



# FROM STATUS QUO TO TRANSFORMATION

Advancing Women, Peace,  
and Security in Yemen

Madrid Forum  
Spain, 23-26 April 2024



**OSESGY**  
Special Envoy for Yemen

25th WPS Anniversary

# FROM STATUS QUO TO TRANSFORMATION

## Advancing Women, Peace, and Security in Yemen

Madrid Forum | Spain, 23-26 April 2024

### About this Report

This report captures the outcomes of the Madrid Forum on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in Yemen, held from 23–26 April 2024. Convened by OSESGY and the Government of Spain, the forum gathered Yemeni women leaders and WPS experts—both women and men—to advance inclusive peace. It features key insights, transformative scenario planning, and policy recommendations to ensure women’s meaningful participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict governance, grounded in regional experiences and tailored to Yemen’s evolving political and security context. Participants of the Madrid Forum issued a Declaration on October 19, marking the 24th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325. The Madrid Declaration, which garnered over 1,000 signatories across Yemen, has been used as a national and international advocacy tool. It has been presented to relevant Yemeni authorities, political parties, and UN member states, seeking their endorsement.

### Contributors to the Report

- **Lead facilitators:** **Rebecca Freeth**, Dialogue facilitator, Senior Consultant, Reos Partners; **Nadine Al-Asmer**, Associate Consultant, Reos Partners; **Areej Noor**, Women, Peace and Security Storytelling Consultant.
- **With review from:** **Shatha Harazi**, Mediation Expert, OSESGY; **Muna Luqman**, National Coordinator for Inclusion, OSESGY; **Ethar El-Shaibany**, Inclusion Policy Officer, OSESGY; **Charlotte Thyra Lund**, Security Arrangements Officer, OSESGY.
- **Under the supervision and substantive guidance of:** **Zahra’ Langhi**, Senior Advisor on Inclusion & Women, Peace and Security, OSESGY.
- **Drafting committee of the Madrid Declaration:** **Muna Luqman**, National Coordinator for Inclusion, OSESGY; **Maha Awad**, Head of Wujood Organization, Coordinator of the Feminist Summit; **Eshraq Maqtari**, Member of the Co-ordination Committee of the Feminist Summit; **Hooria Mashoor**, Former Minister of Human Rights; **Huda Alwai**, Head of WTRC.
- **With review of the Madrid Declaration:** **Nina Lahoud**, Women, Peace and Security Expert; **Zahra’ Langhi**, Senior Advisor on Inclusion & Women, Peace and Security, OSESGY.

### Cover and Report Design

**Omar El-Haddad**, Design Consultant for Report Development

The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen (OSESGY) and its affiliates.

© 2025 by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen (OSESGY)

Khaled Abu Dalbough st. 13, Amman, Jordan | Web: [www.osesgy.unmissions.org](http://www.osesgy.unmissions.org)





▲ Spain's Foreign Minister, José Manuel Albares, joins Yemeni and international delegates at the OSESGY Madrid Forum's opening, reaffirming Spain's support for inclusive diplomacy and locally led peace efforts in Yemen.

## CONTENTS

- 4** Executive Summary
- 6** Background and Political Context
- 12** Section 1: Innovative Learning Techniques on Transformative Scenario Planning
- 14** Outcomes from the Group Sessions
- 22** Section 2: Panels and Key Discussions
- 44** The Madrid Declaration on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen

## Executive Summary

---

**The right to equal participation is firmly rooted in the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian and human rights law. This right is at the heart of the women, peace, and security agenda,**

which calls for women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in all efforts to build sustainable peace. Yet, women continue to have limited opportunities to influence negotiations for peace. In Yemen, the political space for women to participate in peace and security decision-making decreased in the last 8 years of conflict, and there are more difficulties and security concerns for the women who do participate, including

through the weaponization of digital technologies. Advocating for and supporting targeted measures to advance women's direct participation is critical for advancing substantive equality and building inclusive and sustainable peace.

The Madrid Forum on "The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen: From Status Quo to Transformation" marked an important step toward amplifying Yemeni women's voices in the peace process, coinciding with the upcoming 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325. Convened in partnership with the Government of Spain, the forum brought together 38 Yemeni women participants, activists, human rights defenders, local mediators, security experts, and think tank representatives, alongside seven global WPS experts from regions such as Afghanistan, Libya, Sudan, Colombia, and Myanmar. Some of these experts contributed to the original 1325 agenda.

Additionally, the Madrid Forum gathered more than 25 representatives of Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spanish NGOs and WPS experts,

as well as representatives of UNWOMEN and UNDP offices for Yemen.

The Madrid Forum was attended by H.E. José Manuel Albares, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain. Opening remarks were delivered by Carmen Magariños Casal, General Director for the Maghreb, Mediterranean, and Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. H.E. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, Former Deputy Prime Minister, gave the Keynote Speech.

The closing ceremony at Casa Árabe included two panels, co-organized with the Ambassador at Large for Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation at the Ministry. These panels featured leading Spanish activists, feminist academics, Yemeni women activists, and peace-builders. Concluding remarks were provided by H.E. Diego Martínez Belío, State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs, and Sarhad Fatah, OSESGY's DHoM.

Workshops featured a distinguished lineup of speakers from global and regional peace and security sectors, grassroots peacemakers, gender and media-



▲ Group photo at the Madrid Forum closing event, Casa Árabe, attended by Spain's Secretary of State Diego Martínez Belío, center, and distinguished participants, including diplomats, mediators, and senior officials from Spain and Yemen.

tion experts, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and think tanks.

On day three, participants reflected on the Transformative Scenarios Planning (TSP) process, which encouraged creative, forward-looking dialogue. TSP allowed mediators to engage with their counterparts in exploring future possibilities and expanding engagement beyond current limitations, helping ensure women's inclusion in long-term peace planning.

Participants of the Madrid Forum issued a Declaration on October 19, marking the 24th anniversary of

Security Council Resolution 1325. The Madrid Declaration, which garnered over 1,000 signatories across Yemen, has been used as a national and international advocacy tool. It has been presented to relevant Yemeni authorities, political parties, and UN member states, seeking their endorsement.

This report and its recommendations are intended for stakeholders in Yemen's peace process, including Yemeni political leaders, civil society, international partners, and mediators. It highlights recommendations and demands from participants, emphasizing increased women's representation, gender-sensitive reforms, legal protections, and support for women-led initiatives. It also calls for a comprehensive ceasefire, detainee releases, and inclusive political and security mechanisms addressing women's needs. ■

## Background and Political Context

**In late December 2023, the parties in Yemen made commitments to be operationalised in a UN roadmap including a nationwide ceasefire, measures to improve living conditions, and the restarting of an intra-Yemeni political process.. While it is important to note that the roadmap is not intended to be the final agreement, it is a stepping-stone to start a phased multi-track process under UN auspices. This significant development, facilitated by the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, marks a crucial step towards ending the nine-years conflict and the ensuing humanitarian catastrophe.**

Recent developments in the Red Sea region have significant implications for ongoing peace efforts, highlighting the need to find entry points for de-escalation. These new dynamics and considerations must be considered in ongoing negotiations and efforts to achieve a sustainable and inclusive peace in Yemen. Despite the recent military escalation in the Red Sea, there is still growing anticipation of further progress toward a comprehensive and inclusive peace process under the auspices of the UN.

The sequencing of the peace process in Yemen is expected to progress through different phases. An agreement between the Government of Yemen (GoY) and Ansar Allah (Ansar Allah) would likely include elements such as a nationwide ceasefire, road openings, humanitarian and economic measures (including the payment of public sector salaries nationwide), and preparations for an inclusive peace process under UN auspices with three main tracks: military, political, and economic. The Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESGY) aims to ensure an inclusive political process that incorporates gender perspectives.



In terms of inclusivity measures, the growing momentum behind the peace process has brought the issue of inclusion into focus. While women actively participated in national dialogue and played significant roles in peacebuilding and decision-making before the conflict, they were largely excluded from subsequent peace efforts. Multiple agreements and negotiations failed to adequately include women in terms of numbers and influence on the peace agenda. However, initiatives such as Tawafuq and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) have been established by UN Women and OSESGY to channel women's perspectives into the peace process, representing indirect efforts to promote inclusive participation.

The absence of women's representation is also evident within Yemen's political and governance structures, with women holding just 4.1 percent of decision-making positions as of 2019. Efforts to increase women's participation have been made, including inviting Yemeni women to participate in discussions and provide inputs to the peace process. However, their involvement remains limited, and their input is not fully integrated into decision-making. The prolonged war in Yemen has also had dire consequences for gender equality in the country, as evidenced by the republic's poor performance in the Global Gender Gap Index. In 2021, Yemen was ranked 155th out of 156 countries. ■

▼ **Dr. Amat Alsalam Al Haj, Director of the Mothers of Abductees Association, speaks on the role of women in advocating for detainees' release and calls for greater female representation at both local and national decision-making levels.**



▲ **Sheikh AbdulAziz Al Oqab, a respected tribal mediator, underscores the crucial role of Yemeni women and local mediators in fostering peace and resolving conflicts. (left) A session panel exploring the exclusion of women from formal mediation moderated by Zahra' Langhi, Senior Inclusion and WPS Advisor.**

# Objectives

**OESGY co-organized with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Spain “The Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Yemen: From the Status Quo to a Transformation” Madrid forum, which recognizes the importance of including women in peace processes and aims to:**

- **Facilitate the exchange** of specialized technical knowledge, expertise and experience related to inclusive peace-making, mediation, and negotiations.
- **Learn from the role and contributions** of women in ongoing peace processes in the region as well as the impediments in seeking women’s full and effective inclusion and leadership.
- **Establish a space for networking** with women’s groups at a global and regional level.
- **Identify entry points to advocate** for and increase Yemeni women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in Track I and Track II peace negotiations.
- **Address particular obstacles** facing Yemeni women in seeking equal and full roles peacebuilding, including in political negotiations and security arrangements and mechanisms.
- **Identify recommendations** on top priority actions to be accelerated.

The Madrid Forum acknowledges that the direct participation of women as mediators or negotiators in formal talks is crucial for ensuring their perspectives are heard and their interests are represented. It seeks to create a space where women can actively engage in shaping the peace agreements in Yemen. It also calls for practical steps to strengthen the link between local women’s peace initiatives and official negotiations, including establishing a formal consultative mechanism for local women’s groups to contribute directly to Track I negotiations, ensur-

ing the representation of women’s coalitions in key peace talks and security dialogues, and integrating the priorities identified by local women’s networks into the broader peace agenda through structured feedback and reporting processes. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need to link local women’s peace initiatives to official negotiations and recognizes the valuable contributions of women at the community level while aiming to incorporate their perspectives into the formal peace process. By doing so, it ensures that the peace agreements address the specific needs and

▼ **Participants gathered for a group photo with H.E. María Teresa Fernández de la Vega Sanz, standing sixth from right, President and Founder of the Women for Africa Foundation and Spain’s first female Vice-President of the Government, who opened the Madrid Forum, inspiring Yemeni participants.**



priorities of the affected population, particularly women and girls.

