

settler colonialism, apartheid, and injustice has been given priority over the struggle for women's rights, the occupation has exacerbated patriarchy in preventing women from taking on their deserved role in society. Moreover, the culture and political reality of the authoritarian political system that was imposed on Palestinians under the Ottoman and British administrations became entrenched under the Israeli administration. Perpetuated by the PNA, whose administrative behavior is very much rooted in the past, it has prevented women from assuming their merited role in society. Their engagement in our national struggle, however, makes the comprehensive inclusion of women in Palestinian politics indispensable. Serious attention should be given to the role of women both at the grassroots and the political/institutional levels.

Women's participation in decision-making processes has positive potential and has proven sustainable, as outlined in research conducted by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. Examining 40 peace processes that have been conducted since the end of the Cold War, this study showed that in the cases in which women's groups were strongly represented and able to influence the negotiation process, the chances of reaching an agreement were much higher than in cases in which women were marginalized or excluded. Likewise, the strong influence of women in negotiation processes was positively associated with the chances of implementing these agreements. The recommendations of this

global study have been emphasized in various national plans, highlighting women's role in preventive diplomacy and mediation.^{vi}

Some countries are applying gender mainstreaming in their foreign policies to ensure that they bring peace, universal values, and human rights to the world. The time is ripe for women. As a founding member of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network^{vii} – established in Rome in



2017 – I have reflected on women's success in politics by studying Angela Merkel (Germany), Jacinda Arden (New Zealand), and Sanna Marin (Finland), and the successes achieved by women mediators in the Colombian peace process. These examples are cause for the hope that women in Palestine will take on a more significant role in the reconciliation efforts that until now have failed to end the nearly two-decades-old national divide. Women's participation is necessary to bring about the unity we desire.

Above all, however, following 30 years of procrastinated negotiations and the irrelevant peace process, it is time to consider women's involvement in our efforts to end the 75 years of prolonged Israeli military occupation.

It is unwise to hold on to old approaches and failed strategies. The Middle East needs a macro framework that is led by women and conducted with a top-bottom

approach that ensures that women are entrusted with leading positions. A women-inclusive approach must be based on merit and qualification. The tribal approach has been tested repeatedly but to no avail, as it failed to bring about the desired change. While the Palestinian National Council has recently increased the number of women among its members, this increase was based on quantity considerations and did not account for the quality of work or level of qualification in the given portfolios.^{viii}

October 2023 marks the 23rd anniversary of UN Resolution 1325, also known as the Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security. This resolution urges all parties to take the necessary measures to ensure women's participation in decision-making processes, the integration of gender in training, and the protection of women in all matters that relate to UN reporting systems and program implementation mechanisms. In October, Palestinian women also celebrate the anniversary of National Palestinian Women's Day.^x This holiday was adopted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs within the framework of the Palestinian government's plan to work to empower Palestinian women and enhance their role in public life.

March 8, the internationally recognized day for women, October 26, Palestinian National Women's Day, and October 31, the anniversary of the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325, are turning points in the development of women's rights. These dates highlight official and legal documents issued by the UN that stipulate respect for the rights of women and support for their participation in all aspects of life, including peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. These principles inspired the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs to celebrate Palestinian Women's Day on October 26 each year.

Palestinian women have proven excellence in higher education and broken the boundaries in various sectors. It is time to gather these successes under one umbrella. We envision doing this by shedding

light on young Palestinian women leaders in technology, business, and politics. Giving attention to women who play key roles in our society is essential in order to achieve the progress, prosperity, and unity we all desire.

Many projects have been carried out to empower women. It is time that those who have already been empowered become visible. While individual responsibility is crucial to bringing about change in society, collective responsibility remains indispensable. For this reason the Business and Professional Women Platform (BPW) was launched in 2022, aiming to bring together all the powerful women leaders in Palestine.

Women are a national brand for Palestine, and simply paying lip service to women's equality to men should not be tolerated. Women must be acknowledged and take their place in real life as equals.

This month offers us an opportunity for review and evaluation. It encourages us to ask ourselves and

our partners: What have we done to support women? Have we engaged in and promoted women's political participation? Have we done our best to revisit decisions, legislation, and their application in order to protect, represent, and properly include half of our society?

Dalal Iriqat is assistant professor at the Arab American University Palestine. She has been a weekly columnist at Al-Quds newspaper since 2016. Dalal was identified as a Young Global Leader at the World Economic Forum YGL 2021 and is the founding president of Business and Professional Women BPW Palestine 2022.

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ⁱ UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security, UN OSAGIA, available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.

ⁱⁱ State of Palestine, The Amended Basic Law–2003, available at https://www.elections.ps/Portals/0/pdf/The_Amended_Basic_Law_2003_EN.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ State of Palestine, "National Policy Agenda 2017–2022, Putting Citizens First," December 2016, available at <https://andp.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/National%20Policy%20Agenda%202017-2022%20-%20Putting%20Citizens%20First.pdf>.

^{iv} PCBS press release, March 7, 2022, available at https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_7-3-2022-woman-en.pdf.

^v Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford University Press, 1992.

^{vi} Jana Krause, Werner Krause, Piia Brånford, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace," Geneva Graduate Institute, available at <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/library/publications-institute/womens-participation-peace-negotiations-and-durability-peace>.

^{vii} For more information on the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, please visit <https://womenmediators.net/>.

^{viii} Luna Sa'adah, "Women's Quota and Representation in the Central Council," Reform.ps, available at <http://reform.ps/blogs/womens-quota-and-representation-in-the-central-council>.

^{ix} Wafa News Agency, "Marking the Day for the Palestinian Woman, group says Israel is holding 34 women freedom fighters," October 26, 2021, available at <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/126587>.