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Democratisation = greater gender equality?

A report on whether women in the Palestinian territories and Iraqi Kurdistan are experiencing greater equality since the beginning of the process of democracy



FOREWORD

The question of women's rights has always been close to my heart, which is why writing my Master's thesis in political science on the subject of gender equality was a natural choice. My thesis gradually developed into this report, which looks at whether women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories experience greater equality since the democratisation process began. The background to the choice of topic is that while doing voluntary work within the peace and women's movement I had realised that there are few studies into how women themselves experience their situation in the Middle East. Others often speak about or for them, and it is rare to hear the women's own voices in the discussions on their situation. For this reason, I decided at the beginning of 2010 to travel to Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories/Israel, together with Maria Hagberg from the Swedish organisation Kvinnor för Fred (Women for Peace) to interview women about their life situation. Kvinnor för Fred is a non-political, non-religious association which works for peace on women's terms and has had a number of forms of cooperation with the women's movements in these two regions, which is why they were natural destinations. While we were there, we had the opportunity to interview women and men who were engaged in women's rights and we gathered several hours of material from these interviews. The material later resulted in two reports on women's security¹, a book by Maria about women in the Middle East, and my thesis/report.

Since the report is based on a thesis, it has a strong claim to scientific validity. It is important to emphasise this as it means the report can be used in a number of contexts in order to make the voices of women themselves heard on the subject of democratisation. The importance of making these women's own voices heard was again illustrated in conjunction with the Arab Spring, when it became clear that the women wanted to be included in the democratic process but that there were strong forces that sought to hold them back. The report thus plays an important role in studying developments in two of the few regions in the Middle East which have begun the process of democratisation. It is my hope that the report can provide an important insight into the challenges facing women in this process and offer lessons which will be important for future democratisation processes in the region. The final section of the report includes recommendations for matters which will need to be addressed in order to strengthen the process of democratisation from a women's perspective. The report is also published in Swedish and Arabic².

The report is divided into the following sections: first a general introduction, then the theoretical point of departure which forms the basis for this report. This is followed by an account of the contribution the report is intended to make and a report of the interviews. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are presented. The appendix contains a short guide to each country; reading these is recommended for a deeper understanding of the conditions under which the women in each area live.

Finally I would like to thank the following people: my supervisor, Ulf Bjereld, for his support, important reflections and wise comments which helped me to complete my thesis; Sofie Krall, for acting as my sounding board and for her interesting reflections during the writing process; Sara Widströmer, for her thorough proof-reading and comments on the thesis; Maria Hagberg, for travelling with me and generously sharing her network of contacts; Anne Casparsson, for tips and information about travelling to the Palestinian territories; Awaz and Dilan Daleni for the practical preparations in connection with the trip to Iraqi Kurdistan; Biza Barzo Ali, who acted as my interpreter in Iraqi Kurdistan; Bibbi Steinertz, former secretary general of Kvinnor för Fred, for her support and encouragement in this project; Kvinnor för Freds steering group SAMLA, who gave me the opportunity to produce the report, and in particular our treasurer, Sylvia Rönn, and secretary general Lena Steinholtz Ekecranz, for all their practical support; the Board of the UN Women National Committee Sweden, under their president, Margareta Winberg, for their support for the publication of this report; the National Board of Youth Affairs, and specifically Mideto Feza Kalala, Maria Sundbom Ressaissi and Moa Höglberg for granting us funding for the trips and publications; Håkan Persson for the layout of the report; all the people and organisations who have been so generous and helped us in so many ways in their respective fields - too many to name; all the brave interviewees who not only shared their thoughts and knowledge so generously but also dared to trust me, and that I would use the material in a proper way. I would not have been able to complete this report without you, and your courage continues to inspire me; and finally – a special thank you to my wonderful parents, Leif and Birgitta, who not only taught me the value of solidarity, justice and gender equality, but who have also supported and believed in me wherever life has taken me.

Karin Jonegård

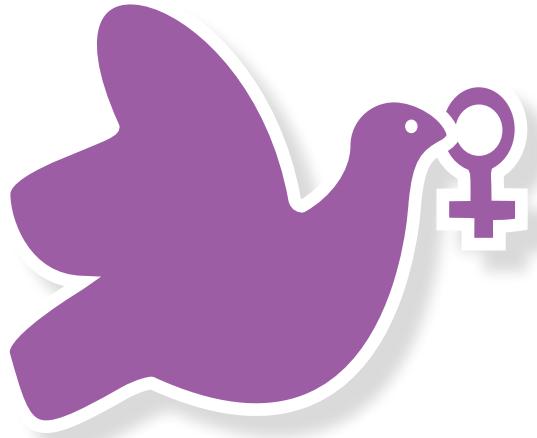
¹ The reports are entitled "Risk and Security for Women in Iraqi Kurdistan" and "Risk and Security for Women in Israel/Palestine". They examine the situation of violence against women from a preventive perspective, an emergency perspective and a follow-up perspective, and the situation for LGBT individuals. The reports are published in both Swedish and English on the Kvinnor för Fred website <http://www.kvinnorforfred.se/rapporter/> or can be ordered directly from Kvinnor för Fred. See the contact details at the end of the report

² The Swedish and Arabic versions can be found on the Kvinnor för Fred website <http://www.womenforfred.se/rapporter/> or can be ordered from Kvinnor för Fred. See the contact details at the end of the report.



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1. INTRODUCTION

After the Cold War, democratisation became a byword which was encouraged by the international community. International interventions were undertaken and negotiations were initiated in areas of conflict in order to launch democratisation under the flag of human freedoms and rights (Momsen 2010:7; Burnell 2006:1; Ottaway 2003:314). This new enthusiasm waned somewhat when democratisation proved not only to be somewhat complicated but also not the successful concept it was first believed to be. Conflicts which had in some cases been held at bay under authoritarian leadership suddenly erupted when a number of different agenda, which took their starting points in religion, class or ethnicity, were given a place in the democratisation processes (Burnell 2006:1ff; Kaldor 2002:89ff). This sometimes led to bloody conflicts, the most extreme of which include the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda (*ibid*). Democratisation found itself challenged by the politics of recognition, which in the 1990s expressed itself in a politics of identity, which sought to place a higher value on cultural differences rather than to secure economic equality. The focus shifted from rectifying the injustices of political economy, which had been the left's definition of social struggle during the 1960s and 1970s, to focusing on the violations which arose from unjust cultural values or status hierarchies (Fraser 2003:12f; Kaldor 2002:89ff).

The corner stones of democratisation, in the form of human freedoms and rights with the emphasis on equality between different groups and gender equality within groups, was in danger of coming into conflict with the politics of identity's demands for recognition of a cultural (nationalist) identity which in many cases is based on clear hierarchies between men and women (Fraser 2003:242f; Hylland Eriksen 1993:190f; Yuval-Davis 1997:39ff). On the one hand, the nationalist project presents itself as something modern, challenging traditional cultural and political values by making it possible for women to challenge traditional gender roles and allowing space to develop new identities and opportunities (Stearns 1998:66,73; Sharoni 1995:33ff). On the other, nationalism is based on cultural values from a perceived past. The new national identity implies a return to a national culture which has been destroyed or oppressed. It falls to women to be the protectors of the national tradition, the original religion and family values, which are used to justify the restrictions on women's activities (*ibid*).

