

The Arab Network for the Study of Democracy

Executive Report on the Network's activities

From February 2006 to December 2009

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Introduction

In February 2006, a meeting was held in Beirut gathering 20 researchers and democracy activists from 7 Arab countries (Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco) whom Mr. Ziad Majed has contacted and invited after Dr. Randa Slim - through the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue IISD and the Kettering Foundation KF - initiated the idea of establishing a network of Arab researchers working on democratization issues.

Mr. Majed prepared a concept paper and a working plan for the meeting that were discussed. The paper suggested establishing a barometer for democracy, measuring yearly developments in each country in the region and evaluating them. It was agreed, however, to have extensive discussions of the working plan and the methodology, study how public opinion surveys may be conducted and see how barometers in other areas of the world function, before committing to the idea of establishing an Arab barometer.

Based on that, Mr. Nazih Darwish (from Lebanon) was asked to prepare an overview of the work of barometers in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe. Mr. Majed was asked to modify the original plan, and the group agreed to meet again to elaborate a programme, to put a budget and to officially found the working teams in each countries (with three members from different backgrounds, and with at least one woman member in each team).

After the Beirut meeting, Mr. Darwish prepared the paper on the barometers and shared it with the other colleagues. Budgets were designed by each team, and Mr. Majed modified the original paper taking into consideration different comments and suggestions.

In July 2006, the group met again thanks to an invitation from the Kettering foundation to its international deliberative workshop.

Dayton's meeting in July 2006

In Dayton, after attending plenary sessions and being exposed to the concept of NIF, after discussing the barometer budgets and after meeting KF associated experts working on surveys, the Arab group decided to modify its approach (due to budgetary concerns and to the lack of survey experience within the group) work on case studies related to the issues raised in the barometer proposal, get trained on the NIF methodology and move on with the design of booklets, and the organization of forums to encourage citizens to deliberate on public issues.

Each national team chose a topic to work on in its country:

- The Bahraini team decided to work on unemployment and its political aspects.
- The Yemeni team decided to work on political participation.
- The Jordanian team chose unemployment.
- The Lebanese team decided that political participation through reforming the electoral system would be its subject.

- The Egyptian team chose political participation.
- The Algerian team decided to work on the environmental crisis.
- The Moroccan team was still not complete and preferred to choose its topic later.

Mr. Imad Siyam (from Egypt) was asked to prepare a case study assessing the literature on democracy and its development in the Arab region (focusing on studies on democracy prepared by individuals and institutions).

Dr. Mohamad Mokhlafi (from Yemen) suggested writing an article on the meaning of deliberation in Arabic and its background in the Arab and Muslim contexts.

Mr. Nazih Darwish was asked – in his professional capacity as webmaster – to create a website for the network that the group agreed on designing as “The Arab Network for the Study of Democracy”.

Mr. Ziad Majed was designed as the Network Coordinator.

A regional meeting was planned to take place in Casa Blanca in March 2007. Ms. Ileana Marin and Dr. Keith Melville (from the Kettering Foundation) were invited to the meeting to share their experience and to do training on the NIF methodology.

Meeting in Casablanca: March 2007

In Casablanca, Mr. Imad Siyam presented his paper on the literature studying democratic developments in Arab countries. Mr. Nazih Darwish presented the concept of the Website.

Training on the NIF methodology took place and each team started designing the booklet it is planning to produce.

It was agreed that an outline for each booklet should be ready (after strategic facts through desk research and interviews are gathered, and focus groups organized) for the next network meeting scheduled to take place in Dayton in July.

Meeting in Dayton: July 2007

In parallel to the International Workshop that the Kettering foundation organized, the network members – invited by the KF – met in Dayton again and presented the work achieved so far. Comments by members and by Dr. Melville were made to help shaping the strategic facts, and the training on the methodology continued. Following the comments, the Bahraini team decided to work on the Wages gap in the kingdom rather than keeping the work on Unemployment (for practical and methodological reasons).

It was decided during the meeting to contract researchers on new Case studies. Emerging Social movements in the region like the Egyptian *Kifaya* (meaning in English: Enough) that is mobilizing citizens against the violation of the constitution and the “reelection” of President Mubarak for a fifth

presidential term, was chosen as a new issue to study and to be ready before the following network meeting.