The forum also highlights the importance of incorporating gender provisions into peace agreements. It acknowledges that peace agreements should go beyond addressing the immediate cessation of hostilities and includes provisions that promote gender equality, women's rights, and women's security. By integrating gender-specific issues into the peace agreements, the forum aims to foster sustainable and inclusive peace in Yemen.

While the forum acknowledges the progress made through various UN resolutions and frameworks supporting women's inclusion, it recognizes that implementation remains lacking. It underscores the need to overcome the barriers and biases that hinder women's participation in peace processes while challenging norms and perceptions that prioritize men's participation and creating an enabling environment that supports women's substantive and equal involvement.

To achieve these objectives, the forum featured sessions dedicated to enhancing the mediation and negotiation capacities of Yemeni women. It provided specialized technical knowledge, expertise, and experience related to inclusive peace-making and mediation. The forum also facilitated the exchange of best practices among local women mediators and political

leaders, capturing lessons learned in peace and security building, protection, prevention, relief, and recovery for women.

Additionally, learning from the role and contributions of women in ongoing peace processes in the region and globally, such as in Afghanistan, Libya, Colombia, and Sudan equips them of ways to apply these lessons to the Yemeni context, taking into account the specific dynamics of the conflict in Yemen.

Ultimately, the Women, Peace, and Security forum seeks to identify strategies and mechanisms to increase women's meaningful participation and leadership in decision-making processes at all levels, including political, economic, and security sectors. It also advocates for the integration of gender perspectives and the inclusion of women's rights in the peace process and subsequent peace agreements and strengthen partnerships between international actors, civil society organizations, local women's groups to support women's empowerment, gender equality and peacebuilding efforts in Yemen. By addressing the inclusion of women in peace processes through these interconnected elements, the Women, Peace, and Security forum will contribute to advancing inclusive peace in Yemen and ensuring that women's voices and perspectives are heard and valued in the ongoing peace negotiations. ■

## Methodology

The sessions were designed in an interactive participatory approach, using trust-building exercises to safely express views and creating a safe environment. Innovative techniques such as Transformative Scenario Planning and storytelling are introduced as tools for transformative learning while aiming to develop leadership skills for peacebuilding, mediation and dialogue.

Storytelling serves as a potent tool for healing and reconciliation in peacebuilding efforts.

The approach focuses on building empathy, preserving memory and imagining alternative futures. Indeed, storytelling is not just about recounting events from the past; it's about reimagining and reshaping the future. By harnessing the power of narrative, stakeholders can heal wounds and chart a path towards a more inclusive and peaceful future. Through the narratives that emerged in the series of panels at the Madrid Forum, a path forward revealed itself. ■

## Participants

The workshop featured a distinguished lineup of speakers and participants, including women from around the world and the region who are actively involved in peace processes.

The Participants consisted of local mediators, grassroots peacemakers, experts in gender and mediation, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and think tanks.

## Agenda

From April 23rd to 25th, 2024, the Madrid Forum was held at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union, and Cooperation (MAEUC). The forum commenced with a warm welcome from the esteemed host, convenor, and keynote speaker, setting the stage for a day filled with thought-provoking discussions. The agenda included presentations on futures thinking and transformative scenarios, providing valuable insights into the inner workings of Transformative Scenarios Planning (TSP). The day concluded with a stimulating panel discussion entitled "Bring your Own Chair to the Table: Inclusive Peace Process.»

The following day, participants engaged in dialogue interviews and mini scenarios, delving into the essence of «People-centered Peace: Speaking for Local Communities.»

On the final day, participants collaborated to embrace uncertainty and unleash their creative imaginations by crafting scenarios in teams. The day culminated in a dynamic panel titled «Turning Tables,» followed by a comprehensive review of the TSP workshop and strategic discussions on the next steps. ■

## Speeches from Distinguished Speakers: Welcome Notes

### Carmen Magariños Casal

At the Madrid Forum, Mrs. Carmen Magariños Casal, General Director for the Maghreb, Mediterranean and Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain,



opened the forum with her welcome note. She emphasized Spain's support for the Arab world and stressed the importance of achieving peace in the region. Mrs. Carmen highlighted the need for all voices to be heard and emphasized

the essential role of women in the sustainable peace process. She also acknowledged the 25th anniversary of the UN resolution advocating for women's participation in the peace process.

***"With the wisdom, confidence and motivation in the eyes of women, equity in all countries at all levels can be reached with respect and integrity."***

*—Her Excellency María Teresa Fernández de la Vega Sanz, President and founder of the Women for Africa Foundation.*



## María Teresa Fernández de la Vega Sanz

The keynote address was delivered by Her Excellency María Teresa Fernández de la Vega Sanz, Former Vice-President of the Spanish Government and President and founder of the Women for Africa Foundation. Her Excellency shared her experiences and insights from her work in women's rights and expressed her concerns about the conflicts in Africa and Yemen. She highlighted how patriarchy exacerbates war, discrimination, and violence and emphasized the need for women's active participation in achieving sustainable peace. Her Excellency recommended the following:

1. The important role of the UN mission in maintaining peace in the region.
2. The need for a socio-economic and political agreement for women's integration, away from totalitarianism and with shared compromises.
3. The essential nature of women's active participation in negotiations for achieving peace.
4. The pivotal role of women in ensuring social cohesion and preventing the proliferation of conflict and violence.
5. The importance of financing projects focused on the inclusion of women in peace building.

Her Excellency closed her speech with the following: "With the wisdom, confidence and motivation in the eyes of women, equity in all countries at all levels can be reached with respect and integrity."



## Zahra' Langhi

Ms. Zahra' Langhi, Senior Inclusion & WPS Advisor at the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen presented the Madrid Forum as a platform technically supporting and building upon the series of consultations on the Bottom-Up Vision of Inclusive Peace. She described how this approach engages youth, civil society, and women to discuss peace from the community's perspective, prioritizing their aspirations and concerns. She emphasized that the consultations focus on integrating Yemeni women's meaningful participation into peace processes, ensuring their voices are reflected in mechanisms, institutions, and outcomes.

Ms. Zahra' also stressed the importance of transformative scenario planning for envisioning future strategies and preparing for uncertainties. She described the forum as a space for storytelling and learning from regional and international best practices, fostering a collaborative environment to build a sustainable peace process. ■

# 1

## INNOVATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES ON TRANSFORMATIVE SCENARIO PLANNING

### Futures Thinking And Transformative Scenarios

The Madrid Forum aligns with the New Agenda for Peace and UN 2.0, which emphasizes the “Quintet of Change”—a dynamic combination of digital technology, data, innovation, behavioral science, and strategic foresight—to drive systemic change and enhance the effectiveness of global efforts in tackling complex challenges. Central to the Forum's objective is fostering strategic foresight, which involves learning structured methods to navigate change, envision better futures, and make more informed decisions today.

A Transformative Scenarios Process (TSP) enables diverse stakeholders to create a shared framework and language for strategic conversations about their situation and how to address it. Rather than focusing on what should or will happen, TSP explores what could happen, providing a map of possible futures to help stakeholders consider long-term outcomes and broader contexts. The goal is not to reach agreement or propose solutions but to generate insight, build relationships, and expand perspectives.

This approach works at the level of mindsets and attitudes rather than negotiated settlements, allowing stakeholders from opposing sides to engage

without needing to agree. Unlike other scenario planning methods, TSP emphasizes shaping and transforming the future rather than merely understanding or adapting to it. It engages multi-stakeholder groups with a direct stake in the situation, not just experts or academics. The impact of TSP comes from the changed insights, capabilities, and commitments of participants; the influence on broader dialogues and negotiations; the relationships formed across sectors and divides; and the strategic actions and alliances informed by the scenarios.

Stories of possible futures can be invaluable in conflict-affected





▲ **The Madrid Forum introduces Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) as a tool for creative dialogue. Participants explore future possibilities for Yemen's peace process, using TSP to reframe challenges and imagine strategic, inclusive pathways for sustainable peacebuilding and women's leadership.**

contexts as they lower barriers to dialogue by not insisting on immediate agreement. This approach encourages participants to lift their gaze to a broader context and longer time horizons, allowing for a more inclusive conversation that incorporates unusual suspects and diverse perspectives. By setting aside wishful thinking, negotiators can subject their positions to scrutiny, fostering gradual trust-building without the need

for direct focus on relationship-building. Furthermore, transformative storytelling practices (TSPs) facilitate collaboration in fragile situations by exploring future possibilities rather than demanding consensus. They require only a willingness to talk and listen, allow individuals to participate as themselves rather than as mandated representatives, and create a warm, welcoming atmosphere in physically safe locations, all while

ensuring strong confidentiality measures are in place.

At the Madrid Forum, dedicated sessions were held on Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) to introduce participants to this methodology and explore its application to Yemen's peace process. These sessions helped to frame the group sessions that followed, where participants used the TSP approach to develop mini scenarios around key uncertainties in Yemen's peace process. The TSP sessions provided participants with the tools and structured framework to engage in forward-thinking dialogue and creatively consider future possibilities. ■

# OUTCOMES FROM THE GROUP SESSIONS

The group sessions at the Madrid Forum were designed to engage participants in a structured and dynamic exploration of Yemen's peace process using the Transformative Scenarios Planning (TSP) approach. Participants were divided into five diverse groups, each tasked with examining one of the top five key uncertainties identified during the discussions: women's participation in the peace process, the commitment and engagement of the Ansar Allah, the disarmament process, transitional justice, and regional and international influence. The division reflected the areas where the greatest unpredictability and potential impact were identified, highlighting the core challenges and opportunities for advancing Yemen's peace process. Each group developed a range of future scenarios, exploring both best-case and worst-case outcomes, and considering the driving forces that could shape those trajectories.

## Uncertainties, Certainties and Driving Forces

Here below are the uncertainties, certainties, and driving forces that the group identified from the dialogue interviews. These provide the building blocks of stories about the future.

### Uncertainties

**When thinking about the future of an inclusive peace process in Yemen, what do you feel most uncertain about?** Key uncertainties are the questions that we think would be most impactful and most unpredictable.

1. The participation of women (7 votes)
2. The commitment and engagement of Ansar Allah (15 votes)
3. The disarmament process (11 votes)
4. The transitional justice process (16 votes)
5. Regional and international influence (17 votes)
6. Insufficient time (1 vote)
7. Fragmented unity (8 votes)





8. Conflicting personal agendas (2 votes)
9. One agreed upon leadership (3 votes)
10. Doubting the peace process (2 votes)
11. Abduction file

The five scenarios were shaped around the top five uncertainties (in list above). In other words, there was one scenario about the engagement and participation of women, and a second scenario about the commitment of Ansar Allah, etc.

## Certainties

**When thinking about the future of an inclusive peace process in Yemen, what do you feel most certain about?** Note: There were some contradictions in the list below, as well as some expressions of hope rather than certainty. In a full scenario process, this list would have been revisited and refined.

