The Women's Coalition for Justice and Equality (ERADA) organizes legal symposium on Personal Status Law within the launching on its second campaign

The Women's Coalition for Justice and Equality (ERADA) launched its second campaign "We Are Citizens" focusing on two main demands:

1)   Raising the age of marriage to 18, and

2)   Divorce and separation take place in a courthouse in the presence of a judge while ensuring that rights of both parties are met.

Within this campaign, ERADA held a legal symposium on Wednesday 09/19/2018 at Nablus Municipality Cultural Center – Hamdi Mango Hall, with special guest speakers Judge Sumoud Al Damiri/Chief of Prosecution for the Personal Status Law and Mrs. Lina Abdul Hadi, Legal Consultant for Nablus governorate and co-founder of ERADA.

Ms. Damiri commenced the seminar by highlighting pluralism, diversity, and the importance of sharing a mutual respect for other people's opinions, as key principles especially when discussing societal issues such as the Personal Status Law. Ms. Damiri also addressed the necessity to harmonize legal modifications with the international political developments, international provisions and instruments as well as the Women's Movement. She also made several indications to the Personal Status Act: 1) the reason behind the complexity of enacting the Personal Status Act is that it stands on a multi-set of regulations, thus important amendments must be made to the Personal Status Act in order that it may be reframed as a Palestinian rule of law. 2) The political crises in the country has caused a great impediment to the enactment of the Personal Status Act. 3) The provisions of the Personal Status Act must be holistic and inclusive so that it may apply to all Palestinian citizens. Lastly, there has been no dispute concerning raising the age of marriage to 18 (for females), and the Shari'a Court is currently looking into this topic. As for the matter of divorce and separation, this topic has seen positive as well as negative views, both which must be taken into consideration in order to preserve that sense of balance present in any household.

Ms. Lina Abdul Hadi spoke her piece on ERADA's mission and vision of eradicating all forms of discrimination against women through the adoption of legal provisions based on gender equality and in accordance with international instruments such as CEDAW, which Palestine has ratified without reservations, and with which decision-makers and the government are obligated to comply to ensure justice and equality for women. Ms. Abdul Hadi stressed that decision-makers must possess a strong political will to adopt just legislations based on gender equality such as the Personal Status Law and the Palestinian Penal Law; she also called for immediate action to raise the age of marriage to 18 years given the fact that all relevant parties have agreed. She also raised the issue of adopting the amended text of the second article that is the second demand of the campaign: overseeing that divorce and separation take place in a courthouse in the presence of a judge while ensuring that rights of both parties are met, to avoid the ramifications of verbally issued divorce and the difficulties women have to face while following up on the legal proceedings of divorce.

This symposium was facilitated by Ms. Samar Hawash, Women Empowerment Programme Coordinator at PWWSD and Co-Founder of Women's Coalition for Justice and Equality (ERADA). A total of 120 people attended the event: activists, representatives of civil society organizations, representatives of legal and government institutions, and members of ERADA. There was a wide and clear interaction level from the audience which reflected an important interest and knowledge in societal and legal issues, especially concerning women's rights. It is worth noting that this event was launched under ERADA's second campaign "We Are Citizens" which will proceed till the end of 2018 with further activities and systematic coordination and networking with relevant organizations and associations.