

# There's no mistaking the signs

**If appearances are to be believed**, women appear to be steadily asserting themselves in Mediterranean societies. They are raising their heads, demanding rights, and denouncing injustice, they are visible and vocal. They are sparking movements against sexist and sexual violence, even in the most airtight circles of politics, religion, sports, and art. They are winning recognition from international institutions such as the European Court of Justice, which declared last January that *"women as a whole may be regarded as belonging to a social group"*, or the United Nations, which, through its Secretary-General on March 8, called for *"support for women's organizations that are at the forefront of this struggle, investment in programs to end violence against women, and the inclusion and leadership of women in the economy..."*. And following in the footsteps of previous generations of feminists, encouraged by the tangible results of their work to improve the well-being of women and those around them, they are confidently pressing ahead with their efforts to renew society and overturn the old patriarchal order.

However, this age-old order has a frightening capacity for regeneration. What appears to be a sign of weakening turns out to be a tactical concession. It's like a wave, receding only to surge back to engulf the entire beach.

**There have been some warning signs** regarding the staying power of the changes underway. For example,

during their most recent elections, numerous national parliaments in our region experienced a drop or stagnation in the numbers of women elected, with these often falling to well below one third. In countries where this figure previously had been close to 40%, it has fallen to about a third. Even Spain, a leading light in this field, recorded a 3 point drop to 44%.

This means that although women are increasingly assertive in the public arena, the representation of women in decision-making bodies is not only stagnating, but even declining. Moreover, there are many –too many– women who use the strength and self-confidence they have acquired

through feminist struggles to defend a patriarchal, ultra-conservative culture that combines fear and contempt for women.

A sign that we are all, to varying degrees, mired in this tragic culture, which constantly catches up with us when we least expect it.

Understanding this can help us think differently about ourselves; for, in the face of the wave's prediction of erasure, we need to ensure the solidity of our foundations, demonstrate agility in our analyses and our organizations, systematize solidarity and stand together.

## "The street belongs to us too"

is the theme of the Mediterranean Women's Fund 2024 PHOTO COMPETITION. Suspended at the time of Covid after 8 editions, it has finally been relaunched for the 9<sup>th</sup> edition! 3 winning photos and one "crush" have been selected from 250 entries received from Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Spain, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

"The old pals" 1st Prize  
by Lucia d' Apote  
Village in Sicily, Italy



# In the first half of 2024, we supported 126 associations working to...

support migrant women



### SPAIN



Since 2011, the **Sindillar - Sindihogar** association has been supporting migrant women, particularly domestic workers, in Barcelona. MedWF's support has made it possible to **hold meetings and provide psychosocial and legal advice** to over forty women.

governorate, notably by encouraging women to participate in public life. The **"Protection and Support for Women Victims of Violence"** project aims to help these women find employment.

### TURKEY

**Cinsel Şiddetle Mücadele Derneği** (Association against Sexual Violence), founded in 2014 in Istanbul, aims to reduce the negative effects of sexual violence on those who have been subjected to this abuse. MedWF supports **the team's operating costs**.

### FRANCE

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Founded in 2015 in Grande Synthe, the **Refugee Women's Center** supports women in the informal camps of northern France. MedWF's support has **strengthened the association's human resources** through the provision of material and psychological support.



combat gender-based and sexual violence



raise awareness through arts and culture

### TUNISIA



Created in 2012, the **El Karama** association focuses on defending and promoting the rights of women in the Tozeur

### BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA



**KAS Banja Luka**, a rural association founded in 2016 in Banja Luka, develops educational programs linked to gender equality and supports the artistic works

of marginalized women's groups. **"Artistic Approaches to Preventing Gender-Based Violence in Rural and Remote Areas"** is capacity-building project in rural and remote areas that uses art to address topics related to violence.

### EGYPT

Established in the village of Barsha in 2011, **Panorama Barsha** is the first association in the governorate of Minya to focus on issues related to women and girls. With its project **"Providing a safe artistic space for Panorama Barsha"**, the association uses the arts to raise awareness concerning early marriage and violence.



provide safe places to gather

### LEBANON

**Beit el Fouad** was created in 2023 in Beirut to provide a healing environment in the wake of trauma. It organizes cultural workshops, support groups and training. The **"Healing the Self, Healing the Soul of Beirut"** project enlists the help of mental health experts to support 30 workshop participants.