- Hope for peace in Yemen / Pessimistic future for peace in Yemen
- Citizens want peace
- Peace as a strategic choice

▲ During an interactive session, participants learn about Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP) methodology. The exercise emphasizes collaboration across divides, encouraging participants to envision multiple futures for Yemen through trust-building, dialogue, and exploration of key uncertainties in the peace process.

- Political agreement set by the governing political parties
- Improved political economy
- Improved economy
- Agreed salaries distribution
- Sustainable agreement among all parties
- Integrated peace process
- Agreed road map
- Private negotiation framework
- Women's participation / Exclusion of women
- Civic society participation
- International influence
- Southerner peace caller
- Finding joint interests



## Driving forces

**What are the two most significant social/cultural, economic, environmental or political factors that will shape how the future unfolds in relation to an inclusive peace process in Yemen?**

A driving force is a social, technological, economic, environmental, cultural, or political force in the world. Driving forces take uncertainties in different directions, at different scales.

- Degree of social awareness
- Extent of youth power
- Power of social media power
- Nature of regional and international support
- Degree of religious conservatism
- Extent of hate speech
- Nature of regional and international support
- Strength of civil society
- Strength of media
- Impact of climate change
- Extent of conflict between parties
- Economic drivers
- Political drivers

## KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Women's participation:** The identification of women's participation as a top uncertainty underscores the importance of prioritizing women's inclusion at both Track I and Track II levels. OSESGY could strengthen this by formalizing consultative mechanisms with local women's networks and ensuring representation in peace negotiations.
- **Parties' commitment and engagement:** The high uncertainty around parties', especially Ansar Allah, engagement highlights the need for OSESGY to adopt a flexible but consistent strategy to build confidence and accountability in the negotiation process. Exploring phased agreements with clear benchmarks could help address this.
- **Disarmament:** The scenarios around disarmament demonstrate the complexity of reaching a sustainable agreement. OSESGY could support the development of a context-sensitive disarmament

model that includes gradual weapons reduction tied to political milestones.

- **Transitional justice:** The focus on transitional justice as a key uncertainty reinforces the need for OSESGY to engage with local justice mechanisms and civil society groups to design an inclusive framework for truth-seeking, reparations, and reconciliation.
- **Regional and international influence:** The strong influence of regional and international actors on Yemen's peace process suggests that OSESGY should strengthen diplomatic outreach and coordination with key regional stakeholders to prevent external interference from derailing progress.
- **Certainties and driving forces:** The identification of certain shared priorities — such as a political agreement, improved economic conditions, and the desire for peace — provides a foundation for OSESGY to align its strategy with local expectations. OSESGY could build on this by facilitating dialogue platforms that connect political actors, civil society, and the public.

---

***The story to be constructed was around Imagining “it’s already 2030 and you’re telling a group of school children what happened in the inclusive peace process since 2024. What is the story you could tell them?”***



## Constructing Mini Scenarios

Following the participants answer to the above questions, teams were formed around top key uncertainties and worked on constructing mini scenarios. Each group worked with one key uncertainty, exploring what could happen in relation to that uncertainty. When they started, they were asked to choose 2 driving forces that could shape what happens in relation to this key uncertainty. The story to be constructed was around Imagining "it's already 2030 and you're telling a group of school children what happened in the inclusive peace process since 2024. What is the story you could tell them?". They were encouraged to give each mini scenario (from the best to the worst possible futures) a name that expresses its essence and will be easy to remember. They produced what is happening in 2030 and the milestone between today and 2030.

▲ Participants develop mini-scenarios envisioning Yemen's peace process by 2030, focusing on critical uncertainties such as women's participation, transitional justice, and regional influences. The exercise encouraged future-oriented thinking and collaborative storytelling, helping peacebuilders prepare for challenges and opportunities ahead.

### GROUP 1: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS

**Scenario 1: Women continue to be excluded from the peace process**

- 2025: Suppression of the feminist movement
- 2026: Political quotas and refusal of women quotas in political parties
- 2027: Escalation of armed conflicts
- 2030: Deadlock in the peace process



**Each group worked with one key uncertainty, exploring what could happen in relation to that uncertainty.**

**Scenario 2: Unfair formal (superficial) representation, less than 15% representation of women in the peace process**

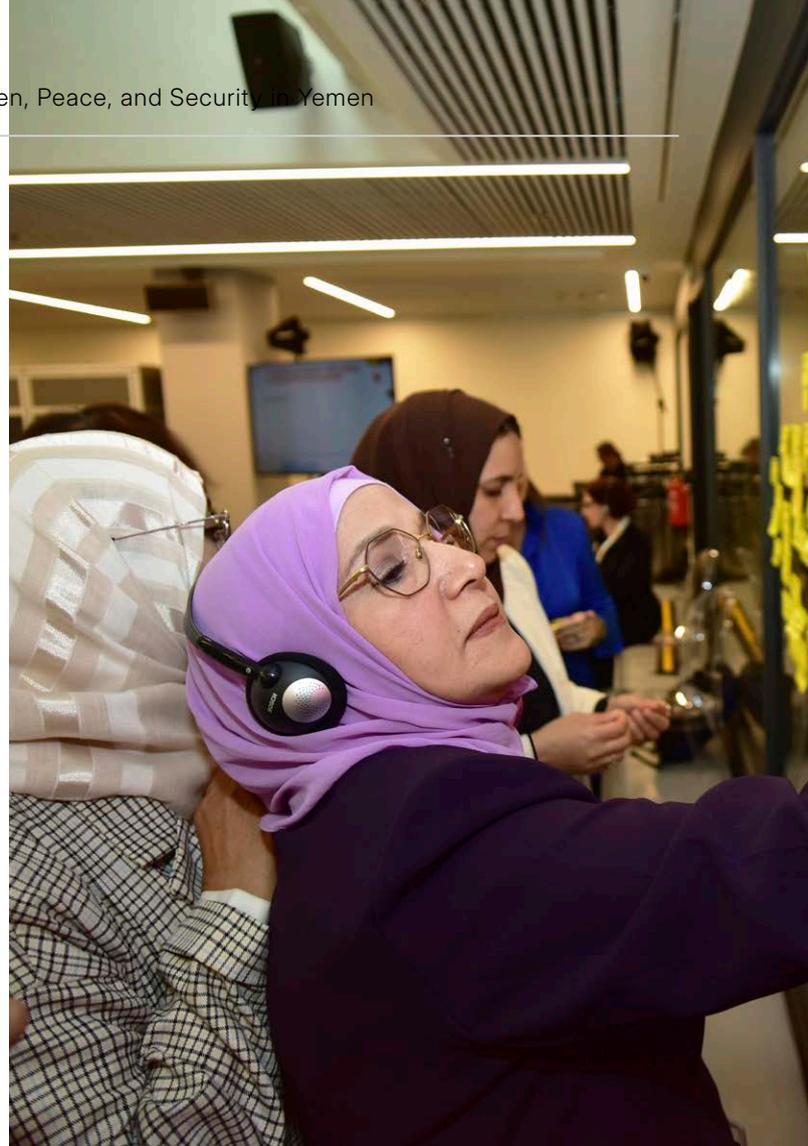
- 2025: Ignoring the demands of 45% from the national dialogue
- 2026: Weak international support and interest
- 2027: Security risks
- 2030: Tribal dialogue

**Scenario 3: Possible women participation in all executives, legislative and judicial bodies (45% representation)**

- 2025: Increase knowledge and understanding of resolution 1325 and request to implement it
- 2026: Improved International, UN Support and countries members
- 2027: Growing influence from women leagues, civil society, and youth
- 2030: Development of the negotiation process and political dialogue

**Scenario 4: 50% representation of women with diversity and inclusion**

- 2025: Solid decision from the security council
- 2026: unification of women movement
- 2027: Strong support from the UN for peace building
- 2028: General implementation of support activities for women
- 2029: Political will
- 2030: Popular support and agreement on women representation



▲ Forum participants work on scenario-building exercises, discussing diverse possible futures for Yemen. Each group addressed a major uncertainty, integrating regional and international dynamics, women's roles, and disarmament pathways, showcasing the importance of creativity and collective visioning in peacebuilding processes.

**GROUP 2:  
HOUTHJI COMMITMENT AND  
PARTICIPATION**

Ideology, history, agreements and status of international territory

**Scenario 1: Restoring the state**

- Escalation in the Red Sea
- International targeting
- Strengthening national army
- Strengthened legitimacy
- Targeting Ansar Allah leaderships



- Ansar Allah becoming a constituted political body
- Agreement on the form of the electoral state

**Scenario 2: Stagnation**

- Calming down the situation in the Red Sea
- Regional and international pressure for peace
- Legalization of Al Ansar Allah and weakened legitimacy

**Scenario 3: Peace agreement**

- Support the region for cease fire and negotiations
- Supported peace agreement
- Houthi coup
- Recovery of military operations

**Scenario 4: Separation**

- Ansar Allah total control of the north
- Withdrawal of Saudi support
- Rejection of the southern leadership
- Weak legitimacy

**GROUP 3:  
DISARMEMENT: WEAPONS  
DOMINATE THE SCENE**

**Scenario 1: Full disarmament agreement**

- The Yemeni parties agreed to fully hand over their weapons, based on the political agreement.
- That determined the form of the Yemeni state after being influenced by the regional, international and UN communities to ensure the security and safety of the Red Sea region.
- All Yemeni parties agree to have few local forces and complete supervision from all segments of society and the judiciary system, with adequate guarantees for the representation and partnership.

**Scenario 2: Conflicting parties' refusal to surrender their weapons/failure of the political operation**

- Failure to reach a political agreement around the full disarmament of the conflicting parties and the decreased influence of the regional alliances and international community.
- The military forces continue to be financed and new parties emerge in the conflict.
- Conflict continues and more damaged incurred.

**Scenario 3: Agreement for partial disarmament**

- The conflicting parties agree for partial disarmaments sponsored by national, regional, and international communities.
- They agree to surrender heavy weapons.
- A structure is established to supervise the use of light weapons with local and international guarantees to different parties.
- A supervision committee is constituted in the process of establishing a transitional government representing all parties.
- A road map is development.



***“Being a woman in mediation often commands respect and facilitates smoother negotiations in many settings.”***  
**— Maeen Al-Obaidi**

## GROUP 4: TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS

### Scenario 1: “Al Juri red rose”: The reality of the transitional justice

- Announcement of the establishment of groups from all regions and factions to support the transitional justice and national reconciliation (2025).
- Insertion of the existing violence file into the social section of the transitional justice and peace development.
- Insertion of the transitional justice file in the envoy work agenda.
- Discussion of the legal project for the transitional justice.

### Scenario 2 “Clove”: Compensations

- Al Maion office supporting the approach for transitional justice and interests in peace agreement.
- The coalition of civil society and victims’ groups calling for inclusive procedures to determine the damages.
- Alliance of civil society and victims’ groups calling for the establishment of compensations funds Ensuring fair access for women in the justice program.

### Scenario 3: “flower al fil”: Monitoring and accountability

- Integrating women and girls ranks in transitional justice.
- Women leadership as a driving force for local innovative.



