The Role of Women in Peace building, Negotiation in Africa and Middle East: Libya case study

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ABSTRACT

Achieving peace on a global scale is the primary goal for which international and regional organizations have been established, most notably the United Nations. Major international powers, reports, and historical facts confirm that women are active in building peace. In our world today, with the beginning of the new millennium, crises are escalating at the international level. Where outbreak of wars and conflicts, especially in Africa and the Middle East, witness the Arab Spring revolutions and their outbreak in 2011 with the control of chaos and unrest that engulfed many countries and is still present and suffering from its effects until now, as the case in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Sudan with the control of terrorist groups and political Islam with an extremist ideology, where women face terrorism, and play an influential role in building peace.

The study aims to determine the role of international and regional organizations (UN and African Union) in strengthening the role of women in peace-building and describe the importance of the role of women in peace-building in Africa, discuss the suffering of women in conflict areas, and crises and their changing role in these situations in Libya and the main challenges they face.

Keywords: Women's role, peace-building, United Nations, African Union, negotiations, Libya

United Nations

The incident of the martyrdom of the Palestinian journalist "Shireen Abu Akleh" in May 2022 is considered to be the most recent and powerful example that confirms and reflects the role of women in the peace process and negotiations in areas of crisis and war, especially in the Middle East, Africa and the Arab world. According to UN News, (2022) The Secretary-General of the United Nations, "Antonio Guterres", he condemned the killing of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, saying, "I am appalled by the killing of journalist Shireen

Abu Aqlek, who was shot dead during its coverage of an operation carried out by the Israeli security forces in Jenin in the occupied West Bank", The United Nations emphasizes the role of women in peace-building processes and their practical efforts to maintain stability and international security, as well as the need for their formal participation in political life about their presence in society and

the importance of the tasks they perform. The United Nations Security Council, in its resolution no. 1325 of October 2000 emphasizes the role of women in peace processes. This resolution aims to address women's privacy and include them in security maintenance and peace-building processes, particularly in conflict areas, and to sensitize peace-keepers, police, and the judiciary to the privacy of women in conflict and to take measures to ensure their protection and commitment to the human rights of women and girls, address the unique needs of women and girls in conflict, support women's roles as military observers, civilian and humanitarian police, and human rights monitors, and represent women in societies witnessing armed conflict so that they can make their voices heard in the conflict resolution process and participate as equal partners at all levels of decision-making to prevent and resolve conflict and achieve sustainable peace.

Resolution UN notes the importance of empowering women to take the lead in preventing and resolving conflict and to participate effectively in addressing the impact of sexual violence and preventing violence against women through the promotion of women's rights, accountability and law enforcement, training, and capacity building necessary for gender equality.

The women, security, and peace agenda is also based on several Security Council resolutions, according to Political and Peace-building Affairs in UN "the most important of which is Resolution No. 1325 of 31. October 2000 on the Women, Security and Peace Agenda, followed by other resolutions, namely resolution 1820 of 2008, resolution 1888 of 2009, resolution 1889 of 2009 and resolution 1960 of 2010, resolution 2106 of 2013, resolution 2122 of 2013, resolution 2242 of 2015 and resolution 2467 of 2019 " , as well as the central intellectual premise of the Women, Security and Peace Agenda Strengthening the Role of Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict, which is based on four fundamental pillars, presented as follows:-

According to Aswad (2021) "The first is **participation**. The concept of participation means that women are fully involved in all areas, and this includes participation in public life in general, as well as participation in political affairs in all its dimensions, including political representation internally and externally, negotiation, and mediation in peace-building, such as negotiating a ceasefire in consultation with local government councils, demanding the release of prisoners, and negotiating with armed men to erect security barriers in some areas to allow access to aid and support materials.

Second, **prevention**: the concept of prevention means working to provide the moral and material components that provide women with resistance and immunization from violence and prevent recidivism and renewed violence, and that prevention stop harm to women in general and in the post-conflict period in particular. A healthy cultural and educational thinking and private and public education. This includes reforming the legislative structure aimed at raising the current level of prevention and broadening its scope.

Third, **protection**. Protection means ensuring the existence of moral and material components that safeguard women and girls in the face of potential violence in all its forms, so that they enjoy safety and security that is not inferior to, but should exceed, the safety and security that men face.

Fourth, **relief, recovery, and reconstruction**, that is, relief and recovery through the provision of services and measures of moral and material nature to address the impact of the moral and material damage inflicted on women in the context of conflict, many of which are ongoing in the post-conflict phase".