Women in the third world found themselves in a situation where they were promised democracy and opportunities at the same time as demands were being made for a return to an "original identity" or maintenance of the status quo, which often meant clear gender hierarchies (Momsen 2010:6; Yuval-Davis 1997:61f). The question which arose was how the position of women as citizens and members of society is affected by the dividing line between democratisation and the search for identity when an old state is reorganised or a new state is created.

This report concerns the extent to which women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories, both of which have begun democratisation processes, experience themselves as being equal to men from a social perspective. My point of departure will be that recognising that women are equal to men is essential if women are to be able to experience and feel that they are full and equal participants in all aspects of society and my intention is to examine the extent to which women feel that this is or is not the case.

2. THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE

2.1 The role of recognition in the democratisation process

Democratisation processes in today's world are an ongoing process and the research community³ has been engaged in investigating the problems encountered in the democratisation processes. In the post-Cold War era, democracy and building peace, which in the long term are a prerequisite for a stable democracy, were assumed by many in the international community to be two sides of the same coin. The reality, however, proved that this was not always the case, as a large number of violent conflicts occurred in newly established democracies (Burnell 2006:1f,21f). The democratisation process, the way in which it was marketed, the extent of the international involvement and the institutional design and identification of those elements of democracy which could best contribute towards preventing conflict in the country affected, all had a significance for whether or not democracy and peace would be successful (Burnell 2006:1f,21f, Ottaway 2003:314f,320f).

Democratisation sometimes involves uncertainty where, for example, the institutional tools appear to be key to preventing conflict. The politics of recognition can be seen as a reaction to the uncertainty which may arise in the power vacuum after an authoritarian regime has collapsed or been reformed through, for example, democratisation (Kaldor 2002:90f; Hylland Eriksen 1993:123ff,185f). Such politics often affect the recognition of ethnic minorities, which can be expressed through a return to "pre-modern day" identities which are temporarily replaced with, or suppressed by, modernisation. This often involves a religious re-awakening, ethnic renaissance and nationalism (Fraser 2003:218f, Yuval-Davis 1997:119f, Kaldor 2002:90ff,96f, Hylland Eriksen 1993:185f,195f). Nancy Fraser refers to this as the identity model, which tends to brand criticism of, for example, patriarchal tendencies as "non-authentic" and to seek a return to social orders in which women are strongly subordinating (*ibid*). Fraser advocates instead the status model *which treats recognition as a question of social status. The recognition lies in the status of the individual members of the group as full participants in the social interaction, rather than the group-specific identity.* Misrecognition implies social subordination; that is to say, being prevented from participating in the social life on equal terms (Fraser 2003:220f,243).

Tina Sideris illustrates in her research the problem of democratisation and recognition by studying the link between the politics of recognition, democratisation and the role of women in relation to these. Sideris has taken her starting point in the South African transition to a political democracy and how this has affected women in a small rural village. Applying theories of Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser and Jessica Benjamin, Sideris examines the way in which democratisation has affected the women's security (Sideris 2007:237ff). Sideris finds that democratisation has led to women being guaranteed their institutional rights: the women take a more active part in public life and have emerged onto the labour market in greater numbers. As a result, they have become more independent in relation to their husbands, families and the traditional society. The recognition of women as legal persons equal to men in the public sphere has, however, led to a crisis in the recognition of women in the private sphere (Sideris 2007:237ff,248f, Honneth 2003:87ff).

The notion of women as separate individuals with rights, unique needs and independent wills is often a direct contrast to traditional values regarding heterosexual relations, which are, in turn, based on gender hierarchies and guarantee men the authority as decision makers with no obligation to consider the needs or wishes of their subordinates. This leads to a tension between women's universal rights on the one hand and their traditional roles as women on the other (*ibid*). The tension between dependence and independence is fundamental, in respect of recognition, for gender relations. Independence is an important element of the masculine ideal, and the role of the dependant is assigned to women. The risk of losing that independence and becoming dependent on women (socially, economically and so on) leads to a crisis in the male identity, particularly when this is placed outside their control as a consequence of socio-political transformations (Sideris 2007:242ff, 248f; Benjamin 1998).

According to Sideris, there is a risk that misrecognition in all aspects will fuel conflicts rather than solve them. The misrecognition, which does not appear to have been fully addressed in the democratisation process, has resulted in the violence against women in South Africa increasing at an alarming rate. The consequences of not working for recognition in all aspects of society are that recognition in one aspect led to a crisis in another (Sideris 2007:248ff).

³Stokes (2005), Kaldor (2002), Ottaway (2003) among others

The conclusions to be drawn from Sideris' research are the importance for women's safety and security of recognition being applied to all aspects of society, not only the institutional aspects. There appears to be a tension between on the one hand democratisation, which is often a demand from the international community but may equally come from within, and on the other hand the traditional society, where women are often viewed as dependent and men as independent in family relationships and society. Sideris' research can be seen as an important contribution to the research community's request for stable, long-term democratisation.

2.2 Politics of recognition according to the status model

Fraser highlights the status model rather than the identity model. In the status model, recognition is seen as a matter of social status in which the recognition concerns the position of the individual group members as full participants in the social interaction and not the group-specific identity. Misrecognition implies social subordination in the form of being prevented from participating in the social life on equal terms (Fraser 2003:220f,243). Women suffer from gender-specific forms of *status subordination* such as sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and domestic violence; harassment and contempt in all areas of everyday life; exclusion from or marginalisation in public spheres and decision-making bodies; being denied full legal rights and equal protection, as well as being deprived of full rights and guarantees of citizenship (Fraser 2003:190f).

Rectifying this injustice requires a politics of recognition which in the "status model" involves overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognised group as full and equal members of society. In establishing participation on equal terms, the status model subjects the demand for recognition to the public justification's democratic process (Fraser 2003:220ff,243). It must be applied both across groups and within the group. A feminist politics of recognition becomes a question of social status. What demands recognition is not the female identity but women's status as full participants in the social interaction. A feminist politics of recognition is without question necessary in order to put an end to the injustices but it is not the same as politics of identity (Fraser 2003:241f). According to the status model, what is required is a politics that aims to end the subordination by establishing women as full members of society with the ability to participate on the same terms as men. When institutionalised cultural value patterns allow women to participate as equals with men in the social life we will be able to talk about mutual recognition and equality of status (*ibid*).

Mainstream research in the field of gender often studies two areas: the private and the public⁴. Women struggle not only to achieve recognition as citizens with equal status in relation to the state (society) but also as individuals with equal status within the family and the social community. The division between private and public has come under criticism. According to Sylvia Walby, it is not possible to make a distinction between the private and the public since the family cannot escape intervention by the state (Yuval-Davis 1997:79f). In the modern welfare state there is no sphere which is free from state intervention. The very creation of borders between the private and public is in itself a political act. The application of individual and collective rights is tied to the state, and control over the state continues to be the primary political objective (*ibid*).

Despite the criticism of the division between private and public, it is clear that the literature implies that some form of division between the role of women in civil society and family relations on the one hand and the role of women in relation to state institutions on the other is relevant. The divisions between the roles are not watertight, but from an analytical perspective there are benefits to be had from making this distinction. It is more topical to talk about a socio-cultural sphere which affects the familiar and civil aspects, rather than a private sphere, which interacts with, and relates to, the public sphere in various ways. Taking its starting point in this perspective, the politics of recognition strives to put an end to the status subordination of women both from a socio-cultural (private and civil society - community) sphere and a public sphere (in relation to the state and its institutions – society). The recognition of women as equal and equally valuable members and citizens in all areas of society can be divided into two spheres.⁶

⁴ See Yuval-Davis (1997), Steans (1997), Sharoni (1995), Özkipal (2000), Enloe (1993) among others.