▲ **Groups collaborate to construct mini-scenarios based on major uncertainties identified for Yemen’s future peace process. Through creative storytelling, participants highlight diverse possible outcomes, emphasizing the critical role of women’s leadership and inclusive approaches in shaping sustainable political solutions.**

- Transitional justice needs for the participation of local groups.
- Relying on inclusive sources in developing a complete transitional justice.

### Scenario 4 “Tulip”: Interventions of international community

- International communities support of the alliance between civil society and victims’ groups.
- Support of civil society and victims groups efforts defending their victims’ rights.
- Support from international organizations in their annually conducted forums and platforms.



***“The peace process remains uncertain, lacking inclusivity and failing to prioritize crucial issues like transitional justice, gender-based violence, and economic recovery. We must act swiftly to prevent further deterioration and build sustainable peace.”***

**— Maha Awadh**

- Integration of support activities and economic boost building decisions in reparative operations for survivors of violence.

## **GROUP 5: REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE**

### **Scenario 1:**

**2025:** Change revolution and integration of civil society

**2028:** Exclusion of women in the peace process

**2030:** All projects supporting human rights are put on hold

- Financing is not given to the civil society. All projects supporting human rights and women are cancelled. Hence, much violence against human rights is committed.

- Increase percentages of arrests and threats
- Increase armed attacks
- Exclusion of women from the peace process

### **Scenario 2:**

**2025:** Conduct feminist alliances and include all involved parties

**2028:** Use of social media networking sites, written/visual/audio media.

**2030:** Businessmen and businesses supporting these alliances

- When women exclusion is resolved, they have formed alliances, women associations, pressure lobby groups
- They use all types of media (audio and visual and social media platforms)
- They receive the support of businesses and financing for the works of these alliances
- This influences positively the regional and international support so they can build peace

### **Disclaimer:**

*These scenarios have been translated from handwritten unrepresented flipcharts which might have resulted in some errors.*

SECTION

2

PANELS AND KEY DISCUSSIONS

**DAY 1:  
"Bring Your Own Chair  
to the Table: Inclusive  
Peace Process" Panel**

**T**he panel entitled "Bring your Own Chair to the Table: Inclusive Peace Process," moderated by **Ms. Zahra' Langhi**, Senior Inclusion Advisor at the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Yemen, featured esteemed panelists including **Ms. Palwasha Kakar**, Director of Religion & Inclusive Societies at USIP (Afghanistan); **Ms. Naima Jibril**, Member of the Libyan Political Dialogue (Libya); **Ms. Shatha Al-Harazi**, Mediation Expert, OSESGY (Yemen); and **Ms. Rim Mugahid**, Program Manager and Researcher at Sana' Center (Yemen), and served as an opportunity to share narratives by and about women, facilitating connections and expanding their network both regionally and internationally.

The panel aimed to address the following topics:

- Identification of specific examples of women's leadership in negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution.
- Examination of challenges hindering increased women's participation and influence in formal and informal peace processes.
- Promotion of various efforts focused on capacity building and resources for women to shape peace processes.
- Recommendations on how to develop structures for inclusive peace and mediation processes in Yemen.
- Extraction of lessons applicable to Yemen.

The following are key highlights from the panel discussion.

**Afghanistan**

**In the context of Afghanistan, the involvement of women in Track 1 negotiations encompassed several significant phases:**

- Upon the announcement of the Inter Afghan Talks in September, 2020, a core coalition group took deliberate measures to ensure the inclusion of women, avoiding any assumptions.
- Rather than limiting participation to only 12 core members, it was collectively agreed that representation from



every province should be secured. Consultations were meticulously organized in each province to appoint representatives for travel to Doha. A total of 40 women, recognized locally for their negotiation capabilities with the Taliban or in inter-tribal disputes, were carefully selected. They actively lobbied the international community for financial support to facilitate the participation of these women, and their efforts were met with the necessary backing.

■ Despite encountering significant challenges, visas were ultimately arranged. However, the Afghan government intervened, preventing the women from attending out of concern that it would confer legitimacy upon the Taliban.

Notwithstanding this obstacle, the established process was utilized for subsequent consultations once the government negotiation team was constituted, enabling the participation of three women.

Among the selected women was Fatima Gailani, chosen by women, the government, and the Taliban. Hailing from a prominent religious family that leads a Sufi order in Afghanistan, she played a pivotal role in proposing a viable solution to revert back to the 1964

▲ **Panelists discuss women's roles in Libya's political dialogue and post-conflict reconstruction. The conversation highlighted lessons on women's leadership, resilience, and the importance of consensus-building and gender equity within peace processes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.**

constitution. However, her proposal for a power-sharing agreement under this constitution was met with rejection from her own government team.

### **The key learnings from the Afghan experience are as follows:**

- Women didn't ask to join; they self-organized across groups and provinces to form women's coalitions, seeking international support for their participation in peace talks.
- The government unexpectedly posed a challenge by preventing women from participating in Intra Afghan talks.

- Traditional religious women successfully proposed interim solutions, but their significance was not recognized by political elites, and they were not effectively engaged.
- Women can exert significant influence on peace processes by participating in side conferences, events, and presenting their statements, red lines, proposals, and scenarios.
- The peace process is a long journey that requires sustainable efforts. Despite many successful steps, Afghanistan suffered a significant setback. Unfortunately, with the NAP quotas and the current situation of the Taliban takeover, the situation has become unimaginable. There are over 200 decrees against women, including the closure of girls' schools, restrictions on movement, and preventing women from working, as well as repression of women on Hijab issues.

## Libya

### **In Libya, women have assumed a pivotal role as national partners in fostering peaceful dialogue and reconstructing the state.**

They firmly advocate that dismantling gender barriers is essential for progressing from exclusion and prevention to inclusion and participation. Michelle Bachelet emphasized the necessity of women's involvement in conflict resolution, stating, "Wherever there is conflict, women must be part of the solution."

Over a span of 15 months, political dialogues were conducted, culminating in a Libyan agreement and a comprehensive roadmap. This process established a normative framework and an international legal context for women's participation in dialogues, accompanied by the issuance of several key decisions. The political dialogue featured a primary track and a supportive track, engaging political parties, figures, civic society, municipalities, and women (the informal

track). Women's engagement in the peace process has significantly contributed to fostering a culture of peace and enhancing women's political empowerment. **The following insights were gleaned from this experience:**

- Cohesion among women's efforts amplifies their collective voice and impact.
- Women's involvement in the peace process commences during preparation, continues through follow-up, and extends into the implementation phase.
- Positive peace is characterized by a cohesive network of trust-based relationships among individuals.
- Peace encompasses more than a mere ceasefire; it embodies a comprehensive commitment to political science and human rights in the post-war era, extending beyond the absence of violence.
- Consensus-building holds particular significance in peace negotiations.
- Transparent media and communication are integral to the process.
- The establishment of a regional and international network is imperative during dialogues.
- Women possess the capacity to serve as catalysts for peace when confronted with conflict.
- The development of projects promoting a culture of peace is an integral part of the process.
- The integration of a gender approach across all stages (pre-conflict, during conflict, and post-conflict) is inseparable from addressing societal and economic dimensions.

## Yemen

### **Conversely, with regard to women's involvement in the peace process in Yemen:**

- There exists a perception that the feminist movement lacks encouragement from the international community, as no specific programs have been tailored for them. This disparity between the needs on the ground and the support offered underscores a



disconnect. The international community is endeavoring to influence the prevailing regime in Yemen.

- The use of language to describe the context and situation, particularly following events on October 7, is a critical factor shaping alignment or discord between local and international perspectives.
- The most substantial gap in terms of gender sensitivity lies between policy and practice. Women struggle against prevailing stereotypes, wherein their voices are deemed irrelevant. This prevailing mindset accounts for the existence of numerous programs that fall short in terms of efficacy.
- The roadmap is best developed through a step-by-step approach, punctuated by various milestones, including an analysis of different parties and the engagement of relevant stakeholders to initiate the initial phase and progress further.
- The conflict in Yemen is deeply entrenched. While the peace process was initiated in Stockholm and continued in Kuwait, it failed to materialize. The dependence of all parties on the initial agreement was dis-

▲ **Dr. Nabilah Al Hakimi member of the legal committee with the Yemeni Presidential Leadership committee intervene about the legal measures needed to protect women and advance their formal participation. Alongside her is Paola Foschiatto UNWomen-Yemen and Eva Mendoza Giraldo, Political Consul at the Spanish Embassy in Jordan.**

rupted by the 2019 oil crisis, which disproportionately affected areas under Houthi control, leading to a dilemma about whether to continue based on the Stockholm agreement or pursue an alternate course.

- When contemplating the future of nations, the perspectives of all political parties are duly considered.
- A holistic approach appears to be the most viable solution, necessitating continuity and collaborative efforts.
- Notable technical divergences emerged during negotiations. For instance, certain parties expressed reluctance in opening roads and the airport due to





▲ Insights from Palwasha Lena Kakar, the U.S. Institute of Peace (left), on the pivotal role of esteemed Afghani women, endowed with religious credibility, both at the forefront of formal negotiations and in grassroots peace initiatives.

concerns that the military and militia might exploit these conduits for transporting weapons.

- In the infrastructure and logistics sector, a dearth of women in leadership positions is observed.
- The efforts of feminist networks do not consistently align with decisions made by political parties. The mechanisms in place have failed to adequately incorporate women into the peace process.
- When women join political parties, they encounter the dilemma of either serving as a mere women's representative and adhering to the party's directives or asserting their individual voice, potentially leading to disagreement with the party and placing them in a conflictual position.
- The role of a mediator is fraught with challenges as they navigate between the government and various parties, necessitating impartiality to establish credibility. ■

## DAY 1: EMERGING NARRATIVES FROM PARTICIPANTS

**Judge Naima  
Muhammad Jibril**

President of the Court in Benghazi / Member of the  
Libyan Political Dialogue

The Libyan experience represents a pioneering effort in the Arab world, characterized by a concerted endeavor to dismantle gender barriers and inhibitions. This endeavor has been likened to breaking through impenetrable walls in the pursuit of gender justice.

Our primary objective has consistently been to ensure that Libyan women are afforded a platform in peace negotiations, enabling them to articulate their

challenges, accomplishments, and insights. Throughout the formal Libyan Political Dialogue spanning fifteen months, we successfully brokered the Skhirat Agreement, thereby formalizing the participation of women. Despite subsequent forums failing to produce conventional accords, the facilitation of Security Council resolutions and political decisions has paved the way for increased female involvement.

In addition to the official trajectory, auxiliary pathways emerged, including municipal and informal women's tracks. Despite being initially outnumbered, our unwavering perseverance yielded tangible outcomes, such as the Libyan Women's Document for Peacebuilding and Societal Peace. Our standpoint underscores the indispensable nature of women's comprehensive involvement in peacebuilding. It transcends the realm of rights, encapsulating the roles of creators, builders, and partners in the construction of a more auspicious future.