Meeting in Amman: November 2007

In Amman, Jordan, the network met in November 2007. On the programme, there were 4 items. Finalization of the work on the NIF booklets, discussion of the case study on the Egyptian *Kifaya* movement, presentation of the network to Jordanian and Arab media and preparation for the registration of the network as an “international organisation” in Beirut (where laws permit to do so).

All NIF booklets were ready for print. A final “fine tuning” of them took place with rounds of presentations and comments.

The *Kifaya* paper, prepared by Dr. Manal Shorbagy (from the American University of Cairo), was presented and discussed. It shed light on new social and political dynamics in Egypt in 2005, and analysed the direct and indirect reasons behind the mobilization as well as the profiles and backgrounds of the organizers of this mobilization.

A press conference was held. Dr. Moussa Shteivi (from Jordan), Dr. Randa Slim and Mr. Ziad Majed presented the network, its activities, plans and answered questions raised by journalists, international NGOs representatives and diplomats from Arab embassies.

Finally, registering the network in Beirut was decided. Mr. Nazih Darwish and Ms. Mayla Bakhach (from Lebanon) were asked to take necessary measures to register the network and find an address that it can use for administrative purposes.

Meeting in Dayton: March 2008

Few members of the network participated in the Kettering Foundation International meeting in Dayton in March 2008. The idea was to have the network represented in the meeting to share information and experiences with participants from other networks or regions of the world.

An informal meeting of the participating network members in the international event took place, and suggestions were made to work on two new case studies and to prepare a concept paper on a Gender approach to be adopted within the network.

Dr. Ibtissam Atiyyat (from Jordan) suggested contacting a researcher to prepare a case study on Muslim brothers and tribalism in Jordanian elections. Mr. Nazih Darwish and Mr. Ziad Majed suggested contracting Dr. Hassan Krayem (from UNDP and the American University of Beirut) to write a case study on the structural limitations for democratization in the Arab region.

Meeting in Dayton: July 2008

The network met again in Dayton in July 2008 during the KF Summer International workshop.

The two Case studies on “Muslim brothers and tribalism in Jordanian elections” (by Dr. Hassan Barari) and on “the limitations for democratisation in the Arab region” (by Dr. Hassan Krayem) were discussed.

It was suggested to prepare two additional studies on the “reconciliation and transitory justice” in Algeria and Morocco.

Dr. Ibtissam Atiyat presented the concept paper she prepared on the Gender approach, and it was decided to develop based on the paper a programme that the Network could implement on women issues and gender perspectives in the Arab region.

The network teams, especially the Moroccan (that started the organization of its forums on “political participation” after the other teams), presented the outcome of the forums they organized. They also spoke of the questionnaires they filled in after the forums and evaluated the “citizens’ participation” in these forums. They decided to contract Dr. Ibrahim Bayoumi (from Egypt) to analyze the questionnaires and present his findings in the form of a qualitative report.

Meeting in Dayton: March 2009

In March 2009, few members of the network took part in the KF International Workshop in Dayton.

Brainstorming sessions on future activities of the network took place during the workshop, and it was decided to recommend to the July meeting the idea of working on the family laws and personal statutes as the next issue for the network NIF track, in all 7 countries.

Meeting in Dayton: July 2009

The network met for the last time in Dayton in July 2009, once again thanks to the Kettering foundation’s invitation to its annual summer Workshop.

In this meeting, Dr. Randa Slim informed the network that she has resigned from the IISD as she started a new job at the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation and the Institute for Peace. Her resignation from the IISD means that she can no more follow the work of the network, even if she remains interested in it and supportive to it.

Members of the network discussed the suggested plan to work on family laws and personal statutes in the 7 countries. The issue is of high relevance since it touches on women’s rights, nationality legislations, religious perceptions of society and it highlights the contradictions within the legal framework related to citizenship and equality between citizens in the Arab region. It was agreed that each team would prepare a paper presenting how it wants to study the issue and which approach it will use.

The case study on “reconciliation and transitory justice in Morocco” (prepared by Mr. Mostafa Naoui – who was not able to attend the meeting) was briefly presented by Mrs. Khadija Reggani (from the Moroccan team). Mrs. Reggani also presented a study on the gender approach used in the reconciliation process in Morocco.

The second case study on the same issue in the Algerian context was not presented since the Algerian researcher who was contacted to prepare it withdrew from the project for personal reasons. It was decided due to the lack of time, and to the fact that no Algerian team members were present in the meeting to leave the study for next year, if funds are available for it.