⁶ Fraser does not oppose the idea that there are other spheres in the recognition aspect but points out that there are other axes of social differentiation such as class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and religion (Fraser 2003:237f). It is not unreasonable to use the division into private and public in the recognition aspect.

2.2.1 Misrecognition of women in a socio-cultural context

The roles of women in the socio-cultural sphere are often based on a nationalist or ethnic ideology which tends to reproduce a patriarchal view of the family. The nation is seen as a metaphorical family in which the mother's metaphorical role is to reproduce: to bear and raise children, and to carry out household duties (Hylland Eriksen 1993:190ff; Özkirimli 2000:192f,204f; Enloe 1993:238f). The literature shows that women tend to have a physical, ideological and symbolic role in such ethnic and nationalist projects. Women are biological reproducers of members of the ethnic collective by virtue of the fact that they bear children. This quality is often ascribed to women as members of a specific nationalist project rather than as individuals, workers and/or wives, since they are generally born into the collective. The right to control their own body and reproductive system challenges the view that the needs of the collective go before the individual rights of the women (Yuval-Davis 1997:22,26ff Özkirimli 2000:206f, Sharoni 1995:24). Women also play a central part in the ideological reproduction of the collective as bearers of its culture. Women are cultural bearers of the ethnic/national group because they are principally responsible for the socialisation of young children and are expected to transfer the legacy of ethnic symbols, traditions, religions and values to the younger members of the collective. Culture is, however, not a fixed category but a dynamic process in constant change, full of internal contradictions (Yuval-Davis 1997:23,41f,61f, Özkirimli 2000:208, Steans 1998:65ff).

Gender relations and sexuality play an important role in this since women in general are seen as embodying the ethnic/national collective (Yuval-Davis 1997:22, Özkirimli 2000:207f). Women can either gain or lose nationalist prestige. Sexuality, reproduction and child rearing have a strategic importance within nationalism, which has resulted in many nationalist men (and to some extent religious institutions) more consciously exercising control over women (Yuval-Davis 1997:22f,27f,35f; Özkirimli 2000:204f; Enloe 1993:238f, Steans 1998:66f). The woman is considered to bear the honour of the collective since she symbolises the nation. There are also a number of specific codes and rules in place to define what makes a "respectable/proper/true" woman, often related to sexual behaviour, and a "respectable/true" man. In many societies, women are tortured or killed on the grounds that they have breached codes of conduct by committing cultural crimes which are perceived as bringing shame on their male relatives and the community (Yuval-Davis 1997:7,46f, Özkirimli 2000:209).

In the Middle East, this is referred to as the concept of honour¹ and is based on the idea that male honour⁶ is dependent on the conduct and behaviour of other members of the family. Honour is an aspect of the patriarchal family and kinship relationships in which the individual is in the first hand seen as a part of the group or family (Amnesty 2003:3, AbdelGani 2007:29ff,52f). In the life of the collective, the man is given power over the woman, who symbolises the family honour. The chastity of the female members of the family is especially important for the honour of the man/family since it represents the difference between honour and shame. This applies particularly to young and unmarried women, since their value is closely related to their virginity (Amnesty 2003:3f, AbdelGani 2007: 14f,27ff,52f).

In the socio-cultural context, women are often recognised as, and ascribed the role, willingly nor unwillingly, of being part of the cultural (nationalist) ideology, and often of reproducers. Their value and role are related to the family as a civil institution in which they are part of the collective rather than individual beings (Özkirimli 2000:193f,199; Yuval-Davis 1997:2f; Siderius 2007:248ff). Women run the risk of being recognised according to the identity model, in which their role is defined based on the collective identity and an objectification of the female identity, rather than the status model, in which the recognition is not about the female identity but about women's status as full individual participants in the social interaction both with and within other group identities (Fraser 2003:241ff). Recognition according to the status model is to some extent a provocation and a threat to the current order, since it poses an indirect threat to the positions of power between those who are independent (men) and those who are dependent (women) (Siderius 2007:248ff).

⁶ The concept of honour is a phenomenon which pre-dates Islam and appears in other religions in the region, including Christianity (AbdelGani 2007:30f,44f)

2.2.2 Misrecognition of women in a public context

The liberal definition of citizenship assumes that the individual citizen has equal status, equal rights and equal responsibilities, while factors such as gender, ethnicity, class and other contexts are not considered relevant for the status as a citizen per se (Yuval-Davis 1997:69f). This has been the point of departure for the democratisation processes for which human rights has been the byword (Burnell 2006:1; Ottaway 2003:314). The struggle to create national states involves the institutionalisation of gender differences. From a historical perspective, the civil rights and responsibilities have been closely linked with the ability to take up arms to defend the state/society. This has been one of the main reasons why women have been excluded from public life and from citizenship, and made subordinate to the men (Stokes 2005:15ff; Yuval-Davis 1997:93f, Steans 1998:81ff).

The hegemonic dominance manifests itself further when the state exercises ideological activity by establishing common practices which institutionalise gender relations (Steans 1998:88,101f; Momsen 2010:46ff). Mainstream theories regarding gender and the state/nation declare that society is divided into two domains: the public, which is identical to the political sphere, and the private, which is related primarily to the family domain. Women were traditionally associated with the private sphere and men with the public sphere (Özkirimli 2000:210f, Burke 2002:18, Yuval-Davis 1997:79f). Gender becomes a central issue in the design of “inclusive” and “exclusive” categories which establish civil rights. This role division is based on a series of dichotomic assumptions between masculine and feminine where masculinity represents the “civilised” and femininity the “nature” that must be controlled (Steans 1998:7, Özkirimli 2000:210f, Burke 2002:18, Yuval-Davis 1997:79f). This construction, in which women are “dependent” because they are identified in relation to men (independent) as wives and mothers, limits the rights of citizenship (Steans 1997:68, Burke 2002:20, Yuval-Davis 1997:78ff).

Carol Pateman is critical of the fact that the social contract is discussed without mention of the sexual contract, which is based on and legitimised by the power that men exercise over women. Fraternity is not only a question of social solidarity between (male) citizens but also of transforming hegemonic power relations in society into a fraternity where men are given the right to rule over women in the private sphere at the same time as they agree to a contract for a social order which implies mutual equality in the public political sphere (Pateman 1988; Stokes 2005:15ff; Yuval-Davis 1997:78f). Women were, therefore, not originally excluded from the public sphere; this occurred later as part of the negotiations between the new regime and its citizens. Citizenship was not based on a universal definition but was rather constructed in terms of “men’s rights” (Pateman 1988; Stokes 2005:15ff, Yuval-Davis 1997:78f). Ursula Vogler maintains that the exclusion of women was the result of a construction which meant that men not only represented themselves in the democratic process but were also given citizen status as representatives for a family (Stokes 2005:15ff, Yuval-Davis 1997:79).