## Palwasha Lena Kakar

Director for Religion and Inclusive Societies,  
United States Institute of Peace

In the intricate tapestry of recent Afghan history, a pivotal moment unfolded on the global stage: the Qatar-sponsored dialogue, where the sparse presence of three women garnered significant attention. The path to this moment was characterized by resilience and negotiation, predominantly at the grassroots level.

Local women, often revered for their devoutness and community standing, engaged in negotiations with the Taliban across various regions of the nation. Their efforts encompassed a wide spectrum, from securing land rights to safeguarding girls' education. However, a fundamental query persisted within the women's movement: how to effectively articulate their perspectives to the Taliban.

As the possibility of peace talks materialized in 2019, efforts to construct inclusive delegations encountered obstacles. While the government curated its roster, a parallel initiative unfolded among women.

---

***“Peace starts with a mother's heart. We trained ordinary women to speak out, and today, some are lawyers advocating for peace, human rights, and the release of the abducted.”***  
— Amat Alsalam

Recognizing the significance of provincial representation and direct engagement with the Taliban, a diverse list of 40 women was meticulously formulated. Nevertheless, bureaucratic impediments delayed their participation, with unanticipated resistance emanating from within the Afghan government.

Amidst the unfolding intra-Afghan negotiations, the composition of the core government representatives reflected inclusivity, eventually incorporating four women. Among them stood Fatima Gailani, a revered figure renowned for her spiritual lineage and unwavering commitment to dialogue.

As negotiations advanced, these women served as conduits between the negotiation table and their communities, amplifying voices and asserting non-negotiable positions. Notably, individuals such as Fatima Gailani leveraged their moral authority to bridge divides, almost brokering agreements through personalized diplomacy. However, despite promising prospects, the fragility of power dynamics ultimately succumbed to the resurgence of the Taliban.

The narrative underscores the pivotal role of esteemed women, endowed with religious credibility, both at the forefront of formal negotiations and in





▲ Sanaa Center expert Rim Mugahid speaks on Yemen's political landscape, stressing the need to integrate women's voices in national decision-making spaces.

grassroots peace initiatives. In Afghanistan's tumultuous journey, the voices of these women resonate as enduring symbols of resilience and hope amid uncertainty.

## Rim Mugahid

Supporting Broader Inclusion and Participation in the Yemeni Peace Process Program Lead, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies

In Yemen's complex political landscape, women's absence from the negotiating table isn't just a consequence; it's a reflection of deeper systemic issues. Unlike experiences in Libya or Afghanistan, Yemeni women were at least present in earlier negotiations but in later they have vanished from the scene, even from the last government.

The reasons behind this absence are multifaceted. Firstly, as was argued by some participants Yemen's

feminist movement is still in its infancy, hindered by the slow pace of societal change. Despite significant strides, the momentum gained from events like the National Dialogue dwindled rapidly due to systematic exclusion and a political status quo that prioritized other issues over women's participation. Moreover, regional dynamics further complicate matters. States sponsoring various factions in Yemen have little incentive to promote women's inclusion, viewing it as a challenge to their own entrenched power structures. The international community, including the United Nations, bears its share of responsibility. While resolutions like 1325 advocate for women's participation, their implementation often falls short. The UN could have exerted more pressure during early negotiations to ensure women's representation, but this opportunity was missed. Even when women are included, it's often in token roles, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting discussions to gender-specific issues. Real progress means placing women where decisions are made, not just discussing women's issues separately.

Ultimately, women's voices must echo the same concerns as their male counterparts – from economic stability to political frameworks – to be taken seriously. This requires genuine support, such as scholarships for higher education and tangible efforts to bridge the

gap between international agendas and realities on the ground. Until then, the international community risks perpetuating a cycle of exclusion, leaving Yemen's future hanging in the balance.

## Shatha Al-Harazi

Mediation Expert, Office of the Special Envoy

In the journey of mediation, the question arises: who designs the process, and how? Reflecting on Yemen's negotiation history, the landscape has shifted significantly since 2016. Initially focused on political structures and transitions in the Kuwait negotiations, discussions have evolved into addressing immediate needs due to the prolonged conflict. Terms like political pluralism and democracy have faded, replaced by urgent humanitarian concerns.

This shift in focus has implications for inclusivity and transparency within the mediation process. While initiatives like the National Dialogue showcased progress in women's participation, subsequent efforts have been fragmented. There had been a focus on ad-hoc solutions, drifting further from comprehensive resolutions.

The introduction of the Stockholm Agreement in 2018 marked a turning point, emphasizing humanitarian priorities. However, issues like oil revenues and airport operations have been treated as technical rather than political, undermining their broader implications. Moreover, the notion of inclusivity has evolved. Initially centered on armed groups, it now encompasses a wider array of political actors. Yet, women's representation remains sidelined, despite their active engagement in advocacy networks.

The role of mediators, too, has shifted. While the UN has historically and still played a central role, other actors, like Saudi Arabia, have emerged as key brokers. This decentralization raises questions of accountability and transparency. Looking ahead, there's a pressing need to align efforts towards a coherent political process. Women's networks must seize opportunities for advocacy, engaging with both domestic and international stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard in government formations and policy decisions.

## DAY 2: "People-centered Peace: Speaking for Local Communities" Panel

The panel held on the second day of the Madrid Forum around "People-centered Peace: Speaking for Local Communities" invited the following esteemed panelists:

- Ms. Hooria Mashoor, Former Minister of Human Rights
- Ms. Sawsan al-Refaei, Gender & Development Expert (Yemen)
- Mr. Ahmed Nagi, Senior Research at Crisis Group (Yemen)
- Ms. Maha Awadh, Wogood for Human Security Organization (Yemen)

This panel explored innovative solutions to support a gender-responsive approach to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in peacebuilding settings and identifying means to engage women in decision making for planning and reconstruction and gender-responsive environment and climate change policies. It discussed ways to promote the participation of women-owned and women-led social enterprises, businesses, and business associations, in post-conflict economic recovery and economic revitalization. Moreover, it reflected on how Yemeni women can contribute meaningfully to the economic track.

In the context of seeking diverse perspectives, academic and feminist practitioners shared their experi-





ences as "peace builders" in various countries, highlighting key insights:

- The Kosovo summit, with representation from over 200 countries, provided a platform for women's voices to be heard.
- Yemeni women have endeavored to support and represent citizens within and outside the capital, gaining recognition from the Ambassadors of France, Netherlands, international development agencies, and the UN representative special envoy. Involving men in their initiatives amplified their impact, ensuring diverse participation mirrors the overall diversity.
- The drafted declaration emphasizes women's priorities, focusing on protection against violations and transgressions. Exploring alternative avenues, such as creating a virtual space through electronic platforms for distributing the declaration, enabled outreach to remote areas. This garnered 200 voices, providing broader support for expressing women's needs and aligning with their assessment expectations.
- Inadequate time is allocated for women's participation in the transitional peace process.
- Violations of women's rights persist in Yemen dur-

▲ **Participants engage in a facilitated trust-building session at the Madrid WPS Forum, using interactive, participatory exercises designed to create a safe environment, foster open dialogue, and build trust among Yemeni and international delegates.**

ing the conflict, necessitating a secure space for their expression and protection.

- Some assert that Yemen is experiencing not a recession but degradation across power spheres, including the peace process, indicating systemic marginalization. Accountability and financial support are deemed imperative.
- The interconnection of Track 1 and Track 2 is essential for the success of the peace process.
- Stigmatization of discussions on violence against women discourages women from speaking out.
- Outdated data characterizes the Yemeni situation.
- While civil society plays a vital role in the peace process, internal dissent impedes reaching a resolution.
- Infrastructure projects lack female leadership. Establishing community support can heighten women's

competence and involvement in pioneering projects led by women.

- Women are engaged in political but not security conversations in the context of the Riyadh signed agreement.

During the panel, participants shared best practices and insights from peace processes, with reference documents distributed by Mrs. Nina Lahoud. Key highlights include:

- Pursuing integrated financial support addressing women and girls' needs is beneficial.
- The peace process, incorporating women, men, and other stakeholders addressing women's needs collectively, has evolved into a shared responsibility between genders.
- In Yemen, the presence of fewer UN agencies on the ground has simplified coordination efforts, reducing overlap and improving the alignment of activities. Innovative integrated mechanisms across parties and political factions enhance collaborative efforts.
- Women from diverse political affiliations have collaborated to develop a unified document outlining their top priorities.
- Compromise, solidarity, setting aside differences, and uniting for the benefit of women's needs are integral to the process.
- Upholding gender equity and practicing it across all

---

***“Even when women are included, it's often in token roles, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting discussions to gender-specific issues only.”***

***— Rim Mugahid***

levels and aspects of the peace process are deemed vital for political stability.

- Integrating the declaration into the system and ensuring its widespread dissemination, as exemplified by a group of articulate representatives delivering it to the general consul (as evidenced in the Namibia case), is key.
- The formation of a women's parliament committee is encouraged in later stages.
- A joint declaration by men and women shared at the UN General Assembly in 2025 can serve as a pivotal platform.

## DAY 2: EMERGING NARRATIVES FROM PARTICIPANTS

---

### **Dr. Sawsan Al-Refaei**

Gender Equity, Gender Policy and Advocacy Expert

---

In the realm of peace negotiations, the spotlight on women's participation isn't just about their inherent right to representation; it's also about addressing the harsh realities they face daily. Women in Yemen endure not only societal violence but also systematic marginalization by all parties involved in the conflict. This marginalization poses a grave threat to the nation's stability.

Rather than assigning blame, the focus should be on accountability and progress. Women, who already face significant risks, are courageously stepping up to ensure their voices are heard across all negotiation tracks, even at personal peril. The issue isn't just about holding individuals or organizations responsible; it's about ensuring they actively promote gender equality



and equity. It's about moving forward and holding all stakeholders accountable for their commitments.

Donors, too, must shift their focus beyond mere lip service. They should actively support initiatives aimed at addressing the needs of women in conflict zones, both financially and technically. This includes integrating women's humanitarian and peace agendas, rather than treating them as separate entities. Women's representation shouldn't be confined to the sidelines or solely focused on political issues. Their concerns, including those related to violence, must be central to all discussions. It's about creating opportunities for women to lead and ensuring their voices are not only heard but also acted upon. We now have an opportunity. There is a new government, new actors, and a feminist movement. We must take advantage of it.

To achieve this, partnerships are crucial. It's not enough to simply listen to women; true progress comes from collaborating with them, both inside and outside negotiation rooms. By providing tangible support and resources, including financial aid, we can empower women to translate their words into meaningful action. Ultimately, it's about recognizing the potential

of female leadership in Yemen and taking concrete steps to support it. This requires consistent pressure on UN organizations and donor countries to prioritize women's needs and voices. After all, their existence is intertwined with ours, and by standing together, we can compel meaningful change.

