Second Regional Forum
Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA)
3-4 February 2026
Beirut, Lebanon

Speakers Biographies

Ms. Lara Saade	***Ms. Lara Saade - Head of the NCLW Committee on Women's Participation in Decision-Making and WPS Focal Point in Lebanon***
Dr. Ahmad Al Zubaidi 	***Dr. Ahmad Al Zubaidi - Deputy Director General of the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Baghdad*** Dr. Ahmed has a career spanning more than 22 years in the Iraqi government. He is a recognized leader in public sector management and policy. His current responsibilities include serving as Deputy Director General for the National Directorate of Iraqi Women and as the lead Advisor on Digital Transformation to the Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Ministers. His extensive experience is further solidified by his recent five-year tenure as the Secretary General and a Board Member of the Federal Public Service Council, where he played a pivotal role in public service governance. Dr. Alzubaidi's unique expertise is built on a strong academic foundation that combines a medical background (MBChB) with advanced degrees in Strategic Studies and Global Health Leadership from New York University, USA.

Ms. Fenik Shafik 	***Ms. Fenik Shafik – Director General, General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family, Ministry of Interior, KRG*** Ms. Fenik Shafiq was appointed as the Director General of Combating Violence Against Women and Families (GDCVAW) at the Ministry of Interior in May 2022. With a professional career starting in 1992, she has become a prominent figure in the Kurdistan Region's civil society, focusing on human rights and gender equality. Her extensive professional journey includes leadership roles in high-profile international organizations such as SCF (UK), UNOPS, Qandil (Sweden), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), where she focused on Gender-Based Violence (GBV). She also contributed significantly to anti-human trafficking programs with the SEED Foundation and held executive roles at the General Directorate of Mine Affairs. She holds a degree in Business Administration from Cihan University and a medical diploma from Erbil Technical Institute. A multilingual leader, Fenik is fluent in Kurdish, Arabic, and English, combining administrative expertise with a deep-rooted passion for social justice.
Ms. Hanan Saliba 	***Ms. Hanan Saliba – Chairperson, Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (PWWSD), Palestine*** Ms. Hanan Saliba holds a Bachelor's degree in Nursing from the University of Jordan and a Higher Diploma in Midwifery from Bethlehem University (1994). She is a feminist activist who participated in the establishment of several civil society and trade union organisations, and she currently chairs the Board of Directors of the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development. She is also a feminist, community, and political activist.

Ms. Huda Ayesh 	***Ms. Huda Ayesh – Director of the Policies and Observatory Unit, Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW)*** Ms. Huda Ayesh is a distinguished professional with over 24 years of experience across government, private, and international sectors. She holds an MBA and specializes in strategic planning, institutional performance improvement, and the economic and political empowerment of women. Currently, she manages the Policies and Observatory Unit and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Project on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) at the JNCW. She is also a PMI Certified Project Manager and a PGA Certified Facilitator in Gender Auditing (ILO).
Ms. Sylvi Bratten 	***Ms. Sylvi Bratten - Executive Director, Forum for Women and Development, Norway*** Sylvi Bratten is the Executive Director of FOKUS – Forum for Women and Development, a Norwegian umbrella organization bringing together more than 40 women's rights and development organizations. She has broad experience from civil society, government, and international organizations. From 2020 to 2023, she served as Advisor on Gender Issues in the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, supporting gender mainstreaming and women's participation in peace and security. Ms. Bratten also has extensive experience from Norwegian politics, having served as a political adviser to government ministers and members of parliament.
Mrs. Ghida Anani	***Mrs. Ghida Anani - Founder and Director of ABAAD, Lebanon***