According to Yuval-Davis, citizenship can never be analysed as a fully individual or collective phenomenon. Collectives, societies and states are continually being reconstructed, but membership and identities can be imposed rather than voluntary. States, collectives and individuals have varying degrees of autonomy in relation to each other (Yuval-Davis 1997:91f). Women’s lives are ruled both by those who have more power within the family and by external ideologies, as well as by common practices which are found in the civil society or state. The private domain, which is not considered to be controlled by the state, also includes, among others, religious institutions (Yuval-Davis 1997:79,91f).

Recognition, in the form of the status model, implies in this case the demand for recognition of women’s status as full participants in the social interaction, not the female identity. The danger is that the female identity will otherwise be recognised as a part of an idea based on women being represented by men, who are considered to be the legitimate representatives of the group, rather than as individuals (Fraser 2003:219f). Recognition in the status model thus challenges who shall represent the woman – she herself as an individual (independent) or a male relative who represents her as a member of a collective (dependent).

	Socio-cultural context	Public context
Recognition according to the status model	Recognition of women's status as full participants in the social interaction. Women are considered to be equal to men in all matters relating to the family and society.	Recognition of women's status as full participants in the social interaction. Women have the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities as men in relation to the state.
Misrecognition according to the status model	Women are subjected to sexual abuse and domestic violence, as well as to harassment and contempt in all aspects of daily life. They are reduced to their reproductive capability, which society wants to control. Women are considered to belong to the collective (dependent) rather than to be individuals (independent) with their own capabilities and rights.	Women are excluded from or marginalised in public life and decision-making bodies, and are denied full legal rights and equal protection. They are further denied the full rights and guarantees of citizenship. Women (dependent) are more likely to be represented by men (independent) than to represent themselves.



Tina Sideris' research	More difficult to achieve recognition. More difficult to change attitudes.	Easier to achieve recognition. Easier to comply with legislation and implementation of quotas.
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3. THE CONTRIBUTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

There is a wealth of literature on the subjects of democratisation, security, recognition and gender in the post-Cold War era, but few empirical studies which specifically study the extent to which women themselves experience that they are recognised as full and equal citizens in the various spheres of society in those areas in the Middle East which have begun democratisation processes. For this reason there is scope for an empirical study which examines the extent to which women in the region experience that they are recognised as individuals who are of equal value and on an equal footing in a socio-cultural (private) and public context.

There are a number of strategies which can be applied in conducting an empirical study into the extent to which women feel that they are recognised. One would be to examine whether the proportion of women in leading positions in the public sphere has increased. If the proportion has increased, this could be interpreted as increased recognition of women as equal individuals. The argument that has been made against this is that in strict patriarchal societies women are elected to parliament as stand-ins for their husbands or fathers-in-law and thereby may fill a set quota (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2010:419f). The problem of only looking at the increase in the proportion of women in public parliaments and institutions, unless it is a large proportion⁷, is that this does not always correspond to increased recognition of women as equal citizens and members of society. The political culture, which includes the socio-cultural sphere, must also be examined (Burnell 2006:13f, Ottaway 320f)⁸.

It is essential to highlight both the socio-cultural sphere and the public sphere in order to establish a full picture of how they relate to each other, since they are mutually dependent. The main difference between them is whether they have direct or indirect influence. The public sphere works more with direct influence in the form of, among other things, legislation, quotas and representation, and is more measurable. The socio-cultural sphere applies a more indirect influence in the form of, among other things, changing attitudes, the view of women, appreciation of women's contributions in the home and the surrounding community, and is more difficult to measure. There are, therefore, analytical advantages to be had in separating them and examining how they influence each other. Sideris chooses to make the division in order to understand the paradox in the case of South Africa, where on the one hand women participate more in public life while on the other violence against women in personal relationships is increasing (Sideris 2007:248f). The division of recognition allows for different perspectives in order to study the role of women in the democratisation process, even though they often imply the same problem: the subordination of women.

Sideris' study is the starting point for this report, but the difference is that Sideris examines the extent to which women's security is affected by democratisation. I will instead examine the way in which the recognition of women as equal citizens and members of society has been affected by democratisation. Since the report is qualitative, it is not generalisations that are sought as answers, but a mapping which aims to present as complete an account as possible of all aspects of what is being examined. The interviewees are women who work (as employees or on a voluntary basis) with women's rights, which means that they work both with the authorities but also at a grassroots level, which is to say in both the socio-cultural and the public spheres. It is anticipated that these women will capture several patterns of thought through their diversification in various social spheres.

My main purpose in writing this report is *to examine whether women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories experience greater recognition as being equal to men after the beginning of the democratisation process*. By examining this, I hope not only to contribute to a better understanding of how a democratisation process can affect women in these areas in relation to the politics of recognition, but also to allow them to speak for themselves.

I will take the following questions as my starting point:

1. Do women experience greater recognition in terms of equality with men in a socio-cultural context (as members of society) today than before the democratisation process began? If not – from where do they feel the misrecognition comes?
2. Do women experience greater recognition in terms of equality with men in a public, civil-institutional context (as citizens) today than before the democratisation process began? If not – from where do they feel the misrecognition comes?

⁷ According to Erik Melander, a rise in the number of women in parliament leads to a fall in the violation of human rights, which can be seen as an increase in the recognition of women. This occurs first when the proportion of women in parliament rises above one third (Melander 2005:162f).

⁸ The majority of authors who write about democratisation and gender often place an emphasis on the institutional tools which influence quotas in parliament, political parties, electoral systems etc. (See Waylen 2007, Stokes 2005, Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010 and others.) These tools are, and will remain, important in the democratisation process but they must be linked to recognition for a deeper understanding.

Democratisation



Recognition



	Recognition	Misrecognition
Socio-cultural context	Do women experience greater recognition after democratisation? e.g. within culture or family	Where does the misrecognition come from? e.g. culture, religion
Public context	Do women experience greater recognition after democratisation? e.g. in politics, education	Where does the misrecognition come from? e.g. administration of justice, culture

3.1 Case selection and expected outcome

The Middle East is a region which has not received the same level of attention in respect of democratisation as former colonies in Africa, Asia Latin America or Eastern Europe⁹. Democratisation has only recently received attention as a consequence of the Arab Spring. Two areas in the region which had earlier begun a democratisation process are Iraqi Kurdistan (northern Iraq) and the Palestinian territories. Since the 1990s, these areas have had a certain level of autonomy and have, for example, held general elections (UI Palestinska självstyret 2013; UI Irak/Kurdistan 2013).¹⁰ In conjunction with the beginning of the democratisation process, a recognition process for the recognition of women as full participants in the social interaction has begun (Rassam 2005; Azzouni 2005; Fraser 2003:242f). A study of both processes, which have taken place during the last 10-15 years in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories, is of interest now that more countries in the region are trying to start democratisation processes. It can provide an informed and important understanding as to whether or not women experience greater recognition as being equal to men in society's different spheres.

Both cases have been selected based on the logic of strategic choice in the form of critical unfavourable cases. Since the purpose of the report is to capture various categories of thought, the critical cases are applicable since they take their starting points in the theoretical notions which are applied in the study (Esaiasson m.fl. 2004:179ff). The literature divides the critical cases into favourable and unfavourable cases, where the difference lies in whether the cases selected are taken from a context which is favourable or unfavourable for the theoretical notion. The thought behind this is that if the theory finds support under unfavourable conditions it is reasonable to expect that it will also stand up under less unfavourable circumstances (*ibid*).

