



# *IFE-EFI Statement*

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Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI

December 2014

## **WOMEN'S SUBJUGATION CANNOT BE DISSOCIATED FROM ALL OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION**

European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI, now enlarged to Euromed Feminist Initiative, is a policy network of independent women's rights organizations from the two shores of the Mediterranean and Caucasus. The first General Assembly of the network took place on 4th December 2014 in Beirut. It analyzed and discussed the political developments and women's status in the Euromed region and elected its leading body. The Assembly shared views on a context that deprive millions of women in the Euromed from access to their basic human rights: to resources, education, health, responsibilities, full citizenship, meaning the right to live without violence and to control their own bodies and lives, and underlined the following issues:

- **The gravity of the unprecedented wave of ultra conservative trends and rising of religious fundamentalist forces** that are posing a serious threat to the peoples and their right to freedom, justice and peace. On the other hand, destructive regimes and occupation continue killings and arrests to silence the voice of women's rights, human rights and civil rights defenders. Women, their achievements as well as their universal human rights are targeted in particular.
- **The militarization of the conflicts** States and EU decision makers have warned that the war against "radicalism" would take many years. It provides them justifications to increase military budgets, arm trade and scale up the rhetoric of militarism at the expenses of peoples' social and economic rights. It is today common knowledge that military interventions and occupation never bring solutions to conflicts or sustainable peace; they neither prevent nor stop sexual abuse against women. In a militarized environment, women's rights are the first to be sacrificed.
- **The need to preserve and advance the international and regional women's rights instruments**, notably CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, Beijing Platform of Action, and UfM Ministerial Conclusions Paris 2013, as reference to protect and promote women's rights as universal human rights and combat cultural relativism and to support non-violent transitions towards democracy, freedom, human dignity and social justice in the region.
- **The importance of international solidarity and the support of the democratic movement** to the struggle of the feminist movement for women's rights and gender equality, in particular in the present context. Only with this solidarity can we promote democracy and social justice, universality of human rights of women and men, non-violence, secularism and establishing and/or preserving civil states and civil legislation that ensure people's democracy and freedom of expression, as well as the equality between all citizens, women and men alike.
- **The crucial role of an independent civil society** and therefore the need to support it and enable it to achieve the above mentioned goals. The space of the civil society has been shrinking in recent years, squeezed on the one hand by repressive regimes and occupied on the other hand by institutions which take not only its space but its resources. All this has led to a weakening of the role of the civil society as a watch-dog and interlocutor to the states and in particular the role of women's rights organizations and networks.
- **The reaffirmation of the recommendations from the Euro-Med Women's Rights Conference** (Amman 2013): *"Building a common agenda for equality between women and men in the Euromed Region"* as IFE-EFI road map for the coming years.

Along with the ongoing activities demanding a political solution for Syria, implementation of the UNSCR 1325 to ensure the equal participation of women in peace processes and supporting gender inclusive transitions towards democracy in the whole region, three main work priorities have been agreed upon:

- **Equality First Campaign:** Mobilizing and advocating for women's rights as universal human rights and for equality between women and men as a top political priority on the agendas of the decision makers in the Euromed and as a crucial means to face fundamentalism and ultra conservative trends.
- **European Neighborhood Policy (ENP):** Calling the EU to link women's rights, political reform and development and to commit to CEDAW and other international and regional women's rights instruments when conducting the ENP in order to support the implementation and empowerment of sustainable democracies and refusing any abuse of women's rights in the name of culture, tradition or religion.
- **Palestine:** Mobilizing and advocating for establishing an independent and sovereign State of Palestine in the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and the right of the Palestinians to return to their home land as a precondition and necessary step to reach sustainable peace in the whole region and to facilitate political changes towards democracy.

Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI will continue to advocate for women's rights as universal human rights and full part of democracy and citizenship, together against war and occupation, for the right of peoples to self-determination. Through its platform, Euromed Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI speaks out for women's universal rights, locally, regionally and internationally.

**Beirut, 4th December 2014**

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