



The 2nd National Conference for Strengthening Civil Peace and the Rule of Law:

Towards Enacting Supportive and Responsive Policies that Promote Civil Peace



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On 4 December 2017, the 2nd Annual National Civil Peace Conference entitled, “Strengthening Civil Peace and the Rule of Law: *Towards Enacting Supportive and Responsive Policies that Promote Civil Peace*” was held under the patronage of His Excellency, Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas. The conference, which comes as part of the Civil Peace and Social Inclusion project, funded by the GIZ’s Civil Peace Service (CPS) program, was implemented by REFORM, on behalf of the Civil Society Coalition partners.

Over the last 11 years, the internal political division of Palestinian society created an unstable environment and promoted the fragmentation of different social and political groups. Palestinian biased media played a detrimental role in this, harming the Palestinian social cohesion, threatening civil peace and the

rule of law, and leading to the emergence of illegal incidences, such as the spread of drugs and weapons in the occupied territories, especially in Area 'C'. At the same time, Palestinian National Development Plans are still unable to overcome the social and economic challenges as a result of the practices of the Israeli occupation, especially in Area 'C' and refugee camps. Palestinian policies do not meet the needs of the majority of citizens and are incapable of engaging youth in developmental plans and enhancing their participation in the political sphere. Current policies also failed to empower women and emphasize their right and ability to hold roles at the decision-making level within Palestinian institutions. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to develop a democratic state, one that ensures active citizenship and enhances the participation of women and youth. These efforts must include developing innovative tools to address obstacles that marginalized areas face and to maintain civil peace in the city of Jerusalem, as an attempt to preserve the Palestinian social fabric.

The conference promoted the participation of non-governmental institutions in developing plans for strengthening civil peace, taking on leading roles, in collaboration with the state's official bodies, to ensure active citizenship and maintain civil peace, which in turn promotes social cohesion, strengthens the rule of law and protects the Palestinian culture.

Within the opening session, five research studies were reviewed followed by the division of participants into working groups to discuss and analyze each research study separately. The participants aimed to come up with recommendations that address various challenges, relying on their own personal experiences.



In the first working group, Participants discussed the efficiency of Palestinian developmental plans in marginalized areas, such as: Area 'C', Jerusalem and refugees camps.

In the second working group, participants discussed the impact of media on civil peace while covering some occurrences related to the internal Palestinian division. They also discussed the interference of national security forces, peaceful strikes, political detentions, local elections, as well as other incidences that occur within Palestinian camps.

In the third working group, participants discussed the reasons behind the lack of participation of Palestinian youth and the obstacles that hinder them from assuming leadership roles in the political and developmental spheres and in decision-making processes.

In the fourth group, participants discussed the jurisdiction gaps in Jerusalem and their effect on maintaining Palestinian civil peace, as well as the challenges that obstruct the promotion of social cohesion in Jerusalem.

In the fifth group, Participants discussed the prospects for engaging women at the decision making level and the effects of the political participation of women on civil peace. Participants highlighted the necessity of developing a framework that promotes civil peace through collaborating with formal bodies to address the challenges and unite national efforts to achieve national liberation. Upon discussions among participants, the following recommendations were proposed:

First: Refugee camps and marginalized areas in National Development Plans

- The Palestinian National Authority and its competent institutions should benefit from prominent and successful international experiences in addressing the situations of marginalized regions and groups.
- To enhance the coordination between the UNRWA, DORA, and other state bodies in order to improve living conditions and enhance the responsiveness of the national development plans to the people's needs.
- To enhance the steadfastness and stability of citizens in Area C, Jerusalem and its surrounding areas near the separation wall through developing their living conditions and easing the access to various services.
- To increase budgets allocated to the Department of Refugee Affairs and projects within Refugee camps, and support for UNRWA should be provided politically and morally, to increase donations from donor countries.
- To provide support for civil society organizations working in the Palestinian camps to enhance the effective participation of citizens living

in the camps.

- To strengthen coordination with international institutions, UN institutions and other donors to develop Jerusalem and Area 'C' and enhance the steadfastness of the people under the occupation procedures.
- To enhance coordination between donors that are working in refugee camps in order to minimize overlap between them, provide better assess and address the needs of the people. In this regard, participants are calling to establish a donor cluster to identify donors that are specifically working in these areas.



