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Committees news



Photos That Can Speak



A Photography Gallery in Salqeen



Report

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Victims of Violence or Perpetrators of It

Social Customs and Traditions, For or Against?

Justice and Injustice



Many words, terms, and phrases are said while discussing women's social reality but there's never a way out.

Whether we are victims of some kind of violence or perpetrators of it, we need to stop, examine and analyze this reality.

Whether we agree or disagree on practicing social and family violence, we as females need to picture some real life examples of gender-based violence and go deep into its details and then we'll of course feel the amount of pain that had to be endured by all females in the world including ourselves.

Arguments start the moment we ask: «When's the best age for a girl to get married?»... and the same arguments continue till after the moment of celebrating an underage girl who was married with her own will or because her parents forced her to do so.

Arguments also include women's right of real participation in a society which never respects its laws when it comes to ensuring all other women's rights. Real participation means, at least, that sisters should have the same privileges as brothers within the one family.

This is a piece of our monthly news which is reported by women who live the bitter-sweet life and experience moments of success and failure.

Nivin Hotary



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Celebrating International Women's Day

The Sub-Committee of Women Support Unit

Committees news

We believe in the importance of shedding light on the Syrian active women in northern Syria in addition to sharing their success stories and the work implemented by them. So, the Sub-Committee of Women Support Unit coordinated with the Day After Organization and held a celebration event on the occasion of International Women's Day. The event was attended by 30 people including male and female representatives of different organizations and syndicates, and they all talked about the challenges that face women in northern Syria.

A concentrated discussion session was held by the Day After Organization for the Syrian active women, and the session included talking about success stories of female survivors. Then, it resulted in the following recommendations:

- Working on providing an environment that suits women's work.
- Intensifying efforts to establish a women's gathering of a large number of female activists.
- Working on finding internal systems that take into consideration the gender-sensitive issues.
- Actual activation of women's role instead of excluding them.



Gender-Based Violence

A session in the Sub-Committee of WSU in Bza'a

Committees news

“ With the aim of clarifying some of the relevant concepts to female gender and increasing the level of experience and knowledge which contribute to enhancing women's practical and social life, and in cooperation with Mercy Without Limits Organization, the Sub-Committee of Women Support Unit in Bza'a held a training entitled: «Gender-Based Violence».

The training was divided into three sessions. Session one was initiated by differentiating between sex and gender. The trainer introduced some of the violence concepts and types like: (physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional violence in addition to deprivation from opportunities, resource, and services). She also talked about its reasons and factors that contribute to violence like wrong upbringing and wrong understanding of religion, poor educational attainment, security status, social customs and traditions, drinking alcohol, poverty and others.

The session was concluded with a reminder of some relevant guidelines to gender-based violence which are: respect, secrecy, safety, security, and non-discrimination.



Syrian Women in Bza'a before and during the Syrian Revolution

Committees news



“ Syrian women faced many difficulties and challenges before the Syrian revolution and this is still the case until the present day. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Syrian revolution, the Sub-committee of Women Support Unit in Bza'a held a dialog session entitled: «Syrian Women in Bza'a before and during the Syrian Revolution» to shed the light on these challenges. The session was attended by members of the Unit in Bza'a and a representative of the local council.

The session was initiated with a description of the Syrian women's reality before the revolution and during it. Talks included the most significant challenges that faced women like the social customs and traditions, the society's disapproval of women's employment, and the low number of women holding political and administrative positions. The invitees participated in writing recommendations related to their visions of Syria after the revolution and the importance of women's role in Syria in the future.

A celebration for Mothers of the Martyrs in Jarablus

Committees news



In honor of their sacrifice and tribute, the Sub-Committee of Women Support Unit in the city of Jarablus organized a celebration on Mother's Day under the title: «Mother of a Martyr, We Are Your Children». The celebration was held in hall of Jarablus local council, and a number of martyrs' mothers were invited to it.

One of the women made a speech through which she congratulated martyrs' mothers, condoled them, and referred to the grief and sadness that these mothers feel after losing

their children. She also asserted on continuing in the track of the Syrian revolution.