⁹ The literature often includes empirical case studies but these concern mainly former colonies in Africa and Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America (see Waylen 2007, Stokes 2005 and others). Countries or regions in the Middle East are often conspicuous by their absence. This can be explained in part but not in full by the fact that the democratisation process has advanced further in these areas which is why this study fills a knowledge gap.

¹⁰ See Appendix 1 for more information.

Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories both have claims to becoming national states but there are a number of differences (Hylland Eriksen 1993:24f):

- The Palestinians are an ethnic group which belongs to the Arab majority group in the Middle East, while the Kurds are a minority group in the area (UI Palestinska självstyret 2013; UI Irak/Kurdistan 2013).
- Palestinians and Kurds each have their own language, culture and history (*ibid*).
- Kurds were subjected to genocide and ethnic cleansing under the previous dictatorship, but today have an autonomy in relation to the central power in Baghdad. Palestinians live today under occupation and are discriminated against by a democracy, Israel (UI Palestinska självstyret 2013; UI Irak/Kurdistan 2013; TT/AFP 2013).
- Iraqi Kurdistan has held four elections since 1992, of which the three most recent took place after the American invasion in 2003 (2005, 2009, 2013). The Palestinian territories have held three elections since 1993, but the most recent were only local, not presidential/parliamentary elections (1996, 2005/2006, 2012). The sitting President has been in place since 2005 (*ibid*). Neither the Palestinian territories nor Iraq are considered to be free countries, but not free countries, according to Freedom House's measurements from 2009. This implies that there are serious restrictions in respect of civil freedoms and rights (Freedom House measurements 2009).
- In Iraqi Kurdistan the politics are dominated by two social democratic parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, with few strong religious parties. In the Palestinian territories, the politics are dominated by two parties: a socialist party, Fatah, and a party inspired by religion, Hamas (UI Palestinska självstyret 2013, UI Irak/Kurdistan 2013)

All in all, the two areas differ in culture, language and history. Iraqi Kurdistan has previously lived under a dictatorship while the Palestinian territories live today under occupation (see also Appendix 1). Iraqi Kurdistan has had a higher frequency of elections, while the politics are inspired to a greater extent by religion in the Palestinian territories. If these two cases follow the same logic in respect of recognition or misrecognition of women as being equal to men, there is reason to believe that the theoretical notions will also apply under less unfavourable conditions.

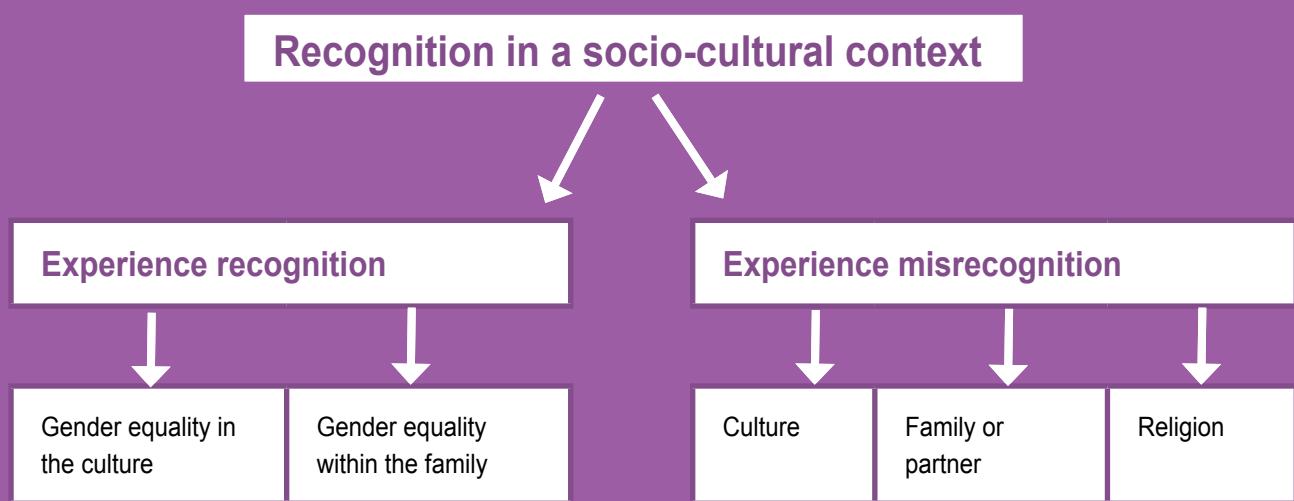
The outcome which can be reasonably expected from the study, based on the literature and previous studies, is that recognition is considerably more difficult in a socio-cultural context than in the public context. The division into the two contexts is necessary in order to reflect the extent to which democratisation affects these two selected areas. It can be difficult to understand why democratisation is successful or less successful in the public context (direct influence) if it is not known what takes place in the socio-cultural context (indirect influence). In all probability there will be both similarities and differences between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. Iraqi Kurdistan has progressed a little further, holding regular elections, and is, in addition, an autonomous region. It is probable that they have progressed further in encouraging recognition of women as equal to men than the Palestinian territories, whose political situation is made more difficult by the occupation. The latter area has larger elements of religion in its politics, which may have a negative effect on women's opportunities. The biggest difference between the areas will probably lie not in the socio-cultural context, since that is more difficult to change, but rather in the public context.

4. MAPPING OF QUALITIES¹¹

The mapping shows different nuances in the material and different ways of thinking regarding women and recognition as an equal individual in a socio-cultural and public context. What I have interpreted as the most profound differences in the material is whether the interviewees experience *recognition of women as equal* or *misrecognition of women as equal*. This constitutes the main categories of the mapping and is divided into two sections: one on the socio-cultural context and one on the public context. In each section the result is presented first for the *women in Iraqi Kurdistan* and then for the *women in the Palestinian territories*. A comparison between *Iraqi Kurdistan* and the *Palestinian territories* then follows in each section. The perceptions presented under women recognised as equal are based on the interviewees' own perceptions of their own situation or that of other women in society. The line of thought which relates to the misrecognition of women as being equal refers to where the interviewees perceive the misrecognition comes from or exists.

The main categories are then divided into sub-categories, which I have chosen to call *gender equality in the culture* and *gender equality in the family* to refer to women as being recognised as being equal in the socio-cultural context. In relation to the misrecognition of women as equal in the socio-cultural context I have chosen to name the sub-categories *the culture*, *the family or partner*, *religion*. In the public context¹² I have chosen to name the sub-categories *freedom of expression* and *freedom of movement*, *education and employment*, *politics and public institutions*, *legislation and the administration of justice* to refer to women as recognised as being equal in the public context. Regarding the misrecognition of women as equal in the public context, I have chosen to name the sub-categories *politics and public institutions*, *legislation and the administration of justice*, *culture* and *religion*. I have endeavoured to divide the sub-categories so that they are relatively close to the actual reasoning and have given examples using quotations¹³. The results will be presented one section at a time, one half-table at a time (see the mapping in its entirety in Appendix 3).

4.1 WOMEN IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT



¹¹ It should be made clear that the interviewees are just that, not informants. I have not checked the facts behind the information given as it is the personal experiences of the interviewees that are of interest.

¹² The classifications are based on those which emerged based on the replies of the interviewees, and on established introductions found in the literature which examines the participation of women in countries where the democratisation process is under way or in countries which are democracies. See Waylen (2007), Stokes (2005) and others.