Second: The Role of Media in Achieving Civil Peace in Palestine

- Calling for conducting a national conference that gathers all official and non-official media stakeholders to discuss mechanisms of developing professional media that promotes social cohesion and strengthens civil

peace. It is suggested that this may be done through producing a code of conduct that condemns incitement and partisan media.

- To urge the government to make stronger efforts in regulating the media sector by including it in the policy agenda and enacting relevant legislation, as well as developing the people's access to information .
- To call upon all parties to demonstrate patriotism and social responsibility by ceasing the use of media to exclude each other and instigate disputes among Palestinians.
- To urge the Journalists' Syndicate to maximize their efforts in raising the awareness on ways to maintain civil peace, such as combating passiveness and using appropriate media terminology.
- To urge civil society organizations to lobby and influence decision makers, political parties and media agencies to adopt anti-violence and anti-extremism strategies.

Third: Political Participation of Youth

- Provide youth leaders with open spaces and opportunities to express their interests and needs.
- Change the conditions of candidacy of the Election Law, mainly with regard to candidates' age, as it hinders youth from obtaining leading roles and from being active participants in political decision-making processes.
- Establish youth empowerment programs that not only provide theoretical training but also employ practical shadowing programs.
- As the lack of participation is considered one of the root causes that leads to violence and extremism, the participants urge NGOs to foster mobilization mechanisms to enhance social participation, which

contributes to supporting civil peace.

- The participants are urging the Ministry of Education and all educational institutions to increase classes that lead to the enhanced comprehension of the younger generations of the social and political context, developing their networking abilities and encouraging their engagement in social and political work.

Fourth: The Limitation of Jurisdiction in Jerusalem and its Impact on Civil Peace

- To urge Palestinian leadership to lead a comprehensive strategy and promotes alternative means to bridge jurisdiction gaps in Jerusalem district.
- To encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, mainly mediation and arbitration techniques, to properly resolve disputes between different Palestinian social components.
- To form elected neighborhood committees to support Palestinians in Jerusalem and to strengthen security in East Jerusalem.
- To establish a comprehensive framework for the services institutions operating in Jerusalem through a higher consultative council in coordination with the Jerusalem Governorate and the Jerusalem Affairs Unit. This framework shall be based on centralization of information and decentralization of implementation, as to minimize overlap between different actors and better respond to the people's needs.
- To advocate for building and developing the capacities of local government bodies to contribute to bridging the Palestinian mandate in designated areas, mainly Area 'C' and 'E1'.

- To develop social bridging programs capable of restoring the Palestinian collective identity and combating the estrangement and seclusion of Jerusalem.
- To call upon local governmental bodies (local authorities) to mobilize alternative mechanisms to enhance Palestinian jurisdiction in Area 'C'.



Fifth: The Responsiveness of General Policies towards Enhancing Women's Participation in Decision-making Processes

- To amend Palestinian Elections Law No. (9) Of 2005 to raise the representation of women and enhance the participation of Palestinian women in the electoral process.
- To enhance women's participation in decision making processes, and increase their representation in leadership roles especially in marginalized areas, Jerusalem, refugee camps and Area 'C'.

- To combat stigmatization, discrimination and domestic violence against women.
- To provide hotlines where women can reach out to for counseling and legal guidance in order to enhance women's protection, mainly in hard-to-reach communities and Area 'C'.
- To economically empower women to engage them in the income-generating process.

Final Participant Recommendations:

1. To combat the root causes of violence and crime as well as the necessity to strengthen the rule of law and judicial independence, providing it with the needed support to judge effectively.
2. Security bodies shall commit to appropriate legal protocols and procedures in dealing with different cases, and uphold the importance of not compromising judicial authority.
3. To engage women in the national dialogue to strengthen their role in the reconciliation negotiation committees.
4. To call upon donor countries and international organizations to form a body that coordinates services' provision to refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza strip (refugee donor cluster) to eliminate overlap and support interventions.
5. The Civil Peace Coalition Organizations are requested to expand the Coalition by engaging new institutions and organizations, to further develop the coalition's framework and to conduct deeper action research that helps decision-makers in this regard.
6. Launch a National Observatory for Civil Peace and the Rule of Law to follow up on policies, procedures and challenges that hinder the

achievement of civil peace.

Thank you!