The celebration was concluded by displaying a promotional video with photos of the martyrs during the Syrian revolution.



An Event on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Syrian Revolution with the Participation of Women in Qabbasin

Committees news



Since the Syrian revolution started, Syrian women had their own revolutionary style as they participated in organizing many peaceful demonstrations in different places in Syria in addition to their significant role in the health field and recently in the media.

There's no doubt that Syrian women proved the importance of their participation on all levels and in making a success of every work socially or institutionally.

In cooperation with Ihsan Organization, the Sub-Committee of Women Support Unit in Qabbasin organized a celebration on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Syrian revolution. Members of the Committee and many local women participated in the celebration by praising this event, condemning the illegitimate Assad regime, and calling for freedom of the male and female detainees. In addition, they discussed women's reality during the Syrian revolution and the challenges they face like the violations practiced and the misery of loss, poverty, displacement, and violence. They also discussed framing women's roles in some societies and they emphasized on their opposing attitude to all of these violations.

Constitution and Women's Rights

Report

Moving towards justice and democracy in Syria requires preparing the Syrian people to establish a democratic constitution that guarantees rights of both sexes which is also a right that mustn't be overlooked.

Supported by the Day After Organization, Qatra for Humanity Team held a pioneer training inside Syria about «The Harmonized Constitution from a Gender-Based point of View». The general objectives of the training were: shedding the light on the most important points that must be taken into consideration in the new Syrian constitution, getting the participants' recommendations in order to raise them later to the Constitutional Committee, and raising the political awareness of both sexes.

The training was held in Cloud Home Center in Al-bab, and it came in a series of ١٠ sessions; ٥ sessions for ٥٠ women and the same for ٥٠ men in each area. The training concentrated on the following topics: (a general definition of the constitution, the democratic constitution, the concept of ensuring legitimate women's rights in the constitution in general and in the Syrian constitution in particular, and the most important factors that must be available to adopt a constitution).

Interviews were made with some of the trainees. Laila Al-Khalil, ٢٢ years old, said: «Such trainings have a great role in spreading political awareness and familiarizing women with their political rights, which were neglected because of the masculine constitutional contents. The governance system in Syria in the future will be democratic and this system will be elected by the people. (People) means men and women, so there must be equal rights for both of the sexes. We, the women, are aware of our political rights and we know we make an essential building block of the new Syria. So, the number of such trainings must be increased. Women's role in the political field and especially during this stage of establishment mustn't be neglected anymore. I also demand that the new constitution prevents the social, physical and economic violence against women and that it also prevents marriage of female minors.

The constitution should also impose punishments in cases of school drop-out until girls have at least completed their secondary school. These might be new and odd laws, but they are enough to protect women and ensure their rights. What I want to tell the Syrian women is that there have been always women's rights but the corrupt Assad regime along with the society have deprived these rights. We mustn't be weak in confronting the outdated tradition and customs and the masculine society. We must fight until we can play an effective role in the new Syria».

Ihsan Alkhedr is a ٣٥ year old woman from Al-Bab city and she is one of the trainees. She said: «We have an effective role in the society and we hope that through our discussions we can reach to some outcomes that can be later raised to the Constitutional Committee. Women's rights must be ensured in the constitution because women make an integral part of the Syrian people and they have the right to participate in the social and political process. We've played a remarkable role in the popular movement and we're still seeking to prove ourselves in the society. I believe in the importance of increasing these workshops because Syria is moving towards a transitional stage, and people's demands must be taken into consideration while drafting the constitution. I would like to encourage women to keep going and never give up on demanding their rights which must be included within the new Syrian constitution because women make the base of the society as they are responsible for raising generations. Women's participation in the political life is really necessary because during the ten years of revolution, they have proved how adaptable and strong they are».



The Syrian Revolution is 10 years old now and I'm still alive!

