PRESS RELEASE

LEBANON'S FEMINIST PLATFORM

Lebanon's Feminist Platform calls for legal reform to advance women's and girls' access to justice and protection in Lebanon

Beirut, 25 November 2026 — On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Lebanon's Feminist Platform called for action to improve women's and girls' access to justice and protection at its second annual national conference in Beirut. Held under the theme "UNITE to End Violence Against Women & Girls: Ensure Justice. Protect Survivors. End Impunity", the conference brought together the minister of social affairs Ms. Haneen el Sayed, along with representatives of the ministries of health and labor, members of Parliament and feminist advocates to advance legislative reform, strengthen institutional responses to violence, and translate longstanding demands for women's rights into concrete commitments.

The Platform highlighted four priority legal reforms: adopting a unified civil personal status law; prohibiting child marriage under the age of 18; ensuring Lebanese women's equal right to pass on their nationality; and adopting legislation to protect women from digital violence.

Speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Nawaf Salam, President of the Council of Ministers, H.E. Ms. Haneen El Sayed, Minister of Social Affairs, said: "Today, I stand before you representing the Prime Minister of Lebanon, and in my ministerial capacity, I participate in making decisions concerning the future of this country. Yet Lebanese law does not allow me, as a Lebanese mother, to pass on my country's nationality to my daughter, Mariam. How can a woman be a partner in governing her country, yet not be an equal partner in passing on her belonging to it?" She added: "The Lebanese feminist movement has done its part in articulating its demands. The time has come to move from asking civil society what it is demanding to asking the State what it has achieved and what it will do next."

Laura Sfeir, President of the Lebanese Association for Combating Violence Against Women and Chair of the Human Rights Committee at the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, speaking on behalf of Lebanon's Feminist Platform, said: " We want to emerge this conference with a clear vision, specific actions, clearly defined responsibilities and follow-up mechanisms that ensure demands do not remain confined to paper, but are translated into policies, laws and practices that protect women and girls and safeguard their rights."

These reforms are central to whether women and girls can exercise their rights on equal terms and seek protection when those rights are threatened. Their significance extends beyond the legal text: family decisions, access to public services and the ability to obtain effective remedies can all be shaped by the protections the law provides. The conference linked the demand for legal change to the need for institutions that can make those rights meaningful in practice.

The conference was led by Ms. Raghad Hassouna, Inclusion Specialist and Disability Rights Activist at the Lebanese Union for People with Physical Disabilities, who served as Master of Ceremonies.Their excellencies, Members of Parliament Elias Hankach, George Okais and Ibrahim Mneimneh joined feminist advocates in discussing the four reforms and the steps required to advance them in Parliament. The panel followed introductory remarks by human rights lawyer Manar Zeaiter on existing legal gaps affecting women and girls in Lebanon.

Gielan Elmessiri, UN Women Representative in Lebanon, said: "At UN Women, we are proud of our partnership with the Feminist Platform and believe that the role of feminist organizations extends beyond service provision to leading change, defending rights and demanding accountability. In the face of declining funding and growing needs, it is not enough to praise the feminist movement's resilience and achievements, or to expect it to do more with fewer resources." This was further reaffirmed by H.E. Gregory Galligan, Ambassador of Canada to Lebanon: "Women who have helped Lebanon through its most difficult years must also have a voice in shaping its future. With government representatives, parliamentarians and civil society leaders gathered here today, there is a real opportunity to translate years of advocacy into legislative action. And Canada is making the choice to support Lebanon in that effort."

The Feminist Civil Society Platform in Lebanon is composed of 48 human rights organizations and activists working in the feminist field. UN Women in Lebanon brought these organizations and individuals together following the August 4 explosion to unite efforts and activities supporting women's issues. Since its establishment, platform members have undertaken multiple advocacy efforts and contributed to the development of Lebanon's reform, recovery, and reconstruction plans. The platform aspires to a society free from all forms of gender-based discrimination. UN Women Lebanon serves as the secretariat for the platform, with its role limited to facilitating the platform's work without intervening in decisions, content, data, or any materials produced, published, or presented by the platform.

The conference also addressed the pressures facing women and girls during conflict, displacement and recovery. Women and girls accounted for approximately 52 per cent of those displaced during the March 2026 escalation in Lebanon, underscoring the importance of protection services, access to justice, social support and economic opportunities during emergencies and beyond.

Against this backdrop, discussions examined the social, economic, health and other consequences of displacement, alongside the measures needed to sustain access to protection, services and livelihoods. The focus extended beyond immediate emergency assistance to the responsibilities of public institutions and civil society during recovery, including identifying shortcomings in existing responses and improving support for women and girls facing additional barriers.

Haneen el Sayed the minister of social affairs; Joumana Haymour, Head of the Inspection Department at the Ministry of Labour; Wahida Ghalayini, Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) Manager, Ministry of Health, MP Najat Saliba; Abir Chebaro, President of the Lebanese League for Women in Business; and Tamam Mroueh, Executive Director of the Social Movement, were among the senior participants contributing governmental, parliamentary and civil society perspectives. The exchange considered how stronger coordination, clearer institutional responsibilities and follow-up measures could help ensure women and girls are not left behind in crisis response and recovery.

The conference also marked the launch of the Platform's 2026 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence media campaign, which will run through 10 December, Human Rights Day. The campaign will carry the issues raised at the conference into public advocacy, amplifying women's experiences and keeping attention on the legislative and institutional action required beyond the event.

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