African Union

The African Union put in place numerous effective plans to accelerate action and efforts to end all wars, civil wars, and gender-based violence, prevent genocide, and emphasize the role of African women and girls as an integral part of the implementation of the overall road-map to end gun violence in

Africa, stress the need to include gender equality as a critical element in its implementation, She stressed the need to increase the participation of women and girls in prevention and intervention mechanisms for peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, noting that "the African Union has developed a master road-map for practical steps to silence guns in Africa, covering political, economic, social and environmental aspects." It is essential to significantly increase the participation of women in all these areas so that they can actively and effectively contribute to peace efforts."

According to AU 2020, "The African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs also point to the need to make meaningful efforts to increase the participation of women and girls in the peace and security agenda in society at the national, regional, and continental levels, and recognize that women and girls are the most affected by conflict and war and that their contributions and participation cannot be limited to symbolic roles. The AU also demonstrates its commitment to addressing current problems and new challenges for a stable and peaceful continent while implementing other gender-specific AU instruments" .

The role of women in Africa and the Middle East in building peace and managing crises

The role of women in Africa and the Middle East

Women in Africa and the Middle East play a solid and influential role in the peace process, participating in all aspects of life, and even running the country, managing conflict, and achieving peace and security at the local, national, and even regional and international levels. A success that is immortalized in history to the present, sometimes because she is a leader of her tribe or state, sometimes because she is part of the decision-making centers, and sometimes because she is a strong fighter.

The Studies have shown that Women have many titles "Babkr (2017), including "Sultana," "Queen," and "Free." In Islamic history, there are more than fifty women who ruled Islamic countries throughout history, starting with "Set al-Mulk", one of the Fatimid queens in Egypt who ruled at the beginning of the fifth century AH, to Queen. Asmaa" and Queen "Arwa" who ruled in Sana'a at the end of the fifth century AH, and "Zainab al-Nafrawi" in Andalusia, Sultana "Razia" who took power in Delhi in the middle of the seventh century AH, and "Shajarat al-Durr" who ruled Egypt in the seventh century " as many leaders have played an active role for women to serve their society and promote peace.

Africa and the Middle East witness numerous unrest and conflicts that have their roots and causes in various factors, some of which are ongoing crises in which women always play a remarkable role in building peace, such as in Sudan, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria, in addition to the crisis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is still the basis of the conflict in the Arab world, expanding its dimensions and impact. The numerous events in Africa and even the whole world keep showing the suffering of civil society, women, and children, the latest being the martyrdom of "Shireen Abu Aqilek" under international condemnation.

With the outbreak of coups and revolutions, including the revolutions of the Arab Spring, where stability is lacking in many countries in the region, such as Libya and other countries, including Yemen and Syria, women there live in a painful and turbulent condition, especially in terms of control of armed militias and terrorist groups, the goals of security and stability, deteriorating living conditions and control of extremist religious ideology Political Islam groups takes the reins of affairs, Stripping women of all rights and powers, thousands of women and children are brutally killed in armed conflicts, schools are closed, job opportunities disappear and life characteristics are lost, health care and lack of daily food for individuals become a bitter reality, so that some countries experience the most severe and worst humanitarian problems in the face of hunger, poverty, and ignorance, as reported from different countries.

Although women are directly and severely affected by the outbreak of conflicts and crises worldwide, they play a vital role in the peace process in Africa and the Middle East, especially in Libya. We note that women have long been doing vital work at the core of peace operations in many crisis areas. Some women negotiate with militias to free their children, and they create safe spaces in crisis areas to protect their communities and find corridors. They provide humanitarian aid to secure food supplies long before aid agencies arrive. Yet they are underrepresented in negotiations and the formal peace-building process, commensurate with their actual role, for many reasons, including social and political dimensions and others. Women face many challenges that become more difficult and problematic with the presence of conflict and unrest, and it becomes necessary to involve them directly in the peace-building process in its various aspects. This is what the United Nations and international forces support and demand through various mechanisms.

Libyan women have played an active and influential role since the outbreak of conflict and unrest with the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, which coincided with the Arab Spring revolutions, the control of armed militias with extremist ideology over several regions, and the commission of numerous brutal crimes that affect the painful reality of women. Women in political life and a constructive process with the support of the international community and the cooperation of national institutions, and this against a backdrop of intense regional and international mediation and continuous international efforts to restore security and stability in Libya through political and diplomatic means and away from military solutions that lead to destruction and thousands of innocent and civilian casualties, especially since Libya is an important hub and center for regional and even international security. In this way, many significant problems that could threaten global stability can be addressed, including terrorism that commits heinous crimes, the most dangerous of which are directed against women and children, illegal immigration, and many other problems.