---

## Hooria Mashhour

Former Human Rights Minister of Yemen

---

Before I became Minister of Human Rights, I spent a great deal of time with the Women's National Committee, crafting strategies for women's advancement. We faced immense challenges in shifting societal norms around gender. While discussions often centered on violence against women, some, influenced by Western agendas, stood apart. Yet, we hailed from the very heart of our society, advocating from within.

I remember a meeting with the Speaker of the House who saw us as mere recipients of aid, not agents of change. Once, a World Bank consultant likened Ye-



▲ **Muna Luqman, National Coordinator on Inclusion at OSESGY, reflects on her journey as a local community negotiator with armed groups in Yemen, particularly in Taiz, and highlights the importance of holistic approaches to peacebuilding. The panel included Spanish NGO actors at Casa Árabe.**

meni women to the base of a pyramid, dismissing their struggles. Does he mean the rural women fetching water tirelessly, the young girls making the same journey? These are the faces of our struggle.

We cannot solely blame external actors or neighboring countries. We must reflect on our own failings as Yemenis. The National Dialogue Outcome offered a fair path, but we faltered in its execution. Following setbacks, a Crisis Group report highlighted our lack of vision for peace. It was a wake-up call. As part of the National Consensus Movement, we saw traditional political parties falter, failing to adapt to the needs of our youth and country. They became bystanders in our

nation's crisis. Thus, we rallied academics, former politicians, and experts from all walks of life, both within Yemen and abroad, to chart a new course. I am proud of the diverse voices within the National Consensus Movement, where women comprise over forty percent.

Women have been at the forefront of calls for peace since the onset of conflict. They bring invaluable expertise and perspectives to the table. At the Yemen Center for Transitional Justice, I stress the importance of a humanitarian approach to peace. We must address the rights of victims and acknowledge the atrocities of the past to prevent further cycles of violence. Transitional justice cannot wait; it is imperative for a just peace. In my role, I've listened to the grievances of those affected by past injustices, from southerners whose lands were seized to Nasserists who faced persecution. These crimes cannot be swept under the rug. We conducted a Transitional Justice Report from a gender lens, shedding light on the unique experiences of women in conflict.

I'm also involved in efforts to institutionalize peace, drawing lessons from Rwanda and Kenya. Women, experts in their fields, play a crucial role in shaping these

initiatives. I firmly believe in the power of women to drive positive change, and I'm grateful for the support of men who share our vision for human rights.

## Nina Lahoud

Member of Advisory Group to UN High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality at United Nations

In my years supporting peace processes in conflict-affected settings, I've often witnessed how women, when excluded from formal Track I negotiations, respond by forming parallel, all-women initiatives to influence the process. Yemen is no exception. The establishment of the Yemeni Women's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) by OSESGY in 2018 is one such example. But I believe this stage in Yemen's peace process calls for a new conversation, not just about creating space for women, but about embedding gender across every level and sector of decision-making.

During my time working with the UN peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste, we adopted an integrated gender coordination model that may offer valuable insights. We created a UNMIT/UN Country Team Working Group on Gender, chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who also served as the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. This group brought together the mission, UN agencies, government counterparts, and civil society to address women's priorities sector by sector, establishing a shared framework that assigned clear responsibilities and timelines. Women's needs were not treated as niche concerns. They became everyone's responsibility.

I share this experience because Yemen does not have a multidimensional UN peacekeeping mission like Timor-Leste. But it does have OSESGY and a range of UN agencies working in-country. I believe there is an opportunity here for Yemeni women, together with these actors, to consider adapting such an integrated, cross-sectoral mechanism to elevate their voices, not only in political talks but also in humanitarian, development, and security frameworks. The more we normalize shared ownership of women's priorities across



▲ Former Human Rights Minister Hooria Mashoor reflects on women's participation in Yemen, noting progress during the National Dialogue but setbacks in implementation.

institutions and actors, the more sustainable and transformative the peace process can become.

Another mechanism that has proven effective in other countries is the formation of a Women's Cross-Party Political Pact. These pacts are forged by women from different political factions who set aside ideological differences to identify a common agenda for advancing women's rights and leadership. I've seen how such pacts can be unifying and impactful. They are locally driven, deeply rooted, and free from donor or institutional ownership. It is an idea worth exploring in Yemen, particularly as women seek to re-enter a political space that has become increasingly exclusionary.

I also flagged, though perhaps less relevant at this stage, the eventual utility of a Women's Parliamentary Caucus. This would be a cross-party platform for elected women to collaborate on legislative priorities

and gender equality. While Yemen's current context may not support such a structure, it remains a long-term goal should parliamentary functions resume.

Finally, I urged participants to consider formulating and adopting a Madrid Forum Declaration. My thinking here draws from another experience, when I participated in the Windhoek Seminar in 2000, which produced the Windhoek Declaration and Namibian Plan of Action. That seminar's outcomes were submitted to the UN Secretary-General and became foundational texts for the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 just five months later. The lesson is simple but powerful. Consensus documents, even from short forums, can shape international policy when they reflect clarity, urgency, and unity.

Such a declaration from the Madrid Forum could outline Yemeni women's consensus on the concrete strategies and actions needed to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Yemen, specifically targeting participation, leadership, and the dismantling of structural barriers. It could also be formally submitted to the UN, amplifying its visibility and influence.

I know all too well that declarations and pacts are only one part of a much longer journey. But I also believe in the power of collective voice, especially when it comes from women who have remained resilient in the face of exclusion. The peace process in Yemen cannot afford to sideline half its population. Women's perspectives, leadership, and needs must be integrated, not as a symbolic gesture, but as a fundamental principle guiding the country's path forward.

---

## Ahmed Nagi

Senior Analyst, International Crisis Group

---

The role of women in Yemen's political development and conflict resolution is complex, largely because the conflict has disrupted traditional political structures. In this vacuum, women have stepped into new spaces, particularly at the grassroots level, where their contributions have become increasingly vital.

I've seen women lead community initiatives, deliver essential services, and build networks of support in

areas where formal governance has broken down. Whether through local economic projects or social media campaigns, they are responding directly to the needs of their communities and helping to build resilience amidst the chaos of war.

This shift toward service-oriented roles is more than a survival strategy. It's laying the groundwork for broader political engagement. Women who are trusted community leaders today could become influential political actors tomorrow. Their effectiveness in addressing real societal challenges positions them as key stakeholders in Yemen's future.

That's why involving women in rebuilding efforts and political processes is not optional, it's crucial. Their expertise, networks, and commitment are indispensable assets for any sustainable peace. We can help foster a more inclusive and durable recovery that reflects the needs and strengths of all Yemenis, by fostering women's inclusion now.

---

## Maha Awadh

Chairwoman WOGOOD foundation for Human Security / Coordinator, Yemeni Feminist Summit

---

The war in Yemen became deeply personal when its reality enveloped us, consuming our lives. Yet, I choose not to dwell solely on my own suffering but instead advocate tirelessly for peace. In Yemen, the peace process remains uncertain, lacking inclusivity and failing to prioritize crucial issues like transitional justice and gender-based violence. Economic factors are paramount too. We must address the decline exacerbated by war, building a peace economy that uplifts communities. Socially, education is essential for sustaining peace, yet services remain lacking.

Societal divisions, a byproduct of prolonged conflict, hinder peacebuilding efforts. Our current status quo is a blend of ongoing conflict and a failure to heed calls for peace.

Amidst this turmoil, people continue to suffer, lacking basic services and facing economic hardship. It's imperative that we act swiftly to prevent further deterioration.





## DAY 3: "Turning Tables or Parallel Tables" Panel

**O**n day three, the panel "turning tables or parallel tables", moderated by Ms. Zahra' Langhi, invited the following esteemed panelists:

- Ms. Samia Al-Hashemi, Director of Muatanat Organization, Peacebuilder Constitutional Expert (Sudan)
- Ms. Martine Miller, Vice President Center of Religion & Diplomacy (on case studies from Asia)

▲ Participants gather for a group photo with Women, Peace, and Security expert Nina Lahoud, standing second from left, after an inspiring exchange on lessons from global conflict settings. Discussions underscored women's pivotal role in grassroots peacebuilding and resilience, calling for greater investment in women-led initiatives for Yemen's recovery.

- Mr. Maeen Al-Obaidi, Local Mediator (Yemen)
- Sheikh Dr. Abdelaziz Al-Aqab, Tribal Mediator (Yemen)

The panel focused on the following:

- Profile key local mediation processes and the contribution of women in traditional/informal justice mechanisms and dialogue processes and the variety of their roles and challenges faced.
- Evaluate these roles of women in mediation processes and mechanisms from a legal, social, and reconciliation perspective, including with regards to the inclusion of victims' rights and promoting women empowerment.

■ Profile the functioning of local mediation processes (case studies), including the way the agreements were reached, the nature of the agreement, its format, and the specificities of women interventions in them.

In **Northern Ireland** peace process, they realized that if there is no coalition, women won't have a seat at the table. So, it took one week to do so as they were motivated.

In **Central Africa Republic**, women came to the leading maire of the capital and said they will be behind her to become the president of the country. These are local level initiatives, speaking openly to have collaborative conversations. She took their voices to the highest level and stayed connected to the women local initiatives and kept their voices heard. She became the president interim of the country thanks to the women support and coalition.

She got invited to the Philippines peace process table and said: "I am not going to sit behind you but beside you" and opened the space for other women to join the table. Many initiatives came from this Philippine table. "It is not asking but being at the table because you have the right to be on the table, be confident in taking that space".

**Myanmar and Thailand:** Myanmar is in a state of anarchy. Women has come together and constituted a national unity coalition party to lead on negotiation in corridor and atrocity resolution. They formed a dialogue with women in Thailand and Myanmar. Regional

cross borders dynamics are important to have. They don't stay within the borders; it is important to come together so that it goes global. There is different bridge building among negotiation parties. "Women motivation is generally to serve their community and not their ego".

During the Beijing conference, there were conflicts between south and north of **Sudan**. When the mediators saw the problem, they decided to meet in a tent to discuss peace and negotiate (1995).

Before the war, Sudan drafted a new constitution, and women played a decisive role in it. This is still a valid document done in a context of war. Women wishes through their imagination and creativity reached an important valid result. Women got selected based on quality of contribution and not quota.

In all the Arab world, Sudan is a big area close to the Red Sea. Despite the richness of natural resources, there is high level of illiteracy, yet the tribal factions are quite peaceful. Though women are victim of violence and exclusion, there is a tribal court that deals with violation against women, a system called "al gallad" dealing in a pro-active way with the violation. The most common explanation of this word is patience. The system absorbed many issues in Sudan.

The tribal problems have been well dealt with thanks to it.

In Darfour, there is a system called "gafamat". These are women poets, singers or clerks who used singing to encourage fights between the farmers and shepherds. This gave women power. The same singing power can be used to prevent men from going to war.

Meanwhile, mediators felt alone until a group of mediators was formed to work on the detainee's file. It took time to build trust between mediators and their communities. Once they became widely known in civil society, women mediator started to work with prisons and the exchange of prisoners. Having a solid relationship with all from different parties is key. The learning in mediation is to put yourself in other shoes regardless of divergences.