Ms. Wathba Altayyar	***Ms. Wathba Altayyar – Women's Rights Expert, Iraq*** Ms. Wathba has a High Diploma in Planning and Development from the National Institution for Planning in 1984 and a bachelor's in administration and economic from AL Mustansiriya University in Baghdad class 1980. She is a Senior Researcher, and Director of the Scientific and Technical Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Planning and, National Center for Management Development and Information Technology (NCMDIT). She has been providing consultation, coordination, and reporting on the Regional Index of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Iraq (Iraqi federal government). She has been working on preparing and developing several guides and national reports. She has more than 15 years of experience in training in strategic planning and leadership, Gender Mainstreaming, and Advocacy in the field of women's rights and equality. She is the Board member of Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Iraqi Women Network and Women Empowerment Organization and has worked as a volunteer for many Iraqi NGOs.
Ms. Muna Rfouh 	***Ms. Muna Rfouh – Director of Governmental Achievement and Performance Follow up Unit, Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), Jordan*** Ms Muna is the Director of the Directorate of Achievement and Government Performance Monitoring at the Ministry of Social Development. She holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology and possesses extensive experience in the fields of family and childhood, women's empowerment and protection from violence. She held several key positions at the Ministry of Social Development. Ms. Al-Rfou' is recognized as an expert in gender equality and social inclusion, particularly in institutional gender mainstreaming and auditing. She has contributed to the preparation of international reports related to women and gender. She has advanced expertise in gender-responsive budgeting and in planning and conducting crisis and disaster simulation exercises. Ms. Al-Rfou' has also served as a Liaison Officer with the National Center for Security and Crisis Management (NCSCM). She has completed advanced crisis management training and is officially certified as a psychological support service provider during crises.

Ms. Gielan Elmessiri 	***Ms. Gielan Elmessiri –Head of UN Women, Lebanon***
Dr. Mohammed Meqdadi 	***Dr. Mohammed Meqdadi - Secretary General, National Council for Family Affairs NCFA, Jordan*** Dr. Mohammed Meqdady is currently the Secretary General of the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), Meqdady Holds a PHD in Organizational Sociology. Meqdady has over 22 years of experience in formulating and implementing National Polices and Strategies in the field of human and social development and family affairs. Dr. Meqdady Participated in developing many National Documents in the field of Family and Children protection. He is the Advisor to the Arab Women Organization and the League of Arab States, the Head of the National Team to Protect the Family from Violence, Founder and Head of the National Team for Early Childhood Development, member of the Committee for Preparing Economic Modernization Vision and member of the Ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment. He is also a member of the Scientific Committee of the King Abdulaziz Prize for Scientific Research in Childhood and Development Issues in the Arab World, and part-time lecturer at the Arab Open University. He represented Jordan in many events, he headed the Jordanian Delegation in the work of the First Global Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children held in the Republic of Colombia on November 7-8, 2024.

Ms. Anne Isambert 	***Ms. Anne Isambert - Deputy Director, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Lebanon***
Ms. Lama Tabet	***Ms. Lama Tabet - Gender Focal Point, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Lebanon***
Dr. Amir Kanani 	***Dr. Amir Kanani - Legal Advisor to the President of the Republic of Iraq*** Dr. Amir Kanani holds a PhD in Law. He currently serves as the Advisor to the President of the Republic of Iraq and the Head of the Office of the Legislative Affairs at the Presidency. His professional career includes membership in the Iraqi Bar Association from 1990 to 2010 and is a member in the Iraqi Lawyers Union. He served as a member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives during its second term (2010–2014) where he held the position of Vice Chairman of the Parliamentary Legal Committee. He has participated in numerous workshops and conferences inside and outside Iraq and has contributed to drafting several pieces of legislation enacted by the Iraqi Parliament.

Ms. Sawsan Zakzak 	***Ms. Sawsan Zakzak - Women´s rights expert, Editor Arabic handbook "Gender Sensitive Reconstruction for Syria", Coalition of Syrian Women for Democracy, Syria*** Sawsan Zakzak is a researcher and activist specializing in women's human rights. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Syrian Women's League and part of its research team and previously served as Gender Coordinator for the National Agenda for the Future of Syria program until 2018. She is also a member of the Women's Advisory Board to the UN Special Envoy for Syria (the Women Leaders platform). Zakzak has contributed to dozens of studies and research papers on women's economic participation in Syria, women's empowerment, the gendering of constitutions and elections, gender-based violence in armed conflict, the feminist movement, and the worst forms of child labour in Syria. She has been a key contributor to shadow reports on CEDAW (2007 and 2014), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011), and the Beijing +10 and Beijing +30 review processes.
Ms. Suzan Aref 	***Ms. Suzan Aref – Executive Director, Women Empowerment Organisation, Iraq*** Ms. Suzan Aref is a human rights and civil society activist, and the founder and director of WEO since 2004. She served as the Coordinator of the Iraqi Cross-Sector Task Force 1325 from 2014 to 2019 and represented Iraq twice before the United Nations Security Council in 2018 and 2019 to present the status of women and the progress achieved in implementing Iraq's first National Action Plan (NAP) for UNSCR 1325. Ms. Aref was recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as one of the 30 most prominent human rights defenders in the MENA region. In 2020, she was named among the world's most creative women for her leadership in promoting diversity and gender equality. She currently serves as an Advisor to Women7 (W7), the official women's engagement group of the G7.