Report

About ten days ago, I was asked: «on the 10th anniversary of the Syrian revolution what would you like to say to the Syrians?» I got into a spiral of ideas and people's faces... I pictured Abdulqader Alsaleh, Yousuf Aljader, the enthusiastic Abdulbaset Alsaroot, Suaad Alkayari and her writings, the physicist Faten Rajab and her friend Muna Muhammad who were both detained and then killed in the Assad's prisons. I also pictured the peaceful Ghiath, Hamza with torture marks on his body, Tareq and his songs, Masha'el declaring his opposition to the regime, Obaida with his camera, Fadwa and Mai, Ibrahim Qashoosh and his cheers to which we would interact with high spirits, the honest revolutionary Basel Shhada, Trad and his concerns about documenting the Assad's crimes, Raed Alfares and his wonderful banners, Khaled Aleissa and Kafr Nabl, and even Abeer, the engineer student who was killed in Idlib by the Assad's planes.

They all rushed to my memory as if they were waiting for my answer to do justice to them...!

Dear Lord, you know that we see them as our role models who sharpen our spirits to keep going in the path of the Syrian revolution with its primary principles. They are the reason why we're still determined, and we're the unripe seeds of their aspirations. We're exhausted and we need their support and motivation to continue in this life yet we're still doing our best to see light at the end of the tunnel.

The detainees' screams keep resounding in our heads a hundred times to wake us up...

We still memorize our first cheers and revolutionary terms...



Fear and tension still attack our heart at the memory of detaining the Syrian revolutionaries.

Picturing the Syrian martyrs is still like a chunk in the throat...

What changes do demonstrations make? Why are we still attached to them until now?

Maybe because they take us back to the first moments of the Syrian

revolution or because they were the detainees and martyrs' guilt or even because they express the anger deep inside us...

No one can mute us and we will protest for the sake of the martyrs who passed away for this revolution. We will protest because the revolution is 10 years old now... 10 years passed and the Syrians are still unable to see light at the end of the tunnel...

Backstage

Opinion Article

Dear men,

Do you have a problem cleaning stains and take a long time to get rid of them?

We have the solution for your problem. Our product was made especially to ensure your relaxation and soft hands.

We hardly ever see an advertisement that addresses men, especially when it comes to advertising things related to household chores.

On the other hand, advertisements mostly address women and deepen the stereotype that the woman is the only person in the house who has to do housework with all its burdens and responsibilities. Yet, society never takes these burdens into consideration and looks at them being a part of women's life.

On Mother's Day, companies make offers on household appliances only as if these could be the only possible gifts given to mothers on their day to link the word «women» with the picture of her doing housework, forgetting that women are human beings with independent entities and that they can practice life outside their homes.

Advertising contributes to the promotion and consolidation of stereotyping women within one frame, and society plays a role as well in keeping women busy inside their homes. If we concentrate on the contents of these advertisements, we would see the same scenario; women who always have a difficulty getting rid of hard stains and not happy with the results of some product, or women who are busy in the kitchen trying to discover the best cleaning way they can adopt.

When women in the Arab countries are asked: «What do you do?», they would answer: «Unluckily I don't have a job. I am a housewife» and you would feel their embarrassed intonation while saying these words. Although they do all the housework, teach their children, make sure that they meet the needs of every family member, and they create a suitable atmosphere for study at the expense of their own time and ambitions, these women don't look at all the tasks and responsibilities they have in a positive way.

Women's responsibilities differ inside and outside the house. But because we're living within a capitalist society, women's efforts are lost because of they don't earn money in return.

Financial independence has many advantages but women's duties doesn't finish once she has stepped out of her working place because many other household duties will be waiting for her.

Helping women in the house is a difficult task for men who believe that household chores are not a joint responsibility and that taking

part in it will make them look less macho.

It's worth mentioning that burdens and challenges faced by women increase due to the revolutionary and displacement reality, and women who have no breadwinner find themselves forced to play the two roles within the one family; a housewife and a breadwinner.

The economic and social conditions contributes to saving women's time and effort, so for example families with high income can support their women with modern household appliances. On the other hands, in poor families women have to do the washing manually because they can't afford having a washing machine and as a result too much time and effort is wasted.

