

Al-Haq Center concludes two trainings on Engaging with UN women's rights treaty bodies

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In cooperation and support of the *Italian Development Cooperation Unit at the Consulate General of Italy in Jerusalem*, Al-Haq Center for Applied International Law concludes two training workshops on:

Women's Empowerment and Local Development: Engaging with UN women's rights treaty bodies



On 28-4-2015, and in the framework of the project titled "*Women's Empowerment and Local Development (WELOD 3)*", funded by the Italian Development Cooperation Unit at the Consulate General of Italy in Jerusalem, Al-Haq Center for Applied International Law (Al-Haq) concluded two training workshops for two groups of women and men from Qalqilya and Jericho and Jordan valley governorate.

The objective of the two workshops was to provide 50 women representatives of local civil society, who are the beneficiaries of the workshops, with more in-depth knowledge and information on the applicable international and domestic legal standards concerning human rights and, in particular, women's rights.

The two workshops aimed at empowering women on their role as representatives of civil society in supporting Palestinian institutions for the promotion of governmental policies' change and legislation reforms which respond to the real needs and priorities of Palestinian women, and to enhance the role of women's civil society in their dialogue with Palestinian institutions on matters concerning the protection and promotion of human rights.

The first workshop was held on 12th March 2015 at Tawasol Center in Qalqilya, and the second one was held on 28th April 2015 at the Jericho Municipality Hall in Jericho city. Both workshops included delivering a training for 42 women and men who are activists and defenders of women's rights and workers in women and youth associations in Qalqilya and in the Jericho and Jordan valley areas, in addition to workers from the public sector engaged in women rights. The focus of the training was on the question of Palestine accession to numerous international human rights treaties and conventions, and in particular on Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and how to benefit from such accession, as well as the importance of joining other international treaties, in particular those relating to human rights in general and to women's rights in particular.

The beneficiaries of this training showed positive reaction to its content and expressed their belief in the importance of this meeting. Also, they seemed to have a great interest in gaining more knowledge on the ICC and the importance of recognizing the nature of the court and its jurisdiction, and whether

it is actually possible to prosecute leaders of the Israeli occupation, or that the ICC will be subject to political criteria and the balance of power in the world.

It is worth mentioning here that the participants expressed their frustration over the United Nations and its various organs due to the fact that Israel, the occupying Power, has been and will remain above the reach of international law.

As to the content of the training, the focus was on introducing the participants to the importance of the Palestinian move to join these agreements, as well as the ICC, its nature and importance to the Palestinian people in the future. Also, the training draw the participants attention to a number of international human rights conventions and treaties, especially those related to women's rights, paying a special attention to Palestine's most important obligations under these agreements, namely: enforcement of such conventions and treaties locally and adapting Palestinian legislations and regulations to meet such obligations thereof.

At the end of the workshop, the participants spoke about the importance of this training workshop, stressing on the need to have more of such trainings and to expand participation to include as many as possible of civil society organizations, especially those engaging with the youth in Qalqilya, as well as working to increase awareness of the human rights system and the rights of women in Palestinian society through schools, institutes and universities, and the need to raise awareness among young people of the Palestinian human rights issues.

The second training workshop, which was held on 28th April 2015 at the Jericho Municipality Hall in Jericho, targeted 34 women representing activists and defenders of women's rights and workers of women and youth associations in Jericho and the Jordan valley areas, in additions to workers from the public sector engaged in women rights. In the training, a special attention was given to the status of women under the international human rights instruments, especially with regard to women's political, civil, economic and social rights. Also, the training focused on the obligations of the State of Palestine under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women "CEDAW" following Palestine's accession to this Convention and to other human rights conventions.

In the training, the trainees showed positive reaction and active participation in the discussions, expressing their views and thoughts that such a training, the issues and topics discussed are very important to them, and that knowing these rights are a crucial matter for both women and men.

Another important issue that was raised by the participants in the training was the importance and the need to adapt the Palestinian legislations and laws to comply with these agreements, to empower individuals to benefit from such instrument through the provision of domestic remedies by the national institutions and courts, and for the citizens to enjoy these rights provided for under these instruments.