and committed peace constituency to prevent conflict and make and build sustainable peace but at the same time expects them to protect them from the horrors of conflicts-this of course includes preventing the insecurity of displacement and loss, targeting and enslavement by violent extremism

and terrorism that we are all witnessing especially places in Iraq and Syria. We all know and aware that both SESRIC and OIC are taking efforts to continue making public the women who are currently facing the difficulties in the trouble neighborhoods where unfortunately civil wars as well as radical extreme groups presence continues to present various risks. By this way, these organizations both are trying to make awareness on the behalf of the international community about these tragic incidents and simultaneously are working on persuasion them in taking imminent action in relieving women and their families from current sufferings. The final aim and expectations of all ours is seeing the realization of construction of all peaceful societies in these conflict embedded fractured states-especially in Iraq and Syria- present in the troubled neighbor of ours but at the same time the imminent needs of those- including women- who are suffering in the mentioned places are waiting an urgently assistance of ours.

But, now please allow me to speak of one country-that is Syria of course-which has taken the most attention of international community due to the on-going six years of old brutal civil war. There are many tragic results coming out of this event not only for the country itself but also to its neighborhood as well. Here, again when one puts aside this events negative geopolitical side effects and ramifications to the Middle East environment Syrian crisis since its inception is taking place as a very tragic humanitarian tragedy for its Syrian population. The situation in Syria today is perhaps the greatest disaster that we have all eye witnessed since the days of the World War II. As we know, approximately one half of the country's population-nearly around 12 million people had to leave their homes. Nearly 5 million Syrians live in neighboring countries as refugees. In actuality, Syria is part of the Arab region most often associated with the Muslim world and fortunately this region necessitates our support most.

Turkey's experience of the Syrian civil war that took nearly 6 years is a unique one of course. Here at this point I again would not talk about how Turkey has got affected from the ongoing civil war since its inception due to the rise of crucial well known

hard security threats but rather try to display and share with you very briefly how the Syrian conflict has affected the local Syrian people- including women and children of course-and how Turkey has tried to be responsive and helpful-by especially hosting the incoming Syrian refugees at Turkey's several cities those are located in south of country. Most important of all here at this point I would try to drive your attentions at again to a women the Mayor of Gaziantep Fatma Sahin's engagement as a mayor during the times of the city of Gaziantep's hosting process of the Syrian refugees as well as Mayor Sahin's very recent appearance in Turkey's efforts helping those of Syrian's wanting to return back their home town Jarablus that was very recently has been emancipated from the raid and occupation of DAESH after the launch of successful Euphrates Shield operation of Turkey with the cooperation of Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces.

Just six years ago, the residents of Gaziantep due to its clones to Aleppo were able to recall crossing the border to spending weekends to see their relatives or friends across the border which is just nearly 100 kms away. However, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 the population of Gaziantep has increased by 20 percent. Currently, Turkey is hosting the world's biggest refugee population of about 3 million. Gaziantep currently hosts more than 50.000 Syrians in local refugee camps that are set by government whereas hundreds of thousands of refugees are living in the province and surrounding towns. Mayor Fatma Şahin now strongly believes that the people of Gaziantep has passed the test of helping the needy. And, hence just very recently acting with this conviction Şahin together with the city's governor have made public Gaziantep's nomination for Nobel prize.-thanks to their hosting Syrian refugees.

Recently, at 22nd day of Euphrates Shield Operation according to information gathered from Gaziantep Migration Directorate 1.700 Syrians have returned to their homes in Jarablus. Turkey on the eve of Eid-al- Ahda (Feast of Sacrifice) has tried to make electricity and water available to residents in Jarablus. The Mayor of Gaziantep Fatma Şahin was very active in preparations of this process and she also gave a visit

to Jarablus to examine the on-going process of Gaziantep municipality's street cleaning campaign in Jarablus and also to observe preparing to pave the roads with asphalt. By using her case as an example I would like to underline importance of women participation to humanitarian relief and peace-building efforts since woman as mother, daughter, sister, someone's loved ones has ability to convince all segments of society to improve well-being and security of all parts of Muslim society and humanity.

Conclusion

We can of course bring numerous excellent examples both from Turkey as well as from other places in OIC landscape where women are trying to be influential when an opportunity is provided them to make contribution to peace-making efforts in our challenging neighborhood. I am sure in today's SESRIC conference the distinguished panelists will discuss the challenges of today's women facing in making contribution to peace not only in our neighborhood but even beyond. After fruitful discussions at this panel I am sure the new ideas will come into force that will accelerate the ongoing process of further empowering women that will help her not only to relieve itself from its present sufferings of today's continues conflicts but also ready her to become an active participant in the peace-making procedures as along with man.