The network discussed next the report which it is supposed to produce on the NIF experience. It was agreed that it is important to present findings and to evaluate the experience in each of the countries (the network was capable of organizing 38 forums with around 800 participants). Dr. Ibrahim Bayoumi, in charge of analyzing the questionnaires and absent from the meeting, was contacted following that by Mr. Ziad Majed and Mr. Imad Siyam to brief him on the discussions and the suggestions for the report and to inform him of the deadlines.

The network also delegated Dr. Ibtissam Atiyyat and Mr. Ziad Majed to prepare proposals for 2010 and to initiate contacts with the KF, thanking the foundation for its generous support, and strengthening cooperation with it. Proposals might as well be addressed to international foundations and UN agencies working in the democracy building fields.

Finally, Mr. Nazih Darwish was asked to prepare a proposal on how to develop the website, make it more visible and interactive. He presented his views and put them into one proposal.

Following the meeting, negative developments in the questionnaires analysis, and delays in delivering the work forced the network to modify the original plan. Mr. Ibrahim Bayoumi withdrew from the network, and Mr. Ziad Majed suggested to work on an alternative report to be prepared by Dr. Moussa Shteivi. The report should present all findings based on national team' reports and evaluations. It should only use questionnaires' data already available "electronically" as cases to analyze qualitatively.

The report prepared by Dr. Shteivi is enclosed.

Teams in Morocco, Egypt and Bahrain are identifying three new members (one in each country) to join the network and replace colleagues who withdrew either for professional or personal reasons.

Summary

The Arab Network for the Study of Democracy ANSD gathers researchers and democracy activists from seven Arab countries.

Members

- Bahrain: Ms. Fatima Fayrouz, Mr. Abdel Jabbar Marzouk, Mr. Abdel Hadi Khawaja (who will remain a support to the team but has no more time to follow regularly the network activities).
- Yemen: Dr. Karima Mourchid, Dr. Mohamad Mikhlafi and Dr. Adel Shargabi.
- Jordan: Dr. Ibtissam Atiyyat, Dr. Moussa Shteivi and Dr. Suleiman Sweiss.
- Lebanon: Ms. Mayla Bakhach, Dr. Hassan Krayem and Mr. Nazih Darwish.
- Egypt: Mr. Imad Siyam, Dr. Ibrahim Bayoumi (withdrew from the network in October 2009).
- Algeria: Dr. Najat Zatla, Ms. Nadia Aissaoui and Mr. Mounir Ben Cherif.
- Morocco: Ms. Khadija Reggani, Mr. Naciri Safi.
- Coordinator: Mr. Ziad Majed

Publications:

- 7 NIF booklets (in Arabic): on “political participation” (in Yemen, Egypt and Morocco), on “unemployment” (in Jordan), on “wages gap” (in Bahrain), on “electoral systems’ reform” (in Lebanon), and on “environment” (in Algeria – in French).
- 2 concept papers on “measuring democracy in the Arab world” (Arabic and English) and on “introducing gender approach to the network activities” (English), and 2 assessments on “international barometers” (Arabic) and on “literature studying democracy in the Arab region”(Arabic).
- 1 article on “deliberation in the Arabic and Islamic heritage” (Arabic with a summary in English).
- 4 case studies on “Kifaya movement in Egypt” (English), “the Muslim brothers and tribalism in Jordanian elections” (Arabic), “structural limitations for democratization in the Arab region” (English), and “reconciliation and transitory justice in Morocco” (Arabic).

Events:

- 3 regional meetings (in Beirut, Casablanca and Amman) and participation in 6 international meetings (in Dayton).

- 38 National Issues forums (4 in Bahrain, 6 in Yemen, 5 in Jordan, 4 in Lebanon, 10 in Egypt, 4 in Algeria and 5 in Morocco) with 798 participants.

Fellowships:

Mr. Ziad Majed and Dr. Ibtissal Atiyat had two fellowships at the Kettering Foundation in Dayton, OHIO in 2008 and 2009 (respectively). Four papers on Media, Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Women's political participation in the Arab region (all in English) were prepared by Mr. Majed following his fellowship (under a contract with *The Council on Public Policy Education*).

Institutionalisation:

The ANSD is registered in Lebanon as an "international/regional organization" and is hosted by the Lebanese Mouvement Social (one of the most active NGOs in the field of social development) at its Beirut headquarter (for administrative and mailing facilities).

The network would soon discuss the election of a coordination committee to continue its work and activities.

The ANSD's Website is: www.ademocracynet.com