

Report for Round Table Event of May 5, 2023

Round Table event that was held at Saint Joseph University (USJ) in cooperation between MEIRSS and CFRI and the Department of History and International Relations-Saint Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon.

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The round table event featured two teams of women, the Lebanese and Iraqi teams, who shared their experiences and insights about

participating in the protests of October 2019 — Iraqi Tishreen Movement and Lebanese October 17 Revolution — and political activism. The Lebanese women consisted of Rita Khalil, Amy Aoun, Nelly Kandil, and Sandy Elias, while the Iraqi team consisted of Ban Majeed, Yasmine Mohsin, Hiam Ali, and Ruaa Darwich. The Lebanese women shared their experiences in the protests against corruption and how they dealt with personal and family pressures while pursuing their activism. The Iraqi team shared their experiences participating in the protests despite the socio-cultural limitations and their commitment to political activism as a means to achieve equal rights for women.

Through their personal stories, we gain insights into the many factors that drove their participation, the challenges they faced, and the impact of their actions.

Analysis:

Comparing two teams, the Iraqi and Lebanese teams were involved in political activism, particularly in protests. Both teams expressed a desire for change and a belief in the power of their respective movements. Additionally, both teams were passionate about women's rights and saw it as their duty to fight for those rights. However, there were also differences between the two teams. The Iraqi team members were involved in a more dangerous and volatile situation, protesting in a country plagued by violence and conflict. They also faced more direct violence from security forces and militias. The Lebanese team faced more indirect violence and oppression, such as personal attacks and monitoring by authorities. Another difference between the two teams was their political affiliations. The Lebanese team had members affiliated with political parties known for their stance against corruption, while the Iraqi team did not mention partisan affiliations. Finally, the Lebanese team had members involved in organizing NGOs, while the Iraqi team did not mention NGO involvement.

Overall, both teams were passionate about their respective causes and were willing to risk their safety to fight for change. While there were differences in their experiences, they shared a common belief in the power of political activism and the importance of women's voices in the fight for a better future.

Recommendation:

Based on the experiences of these individuals, it is clear that there are significant challenges facing women in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Middle East when it comes to achieving economic independence and political empowerment. However, the testimonies also demonstrate the potential for progress and the importance of activism and collaboration.

One key takeaway is the need for more representation of women in politics and civil society, particularly in economic issues. Economic independence is a crucial aspect of women's empowerment, and it is clear that women need greater control over their financial situations to achieve this. Another point is the role of social media in creating awareness and spreading information about social issues. While social media is not enough to make change alone, it can be a powerful tool for raising awareness and creating momentum for social movements. The issue of honor killings is a particular challenge in Iraq and needs more attention when raising awareness and changing laws to protect women. It is also necessary to recognize that violence against women takes many forms beyond physical violence, like economic and legal violence. Finally, the experiences of these individuals highlight the importance of international collaboration and cooperation in addressing these issues. Progress requires teamwork and collaboration, both within individual countries and between nations. Overall, the round table on female activism, economic independence, and women in Iraq, Lebanon, and the Middle East

emphasizes the need for more representation, collaboration, and awareness to achieve meaningful progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment. Based on the participants' testimonies, for a recommendation, it is necessary to continue raising awareness of the issues and challenges women face in political activism and protests. Providing support and resources to women to enable their participation is essential. Engaging with civil society organizations and international institutions can also help provide support, protection, and advocacy for women involved in these movements.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the round table event featuring the Lebanese and Iraqi teams was an excellent platform for the participants to share their experiences and insights about participating in protests and political activism. The speakers from both countries shared their stories, highlighting the challenges and successes they faced as they fought for change in their respective countries. The event highlighted the power of political activism and its critical role in creating change. The participants' stories showed the resilience and determination of individuals fighting for their rights and the future of their countries. Overall, the event was a powerful reminder that the fight for change is ongoing and that individuals' collective efforts can make a difference in creating a better future.