Ms. Leila Al Ali 	***Ms. Leila Al Ali – Executive Director, Association Najdeh, Lebanon*** Ms. Leila El Ali is a Palestinian Refugee feminist and political activist. She is a gender advisor and a promoter of Palestinian national and human rights with a particular focus on women. She served as the vice- President of the General Union of Palestinian Students in Lebanon between 1990 and 2004. El Ali is the executive director of Association Najdeh, which is a development non-governmental organization that works with women and children in refugee camps and gatherings across Lebanon. Since 2014, Ms. Leila has been the Co-President of Euro Med Feminist Initiative (EFI). She has also been a member of the Advisory Committee of the Faculty of Arts at Beirut Arab University since 2017. El Ali is a central and national Palestinian member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).
Eng. Zeina Sorour Khoury	***Eng. Zeina Sorour Khoury – Civil Engineer and Project Manager, Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), Lebanon.***

Mr. Ezzadin Abdulla 	***Mr. Ezzadin Abdulla – Legal Advisor, General Directorate for Combating Violence against Women and the Family, Ministry of Interior KRG, KR-I*** Mr. Ezzedin is a graduate of the Law and works as a legal consultant. He is fluent in Kurdish, Arabic, and Turkmen. He is a member of the Kurdistan Jurists Union, the Kurdistan Green Organization for Environmental Protection, and the Kurdistan Region Employees Union. Mr. Ezzedin has extensive experience in family reconciliation at the Erbil Court of Appeal, and advocacy for women's rights. He specializes in administrative and legal affairs and is a certified trainer in combating violence against women and in preventing sexual violence against women and girls. He currently serves as the Advisory Director of the Family Counselling at the General Directorate for Combating Violence Against Women and the Family.
Ms. Hayat Mirshad	***Ms. Hayat Mirshad - Founder and Executive Director, FEMALE, Lebanon***

Ms. Wala Hasan 	***Ms. Wala Hasan – Program Manager, Arab Women Organization (AWO), Jordan*** Ms. Walaa Hasan is a feminist human rights defender, and political activist dedicated to advancing women's rights and gender equality in Jordan and the wider MENA region. She holds a master's degree in social work with a specialization in Migration and Refugees. Her thesis explored how the adoption of UNSCR 1325 through the JONAP has influenced women's participation in peace and security processes in Jordan. With over 11 years of professional experience, including 9 years as Projects Manager at AWO, Ms. Wlla has led projects promoting gender equality, women's economic rights, and inclusive education. She has also supervised 12 community-based organizations in implementing gender-focused projects. Alongside her management roles, she contributed to several research projects and is currently co-researching with the University of Barcelona on gender equality.
Ms. Marwa Alatiyat 	***Ms. Marwa Alatiyat - Senior Officer for the UNSCR 1325 Project, JNCW, Jordan*** Ms. Marwa holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in international Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding. Throughout her academic and professional journey, she focused on enhancing the role of women in building more just and stable societies. She currently serves as a Senior Project Officer at the Jordanian National Commission for Women, overseeing the implementation of Jordan's National Action Plan to advance UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Her work involves organizing training programs and managing national events that strengthen women's participation in peace processes and decision-making.