Simone de Beauvoir says: «one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman»

Everyone contributes in framing women's role to include only the housework. Girls and women are not born with an extra level of genes or hormones that make them only concerned about cleaning all the house and caring about it. It's the social stereotypes imposed on them that make them concentrate on what to do inside the house. So, companies compete in advertising for their cleaning products that come with special offers and excellent features to occupy women's minds with the idea that once they use one of those products, the results will be amazing.

Society takes it for granted that women dream of nothing but being mothers, and so it imposes certain roles on women and make them believe that these roles are their major tasks; and what contributes in exploiting women and make them economically fragile is that those tasks are unpaid.



Portrait

Age is just a number... it's the soul which does all the learning and working.

Yusra, a 42 year-old displaced woman from Eastern Ghouta, is a mother of three children. She has a sociable and



After completing her secondary school, she specialized in dressmaking, and then she worked as a trainer in the same field in the centers of WSU for many years. Moment of displacement was the most difficult and most painful in her life, but it was the turning point in her life and changed her from a weak woman to a strong one.

She didn't give up to the reality of war and displacement that was imposed on her. She improved herself on many levels; she has attended many intensive trainings, she worked in many fields, and she participated with many voluntary teams in implementing humanitarian relief activities and awareness campaigns. Now she is working as a coordinator and she's had the chance to participate with us in Akhbaruna (Our News) as a correspondent in Afrin. This experience added to her life and helped her be familiarized with the media and press fields and also encouraged her to attend a lot of relevant trainings, which enriched her knowledge and widened her cultural horizon.

Yusra is also interested in politics and she used to be a member of the Justice Network while now she is a member of the Women Political Network.

She said: "I hope I can make a success through my work with Akhbaruna (Our News), and I hope that our news become broadcasted internationally"

Underage Marriages

Social Habits That End in Human Disaster

Report

Surrounded by four white-painted walls and the smell of alcohol, Reem spends the last days of her pregnancy. The fetus she carries inside her feels like a burden carried by a ٩٠ year-old woman. In fact, she still a teenager who hasn't completed her ١٥ years old.

She came to hospital after having a violent fight with her husband which resulted in making her a divorced woman, in addition to the psychological shock she went through because of the verbal abuse her husband addressed her with in front of all residents of their neighborhood after she discovered his infidelity.

Reem, a ١٥ year-old girl, is from Eastern Ghouta. Her mother made her marry a man in his thirties; an ex-husband with two children. Reem's mother found herself responsible for four children, the oldest of who was ١٢ years old. Her husband died and she had nobody to support her or care for her children especially in the disastrous conditions of war. Life was difficult with the hunger, shelling, and seize that prevailed in the area.

Some local bodies would help in providing the children's needs, but that help was too little and it was permanent; as it would stop once the children are ١٤ years old.

Reem grew up, and at the age of ١٥ she realized that her lonely mother had no job or money to support them or protect them from the sever conditions of life.

Suddenly, a man showed up. He was a divorcee who prevented his ex-wife from her children and kept them in his custody. He proposed to Reem after he promised to support her mother and saves her and her family from the poverty and hunger they lived in. He also promised that he will be the best husband Reem could ever have.

٦ years of neglect, disappointment, and verbal and physical violence. That was the shape of life Reem which lived with her husband.

He terminated every glimpse of hope and killed the sense of childhood and innocence in her. His misbehavior distorted all the beautiful and natural images of marital life. He shot the door in the face of every future opportunity



and made every beginning she might have exhausting and next to impossible.

Reem is an example of thousands girls who had to be married during the extreme conditions of war and in which we can never tell who the guilty person was. It's the community that doesn't guarantee women's rights; no laws, no ideals or morality, ignorance, and painful war conditions.

In spite of the laws that prevents underage marriage, the Syrian society has too many examples of forced marriage in which traditions and customs play a great role and made it common within all the Syrian components.

We interviewed female activists in the civil society of Afrin and most of them asserted that underage marriage is not acceptable in the Kurdish community because girls have to complete their studies first then they can get married. There used to be a very low percentage of Kurdish families who would allow underage marriage, but unfortunately due to the long years of war. Out of fear and worry, families have started to stop sending their daughters to schools and make them marry instead and this was one of the reasons why the average of divorce has increased.