International and national efforts to support the participation of Libyan women in building peace

Cooperation between the United Nations, international actors, and Libyan institutions to support women :

According to UN Women Arab Arab States, "Since its inception in Libya in 2018, UN Women has built strong partnerships with government institutions, civil society, women's groups, other UN agencies, development partners, and the media across the country to highlight the impact of the conflict on Libyan women and girls and the importance of their contribution to peace and security and the implementation of all aspects of the conflict. To support Libyan women's participation in peace, humanitarian, and reconstruction efforts and to address all forms of gender-based violence, UN Women works closely with all stakeholders to make a difference in four key areas, including Resolution 1325 Women's Leadership and Equal Political Participation; Women and Girls' Participation and Contribution to Resilience, Peace-building, and Crisis Prevention; Strengthening Libyan gender equality and women's empowerment laws and ensuring that the justice system addresses needs and considerations from a gender perspective, through various programs and initiatives, as well as training processes aim to disseminate and raise awareness of the need for women effective representation and participation in all areas. UN Women in Libya implements programs in line with UN Women's global strategic plan and promotes the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security plan in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders to promote women's active and meaningful participation in peace-building and the protection of their rights during and after conflict. The United Nations and its officials are working to increase women's political participation and leadership, particularly in the elections that will shape post-conflict Libya. This requires work on multiple fronts, working with all stakeholders to ensure that governance systems strengthen women's

participation and leadership, including young women and women with disabilities at the local and national levels. UN International reports state that key partnerships and actions in this priority area have led to significant achievements, such as women's participation in the Libyan Political Dialog Forum, which raised awareness of women's issues and led to the inclusion of a statement calling for a 30 percent quota of women in the unity government. Libyan women are indeed making great strides in their quest for equal participation and representation in the peace process. They have been the most affected since the beginning of the crisis and conflict, but they stand out for their awareness and eagerness to effectively participate and serve their community. According to UN Women Arab States. Since 2020, 17 women have participated in the Libyan Political Dialog Forum to build consensus on a unified governance framework and agreements to restore Libya's sovereignty and the democratic legitimacy of its institutions, including national elections to restore and consolidate security and stability. Five female ministers were appointed in the Transitional Government of National Unity, including the first woman to hold the post of foreign minister in Libya's history, representing confirmed and effective participation of Libyan women in political life.

UN Women also call for the inclusion of a gender perspective in political transition, conflict resolution, peace-building, and reconstruction efforts. These efforts aim to create an environment that enables women and girls to lead, participate in, and benefit equally from all aspects of the peace process. Civil society and stakeholders are conducting a social media campaign to raise awareness of the importance of the women, peace, and security agenda for a stable democratic future for Libya.

Several training programs are being conducted in which female executives participate. The most recent is the training conducted in the last two weeks on diplomatic and international engagement by the Libyan Women Peace-building Network and heads of state for civil society organizations, as well as training on international interaction strategies, diplomatic solutions, and influencing policy-making to achieve peace.

UN Women provides expertise and capacity to civil society actors, youth leaders, activists, and peace process advocates and supporters to engage in peace and stabilization efforts. For example, UN Women supports the Libyan Women Peace-building Network, a network of women representing a broad spectrum of Libyan women at social and political levels, from different generations and with different geographic distributions, to build their skills in conflict negotiation, mediation, and resolution. In this context, UN Women provided expertise. With the support of the Governments of Finland and Norway, the Ministry of Women's Affairs of the Libyan Government of National Unity will be tasked with developing a road-map for a national action plan to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Recognizing the importance of an inclusive, sustainable peace process that engages all stakeholders, UN Women supports youth organizations working to alleviate the plight of this generation and reduce gender inequality throughout Libya. UN Women provides training grants and scholarships to several youth organizations to enhance their skills and contribute to the country's peace and security process. In addition, UN Women organized several media training courses to improve the knowledge of journalists in Libya on gender-sensitive reporting and the women, peace, and security agenda in Libya.

The United Nations is also working effectively with the national community, stakeholders, and actors for the implementation of the international standards for women's rights and gender equality in Libya, and one of the critical initiatives to improve the implementation of the international standards for gender equality, to improve their knowledge of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and gender-based violence to improve the Libyan criminal justice response to such violations, UN women also support experts in Libya to develop a comprehensive road-map for a gender-based violence law in line with international human rights.

The Minister of State for Women's Affairs signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 2021 with the representative of UN Women on the development and adoption of the national plan to implement Security Council Resolution no. UN 1325 for women, peace, and security in Libya, for cooperation in areas aimed at maintaining peace, achieving stability, and safeguarding women's rights in a manner that does not conflict with the legislation or national laws of the State of Libya, and only the training aspects and activities, and aims to strengthen the framework of bilateral cooperation and joint actions in the framework of the implementation of the National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 UN for women, peace, and security in Libya.

The various challenges to Libyan women's participation in peace-building

Libyan women face many challenges that affect their participation in the peace-building process, the most important of which are:

Political situation

Amidst international and regional efforts in which several countries play a central role in spreading security and stability, implementing reconstruction plans, and countering attempts to destabilize security and stability, Libyan women experience change and respond to it through various mechanisms, the most important of which is their awareness and concern for their country and homeland and their desire to participate in the political process effectively and peace-building efforts. Despite multilateral efforts, there is a need to increase women's presence and representation in politics, humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution, and peace-building.

