

# A Word from our Director

**Lina Abirafeh**

All the articles that appear in this issue were originally accepted for publication in 2016.

This special issue of *Al-Raida* is a part of the Capacity Building for Law Enforcement Personnel on Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response project that was generously funded by the Dutch Embassy. It is a product of nearly two years of work, commitment, and collaboration between the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW), the Dutch Embassy, the General Security, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), and our civil society partners in Lebanon. Together, we took on the issue of Security Sector Reform (SSR), targeting issues related to gender-based violence prevention and response, through the development of a training course curriculum addressing various topics, international standards, and best practices for this type of work in Lebanon.

Security Sector Reform is a notoriously difficult field to work in, especially in countries as politically fragmented and resource-depleted as Lebanon. The lack of political will and financial resources, alongside heteronormative gender practices continue to relegate gender equality and “women’s” issues to a secondary status in eyes of policy-makers and government officials. Taking on this challenge could not have been possible without the commitment of our donor as well as the General Security (GS) and the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) leadership and participants, our civil society expert trainers, and the entire team of IWSAW. This effort is a continuation of the Institute’s long history of commitment to supporting the security sector in driving forward change for women in Lebanon.

This issue offers rare insight to SSR, and shows that reform is possible, built on shared feminist values and open collaboration between partners – particularly civil society and the security sector. As the Editorial discusses, the issue will provide details of the trainings themselves, including topic selection and curriculum development, alongside research and critical reflections by both civil society activists and ISF personnel on the status of SSR more broadly in Lebanon, as well as what is needed going forward. Such analyses apply not only to Lebanon, but to the Arab region more broadly, and perhaps to any country struggling to reform patriarchal institutions.

The publication of this issue is part of the Institute’s long history of work dedicated not only to SSR, but to the broader Women, Peace and Security Agenda mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). In 2016, the

Institute hosted another international conference called Towards Prioritizing Women, Peace and Security on the Arab Agenda, in collaboration with UNESCWA and KVINFO, the Danish Centre for Research and Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity. The three-day conference focused on the importance of institutions as implementers of UNSCR 1325, specifically national women's machineries, and discussed the current experiences of civil society organizations across the Arab region implementing UNSCR 1325. The conference culminated in a powerful call for a new paradigm on Women, Peace and Security in the Arab region, and produced the Beirut Call to Action that registered the signatures of participants in support of this important new work.

The Beirut Call did not go unanswered: Lebanon has made a number of advancements in the field of women, peace, and security since the beginning of this project. Most importantly, NCLW continues to lead the development of Lebanon's very first National Action Plan, which will serve as an accountability framework for the Lebanese government, including fiscal obligations and rigorous monitoring, in relation to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000). These conversations don't exist in isolation. Women cannot be part of peace or security without reform of the security sector itself. This is a long commitment, but Lebanese women are now joining military and police forces more than ever before. The growing visibility of women in these positions is further supported by civil society actors – like those discussed in this issue, and the Institute itself – who continue to provide guidance and technical support in the form of trainings, information, and campaigns.

*Al-Raida* has always been a pioneer, and in this spirit this issue pays homage to our shared commitment to women – in fulfilment of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and beyond. As we know all too well, peace is not possible without women. We are inspired by this work, and look forward to greater successes as we advance.

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