Afista, (a nick name), is a ٢١ year-old woman who was married to one of her relatives and now she has three children the oldest of who is ٥ years old. Her husband is a ٢٢ year-old irresponsible and dependent man. The husband's family made him marry Afista hoping that he would give up his carelessness and man up. But Afista was sure later that divorce is the only solution for her miserable life because she couldn't tolerate struggling alone for the sake of her family while her husband enjoys irresponsibility.

It's worth mentioning that CSOs in Afrin are working on a series of awareness campaigns to fight this phenomenon in



addition to holding protection trainings that target girls and familiarize them with their rights through visiting schools and implementing various activities in the cultural centers where girls go to. CSOs always cooperates with the active organizations in the field of protecting women.

A Heart of Pain and Hope

Stories



Strong will and determination were the means with which she faced life and confronted its pains. She experienced violence and went through many sufferings, and only then she realized that challenges make the nucleus of success.

«I was unlucky and I couldn't complete my study. I was married at a very young age and now I'm a mother of four children aged: ٦, ٩, ١٠, and ١٢». This was what Sabrin Sadeq, a ٢٨ year-old woman from Kafr Takharim in Idlib, said. Her marital life was very miserable, and disappointment was clear on her face. She was married for ١٣ years and she had to endure all forms of violence as her husband used to burn her body and beat her leaving broken bones. Once he tried to slaughter her right in front her children's eyes, the thing that made them go through a psychological trauma. Sbarin was afraid of losing her children and of the way society would treat her once she gets divorced so she preferred to keep silent and endure her husband's abuse.

She said: «I used to tolerate all that much of pain for the sake of my children but he tried to kill me I decided to put an end to that marriage. If he had killed me that day, he would have accused me of infidelity to justify his crime»

After divorce things weren't much better because Sabrin had to face many challenges the most difficult of which were the negative attitude of society towards divorced women and that her husband took away her children and prevented her from the right of keeping their custody. This made Sabrin depressed and isolated, but later she knew she had to overcome that

stage of her life and rise up again to make it up to the things she couldn't have before. Sabrin didn't give to her new conditions nor acted as a broken woman. Rather she decided to break all barriers that would face her and tried to be indulged in the society again.

«At first, I worked as a hairdresser and then as a dressmaker. Then I attended many trainings and I volunteered with the Starting Point Team, which is a voluntary team that fights all forms of violence, so that I could help as many abused women as possible. I also attended some psychological support sessions». This was how Sabrin described her first steps into the field of work.

«From emotional failure to professional success»

A while after she had volunteered in many activities, Sabrin was invited to an art training. Her ١٢ paintings were displayed for the first time in a gallery in Kafr Takharim, then in Azaz, and finally outside Syria.

«Separated not divorced»

Sabrin doesn't like it when people describe her using the word «divorced» and she would always use the word «separated» when she's asked about her marital status because according to her separation was a decision made by her. «I'm not a divorced woman. I'm a woman who fought humiliation and offence. Being separated didn't worsen my life, and now I'm working with a voluntary team to make children happy and draw smiles on their faces; I like this job because I see my children through them».

Sabrin is an independent woman, and the life she started to live is based on integrity. Her financial status prevents her from reaching to her children and this was the reason why she established a voluntary team in her home city and she hopes that with the money she makes, she will be able to bring her children to live with her. Yet, the negative social look of divorced women and the lack of moral and material support stand as obstacles in making Sabrin find a decent job that can ensure her a decent life with her children.

A Photography Gallery in Salqeen

Report



Within the events that are hold in free northern Syria and in the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Syrian

revolution, Mazaya Organization for Women held a photography gallery in Salqeen in the countryside of Idlib. The aim with gallery was to document women's participation in the voluntary movement and convey women's sufferings for a complete decade.

Syrian women have always symbolized the revolutionary struggle through participating in the peaceful protests and the demonstrations that called for bringing the Assad regime's down. In addition, many of them experienced detaining, torturing, and forced disappearance in the regime's prisons.

