
Introduction To Gender Studies Gender Equality & Democracy In Lebanon

Gender equality is a matter of human rights, democracy, and justice. Women being equal to men leads to social development, economic growth, and creates a positive change in the society. Women and Men should receive equal treatment in their jobs, and should not be discriminated against based on gender. Democracy and gender equality should go hand in hand together specifically in our modern days, where the rule of law and human rights are more respected and implemented, by the International Community. Historically women were excluded from political, economic, and social life, in a democracy there is individual freedom, and equality is valued, free elections are held where the people choose their representatives, it is based on the rule of law, and equal rights for everyone.

Democracy, does not only mean freedom, free elections, freedom of expression, and right to vote, but equality between men and women is very important, and Discrimination should not be tolerated. Historically, women suffered from discrimination, oppression by men, and were not allowed to vote, work in business corporations, participate in politics etc. Gender basically is the psychological aspect of being female or male most of the times it varies in different societies, cultures, and religions. Lebanon, is a democratic country, the democratic process is not really practiced by all its spheres, in the Lebanese society women still suffers from certain discriminatory laws.

Lebanon ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women "CEDAW" but under certain reservations on article 9 (2) equal rights with regard to nationality and on article 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) (g) concerning equal rights in marriage and family (UNICEF, 2011). Lebanese women are not allowed to give their nationality to a foreigner husband, while a Lebanese man can grant it to his foreigner wife. Women still suffers from religious laws such as the divorce rights and inheritance, a Muslim man can simply divorce, while a Muslim woman is more difficult to initiate divorce. Representation for women in business companies, and governmental institutions is not equivalent to men. Honor killing in Lebanon occurs in certain areas, where they lack education, and are conservative. Lebanon has no civil code covering issues such as divorce, property rights, care of children, many religious laws governs personal status issues, these laws are discriminatory against women, and does not guarantee basic human rights for women. (Said,2015)

Kafa NGO keeps fighting against discrimination, and protects women rights, and pressure the government to enact certain laws to fully protect women, it reported many violations, to the CEDAW, and other international NGOs. Kafa pressured the government to repeal article 522 concerning sexual assaults, the government amended it, but 522 was not fully abolished. (KAFA, 2017) Lebanon should eliminate inequality under personal status laws, women nowadays are present in the judiciary and many were appointed as judges, but women are not allowed to serve as judges in religious courts. Lebanon is a diverse country, and has many religious groups, and traditions, achieving democracy and gender equality in Lebanon can happen, by respecting the transsexuals, and transgenders, not judging people based on their gender or sex, but based on their capabilities. Marilyn Frye used the bird cage to describe oppression, and she mentioned "because you are a woman you are in the cage for no other

reason”, (Word Press,2012) by Supporting NGO’s who protects, and fight for women’s rights, having conferences in universities, schools, to educate students, and instructors about women’s rights, we can limit oppression.

Expanding political participations, empowering women economically, defending as individuals women against discrimination, allowing women to have decision making careers in the government, adopt gender equality in security and defense, political parties should ensure larger involvement of women in the parliamentary elections. (Piccone, 2017) The government should adopt certain quotas or policies, to fully protect women, amend certain discriminatory laws, and the government should implement a quota that allows women to have 50% of the parliamentary seats, and jobs in the governmental institutions. In a nutshell, gender equality in our modern world is considered a universal norm, and according to the developments accomplished, accepting this idea is not difficult. Lebanon witnessed changes that has been slow, hard to achieve, because of conservative politicians, and religious figures that are still rejecting the Universal approach for gender equality. Women should benefit from all spheres of the society, and the process of gender equality is a driving force which leads to democracy. “Women are half the society, you cannot have revolution without women, you cannot have democracy without women, you cannot have equality without women” (Nawal Al Sadawi). The international community should offer more assistance to the NGO’s, women’s rights movements, and civil society, so that they could proceed in fighting discrimination against women. These organizations, needs more experience, by providing support through funding, raising awareness, and training, so that gender equality and democracy goes hand in hand together.