Ms. Hana Gorgis 	***Ms. Hana Gorgis - Director General, Department of Women's Affairs, Presidency of the Republic of Iraq*** Ms Hana has a master's degree in general psychology, with a Bachelor of Psychology. She is currently the Director General of the Women's Affairs Department at the Presidency of the Republic since 2023. She was the Acting Director of the Office of the President of the Republic from December 2022 to March 2023 and the Assistant Director of the Office of the President of the Republic between 2016 and June 2023. She is the Advisor to the Chaldean Patriarchate since 2018–present and Psychology Lecturer at the Educational Institute, Babel College of Philosophy and Theology, Urban University, Rome since 2002. With civil society she worked as the Director of the Office of the Iraqi Women's Network – Iraqi Hope Association between June 2008 and November 2008, and the Director of the Al-Noor Center for Family and Social Counselling between 2005 and 2008. She participated in several training programs on several topics including planning and development, management and strategic planning, federal constitutional arrangements, and Violence Against Women.
Ms. Manal Awad 	***Ms. Manal Awad – Projects Coordinator, Association of Women Action (AOWA), Palestine*** Ms. Manal is the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the Association of Women Action, and an active advocate for women's rights and the fight against gender-based corruption. She previously served as a board member and Head of the Women's Committee at the Jordanian Workers Union, and as a member of the Jordanian Women's Union. She has participated in numerous Arab and international conferences focused on social justice and women's empowerment. She completed her secondary education in Kuwait and holds a bachelor's degree in English literature as well as a Diploma in Teaching English from Yarmouk University in Jordan.
Ms. Lina Abou Habib	***Ms. Lina Abou Habib - Director of the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut***

Dr. Rola Baghdadi	***Dr. Rola Baghdadi – Executive Director and Legal Expert, Dawlaty, Lebanon***
Ms. Narmin Ahmed 	***Ms. Narmin Ahmed – Board Member, Women Empowerment Organization (WEO), Iraq*** Ms. Narmin is a consultant lawyer and board member of the Women's Empowerment Organization, with over three decades of experience in advancing women's rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. She began practicing law in 1992 and was among the first ten women judicial investigators, specializing in cases of honor crimes, self-immolation, and sexual violence. She played a key role in legal reforms related to the Personal Status Law, the Penal Code, and the age of criminal responsibility. She served as Director General of Human Rights Affairs in the first Ministry of Human Rights, contributed to domestic violence legislation and the repeal of honor crime provisions, and continues to work as a legal advisor, gender policy expert, and regional contributor to UNSCR 1325 and the 2024 Regional Index on Violence against Women and Girls.

Ms. Dina Almaaweed 	***Ms. Dina Almaaweed - Project coordinator, Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD)*** Dina Al-Ma'aweed is a Project Coordinator at JOHUD's Women and Gender Program. She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a master's degree in educational psychology from the Hashemite University. Dina has over ten years of experience in community development, women's empowerment, and child protection. Within JOHUD, she has led and coordinated several key projects serving in roles such as master trainer, project coordinator, and team leader. She holds multiple professional certifications in project management, proposal writing, and training of trainers, and is a certified "Gold Trainer" under the P.A.C.E Project. She is also recognized as a master trainer by organizations such as UNICEF and the Orange Foundation. Dina is known for her strong communication and facilitation skills and is passionate about promoting inclusive and safe environments for women and youth.
Ms. Wala'a Al Tell 	***Ms. Wala'a Al Tell – Project Coordinator, Rural Women Development Society, Palestine*** Ms. Walaa is the Project Coordinator at the Rural Women Development Society (RWDS) in Palestine, with over nine years of experience in project coordination and field implementation. She holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Birzeit University, in addition to a Higher Diploma in Cooperative Institutions Management and a Higher Diploma in Project Management. Her work focuses on women's economic empowerment, leadership development, and community-based initiatives in rural and marginalized areas, with a particular emphasis on linking economic security to the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (UNSCR 1325).

Ms. Alaa Sayed 	***Ms. Alaa Sayed - Project Coordinator, Association Najdeh, Lebanon*** Alaa Al Sayed is the project coordinator and external relations officer with Association Najdeh. She has over 6 years of experience in humanitarian and development work in Lebanon. She holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. Her experience focuses on donor communication, stakeholder engagement, project management and reporting. She worked on emergency response projects and community-based initiatives (ex; Covid- 19, Beirut Blast, the war on Lebanon in September 2024). Her work focuses on gender equality, women's rights and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.