Lama Muhammad Al-Abbadi is a ٣٠ year-old woman from Jisr Al-shughur. In spite of the hearing disability she has, her smile adorned the pictures that were displayed on walls of the gallery.

Her father said: «Lama took up painting when she was only ٤. She couldn't complete her study because there were no schools that would give care to a student with such disability. But Lama learned to draw and paint, and the late artist (Adnan

Kadrash) helped her improve her painting skills. She also attended intensive trainings in the cultural center in Idlib. The first exhibition of her pictures was held in ٢٠١١, and then she participated in ٧ other galleries in different areas of free Syria».



(Hikayati / My Tale) in Jisr Al-shughur was the last gallery that she participated in. The gallery also included reciting a poem entitled: (Here We Promise Again), in addition to a speech that was made by a Syrian active woman who was previously detained by the Assad regime and in which she described her bad sufferings in imprisonment.

«I am every woman, and every woman is me» are the words that make the motto which Ghalia al-Rahhal, CEO of Mazaya Organization, believes in. she said: «Being displaced and previously detained women in addition to being martyrs» mothers, have made us fight and take the initiative to renew our promise and stay at the forefront of the Syrian revolution . In the beginning, we could, as Syrian women, convey our voices on a large scale, but the military escalation made us step aside partially. Today, in the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Syrian revolution, we have proved that we are active, efficient, and non-marginalized women. In spite of all the obstacles and challenges we faced, nothing could discourage us. We have the right to take part in every event and we must fight until peace and security prevails in the area so that the next generation lives freely in a free and democratic Syria».

Written by: Yusra Haidar



Photos That Can Speak

Talents

«Little journalist» is the nickname that always motivates me to keep practicing my hobby in photography.

Fatima Darweesh is a 25-year old woman from Bza'a in the northern countryside of Aleppo. After finishing her secondary school, she hoped she could join the faculty of law, but due to the difficult circumstances including the transportation, she couldn't, and now she works as a teacher in one of the schools in Bza'a.

Fatima took up her hobby 3 years ago, and she has a passion for photographing every beautiful and distinguished things she sees especially natural views like the sky on a sunny or a cloudy day and the different kinds of trees. She feels that these views have souls and that they affect her. She also takes photos of whatever catches her eyes even if it's a glass of water or a cup of coffee, so you find her always ready to document moments of her life by taking photo at any time and everywhere.

Fatima feels proud and happy when her co-workers depend on her in documenting all the events and

activities implemented at school in addition to all the family celebration. This makes her always motivated to practice her hobby and improve it.

She doesn't earn any money in return of the photos she takes because she doesn't have a hi-tech camera but rather she uses her mobile phone in photography. She hopes that someday soon she will have her own camera and she also hopes she can attend photography training courses so that she can improve herself. The problem is that her city lacks this kind of trainings and workshops and she can't travel to attend them in other cities. She depends on social media to post her remarkable photos and people who follow her web pages always react with all her posts. She's always hoped she could organize her own photo gallery to show people the photos she has taken for years but unfortunately her phone broke down and she lost most of its contents.

Fatima aspires to work as a professional news

photographer with one of the media agencies, and she's working on being the first journalist in her city because she believes in the importance of women's role in covering all the events and activities especially those related to women. Women feel much comfortable dealing with female media professionals than male ones because they can understand each other within their conservative society.

"I have passion for art in general. I'm talented at painting and writing in addition to photography. Also write short stories and I've recently finished writing (Policewomen Who Broke the Social Chains). Art to me is like a garden full of flowers; each has its own color and special fragrance. Art is so; each branch of it is special with its unique beauty".



“ Who we are:



Women Support Unit is a civil society organization, concerned with the women related issues (affairs) and seeks to empower them politically, economically, socially and culturally alongside to meet their needs.

Vision:

To create a healthy community in which women are empowered and able to contribute to bulding the community and facing the challenges in partnership with the men.

Mission:

Women Support Unit targets the women who are facing difficulties regarding playing their optimal role in the society and seeks to empower the women in the Northern and Eastern countryside of Aleppo politically, socially, economically and culturally.



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