



Palestinian Businesswomen's Association  
الجمعية الفلسطينية لصاحبات الأعمال

## **Policy paper:**

# **On enhancing women's participation in the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry elections in the West Bank**

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The policy paper titled “Enhancing the Participation of Women in the Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Elections in the West Bank”, highlighted the origins of the chamber of commerce since 1989, their historical course throughout Oslo up to the present day, and the reality of women’s participation within the chambers of commerce in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The policy paper was prepared by researcher Fatima Dana for the Palestinian Businesswomen’s Association, Asala, within the framework of the project, GROW, that aims to create economic opportunities for women and youth in the West Bank. The policy paper illustrated the laws regulating the framework of the chambers of commerce (the Chambers of Commerce Law of 2011), as well as, the election system of the chambers of commerce and industry for the year approved by the Council of Ministers in 2013.

In addition, the paper depicts the fact that, the elections that were held according to the provisions of the aforementioned system, in late 2018 and early 2019, are the elections that came in implementation of the system, eight years after the first elections that were held in 2011, which had emphasized the success of four women in the chamber’s board of directors. Shockingly the 2019 elections resulted in the victory of only two women the Chamber of Commerce elections, which signified a decline in women’s representation than that in previous council elections.

The policy paper examines the underlying problem in the almost total absence of female representation in the Chamber of Commerce councils, despite the Palestinian Authority’s accession to a set of international treaties, which stipulate the need to include women in the economic and political fields, as well as, the regulatory local laws that guarantee the rights of women in political participation.

In addition, the paper highlights the increase in women's projects in Palestine, and its positive correlation on the Palestinian economy. Based on the gender statistics of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the paper revealed that the membership of the Federation General Authority reached 81054 members in each of the West Bank and Gaza strip, of which 3166 are females and remainder being males.

The paper focused on the reality of the Federations General Assembly membership, prior to the 2018-2019 elections, which reached 62513 members in the West Bank, and consisted of 59763 males and 2750 females, or 96% males and 4% females.

The paper clarified that there is a difference in the statistics presented by the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and the Ministry of Economy, regarding the number of women projects with individual ownership. Which decreases the clarity regarding women's representation and participation in the chambers of commerce, as well as the Palestinian economy as a whole. However, what was highlighted in this paper is the issue of the number of members who are entitled to vote in the last elections of the chambers, where elections were held in a competitive manner, as the total reached 13,843 of the 41,096 registered members, or 33.6% of the registered members, whereas, those who exercised their right to vote reached 77.7% of those eligible to vote, 26.2% of those registered in the chambers of commerce that were within the sample of the paper. (7 chambers of commerce, which are Qalqilya, Jenin, Salfit, Tulkarm, Hebron, Nablus, Ramallah and Al-Bireh)

The policy paper came out with a set of challenges women face in increasing their representation in chambers of commerce, which increases the hardship in their participation to vote. The paper classifies the axes as policy, legal, institutional, structural, social and economic obstacles. After conducting a review of all the literature, strategies and legislation related to the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the role of women in it, and conducting various interviews and round table discussions with the relevant authorities, the paper came out with a set of findings and recommendations, the most prominent of which were the following:

- It is recommended to urgently review the rules of procedure and internal policies of the chambers of commerce, unify the procedures related to the registration of women in the chambers of commerce, write and circulate them, follow up accordingly and develop them regularly within relevance to the needs of women in the chambers, in cooperation with civil society institutions and relevant international institutions.
- It is recommended that the federation form a gender advisory committee that includes women, national and international institutions related to gender in the private sector, with the aim of uniting efforts and energies to support and empower the union, to enhance the opportunities for the presence of women in the union, its various bodies, committees, and meet the needs of women in this sector, this committee and standards are institutionalized to women's work.
- It is recommended that action should be taken to form the sectoral committees, stipulated in the law, and to develop policies for their work that take into account the integration of gender.
- The need to develop a special policy to encourage Jerusalemite women to register with the Chambers of Commerce, and setting exceptional standards and special facilities in Jerusalem, given the political, social and economic challenges of Jerusalem and the economic sector in this city, and its impact on women's projects.

To view the full study, please contact us:

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