

Policy Paper
Action Strategies and Plan
Conference of the Jordanian Women's Union
Session 2021-2024

The policy paper includes a reading of the reality of problems and obstacles facing the Jordanian Women's Union in achieving its goals. Since our vision is to confront all forms of discrimination against women, the economic, cultural and political contexts that affect all Jordanians necessarily affect the reality of women, as well as Arab reality and context. At every stage, challenges facing Arab and Jordanian women and their impact on them and their society are read, as we are a national organization that seeks equality for women as well as for all citizens, on the basis that the issue of women is a national issue.

National level:

Our country, as well as the countries of the world, has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and its mutations, which have claimed millions of lives worldwide and affected countries' economies. Women have been an important part of the crisis; reports indicate that there has been an increase in the frequency of domestic violence caused by closures in many countries for varying periods. This is according to the statements made by the Director of the Family Protection Department, who indicated that there is an increase of 33% compared to the previous year.

COVID-19 pandemic is not the only crisis that has affected our beloved country, we know that Jordan is the meeting point of the inflamed triangle of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, and is directly affected by what is happening in these countries either by geography or by the interlocking social fabric.

Both official and popular Jordan has always been opposed to the deal of the century and the subsequent Israeli actions on the ground, which have been reflected in the daily attacks on Jerusalem. Jordan, together with the Jordanian Women's Union, has maintained custodianship over the holy sites that are at the heart of the issue of Jerusalem, the displacement of its people and the grabbing and annexation of its territory. Thus, all components of Jordanian society have come together to confront the Israeli actions that have targeted our people there and to which the Union has always responded, as a human rights organization, like others in order to support women stationed in Al-Aqsa and throughout Jerusalem. This has been through human rights activities involving statements made and delivered to international actors such as the United Nations and the like, in an attempt to hold them historically responsible for what has been happening in Jerusalem.

Jordan adopted the defense law that accompanied the COVID-19 crisis, the government indicated then that it would be used only in the management of the crisis and would not affect other public freedoms. This was the case as the defense law targeted the pandemic, without prejudice to applicable laws.

Restrictions in the freedoms of non-governmental organizations were observed; both in terms of the suffering experienced by many organizations due to the refusal of funding, which is the main artery to provide them with continuity and life, and the limitation on certain activities, particularly those affecting women's freedoms and public freedoms.

The current and former governments have tried to reach out to civil society and have been more open than others to public opinion polls on their actions. However, clear development plans that could contribute to solving economic problems and human rights issues have been absent.

Women continue to be subject to administrative detention under the pretext of protection. It has been noted that attention has been paid by the recent government to the issue of reducing the powers of the administrative governor with regard to the custody of women victims of threatening crimes and that they have been released. In addition, "Amneh House" has been opened, which constitutes a temporary alternative to prison and improves the conditions of women administrative detainees.

Despite all the campaigns carried out by NGOs in connection with the amendment of several laws that discriminate against women, the greatest achievement was the repeal of article 308 of the Penal Code, which exempted a rapist from punishment if he married the victim. Jordan thus condemned the crime of rape and imposed punishment on the rapist regardless of his motives. However, parliament was intransigent on many issues and did not respond to the varying demands of the women's movement, particularly with regard to Personal Status Law.

The talk of equality is still a subject of controversy among Jordanians. Neither government nor parliaments take into account the demands of women without placing the legacy of discrimination as part of the culture and defending it as an advantage in societies.

Accordingly, many women who demand equality have experienced bullying, threats and exclusion, because of their views calling for their rights and the right of their peers to equality and self-determination. Religion has been used as a hanger for all demands to keep women second-class citizens. Knowing that none of these claimants considers religion to be a reference in all other man-made laws, so that all Jordanian laws are man-made, except for issues relating to women or family.

When we talk about Inheritance, it does not equate women with men, but rather gives the woman half of the man's share without preventing those who wish to give her more or accusing them of unbelief. If we compare inheritance with hudood, for example, that came for forbiddance, prevention, and prohibition and established clear penalties for violating them, we will find that religion is referenced in the first case and excluded in the second.