Two years ago, a panel of twelve men and a woman mediator was created. Being the only woman is a big responsibility. The efforts were divided on each other focusing on different topics. They offer each other constructive criticism. Men working with a woman in

---

***"Issues like oil revenues and airport operations have been treated as technical rather than political, undermining their broader implications and sidelining inclusive dialogue."***  
— ***Shatha Al-Harazi***



mediation, offered exemplary solidarity, helped, and facilitated her tasks.

Ghazal El Makdassiya, tribal leader of one of the most difficult governate, became a very prominent activist. Everyone took her contribution as a prominent and a good reference.

Mediation in **Yemen** is based on cluster of specificity and priorities. First, the position of the mediator is extremely important, the prestige is second. Moreover, it is very important to have all the necessary data to effectively implement mediation effort.

“Unfortunately, there is very little up to date documentation and particularly of women work in mediation. so many unheard stories of ordinary heroes. Once heard and witnessed we are halfway.”

## DAY 3: EMERGING NARRATIVES FROM PARTICIPANTS

### **Maeen Al-Obaidi**

Mediator, City of Taiz

I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to share my journey into mediation today. It's a unique moment for me to address my female colleagues, possibly the first time for some of them to delve into the world of local mediation.

Let me take you into the heart of what local mediation means, particularly in a place like Taiz, Yemen, where I call home. Before the war, and still persisting today, local mediation has been the bedrock of resolving small-scale disputes, especially concerning essential services like water, within villages and communities.

But Taiz, once a bustling city, suddenly found itself ensnared in the chaos of war. Overnight, we were con-

***“Women have been at the forefront of calls for peace since the onset of conflict, offering invaluable expertise and humanitarian perspectives.”***

**— Hooria Mashhour**

finied to what felt like a tiny, besieged square. Crossing neighborhoods became perilous journeys, with roads blocked, mined, and inaccessible, forcing me and many others into arduous, hours-long treks just to connect with loved ones. In the midst of this turmoil, spurred by my legal background and pre-war political connections, I felt compelled to act. I began by leveraging these relationships to advocate for humanitarian truces and the reopening of vital routes. Soon, I found myself immersed in mediation efforts, initially focusing on detainee exchanges.

One pivotal moment cemented my role. When a party refused to cooperate until I intervened, it underscored the power of trust and familiarity in mediation. Building on this, I expanded my efforts, bridging divides between decision-makers, tapping into my broad network and impartial stance to navigate complex negotiations.

Two years ago, recognizing the need for cohesion amidst scattered efforts, we formed a unified team of local mediators across Yemen. Despite being a woman in a predominantly male field, my colleagues never hindered me; rather, they supported my endeavors, acknowledging the breadth of my connections. Maintaining neutrality and discretion were paramount. Away from the glare of media, we operated in the shadows, where trust and confidentiality reign supreme.

When asked about integrating women's rights into mediation, I emphasized the necessity of prioritiz-

ing women, drawing on societal norms and personal experiences to navigate these sensitive issues. Despite challenges, being a woman in mediation often commands respect and facilitates smoother negotiations.

Yet, it's important to acknowledge the barriers many women face. Societal expectations and family obligations can impede their involvement. Not every woman can readily step into this arena, especially considering cultural norms and practical challenges, like navigating khat-laden negotiation sessions.

Ultimately, my journey in mediation has been about transcending barriers, forging connections, and advocating for peace in a landscape marred by conflict.

## Sheikh Dr. Abdelaziz Al-Aqab

Founder of Fikr Organization for Dialogue and Human Rights Defence / Tribal Mediator

Yemeni women, to me, are the architects of peace. During this forum, I was struck by two powerful statements. One speaker emphasized the need to question rather than ask or beg for rights, recognizing them as inherent. Another participant spoke about the importance of assessing politicians' qualifications, framing the struggle as a battle of consciousness. It's true—those who emerge from conflicts don't change their steps, they change their minds.

Yemeni women face hurdles but not due to lack of qualification or participation. Their resilience in overcoming obstacles, from navigating airport challenges to societal barriers, is testament to their strength. Yet, what they lack is empowerment, particularly in financial support for women's programs. I've seen firsthand how Yemeni women excel as mediators, navigating complex tribal dynamics with grace. Customary rules uphold women's sacred status, reflecting their innate capabilities. Women have historically shaped pivotal rules of consultation and choice, demonstrating their indispensable roles. However, their potential remains untapped due to limited control over finances and decision-making. I've pledged support for women's initiatives, recognizing the need for practical action.

Mediation in Yemen requires a deep understanding of social and political dynamics, something we've cultivated through years of groundwork. Success stories abound, like our efforts to reopen a crucial road linking communities. Overcoming resistance required understanding and addressing underlying fears—a recurring theme in Yemeni society. Despite upheavals, Yemenis retain a rich heritage of values, essential for reconciliation and peace-building. As we navigate challenges, let's harness this legacy as a beacon of hope.

## DAY 4: Closing

**A**fter three days of connecting, building relationships and learning best practices and technics from regional and international experts and practitioners around women, security and peace, participants met in Casa Arabe for a last round of panels on "Gender rights and constitutions in action – the gap between the promise of equality in constitutions and the reality of its implementation in society" and Women Transforming Security- Local Women Mediators in Negotiating with Armed Groups". His Excellency Diego Martínez Belío, State Secretary for Foreign and Global Affairs and Mr. Sarhad Fatah, Deputy Head of Mission of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen gave their closing messages highlighting the importance of Madrid Forum as one key step, gathering the right people in the room to think and work together towards a sustainable peace in Yemen, learning from the past, designing future scenarios, in an inclusive and participatory way, so to feed the future strategy and road map.

## DAY 4: EMERGING NARRATIVES FROM PARTICIPANTS

### Muna Luqman

National Coordinator for Yemen, OSESGY

In the esteemed company of Yemeni women, global experts, and elite leaders, I am humbled to stand alongside Dr. Amat alSalam al-Hajj. Our journey towards peace, as Yemeni women, is more than a task; it's a commitment, a continual readiness to serve. We carry forward the legacy of our predecessors, whose struggles transcended war and peace, embodying resilience in every era.

Our efforts extend beyond conventional roles, encompassing initiatives for social justice, human rights, and the establishment of a fair state. From grassroots endeavors ensuring food and water security to educational reforms preventing child recruitment into conflict, Yemeni women lead initiatives that foster love, peace, and cooperation amidst adversity.

We navigate through perilous times, facing threats and violence, yet persist in our mission to protect our communities. I recall a pivotal moment during the early days of conflict, when social media became a tool to disarm militias and remove armed presence from our streets. In the face of danger, we organized campaigns to safeguard civilians, including orphans and the vulnerable, trapped amidst the chaos of battle.

In Taiz, amidst relentless airstrikes and street warfare, we formed human chains to rescue those stranded in besieged areas, including seventy five orphans trapped in a central prison. Leveraging our relationships and reputation, we negotiated safe passage, highlighting the inherent humanity even within the ranks of fighters.

Our endeavors underscore the vital role of women in peacebuilding. We are not merely half of society or



▲ Feminist Summit Founder Maha Awad, left, and Judge Eshraq Al Maktari of Yemen's National Committee for Investigating Human Rights Violations exchange perspectives on justice and accountability during the Madrid WPS Forum. (Top photo) Sudanese Women, Peace and Security expert Samia Al Hashemi engages with Yemeni protection expert Nadia Gamal from the Peace Track Initiative on coalition-building, networking, and advancing the protection of human rights defenders.



bearers of rights; we are the bedrock of community resilience and the guardians of our nation's future. Our call for support is not just for women's rights but for the holistic engagement of our entire society, for without women, true peace remains elusive.

## Amat AlSalam

Head of the Abductees' Mothers Association

I'm here to be the voice of those who've suffered. The mothers, wives, and families of those abducted due to the strife in Yemen. It began with the Houthis takeover of Sana'a and the atrocities that followed. I speak for the families and the victims across Yemen. We're a simple group, representing mothers, the kidnapped, the wounded, and the lost.

We're from Taiz, from the heart of Yemen, and we're grateful to those who've given us a platform to share our pain. The voices of mothers are crucial. Our organization started with parents desperate for their children's release from prisons. They weren't activists initially, just ordinary women. But we trained them, we spoke out, and now some are even lawyers advocating for peace and human rights.

We've taken our plea to international platforms, including the Security Council, demanding the release



▲ Media expert and Yemeni author Lutfi Noman attends a session at the Madrid WPS Forum, emphasizing the power of narratives in advancing and empowering the Yemeni women's movement for peace and social change. (Top left) Liza Al Abadwai, Coordinator of the Women Solidarity Network, shares the challenges facing women-led organizations in Yemen, including limited funding, operational constraints, and threats to the safety and sustainability of grassroots initiatives.

of our loved ones. Peace, we believe, starts with a mother's heart. We need everyone's support to keep pushing for peace and the freedom of our children. Justice is paramount, especially for the 148 victims who died under torture and the thousands arrested, including men and women.

We urge all parties, especially the Ansar Allah, to acknowledge their failures. This is our message to civil society, feminists, and all who care. We're a feminist organization, trained by Yemeni leaders, and we're determined to make a difference.



## Amal Basha

Co-founder of the Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights (SAF) / Laureate of Arab Women of the Year Award, 2014

In the heart of Yemen, where history whispers tales of resilience and revolution, lies a story of women silenced for too long. But within the shadows of oppression, a glimmer of hope emerges—a story of courage, determination, and the relentless pursuit of equality.

Picture a nation torn by conflict, where women, the backbone of society, are often overlooked in matters of governance and law. For decades, Yemeni women have fought on the frontlines of activism, advocating for their rights, demanding to be heard, and refusing to be sidelined in the narrative of their own country.

Amidst the chaos of constitutional reform, where men have traditionally held the reins of power, Yemeni women have begun to carve out their place at the table. In a historic moment, they found themselves not just spectators, but active participants in shaping the future of their nation. Through the National Dialogue, they seized the opportunity to amplify their voices,

▲ **Renowned Spanish journalist Blanca Diego Vicente, from LolaMora Producciones, shares insights on participatory news production with a gender approach, highlighting how Yemeni women can leverage international media coverage to amplify their voices and advocacy efforts.**

championing for gender equality, justice, and the rule of law.

In drafting a new constitution, Yemeni women faced formidable obstacles, but their resolve remained unyielding. They navigated through the murky waters of political maneuvering and patriarchal resistance, refusing to compromise on their fundamental rights. With every stroke of the pen, they etched their demands onto the pages of history, ensuring that equality was not just a promise, but a reality enshrined in law.

Yet, as the ink dried on the draft constitution, a shadow loomed over their hard-fought victories. A clause, out of nowhere, threatened to undermine the progress they had made—a clause that placed Islamic law above all else, casting ambiguity and doubt on the very principles of equality and justice they had fought to uphold.

But Yemeni women are no strangers to adversity. In the face of this new challenge, they rallied once more,

refusing to let their dreams be deferred. They raised their voices, demanding accountability, transparency, and a reaffirmation of their rights as equal citizens.

