

On 23 March, 2017, the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF) held a webinar to speak about an analytical study based on local consultations with Libyan and Yemeni women leaders, activists, and international displaced people (IDPs.) in WILPF's Geneva headquarters. The study highlights the women, peace, and security agenda in these countries, highlighting their findings of their women's roles and what still needs to be implemented.

These three women were scheduled to attend the annual United Nations Commission of the Status of Women (CSW). But they were banned from entering the United States because of the travel ban implemented by President Donald Trump. The panelists were Rasha Jarhum, a Yemeni social researcher; Lina Salim, a Yemeni activist and director of President of TOBE Foundation; and Inas Miloud, a Libyan activist with the Together We Built It Organization.

The first speaker, Jarhum, conducted consultations and partnerships with organizations at the local level in Yemen. They selected three locations within the countries because of conflict dynamics and wanted different perspectives of the challenges that Yemeni women face. The consultation was with women who were IDPs, political leaders, and are working at civil society organizations, and working at the security sector. Because of the ongoing war, there are 3 million IDPs who lack basic needs and living in shacks and have no assistance. Yemeni women have been targeted by airstrikes, exploitation, and have been recruited by the militia to disperse peaceful protests.

However, Yemeni women are at the front lines, facilitating relief for convoys in locations where it was difficult for humanitarian assistance to go through. They addressed disarmament, demilitarization, reintegration, and preventing violent extremism. There were only three women out of 26 people who were at the third round of Yemeni peace talks in Kuwait last year. Jarhum says male leaders claim that women aren't qualified for peace negotiations, even though they clearly are. The Yemeni women's agenda is not issued with the peace agenda. These women also want DDR programs for women and children to start immediately, women's inclusion in the security sector, and a humanitarian response plan with women's voices.

The second speaker Salim briefly addressed the issues that NGOs had when conducting humanitarian missions within Yemen. International NGOs withdrew from liberated areas, which directly affected the work of national NGOs. There's a tension between the NGOs located in the south and north of the country because of the conflict dynamic, even when invited to conferences. The national NGOs, which have mostly humanitarian mandates, because the judiciary system is frozen in the southern region of the country, which directly effects women's needs. The northern region requires licenses from the ministry of planning for the simplest activities. And the national NGOs are having received threats and have trouble documenting SGBV cases because of the social stigma.

The final speaker Miloud introduced the Together We Built It Organization, which monitor and implements the 1325 agenda and WPS security in Libya. Libyan women have no presence in peace negotiations and a lack of including women's needs. Miloud noted that the Together We Built It Organization would like to create a platform to address these needs. They consulted more than 50 women in north and south of Libya. They targeted grassroots women activists who are of

different education levels, careers, ages and ethnic backgrounds, and women negotiators as part of the conflict in Libya.

The majority of women said they are the target of the armed violence in the communities. The militias are threatening their way of life and basic daily activities, specifically in IDP communities and people who depend on government funds to live. They lack freedom of movement nationally and internationally because of the rise of extremists controlling certain areas, especially women peace activists. When asked whether they were familiar with the political process, many of them weren't familiar with it and the women activists who were familiar with the process said they weren't called or consulted to participate. But if there is a peace political agreement, the results probably won't be seen on the ground, Miloud said. In Libya, there were several peace talks with few women participating, and the recent peace talk in Geneva had few Libyan women participants who were not negotiators. These women are familiar that their exclusion is not random but intentional, which is a huge concern. There was a call to end bombardments and an urgent call for sanctions against countries that are violating UN treaty embargos, and more women's meaningful participation.

After the presentations, the question and answer period addressed how the consultations were carried out in these countries because of the challenges of security, and encouraging women's participations. These activists have worked with displaced people and the targeted communities, making it easier to collect the information they needed for the study. Many of the women were willing to be part of the consultation, and they picked because of their diverse backgrounds. They were willing to speak about their situations and state their opinions and make suggestions.

For women's participations, there's a systematic exclusion of women. Miloud called on UN leaders to listen more to women's needs and include a more feminist agenda. In UN-led projects, there needs to be more women leaders who know the women, peace, and security agenda, and will change the outcome of how these countries will approach women's needs and encourage women's meaningful participation.