... defend the planet

### GREECE

Founded in 2023 in Athens, the **International Institute for Climate Change** association aims to raise awareness and improve women's quality of life in the context of climate change and sustainable development. Through the

“Green skills for a green and equitable life for women” project, the association organizes capacity-building workshops focusing on the link between climate and gender.



... amplify women's voices

#### LEBANON



Established in Beirut in 2022, **No2ta** is a regional media outlet producing feminist content and campaigning for women's rights. The “**Revolution in Thought: Feminist Content as a Catalyst for Social Change**” project aims to highlight the stories of women in Lebanon.

#### MOROCCO

**Droits et Justice** (Rights and Justice) was established in 2008 in Casablanca by young lawyers to facilitate access to justice for vulnerable communities in Morocco, and to promote the rule of law and improve the country's judicial system. The association has launched a **national digital advocacy campaign for the reform of the Moudawana** (the Family Code in Moroccan law).



... Strengthen knowledge and self-confidence

#### CROATIA

Established in 1995 in Zagreb, the **Centre for Feminist Studies** is the only independent educational centre in Croatia offering an interdisciplinary programme of feminist studies and academic and civil discussions on gender equality. MedWF provides support for **operating costs**.

#### ITALY



Founded in Palermo, Sicily, the **Violetta** association has been fighting gender-based violence since 2023 through training and education for young women, notably by defending sexual and reproductive rights. The association has been running a **travelling feminist school for sexual and reproductive education** in Sicily for schools.

## And we organized...

... **two meetings in Istanbul**, in May.



The **first** was a strategic reflection meeting bringing together 16 feminist associations in Turkey. All noted that they were facing increasing difficulties in carrying out their work as associations, for financial as well as security reasons, in a climate of heightened repression.

A **second meeting**, bringing together 27 women's associations from the southern shores of the Mediterranean (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey), noted the same issue, namely that women's rights associations are struggling in a climate of growing physical and economic

insecurity. Discussions focused intently on finding strategies to cope with this situation.



... **and a meeting in Torcy**, in April, gathering the network of women's organizations from Ile de France. This network brings together about 15 women's associations from work-

ing-class neighborhoods in the Ile-de-France region to focus on sexist, racist and poverty-related discrimination. This meeting, which was the first face-to-face one in four years, concentrated on the network's in-house organization, with a moment to reflect on the European elections and the rise of the anti-gender movement.



# PALESTINE EMERGENCY

**When the bombing began, they opened their premises to people seeking refuge ;**

later, these buildings were destroyed and the women activists themselves scattered. Nonetheless, CWLRP a Center for

victims of violence and Zakher, an association dedicated to fighting violence against women, continue to help starving and desperate women and children wherever they are, amid the rubble and

the shelling. With your donations, we have been to continue supporting their work and their very survival. Thank you!

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## ALL TOO OFTEN, WE FORGET THAT FEMINIST ASSOCIATIONS ARE RUN BY EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE!



Yet it is vital to recognize those who accomplish amazing feats for other women, who rouse them out of submission, free them from

commonplace and extreme violence, save them from forced marriage, excision, being locked up, from the despair of being born a woman in a world made for men... Those who give strength, hope, ideas, and love, who bring back smiles to lips and joy to hearts through nothing more than their courageous and determined efforts, and their deep faith that greater justice is possible.

Steadfast and determined, they persevere despite the many obstacles in their way as women with a feminist commitment.

Over the past few years, we have been looking for a way to thank them for the immense service they render to society through their herculean efforts, often at the cost of their own health and personal

security. We want to give them back what they themselves so generously give to others: recognition of their own worth.

We were fortunate and honored to be able to do so for a few of these women through the **SUSAN TREADWELL MEMORIAL AWARD**, created by the Open Society

Foundations to commemorate her commitment to the defence of gender equality and LGBTQI+ people. The Prize, dedicated to feminist activists extending beyond our own Mediterranean region, was awarded to 16 laureates in recognition of their outstanding work in 10 European countries.



The Mediterranean Women's Fund aims to help improve the status of women and promote gender equality in countries around the Mediterranean by contributing to the strengthening of women's rights associations at the local and regional level.

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LETTER FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SHORES

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