¹³ It is not always obvious where to set the limits for quotations, whether they should be included in one classification or another. To give an example, in the following quotation both religion and culture are mentioned: *There are so many things which are mixed in our culture. (--) If they really understood Islam properly, no girls would ever be killed. (16)*. The quotation is taken from a context where the interviewee discusses religion, for which reason I have chosen to categorise it under religion, even though it mentions culture, as that is where the interviewee has placed the main part of her argument. (See *Misrecognition of women in a socio-cultural context, Iraqi Kurdistan*).

4.1.1 Women in Iraqi Kurdistan

4.1.1.1 Women recognised as equal members of society

Gender equality in the culture

Proponents of this line of thought view gender equality in the culture both as men and women having the same opportunities, and as equal justice. For I2, this means an emphasis on justice, but also on increased opportunities for women:

The situation between men and women is fair. In the past, women weren't able to do as many things and had no opportunities (---) Now they (the women) have many more opportunities than before. (I2)

The quotation shows that the interviewee feels that things are better now than in her earlier situation. It should be pointed out this does not automatically mean that gender equality is a fact but that the sense of equality is greater than previously. I6 demonstrates a similar line of reasoning on the question of whether men and women have the same opportunities in society:

Definitely, and in different ways, yes, and in the employment sector I can confidently say yes. (I6)

I6 highlights the fact that women have more opportunities even though they may appear slightly different, but that the employment sector is an area where the interviewee experiences that women and men have exactly the same opportunities. This does not imply that recognition is problem-free, but that it is possible.

Gender equality within the family

In this aspect, the focus is on the smallest unit of society, namely the individual and his or her relation to the family. The emphasis is placed on an individual-based level, where it is the individual who chooses his or her role in society, rather than societal norms which control the individual's scope for movement. This can be seen in I1's reasoning:

It depends on the individual and his or her family. Some people do everything themselves and go out to work like I do. I go out, work and cook. (I1)

It is not the socio-cultural context which dictates the norms but rather the individual in the first hand. Men and women decide for themselves which possibilities and opportunities they want, and can have. I8 shows in her reasoning that this is not without problems:

It isn't possible for everyone, but it is for me. I had to fight for it. (I8)

The quotation shows a reasoning that takes into greater account the socio-cultural context that women live in. It appears to be possible to change things, but not for all women, and for those for whom it is possible, it can be a struggle. Achieving the same opportunities as men does not appear to be plain sailing but neither does it appear to be impossible. It is however, a struggle which does not appear to be possible for all women.

In conclusion, we can see that there are two lines of thought among those who believe that women and men are equal in the sense that they have the same opportunities and equal justice. One line takes the position that there is gender equality, and that they are therefore recognised within the socio-cultural context as a whole. The other line believes that it is the individual who chooses his or her role in society rather than that social norms control the individual, and that the most important recognition comes from the family. This implies that the individual can experience recognition while at the same time not always considering that other women are recognised as being equal to men in the socio-cultural sphere, primarily because of the family.

4.1.1.2 Misrecognition of women as equal members of society

The culture

In the notion of culture as a reason for misrecognition, there are several aspects where this restricts women in their daily lives. The restrictions which women experience are described by I5:

In our culture, women are expected to stay at home, and to serve the men if they are her husband, father or brother. Clean the house, look after the children. The women obey the men (--) That's the women's job and responsibility, while the men are expected to go out and earn money to support the family. (I5)

I5's reasoning demonstrates clear (classic) gender divisions, where the cosy home, the private, is largely the domain of the women while the men go out into the world and work. The men are responsible for supporting the family, and the women for the home. The women are also expected to submit to the men in order to be valued as a "good woman" worthy of respect in the socio-cultural context. The men are ascribed a greater value as independent individuals, while the women are considered dependent on the men. The concept of honour is also present and I1 clarifies what the concept of honour means in practice:

If a girl runs away with a boy, the family has to either marry her off to the boy or kill her. (--) Women have more reason to be afraid. There is a greater shame for women who commit honour crimes. (--) That makes you realise that you can't (as a woman) do everything. There are lots of jobs and things like that you can't do because of the culture. (--) A woman can't go out at night, but a man can. (I1)

Men and women appear to have different opportunities. Men appear to have a greater level of freedom than women, who appear to be considerably more controlled and restricted in their daily lives. Women risk being killed on the grounds of honour, which means their freedom of movement is restricted, as is their choice of occupation. I interpret this as misrecognition on the part of the men, but also that the actions of the woman can have consequences for the position of the family in the socio-cultural context, since it is the family who are expected to deal with the woman's crime against honour.



Women are far more restricted in their movements than men. For example, it is not advisable for women to be out of doors after 7 pm in Iraqi Kurdistan as they not only risk their reputation but also face great danger. This means that the street view is often dominated by men, especially in the evenings.

The family or partner¹⁴

In this aspect, it appears that it is the inner-most circle around the woman, in the form of the partner or family, who do not recognise her as an equal individual with the right to make her own decisions and life choices. According to I7, it is the level of education within the family which determines the choices a woman can make regarding freedom of movement, choices, education and work:

A well-educated family will allow the girls to go out and make their own choices, and follow their own wishes regarding education and work. But in a family with a low level of education, the women will be oppressed by the men. (I7)

The level of education within the family is the bar which regulates the women's opportunities in the socio-cultural context. The women's choices and freedom depend quite simply on the family's education. Families with a higher level of education

¹⁵ It is, of course, possible to ask the question – what influences what? Does the culture influence the families or do the families influence the culture? I have chosen to take as my starting point what the interviewees have emphasised and what they have stressed regarding the division. There are no watertight compartments between any of the aspects; rather this is a theoretical attempt to structure various aspects of recognition or misrecognition.

give women more opportunities to study, work and make their own choices than families with a lower level of education. In some cases, making undesirable life choices can lead not just to criticism from family members but to physical punishment:

In some families, but not all, if you don't do what is expected of you they will use violence against you, and beat you (I4).

I4 shows in her reasoning the possible consequences of a woman choosing not to follow the socio-cultural norms in place. In some families, choosing to go your own way can lead to the use of violence as the most extreme form of control. For a woman, not behaving in the expected way can mean paying a physical price. Whether or not this will be the case depends, however, on the family.



Religious leaders have a major influence on society and on values regarding women's rights and opportunities in a wide range of questions.

Religion

Another aspect which risks restricting women and not giving them the freedom to be fully recognised in the socio-cultural context is religion, which is inevitably always a complex question. I9 points to the strong role religion plays in the region:

People make the culture. Culture can be changed if the government wants. If parliament wants. That's the problem in the Middle East. What I mean is that the religious leaders can influence society more than political leaders or an author can. (---). Islam dominates in the Middle East, and in Kurdistan too. (I9)

It appears to be more difficult to change the religion than the culture and politics. The religious leaders have greater influence than the (democratically elected) political leaders. The religion therefore becomes a powerful factor which can exert a strong influence on society, more than both culture and political leaders. I10 points out that is not just one religion that oppresses the women, but several:

The Church and Islam oppress women. (I10)

Both these religions contribute to oppressing and restricting women's situation, according to the interviewee. I6, for her part, maintains that it is not religion that is the problem regarding questions such as honour killings, but its interpretation:

There are a number of very strict criteria to be met before you can kill someone (honour killing) using religion as an argument. (---) Sometimes she'll be killed just for talking to a boy. (---) Our culture is a mixture of so many things. (--) If they really understood it (Islam) properly no girls would ever be killed. (I6)

The interviewee admits it is possible to find support for killing, but says that if the religion was interpreted correctly then it would not be possible to use it as a reason for killing in the name of honour. The religion becomes, and is indirectly misinterpreted as, an excuse for killing women on arbitrary grounds. There appear to be elements within the religion that can be misinterpreted, but I6 emphasises that the religion is mixed with culture, and that this explains the incorrect interpretation.