The main challenges that were faced by Libyan women while strengthening their political participation include power conflicts between several parties in the face of the tense situation that affects all aspects of life and economic and social conditions, threatening the intervention of the armed forces, as well as the deteriorating living conditions of society and women in particular. They are forced to stay at home, and their chances of participating in public life become very low.

Economic conditions

The economic sector is one of the most affected sectors. The country's infrastructure, which is the basis of economic activity, has collapsed, many jobs have been closed, the unemployment rate has increased, and the likelihood of women not being present in the labor market has multiplied. There were various reasons for this, including the social background, customs, traditions, and tribal thinking that prevail in society, which creates instability that limits women's ability to make new investments, and at the same time, stereotypical views on gender increase their unpaid care work and increase their economic vulnerability.

However, many new ideas represent investment opportunities specifically for women that meet the requirements of this stage and the needs of society, such as prostheses, technical ideas, and other means that help women to represent themselves in the labor market and achieve their economic empowerment, which national and international institutions seek for them.

Social situation

Social life in Libya and women's participation are linked to many aspects that go back to a long history related to the idea of Gaddafi rule and the formation and construction of Libyan society and its tribal composition, as well as restrictions on freedom of movement in work and the workplace. Restrictions on women's political participation are found not only in legal restrictions but also in social and cultural barriers and constraints. Sometimes, women are allowed to leave the house only after specific controls. This is related to the social situation and the control of tribal thought over certain areas in Libya, which limits their participation in life in general and in political participation in particular, as well as the control by armed groups and their presence in some areas, which poses a threat to women and their exit and participation in society.

One mechanism that affects social life is the media, which acts as a double-edged sword. When they function effectively and positively as a building mechanism, they serve as effective channels and tools for education, spreading awareness, and serving the community. We note that a number of women media practitioners in Libya are doing their media work under these circumstances, but also at the same time. We note that there are cases of violence against women in this field and in all political fields where they express the truth. The media is also often used as a deadly and misleading weapon for a society in these situations, and this is already happening in Libyan society, especially through "social media" that spreads false ideas and is used by Islamic political groups to stir up strife and unrest and spread populism, confusion, misinformation, and influence. This negatively impacts the lives of society in general, women in particular, and political participation. Community leaders, led by religious men, tribal elders and all so-called "reference groups," also play a prominent and effective role in influencing women's participation in peace processes.

Health Situation

With the outbreak of wars, crises, and conflicts, the level of health services for the community and especially for women and children decreases. Women's health services decrease with conflict and unrest in Libyan society. Nevertheless, women played an active role during this period as they contributed to the relief efforts and rescue of victims. Those exposed to violence and victims of armed attacks, especially given the presence of armed militias and their control over large parts of the country at the beginning of the crisis.

The dire humanitarian situation of the Libyan population is also exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the worst effects of which are being suffered by women and girls throughout the country, despite the ceasefire in 2020, but with the Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacting all aspects of life in Libya. The volatile political climate in Libya makes it challenging to provide development assistance, especially to vulnerable and marginalized groups and hard-to-reach communities, given the crisis that the major regimes have been unable to address effectively.

The dire humanitarian situation of the Libyan population is also exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the worst effects of which are being suffered by women and girls across the country, despite the ceasefire in 2020, but which is negatively impacting all aspects of life in Libya. Particularly with regard to women, who are the foundation of the family and society, the volatile political climate in Libya makes it difficult to deliver development assistance, especially to vulnerable and marginalized groups and hard-to-reach communities, in the face of a crisis that the major regimes have been unable to address effectively.

In addition, geographic dispersion continues to challenge efforts to consistently and equitably engage women from the west, east, and south of Libya. Engaging young men and women, especially young women, remains challenging due to discriminatory practices exacerbated by the pandemic, limiting their much-needed civic and political participation. The active participation of women and young men and women in elections would improve the daily lives of the entire Libyan population and shape the future Libya for all its citizens. The impact of these crises on the complex and disproportionately extended humanitarian protection situations for vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, and women with disabilities, especially women, will be multiplied.

CONCLUSION

Women in Africa, the Middle East, and Libyan women have a special awareness, play an important role in the peace process, and have participated in all aspects of political and economic life, in addition to their social role. And education to form a conscious society that can cope with the many and varied challenges, especially at the time when Libya is experiencing significant changes amid an international arena that is fraught with changes and urgent issues that require concerted efforts of all efforts and the presence of women as a practical

and essential era in the development, development, and renaissance of society and the achievement of international peace and security.

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