



PROJECT
on **Middle East**
Democracy



HEINRICH
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FOUNDATION

*The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED) and
the Heinrich Böll Foundation present:*

WHAT WOMEN WANT: VOICES FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Middle Eastern activists and Western democracy advocates alike have noted that the continued exclusion of women from the political sphere constitutes a serious challenge to the prospects for democratic reform in the region. In recent years, there have been formal, official gains in this regard as women have gained suffrage and the right to run for political office in most countries of the region. But women's political participation has been impeded by various social factors, and discriminatory laws against women remain in effect. As a consequence of that basic imbalance, public policies advanced at the national level often fail to address underlying gender inequities or the concerns of women.

Nevertheless, in recent years, a growing number of women have challenged social conventions and progressively entered the public sphere, at the grassroots as much as the national level. Increased access to education and a growing awareness of citizenship rights have given rise to a generation of female activists who assert the necessity of women's participation for reforming national political agendas.

How has the greater inclusion of women affected debates over public policy in Middle Eastern countries? How can the inclusion of women contribute to the advancement of a larger reform agenda? What kinds of national reforms and civil society initiatives are needed to successfully encourage women's participation? And what role, if any, can US actors play in bolstering the role of women in the political decision-making processes of their countries?

Please join us for a panel discussion with:

Rama Chakaki, Founder and CEO of the Dubai-based The Baraka Group, a consulting firm that invests in social and environmental entrepreneurship

Rola Dashti, First elected chairwoman of the Kuwait Economic Society and the first woman to run for parliamentary office in Kuwait in 2006

Lama Hourani, Advisor to the PLO Secretariat General and former Gaza Branch Coordinator of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development in the Gaza Strip

Rahma Hugaira, Co-Founder and Chairwoman of the Yemeni-based Media Women Forum and former President of the Yemeni League to Defend Journalists

Laura Schulz (*Discussant*), Civil Society and Rule of Law Manager in the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) at the State Department and has also worked on MEPI women's programs

Moderated by **Andrew Albertson**, Executive Director, Project on Middle East Democracy

Tuesday, June 24, 2008

12:00 – 2:00 pm

Heldref Publications, Reid Ballroom

1319 18th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (Metro: Dupont Circle - Red Line)

Please RSVP by contacting: rsvp@pomed.org

Lunch will be served.