In conclusion, it can be said that the various lines of thought all stress the view that honour is a reason for the misrecognition. Honour implies that women's bodies do not belong to them but to the family/husband, which in turn has consequences for women's freedom of movement, freedom of choice, opportunities for education and employment. The culture, family/partner and religion interact in a number of ways to control the woman, and physical violence can be seen as the ultimate control. The difference between the three lines of thought is in where the main focus lies. Some say that the culture permeates the socio-cultural context and creates limitations, while others believe it is difficult to talk about a cultural aspect since it is based on different families who react differently. Others believe that religion is the major source of misrecognition as a result of its authoritarian power in the region. These three aspects lead to a situation where women's opportunities are restricted, and to misrecognition of women as individuals equal to men.

4.1.2 Women in the Palestinian territories

4.1.2.1 Women recognised as equal members of society

Gender equality in the culture

Proponents of this line of thought view gender equality in the culture both as men and women having the same opportunities, and as equal justice. For I15, the increased opportunities for women are a consequence of greater encouragement of women and of more organisations working with women's rights:

There's more encouragement for women now. By this, I mean that there are more organisations which work with women's rights in Palestine now. Most of the students at university are women, not men. (I15).

The quotation shows that the interviewee experiences that the situation is better now than in the past. It should be pointed out this does not automatically mean that gender equality is a fact but that the sense of equality is greater than previously. I15 points out that more women than men now gain a university education, which might suggest greater socio-cultural recognition. I17 experiences that women and men have the same opportunities:

I think that women are equal to men today, because whatever a man can do, a woman can do it too. (I17)

The interviewee links women's opportunities and potential with gender equality. According to I17, men and women are equal in her socio-cultural world. This does not imply that recognition is problem-free, but that it is possible.

Gender equality within the family

In this aspect, the focus is often on the smallest unit of society, namely the individual and his or her relation to the family. The emphasis is placed on an individual-based level where it is the individual who chooses his or her role in society, rather than societal norms which control the individual's space to move. This can be seen in I14's reasoning:

Being a woman in Palestine isn't a problem for me. I was lucky enough to be raised in a family with four daughters and one son. (---) My father was so proud of us. (I14)

It is not the socio-cultural context that dictates the norms, but the individual in the first hand. Men and women decide for themselves what opportunities they want and can have. The family's views appear to have the greatest influence, rather than the surrounding community.

In conclusion, we can see that there are two lines of thought among those who believe that women and men are equal in the sense that they have the same opportunities and equal justice. One line takes the position that there is gender equality, and that they are therefore recognised within the socio-cultural context as a whole. The other line believes that it is the individual who chooses his or her role in society rather than that social norms control the individual, and the most important recognition comes from the family. This implies that the individual can experience recognition while at the same time not always considering that other women are recognised as being equal to men in the socio-cultural sphere, primarily because of the family.

4.1.2.2 Misrecognition of women as equal members of society

The culture

In considering culture as a reason for misrecognition, there are several aspects where this restricts women in their daily lives. I16, for example, highlights the expectations placed on women in relation to the culture:

You're expected to preserve the family's culture. You have to obey society's rules and laws. The unspoken rules of society and customs in general, and the family's in particular. You have to protect the man's reputation by not making mistakes in the eyes of society. (--) We're also expected to work, and we support the family economically. Society expects us to keep having children because children are an important resource for the family. (--) In my opinion, it's a class society, a clan mentality. (I16)

The woman's role is to preserve the culture, even though it imposes restrictions on her. It is important to follow both the socio-cultural norms and the norms of the family (which are often a part of the socio-cultural norms). The husband's reputation is important and the woman plays an important role in preserving it by not breaching the unspoken rules or customs. The woman is expected to contribute financially, while not having children is out of the question. According to I16, there is a clan mentality where children are considered to be an important component of and resource for the clan; you are a member of a collective, rather than an individual. The woman has certain opportunities but these are limited in relation to the responsibilities she has towards the family, according to the socio-cultural context. I16, for her part, highlights the emphasis placed on the woman's sexuality:

You must be a virgin when you marry. If you're not a virgin, you can be killed. You can be divorced and stigmatised by the whole of society. (I16)

A woman must be sexually inexperienced or she risks being killed or divorced, which implies stigmatisation in the socio-cultural context. A woman's sexual experience appears to be strongly linked to her status in the socio-cultural context. I interpret this as meaning that there may be a certain level of fear among women of breaching the cultural norms, since the punishment is so severe.



Women are primarily ascribed a role of obedience, in which they are subordinate to the male members of the family. A central element of this view is that a woman's sexuality belongs to the family and must be protected at any price, or the reputation of the family is at risk. Wearing the veil is often part of this since the woman must protect herself from the men.

The family or partner

In this aspect, it appears that it is the inner-most circle around the woman, in the form of the partner or family, who do not recognise her as an equal individual with the right to make her own decisions and life choices. The male authority appears to be important and women are subordinated to this. The consequences of failing to obey can be the following:

In some families they will use violence against her. So she has to listen to what they tell her all the time. Not go out to work. Give up school. (I17)

The quotation shows that women have a duty to obey, and that those who choose not to do so risk physical punishment. The woman is not free to make her own life choices, but these must be approved by the family. This means that she is not only severely limited in her opportunities but that she is not recognised as an individual who is equal to the men in

her family. The quotation further indicates that there are differences between families and that the occurrence of violence varies from family to family. Honour is an important aspect for the family, as I15 points out:

Not getting married, or deciding who I want to marry, is easier (in the cities) (---) than in the villages, where the people are poor. I mean, where the people are poor, they're more influenced by religion, by traditions and they're more concerned about their honour. That means everything to them. It's all they have, but in places where they're educated and have money, it's easier. (I15)

According to the interviewee, poverty is a contributing factor to the concept of honour, in combination with tradition and religion. Honour is the most important thing, since it is all the villagers have. This explains why it is more important to preserve traditions in the villages. The lack of education and economic resources contribute to the traditions being maintained, which leads to restrictions on women's opportunities to make their own choices. According to I15, the difference between the towns and villages is a significant factor in the difference in women's opportunities to enter into or end a marriage.

