
UN Human Rights Council
UPR Working Group 29th Session, 23 January 2018

Israel

Delivered by Ms. Eva Madjiboj,
General Director of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel

Distinguished members of the Council,

I am Eva Madjiboj, a single mother to a sweet adopted son, and as of three months, the General Director of the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel .

I grew up in Israel as a daughter of immigrants from the Ukraine, who were forced to adjust to a new country, a new language, a new mentality, and to establish a place of their own.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the status of women in Israeli society has been equal to the status of men, both in their rights and in their active involvement in the public, economic and security sphere .

The difficulties are similar to those of other countries - changes in the family structure; women's need to break out from the barriers dictated to them and develop a voice and a status of their own.

There is also the difficulty of accepting gender equality in conservative societies, the Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious groups.

The years' old feminist revolution left its mark, and now time has come to complete the gender equality revolution, including the exclusion of women from the public sphere.

We in the Authority have recently proceeded to take charge of the members of the LGBT community in Israel, and will change the name of the Authority to the Authority for Gender Equality, and are working on thousands of dollars campaign regarding tolerance towards the LGBT community .

The #MeToo campaign is flooding the social networks and garners great interest in Israel as well. The conservative perceptions that were once commonplace, even among men who see themselves as liberals and progressive, are no longer legitimate in the reality of 2018.

Israel prides itself on one of the most advanced laws for the prevention of sexual harassment in the world. For example, recently the compensation paid by sexual harassers has risen from 14,000 USD to over 34,000 USD without need of proof of damage.

Also, publication of a photograph, video clip or recording focusing on a person's sexuality, against their will, and that is liable to humiliate them, is now also considered to be a sexual harassment offence, punishable by 5 years imprisonment.

Recently the Minister for Social Equality, Gila Gamliel, has allocated an unprecedented sum of over 2.8 Million USD for the establishment of a public committee, which I am the head of, for the establishment of the national program for the eradication of sexual harassment. We are working closely and have started cooperation with the civil society, the private sector and women's lobby in every aspect, and they will have representation in this committee as well.

We have introduced gender budgeting into all government ministries, and have arranged that every law to be voted on will need to be looked at in a gender perspective in order for it to pass.

We now see the advancement of gender equality and the integration of gender thinking in policy and decision-making, in strategic programs in the public and private sectors and the creation of information and assistance centers.

We formulated a three-year program in an inclusive sum of almost 10 million USD, which includes training for female advisors in local authorities – of all segments of the Israeli society.

More than 60 percent of the authorities applied for the program. Emphasis was placed on Arab local authorities, where an additional sum of 7 million USD were provided towards the recruitment of female advisors for gender equality. Among other activities this year, was cooperation with the police in providing self-defense courses for victims of sexual assault in Arab localities.

In the education system, it is our intention to increase the awareness of gender equality and assimilate these values as early as the kindergarten age.

The Authority conducted seminars for school advisors towards gender thinking, has promoted special programs for the integration of girls in technological classes, mathematical studies and more.

The Pupils' Rights Law has also been amended, and now sexual orientation and gender identity constitute grounds that are forbidden to discriminate against.

Another important global issue is violence against women.

This is a topic that Israel takes very seriously and is investing its best resources for. The UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women's visit last year, enabled us to have an important evaluation of this issue.

Firstly, we are in the stages of formulating a national program to combat violence against women ;

Secondly, we are working towards the recognition of economic violence as domestic violence and as a civil wrong;

also, the State of Israel grants legal aid to victims of gender based assault and is doing much more in this matter.

Before finishing, I would like to speak about a personal matter. Two years ago, as a single mother, I adopted my son Ariel, a sweet and funny boy with special needs.

Ariel, was not born in Israel and the journey to him was complex and challenging. I dream to make this journey easier for women in Israel.

When I look at the challenges before us, I think about the world that we are creating for our children.

Will it be a world like the one in which I grew up in, a child of immigrants who clears a path for herself through a rigid male society? or a world in which boys and girls enjoy equal opportunities no matter what?

I am prepared to face any challenge so that my child will have better opportunities than I had at his age.

Thank you.