

International Women's Day Is Still Highly Relevant and Important



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International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It is also a day about reflection, advocacy, and action.

Norway, together with the international community, is proud to join forces with Palestinians to celebrate International Women's Day for a week of events around March 8. The objective for this year's campaign is to raise awareness on women's fundamental human rights, with the slogan "My Rights, Our Power." The joint campaign has been developed after extensive networking and coordination with Palestinian civil society.

Palestinian women continue to face multiple challenges in relation to full economic, political, and social participation, both from within and from the consequences of occupation. The emphasis on the importance of the Palestinian women's organization in the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (WPS Palestine 2017 – 2019) is a step in the right direction.

The ongoing Palestinian efforts to support and promote women's rights and enhanced participation are more crucial than ever, and achievements have been made. This includes the report by the Palestinian Authority as well as the shadow report by the civil society to the CEDAW Committee. A concrete follow up to the committee's recommendations has been the drafting of the Family Protection Bill, with the purpose of eliminating violence against women.

Last month the Norwegian government launched its fourth action plan for the implementation of the WPS agenda globally. The focus is on women's participation and rights both in initial, informal peace talks and in formal peace negotiations. We will also strengthen the gender perspective in international operation and mission, and increase our efforts for women and girls in our humanitarian work.

In Palestine, Norway will promote cooperation on WPS at country level, in close coordination with Ministry of Women's Affairs and other stakeholders. A sustainable future Palestinian state requires democratic institutions and a growing economy, none of which is possible without the participation and contribution of both men and women in the society in general, and in the work force in particular. Women's full participation is fundamental for sustainable economic growth and development. Gender equality is also key to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

A lot has happened since International Women's Day first emerged over one hundred years ago. Many accomplishments have been made. However, according to a report by the World Economic Forum in 2017, it could still take another one hundred years before the global equality gap between men and women is closed. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that this will not happen. Let us celebrate International Women's Day, which is still highly relevant and important.

Ambassador Hilde Haraldstad has been head of the Norwegian Representative Office to the PA since 2016. Before that she was ambassador of Norway to Sri Lanka. She has also been assistant director general in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and director for Conflict Resolution, Humanitarian Policy, and UN Affairs, and has been posted in the region before. She is a historian – Cand. Philol. – by education, and has also studied political science and French literature.