



Side event on Yemen: Monday 6 March, 13:00-14:00 CET, Room XXII

Hosted by Luxembourg

Speaker: Nadia Gamal

Peace Track Initiative

The need for protecting women HRDs

I am Nadia Gamal, the Protection Coordinator with the Peace Track Initiative. I have been supporting women human rights defenders in the last couple of years.

During our work in protection for the last few years we were able to document, help and support 110 women human rights defenders, 57 of them were targeted by the Houthis mainly to suppress their perceived opposition voices. The cases we support were women humanitarian workers, artists, journalists, activists, political leaders, and human rights defenders etc,. We also supported women in areas under Government Control who were also a target for their civil work, one of which was shot down for providing shelter service for women survivors of violence. Most of the women HRDs we worked with and supported are going through different levels of violations from being attacked physically, digital attacks, and smearing campaigns which put more burden on their mental health and more determination to face those attacks targeting them.

The Human Rights violations and abuses in Yemen have reached a level that we have not witnessed before in our history.

Yemen already ranked last in the gender gap index as a result of institutional, social, and legislative discrimination against women.

Today, sexual and gender based violence are used as tools of war and to suppress Yemeni women.

As civil society, we have always advocated for a mechanism to document human rights.



In 2017, we mobilized more than 40 organizations to call for a joint mechanism for investigating and documenting human rights¹. We proposed a joint mechanism that is both national and international to ensure that there will be sustainability and we also urged that the mechanism work in complementarity with the national commission of inquiry.

We advocated that the mandate of the mechanism be drafted jointly with the Yemeni civil society to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of right holders in Yemen and that it is not used as a political tool. We called for effective partnerships with women led and feminist organizations to ensure that there is gender responsiveness.

The (Group of Eminent Experts) GEE was formed without taking into consideration our recommendations as civil society, although we voiced our concerns and aspirations in the informal consultations organized on the sides of the Human Rights Council².

When the first report was produced by the GEE, we expressed our disappointment in a joint statement of the Women Solidarity Network³.

As their first report missed on reporting the main human rights violations and abuses specially perpetrated by the Houthis including Taiz siege, the use of mines, Aden invasion in 2015, the radicalisation of education curriculum, and the looting of cash reserves of the Central Bank of Yemen.

The GEE also completely ignored reporting on the South self-determination calls.

They also were not able to find a good synergy with the National Mechanism of Inquiry under utilizing a mechanism that could have provided them with better national access in Yemen.

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<https://peacetrack.wordpress.com/2017/08/25/calling-for-establishing-international-commission-of-investigation-in-yemen/#more-106>

² <https://peacetrack.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/hrc-36-resolution-analysis.pdf>

³

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid024Vutn5uhXecg2ujiZEBY7eBVx4mYGLL6KKNLXwznPtaYUWYaxWy7QQY6rDWnn9l&id=1798620420210572&mibextid=l066kg&_rd_



While the learning curve with GEE was unnecessarily slow, as years progressed they came to respect us as civil society, they resorted to us to report on sexual and gender based violence, and their reporting on SGBV greatly improved in their reports specially in 2020.

They also referred cases of women in need of protection to us. We found ourselves overwhelmed as we had limited resources. Our protection programme has been growing in the last few years and we are currently developing a self referral for women human rights defenders protection services. However, there is much to be done.

The gap for protecting people in Yemen is not related to human rights documentation, the gap is in the protection services for human rights for accessing justice, protection grants and reparation, and for example, changing discriminative procedures of guardianships that deprive women from being released from prisons.

We hope the international community will pay attention to creating a comprehensive human rights system in Yemen. One that does not only focus on documenting violations and abuses but also supports national mechanisms sustainability, and empower civil society with resources and technical support to provide services of protection in Yemen.

Thank you!