



Feminist support to women activists and movements

Making non-violent activism count politically

Side Event to UNSC Open Debate on WPS

28 October 2021, 9:00 – 10:30 EDT // 15:00 – 16:30 CEST

Meeting to be held virtually. Register [here](#).

Simultaneous Arabic/English interpretation available.

Objective:

By bringing together influential local women activists from Sudan, Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Myanmar and Iraq with leading international stakeholders, this WPS Side Event will examine how international actors (member states, multilateral organisations, INGOs) can provide feminist support to women activists and movements in times of political upheaval, mass protest and armed violence. The session will particularly focus on bridging the gaps from (young) women leading protests on the streets to influencing all stages in each and every peace and political process.

Background:

There are clear links between gender inequality and outbreaks of violent conflict. A significant and growing body of research has demonstrated that strengthening women's political and social participation lowers the chances that a country will relapse into conflict. However, since UNSCR1325 women and girls' inclusion and meaningful participation in peace processes remains structurally under-resourced in UN and international support mechanisms, with severe challenges in engaging with informal activist structures.

Women in Sudan, OPT, Myanmar and Iraq took to the streets, defying traditional norms to demand political change and recognition of their social and economic rights. Yet in all these countries women found themselves on the outside looking in when it came to deciding what would come next. Informal groups of women activists have proven that nonviolent action is nearly twice as successful as violence. Women's leadership in nonviolent movements is likely to increase a movement's tactical innovation and resilience, contributing to its success¹. Despite this, women and girls continue to be systematically excluded from transitional political and peace processes following major nonviolent campaigns. The experiences of women and girls in Sudan, the OPT, Myanmar and Iraq are no exception.

In **Sudan**, despite women leading the revolution and playing a critical role in toppling the Bashir regime, they have been effectively shut out from equally and meaningfully participating in every step of the transition. Their exclusion is a major factor in the country's continued political fragility. Women activists' call for an inclusive and gender-sensitive security sector and legal reform continues to be ignored. Instead, disrespect for women's rights has encouraged those who seek to violate them².

In the **OPT**, women activists played an instrumental role in the mass nonviolent uprising of Palestinians and Israelis that started in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah in April 2021, spread



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to Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip, diaspora and internationally. After Israel's use of excessive military force, Palestinian women continued and have particularly played an enormous role in online activism.

In **Iraq**, a massive grassroots movement began in 2019 with women at the forefront of protests. Prime Minister Mahdi resigned, generating an opportunity to create an inclusive and effective government. Despite an increase in abductions and violent targeting of women activists, women remained engaged alongside their male counterparts breaking down conservative gender dynamics.

In **Myanmar**, women have been on the frontlines of protests after the military coup took place in February 2021. Despite a protection gap for women activists and the high risk of reprisals, women have been leaders in the civil disobedience movement and used innovative tactics to protest, while questioning historical gender norms.

Guiding questions:

- International feminist support: How to gender-transformatively support (women) activists and movements? How to prevent violent backlashes? How to ensure political and peace processes are truly inclusive by engaging women to change patriarchal power dynamics?
- Non-violence and feminism: What's the impact of (young) women's participation from diverse backgrounds on the outcomes of non-violent mass movements? How to strengthen inclusion and promote diversity within non-violent movements?

Programme:

Moderator: **Moneera Yassien**, *Founder of AMNA*

Opening remarks:

- **H.E. Ms. Maritza Chan Valverde**, *Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the UN*
- **Ms. Lena Skoglund**, *Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Sweden to the UN*

Panel featuring:

- **Hadia Hasaballah**, *Sudan*
- **Suheir Farraj**, *Director-General of the Women, Media and Development Organisation (TAM), Palestine*
- **Ada Chai**, *Myanmar*
- **Yasmin Fala**, *SheRevolution and InfoCenter, Iraq*

Q&A session moderated by: **Breza Race**, *Program Director Center for Applied Non-Violent Actions and Strategies, Serbia*

Closing remarks

- **Maria Stephan**, *Author of 'Why Civil Resistance Works', currently co-leading [the Horizons Project](#) and former USIP Program Director on Nonviolent Action*