Their journey is far from over, but with each step forward, Yemeni women are rewriting the narrative of their nation. They are the architects of change, the guardians of justice, and the champions of equality. And as they continue to shape the future of Yemen, they do so not just for themselves, but for generations to come.

Our political situation is stagnant, trapped in an undeclared conflict. But we cannot afford to be pessimistic. The reality demands attention, especially amidst a changing climate that amplifies natural disasters.

We must tread carefully, ensuring our interventions address the root causes of suffering without exacerbating existing woes.

I stand alongside countless peace advocates, committed to pressing for an end to this war. I'll champion the protection of women's rights and combat gender-based violence and discrimination.

Together, we'll prioritize peace, amplifying voices that call for a just and sustainable resolution. Though the road ahead may be challenging, our faith in the cause propels us forward. We will persevere, pushing for swift and effective responses as we continue our journey towards peace.

## Liza Badawi

Coordinator of the Women's Solidarity Network /  
Member of the Peace Track Initiative

Yemen's legal landscape reflects a bias towards masculine language, despite the Arabic language's richness in feminine expressions. While the constitution speaks of equal citizenship, its wording leans towards the masculine, inadvertently encompassing both genders. Although Yemen pledges allegiance to international agreements promoting gender equality, such as the CEDAW convention, its translation into practice remains lacking.

In the realm of law, disparities persist, notably in matters of personal status and nationality. For instance, the valuation of blood money for women at half that of



▲ Gender expert and former National Dialogue member Bilqis Al-Lahbi, left, joins local Taiz mediator and lawyer Maeen Al-Obaidi during the Madrid WPS Forum group session focused on strengthening local mediation efforts in Yemen and water mediation as an entry for peace.

men diminishes their worth. Women encounter hurdles in accessing travel documents, facing discriminatory requirements like the need for a male guardian's approval. Such challenges extend beyond bureaucratic barriers; they're embedded in societal norms, as evidenced by a Yemeni representative's struggle to renew her passport due to her attire.

Despite these obstacles, civil society, spearheaded by women-led organizations, remains steadfast in advocating for change. Their efforts are channeled through reports submitted to international bodies like the CEDAW Committee, urging Yemen to fulfill its commitments and rectify discriminatory laws and practices. Through collective action and advocacy, they strive to create a more inclusive and equitable legal landscape for all Yemeni citizens. ■

# THE MADRID DECLARATION

## on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Yemen

Issued on:  
19 October 2024

Issued by Yemeni participants at the Madrid Forum  
on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in  
Yemen: From the Status Quo to a Transformation

The Madrid Forum was co-organized by the Office of the  
UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and  
the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and  
Cooperation from 23-26 April 2024 in Madrid, Spain

**D**uring the four-day “Madrid Forum on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Yemen: From the Status Quo to a Transformation”, we had the opportunity, as Yemeni participants from diverse segments of society, to engage in intensive, constructive and candid dialogue after having closely witnessed, with deep sadness and pain, persisting catastrophic conditions gripping our country during years of war.

This war has devastated the country’s infrastructure and triggered an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, leaving millions of civilians—particularly women and children—suffering from extreme deprivation and the lack of basic social services to be able to enjoy any semblance of a normal life.

Accordingly, during our discussions, **we concluded that, as a first priority, it was essential to call for an immediate and comprehensive cessation of violence and hostilities throughout the country.** We further concluded that, in conjunction with this cessation of hostilities, **it is pressing that a series of immediate humanitarian measures be implemented in conjunction with other urgent measures to address and strengthen conditions in the security, economic and political spheres.**

### **Urgent Priority Humanitarian Measures Needed Throughout the Country**

To address the dire humanitarian situation and to end Yemen’s prolonged and ongoing crisis, we agreed that certain humanitarian measures are urgently required in order to save civilian lives, particularly those of women, children and other vulnerable groups. As more lives are put in danger as each day passes, rapid implementation of such measures is essential as delaying action will only worsen and extend the suffering of Yemenis who have already endured extreme hardship.

**With the situation deteriorating rapidly, we therefore call upon all relevant Yemeni authorities and parties to immediately take the following priority humanitarian measures, with the support of the international community:**

- 1. Commit to and implement an immediate and comprehensive cease-fire across the country** to end hostilities and protect all Yemeni civilians, which will also allow for a conducive environment for negotiations leading to a just, inclusive, and sustainable peace process.
- 2. Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all Yemeni civilians, women and men, who are unlawfully detained**, including those working for the UN, national and international civil society groups, and journalists. Their release is a humanitarian necessity to alleviate suffering as well as a confidence-building measure to facilitate peace negotiations. In addition, **all parties must end any practices of intimidation tactics or arbitrary detention** occurring in Houthi-controlled areas and in all parts of Yemen. The fundamental right of all Yemeni civilians to liberty and freedom from mistreatment should be respected in accordance with international humanitarian law. **Access to legal support and due process must also be provided to all Yemeni detainees.**
- 3. Open secure humanitarian corridors and remove restrictions on land, sea and airports to allow for the immediate and unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid across Yemen.** The provision of such urgent relief also requires unfettered access for aid organizations.
- 4. Distribute the overdue accrued salaries owed to Yemeni civil service employees to help restore conditions of a normal life and to alleviate the hardship of the population.** Doing so will enable Yemenis to cover basic needs. Such guaranteed income is key to sustaining livelihoods of Yemeni civilians.

### **Urgent Measures Needed in the Political, Security and Economic Spheres**

In calling for the above humanitarian measures, **we emphasize the critical role of Yemeni women who are the cornerstone of society and essential participants to be involved in all levels of mediation and peace efforts.** During the past decade, Yemeni women have substantially contributed to enhancing peace and stability, particularly through local mediation and community-based initiatives across the country. Whether through their humanitarian or development work, their me-

diation efforts have been critical in opening humanitarian corridors and have also led to the release of detainees and the exchange of bodies of the deceased.

Taking account of the past invaluable efforts of Yemeni women, **we call for all Yemeni authorities and parties, with the support of the international community, to commit to and undertake action to increase the participation of women in all phases of peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, including in mediation and negotiation processes**, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325 and its nine successor resolutions as well as the National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security 2020-2023.

**Women's inclusion is key to achieving an enduring and comprehensive peace in Yemen**, as their full, equal and meaningful participation in all levels of peace efforts is fundamentally linked to principles of human rights, equality and non-discrimination. However, over recent years, opportunities for Yemeni women have considerably decreased, particularly as they face heightened risks to their security across multiple domains, including digital threats and violence. Furthermore, Yemeni women continue to confront barriers to assuming leadership and decision-making positions. Their voices and perspectives remain underrepresented in decision-making fora which, in turn, profoundly impacts their lives and livelihoods. **All such barriers facing women must therefore be urgently removed.**

**This particularly dire situation of Yemeni women is an important factor underpinning our urgent call for action across the humanitarian as well as the security, economic and political spheres.** We therefore appeal for national and international solidarity and support for those Yemeni women whose voices continue to be unheard. To be able to achieve the objectives of Security Council resolution 1325 and its nine successor resolutions as well as those of the National Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security 2020-2023, strengthened and united efforts by the entire Yemeni population will be required for building a just, inclusive, and comprehensive peace in Yemen that restores hope to all people, including women and girls who equally deserve to lead dignified lives. More broadly, we emphasize that unified efforts must also be undertaken to pursue sustainable and inclusive development, uphold the rule of law, provide redress for victims, and promote effective governance and institutions with the participation of all segments of Yemeni society.

**Taking account of the above considerations and constraints, we call upon all relevant Yemeni authorities and parties to immediately take the following urgent measures to address and strengthen conditions in the security, economic and political spheres, with the support of the international community:**

- 1. Develop comprehensive and transparent criteria for selecting representatives for all Yemeni-led or UN-supported negotiation committees and delegations across all political, security, and economic tracks.** These criteria should ensure diversity among qualified individuals and experts who are selected for such committees and delegations, **with a minimum of 30 percent to comprise women.** Similarly, ensure that Yemeni women comprise a minimum of 30 percent of representatives on all detainee negotiation committees. Only through such an inclusive approach can a lasting and sustainable peace be achieved that benefits all of Yemeni society.
- 2. Ensure that all Yemeni-led or UN-supported peace negotiations on political, security and economic issues have a comprehensive agenda.** The agenda must also be responsive to the needs and priorities of women, marginalized groups, and local communities to comprehensively address root causes of these issues.
- 3. Take steps to empower Yemeni women and ensure their full and meaningful participation and representation in all decision-making bodies in Yemen,** including in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. **Yemeni women should also be meaningfully involved and represented in all processes and institutions related to or formed through any peace negotiations,** including committees established to implement and monitor peace agreements. Their leadership and perspectives are important for developing inclusive and equitable solutions and for building inclusive governance and institutions that represent all Yemeni citizens.
- 4. Develop and implement concrete steps to protect and uphold the rights of women in all spheres and their well-being throughout Yemen.** For this purpose, an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism should be established to document how the conflict has impacted Yemeni women. **Also ensure that legal reforms are undertaken to uphold the full rights of Yemeni women, which must also guarantee their full access to justice.**
- 5. Remove all restrictions on women's freedom of movement within and outside Yemen,** including eliminating barriers that prevent women from accessing education abroad or participating in national and international events.

6. **Implement measures to strengthen and reform security institutions to make them equally responsive to the needs of all men, women and marginalized communities.** Yemeni women should also be meaningfully engaged in all security-related committees and processes, including those addressing military issues.
7. **Support and strengthen national mechanisms in Yemen for the protection and empowerment of women victims and survivors of violence.** This must include reinforcing community-based protection systems as well as providing economic and social rehabilitation programs to all survivors to facilitate their access to justice and reparations.
8. **Establish the rehabilitation services needed to help Yemeni women and girls recover from the direct and indirect effects of any and all forms of violence incurred,** the levels of which have been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict.
9. **Undertake strengthened demining efforts, and also ensure adequate medical care and economic empowerment opportunities for women injured by landmines.** In addition, all planning efforts and demining programs throughout Yemen must involve the participation of Yemeni women, including in the training and composition of demining teams.
10. **Ensure the full and meaningful participation of Yemeni women in all economic and development bodies and committees, and develop inclusive policies depoliticized from conflict.** Strengthening women's leadership across economic and development sectors will contribute to Yemen's recovery, including in sectors focusing on healthcare, education, energy, and banking, amongst others. Empowering women to participate and assume leadership roles in these vital sectors will also help alleviate suffering and steer greater investment to meet women's needs, which will advance the overall prosperity of the Yemeni population.

**We hope** that all relevant Yemeni authorities and parties, with the strong support of the international community, will fully embrace our urgent appeal to take the above-listed measures in the humanitarian as well as the political, security and economic spheres in order to ensure that the entire Yemeni population, including its invaluable women, will soon be able to enjoy a more peaceful and prosperous life.

Issued on 19 October 2024



**OSESGY**  
Special Envoy for Yemen