

Women on the Frontline: **THEIR STORIES**

Tunis
18 November 2016

Five short films
featuring women's
rights activists from
Syria, Iraq, Yemen
and Tunisia

Women on the Frontline
invites you to a
screening followed by a
moderated discussion
with special guests
featured in the films.


screening.womenonthefrontline.eu

**women on the
frontline**

نساء في الخطوط الأمامية

5 YEARS 5 STORIES

***Women on the Frontline: Their Stories* is a collection of films that brings us face to face with the women and men active on the ground today in the Middle East and North Africa. They bring different perspectives and answers to the daily struggle for dignity and peace and against the violent extremism that infects their region and spreads fear and xenophobia around the world.**

 What made them want to follow this path of activism? 

It was only five years ago that dictators were falling like ripe fruit from trees. However, the 2016 anniversary of these events was not festive anywhere. The majority of the Arab Spring countries have fallen prey to chaos and (civil) war. No one can be sure about his or her own life. Even in Tunisia, the once optimistic mood has been shaken by factional bickering and attacks targeting tourists. But alone amongst the Arab countries that rose up against their dictatorships, this small country has gone through a successful democratic transition. Why did other countries fail where Tunisia succeeded? Could it have turned out otherwise?

The legacy of the Arab uprisings is still being written. In the growing power struggle between deep-rooted forces, extremists, and revolutionaries, it is not clear who will win. Regardless of the outcome, women have formed a powerful vision for lasting peace and equality for all in the region: a vision that must be returned to the forefront of any discussion about the future of the Arab world as women were at the forefront when the dictatorships collapsed. They were the leading figures in protests. Women have since formed new organizations and movements to actively advance their political role in the region in inspiring ways. However, their moderate, rights-based voices are being silenced by resurgent authoritarianism and the din of violent extremism.

Women on the Frontline: Their Stories chronicles the stories of five women's rights activists, both women and men, who show us what is at stake - the risks they take, the conditions they work in, and what made them want to follow this path of activism. They share their struggle for freedom, justice, equality and security in a narrative that goes behind the headlines and sound bites. They tell stories of hope, bravery and perseverance in the ongoing struggle for, ultimately, simple humanity.

The films reveal how their circumstances and countries have changed since 2011 and how this has affected their work. We discover what keeps them going despite the difficulties and dangers their work presents for themselves and their loved ones.

Sara ben Said

Tunisia –
programme
coordinator
Aswat Nissa



It's true Tunisia is a success story but there is still plenty of work to be done. It's true, we worked on a constitution in Tunisia in 2014 that includes equality between men and women. Yet, there are demonstrations in Tunisia now because the revolution's goals were not met. Tunisia rebelled for freedom, dignity and patriotism. Five years after the revolution Tunisians still haven't seen change – they haven't felt it in their daily lives.

Feryal Al Kaabi

Iraq –
Director Awan



Some might say how can you speak of women's rights at times when the world is focusing their efforts on fighting terrorist and armed organizations? Well, that's because women suffer the most from these organizations. Women have lost their husbands, are under siege, thousands of women are abducted and until today we don't know their fate. These terrorist organizations have not only harmed women but humanity as a whole.

Mohammad Mallak

Syria –
Director
Saeidat Souria



We have many incredible Syrian women working with us who are making a legendary effort and heroic acts every day. All under shelling, oppression, suffering, extremism, injustice and under all the violations they suffer from. Every day we discover this incredible determination that they have from which we draw strength for us to keep working.

Bilqis Abu Osba

Yemen -
Director AWAM



Yemen is a forgotten war. It's not on the world's agenda. That's why we work on delivering that voice: there are people who are suffering in Yemen and we are part of them. How can we all work together to stop the war and take Yemen back to how it was so that people can return to their lives and towns?

Behar Ali

Kurdistan Iraq -
Director Emma



One of the biggest challenges we faced was that of Yazidis after IS took control of Sinjar in 2014. It turned into a human tragedy. IS did more than just taking control, they killed hundreds of Yazidis and kidnapped thousands of young Yazidi girls. This is very hard for us and for Kurdish society as a whole, because the Yazidi society is a vital component of Kurdish society. Due to the policies of governments in the country the Yazidis are even more marginalized.

Women on the Frontline

Women on the Frontline (WoF) launched in 2013, following and building upon the great hopes and aspirations that arose from the Arab uprisings of 2011. The programme was initiated by Hivos, in cooperation with PwC, Oxfam and the Institute for War & Peace Reporting (IWPR). WoF was conceived as an umbrella programme for long-term investment in building the capacities of civil society organisations that work towards peace, security and advancing political participation of women and gender equality in seven Middle East and North Africa countries: Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Tunisia, Egypt and Bahrain.

Websites

To learn more about Women on the Frontline visit: www.womenonthefrontline.eu

If you are interested in attending any of the upcoming screenings and/or to know more about this project please visit: screening.womenonthefrontline.eu

Questions?

Contact ewijnen@hivos.org

