

Position Paper- 12 July 2013

*Exclusion of Women in the Political Process and the Constitutional Declaration Should be Treated Immediately...*

## **Political Forces and those Leading the Transitional Period Need to Integrate Women in a Fair and Equitable Manner within the Roadmap of June 30**

Egyptians masses took to the streets inside Cairo and outside it, on June 30 2013 to express their demand of deposing president Mohammad Morsi in a new wave of the Egyptian people's revolution against the ruling authority, which had started on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, General Abdul-Fatah El-Sisi, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defense, announced the deposal of president Morsi and presented a roadmap for the coming transitional period, which includes a period for constitutional amendments, followed by legislative elections and ending with early presidential elections within six months. A new wave of popular demonstrations was triggered after this announcement, to celebrate the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood's regime and to reaffirm the popular legitimacy backing the army's intervention as opposed to associating such transformations with that of a military coup. More so, Egyptian women had a great presence within this massive popular participation and a pivotal role in all the revolutionary movements. Even prior to the events of June 30, Egyptian women had taken part in public life and in raising popular demands for decades, yet the different stages of the political development of women's participation had been marked with negligence towards their presence in decision-making positions; in addition to neglecting women's issues within these policies. Despite the expansion of women's participation in the public sphere and their presence in different revolutionary movements and groups, the question of women's issues is still posed and should be looked into with more attention throughout the coming phase.

In spite of the continuity of women's powerful participation in the protests of June 30 and their strong presence in different public spaces in governorates of Egypt to prove they are part and parcel of the fabric of this nation, current political developments do not seem to be promising with regards to their right to being part of the process of policy formulation for the upcoming period; particularly since the desire and consciousness of those leading the transitional period, have become doubtful, as they fail to create spaces to integrate women effectively throughout the crucial period we're living. The majority of official discussions have witnessed a lack of women's participation and have also failed to raise or address women's issues, despite the dense participation of women in protests that were called for by "Tamarud" or the "Rebel" movement as well as different political forces for example, since day one.

There is proof of the short-sightedness of most current political actors regarding the exclusion and elimination of women, as they do not realize the importance of equal representation of women in presenting and discussing the developments of the upcoming phase, with its consequences influencing women in different ways. In addition, the negotiations that were held concerning the new government formation did not include any indication of choosing women ministers. And despite the positive sign exemplified in appointing the author Sakina Fouad,, as the presidential advisor for women's affairs, the choice itself shows clear dismissal of the necessity and possibility

of integrating political and human rights pioneers involved in feminist political action and aware of women's issues and their different problems on the ground, adding to that, the vagueness around the responsibilities of this post and the role to be achieved through it. Such decisions confirm -in a concerning manner- the desire of those leading the transition to represent women superficially instead of granting women effective participation in formulating all policies issued by all structures of the state.

Unfortunately, the constitutional declaration issued on July 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 steered clear of any articles concerning women's issues and their right to equality; these articles to which there were several objections and were one of the main reasons for refusing the 2012 constitution that was temporarily suspended.

This happened regardless of what women and girls paid as a price for their taking part in demonstrations and their gathering, particularly in Tahrir square, where they were exposed to the most violent sexual assaults, amid ferocious negligence from those responsible for calling for the demonstrations from parties and revolutionary groups. This is one of the main indicators in analyzing the vision of the authorities regarding the importance and the kind of participation of women in public life. The fast developments that took place over the last days seem sufficient to warn of an administration that lacks a comprehensive vision on reconciliation and national participation of all factions of society, ahead of which are women's groups and figures who continue to resist the trials of systematic exclusion whether on the legislative or political level, which include issuing election laws that limit women's participation in public office, as well as on the social level where women long for the appropriate environment that gives way for wider freedoms of mobility and safe participation on an equal basis with men, or on the economic level which involves several structural problems that prevent achieving equal opportunity and equality. Therefore, we see that one of the most important forms of political equality that should be implemented immediately includes forming a gender-balanced government and to embark on the next phase with expanded definitions and wider applications to the concept of women's participation in the political process, so that they become a part of the discussion and decision-making process, and to genuinely reflect the wide female participation on the popular level, on diverse political levels, instead of reducing women's participation in the political process to a symbolic gesture or some decorative criteria that needs to be met.

### **Thus Nazra for Feminist Studies demands two things:**

**First:** Fair participation of women in decision-making positions throughout the next phase. As such, there is an urgent need in having various ministries headed by women professionals in different fields of the government, the formation of which is currently being discussed. In addition, women must participate in the committee for constitution amendments which would grant greater gender representation of women and their issues. Women must also take part in the efforts being made in restructuring the security apparatus and the judiciary; all of which are steps which should start as soon as possible.

**Second:** Acknowledging and integrating women's political, social and economic issues in the transitional period in order to grant comprehensive understanding of women's reality in Egypt, as well as avoiding discussing women's issues individually, as if separated from wider societal interactions; listening to their demands as well as holding those who committed crimes against them accountable.