All of this puts us at a crossroads, either to bring the laws back to what they were before the establishment of the modern state, or to keep pace with modernity and develop what's left stuck, according to the interests of individuals and society.

Equality between men and women is not bullying by women over men, but rather a means to achieve citizenship with the rights and duties it entails for every member of society.

Legislation level:

The various parliaments have discussed laws and legal texts, most of which on women's rights, and their law committees have sought to reject amendments to which the women's movement has demanded, although most of the demands have not been entirely fair to women. The women's movement has even fully waived its rights and accepted improvements to the law that haven't eliminated discrimination therein. However, the women's movement has been demonized and bullied, as was evident in the articles of Personal Status Law.

We, therefore, believe that half-solutions in claiming the right are no longer viable, nor have they ever been. We have taken the initiative and will continue to open community dialogue on all issues that are considered sensitive or face denials and reactions intended to intimidate feminists and to push them back on their demands. We have also previously decided that the Civil State and Civil Code is the only entry point for equality.

We are fully aware that equality does not bring about social justice. Equality is the first step that leads to social justice, where citizens have equal opportunities to participate in nation-building, and they are equal before justice and law.

Regional level:

The Women's Union believes that joint Arab action is the best way to liberate women and build nations. We are therefore an integral part of the Arab feminist and development movement, and we are convinced that we must play an important role in unifying efforts to promote the movement, leading to building a clear Arab feminist discourse. We must also not remain reactions to discourses imposed upon us from the outside, which do not respond to the needs of Arab women.

Individualism in dealing with international organizations has led to Arab women's issues being dropped from the global agendas, whether in the corridors of the United Nations or in the agendas of international organizations. This has fragmented and weakened our movement, making most of our organizations the recipients of programs and agendas rather than the holders thereof, whether through foreign funding or by prioritizing our issues in the international conferences.

As a translation of all the above, the Union has been keen over the years to be involved in Arab alliances. It has also devoted its membership to the networks with which it meets in the vision.

We are a member of many organizations and founders of a number of others. The Union has gained the confidence of these organizations and its role has emerged in maintaining its alliances, such as the Rua Network, the Anti-Human Trafficking Alliance, and the Personal Status Law Amendment Alliance, which have become permanent alliances.

In view of the foregoing, we are putting our action strategy in your hands:

Strategy I: To complete the joint Arab action to produce a personal status law, which shall be then submitted to the League of Arab States, as all Arab countries have the same references and concerns.

Strategy II: To foster the relationship with the Ministry of Social Development and Jordanian ministries in general, in a manner that serves the protection system for Jordanian women.

Strategy III: Seek to create a political climate that encourages women's public participation, whether economic or political. This is done through pressure to pass electoral laws, whether at the parliamentary or municipal level, that expand women's participation and equality among citizens.

Strategy IV: Combat all forms of bullying and exclusion experienced by women, whether coming from the laws or from unjust groups that bring women back to the pre-state era.

Strategy V: Strive with all civil society organizations in Jordan to achieve a democratic and transparent system with regard to freedom of associations to operate, and the optimal use of foreign funding.

Strategy VI: Develop the protection mechanisms used by the Union to address violence against women, through various programs. In addition to developing the mechanisms for documenting violence and producing the necessary reports, which would serve as an objective point of reference for devising the programs and services provided.

Strategy VII: Expand women's and men's awareness of the concepts used contrary to their meanings and intents. This strategy also aims to encourage reading, research, and writing on the subjects that are specific to women and would contribute to enriching the Jordanian and Arab feminist discourse.

Strategy VIII: Contribute to increasing women's economic participation, whether through the provision of supportive legislation and measures, or by assisting to create employment and training opportunities that raise women's competence to enter the labor market.

Therefore, we are putting in your hands the Union's action plan for the next three years:

We would like to point out that the Union's plan is based on the action strategies approved by the General Assembly. However, we depend primarily on external funding; our plan is therefore constantly evaluated according to its potential funding.