Religion

Another aspect which risks restricting women and not giving them the freedom to be fully recognised in the socio-cultural context is religion, which is inevitably always a complex question. I15 explains that religious views go hand in hand with cultural views:

The concept of honour comes more from the culture, and in the case of Islam, it also has more to do with religion. There's a lot about it in the Koran. (---) In the case of Christianity, there's also a lot about being a virgin. (I15)

The interviewee points out that although honour is a cultural phenomenon, it appears to have support in both religions. The view on the importance of virginity for women exists on both sides, but it would appear that the culture is the stronger driving force in respect of honour. I interpret this as implying that religion is a supporting, but not the driving, factor in the question of honour. I18 follows the same line of reasoning and believes it is a question of interpretation:

Islam is better for women. It gives her rights (---) but people prefer to follow custom than Islam. (I18)

According to the interviewee, religion itself has benefits for women. The problem appears to lie in the interpretation, in which religion is not independent of custom. Furthermore, there are schisms between religions:

Women who marry people from other religions are stigmatised. (---) They are stigmatised by others and particularly by religious leaders and political leaders. (IP16)

Religion appears to be a powerful factor which affects women in the choices they make and where the consequences of these choices can lead to social exclusion in the socio-cultural context. Religion thereby appears to have a strong restrictive effect on women's life choices if they do not follow the accepted norms, that is to say, marry someone from the same religion. Religion becomes a powerful factor which, in combination with the political leaders, can have a strong influence on society.

In conclusion, it can be said that the various lines of thought all stress honour as a reason for the misrecognition. Honour implies that women's bodies do not belong to them but to the family/husband, which in turn affects women's freedom of movement, freedom of choice, opportunities for education and employment. The culture, family/partner and religion all interact in a variety of ways to control the woman, and physical violence can be seen as the ultimate control. The difference between the three lines of thought is in where the main focus lies. Some say that the culture permeates the socio-cultural context and creates limitations, while others believe it is difficult to talk about a cultural aspect since it is based on different families who act differently. Finally, some believe that religion is the major source of misrecognition as a result of its authoritarian power in the region, which places severe restrictions on such things as a woman's choice of partner. These three aspects lead to a situation where women's opportunities are restricted, and to misrecognition of women as individuals equal to men.

4.1.3 A comparison of Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories

There appear to be few differences between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories.

Both areas follow clear patterns of what is expected of women in a socio-cultural context: they are expected to be biological and ideological reproductive vessels in the ethnic (patriarchal) collective. Further, the women symbolise the cultural heritage and are considered to bear the collective's honour. Their value and role is, in the first instance, related to the family as a social institution, in which they are seen as members of a collective rather than as separate individuals. Some lines of thought recognise women as equal members of society in the culture as a whole, or recognition takes a different form because recognition in the socio-cultural sphere depends first and foremost on the family. There is a slight difference here between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. Regarding "gender equality in the culture", the experience of being (almost) fully equal to men appears to be greater in Iraqi Kurdistan than in the Palestinian territories where there is a stronger focus on the fact that men and women are more or less equal. Regarding "gender equality within the family" there is very little difference between the areas.

Among those who believe that men and women are not on an equal footing and that there is thus misrecognition, this is considered to have its origins in the culture, traditions, family/partner or religion. In the first two cases, the answers are largely identical in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. The difference is that the interviewees in the Palestinian territories stress that there are differences between the villages and towns, something which the interviewees in Iraqi Kurdistan do not mention in the same way. This does not mean that the differences do not exist, but rather that they may not be considered as relevant as in the Palestinian context. Religion plays a strong role in the socio-cultural context, but there are differences in what are termed mixed marriages between the religions. In the Palestinian context, it is clear that such marriages are strongly opposed by religious and political leaders, but it is not clear whether the problem exists in the Iraqi-Kurd context. This may be because more Christians were interviewed in the Palestinian territories or because the problem is not so widespread in the Iraqi-Kurdish areas.

4.2 WOMEN IN A PUBLIC CONTEXT

Recognition in the public context

Experience recognition				Misrecognition			
Freedom of expression and freedom of movement	Education and employment	Politics and public institutions	Legislation and the administration of justice	Politics and public institutions	Legislation and the administration of justice	Culture	Religion

4.2.1 Women in Iraqi Kurdistan

4.2.1.1 Women recognised as equal citizens

Freedom of expression and freedom of movement

This aspect often includes women's increased opportunities to express themselves freely as well as the fact that they have had greater freedom of movement in recent years compared with under the regime of Saddam Hussein. This is clear from I1's reasoning:

Of course it's better now. Before 2003 women were really scared to go out but now I can go home at 10 o'clock in the evening without being afraid. (--) In those days you could be raped, you could be beaten (by Saddam's soldiers) but now we don't need to be afraid any longer. (I1)

The quotation shows an earlier fear of moving around and risking physical violence in the form of rape and/or assault that has been very real to the interviewee. I1 experiences her freedom of movement in the public context as being much greater now than in the past. The opportunities to speak in public have also improved:

Women are debating their rights on TV now. There are lots of channels that have programmes about women's issues and freedom. (--) But a few years ago there were only four or five women who could do that. (I9)

The possibility for women to take part in public debates, through the medium of television, also appears to have increased. More women now take part in these forums and discuss their rights than previously. There also appear to be more and better opportunities for women to speak in public through the increased number of channels. Today there are more women who set the agenda for women's issues than earlier, when the number was very small.

Education and employment

In terms of education and employment, an improvement and greater opportunities are being experienced in both areas. I9 is one person who points to the growing number of young women at university:

There are more girls than boys studying at university. (I9)

Young women are being given more opportunities today and the interviewee even experiences that they are in the majority in higher education. This can be interpreted as one aspect of progress, as girls are being given greater opportunities to choose their future. Further, the number running their own businesses has risen:

There are women who have their own shops at the market. And there are lots of women who drive. It wasn't like that before. And lots who have their own offices. (--) They have the freedom to travel. (I10)

According to I10, more women have greater opportunities to run their own businesses and thereby support themselves. They have greater freedom of movement now that they can drive and are able to go where they want. They can also travel. I6 stresses the importance for women of being able to work outside the home:

I've seen lots of girls who work outside the home and it's given them a form of independence. They've had several relationships and that's not a problem as far as their families are concerned, and they haven't had a problem getting married. (I6).

Having a job becomes an opportunity for greater independence. It influences their possibility to choose their own partner and also to have several partners without affecting their chances of marriage. Economic independence appears to give the girls a stronger position in relation to the family, which in turn creates opportunities for other life choices.



In the last few years, women have taken their opportunities to study at university, and today female students are in the majority at several universities.

Politics and public institutions

There is increasing participation by women in politics and public institutions, which in turn gives them more opportunities. According to I2, the increased presence of women in politics has shaken up the political map:

When it comes to politics, people listen just as much to women as to men, and it's really good that women have started going into politics. (I2)

As women have become more active political players, so has their influence increased. According to the interviewee, the women have as big a voice as the men and are also being listened to. This improvement is supported by I10:

Things got better after 2003. There are women in parliament and the law says that 30 per cent of the parliament should be women but there are 33 women members of parliament and now there's a woman in the government. (I10)

It appears that there is a quota law which aims to increase the number of women in the decision-making assembly. There is also a woman minister. I interpret this as meaning that the increased opportunities for women to take part in the political life have contributed to the improvement described by the interviewee. If there are more women in the decision-making assembly this should imply that more attention is being paid to women's issues and also that new role models are being created.

Legislation and the administration of justice

This aspect shows that the administration of justice has begun to take greater and more overall responsibility for women's legal status. I5 points out one of the changes to the law which has resulted in greater security for women:

When a man kills his wife because she was unfaithful, on the grounds of honour, the sentence used to be less severe than if he killed a man or someone else. (--) Now there's an amendment to the law. That article says it's murder. There's no excuse for men to kill women in the name of honour. (I5)

According to the interviewee, the law no longer allows reduced sentences on the grounds of honour. Men can no longer use honour as an excuse for killing women; they are judged in the same way as for any other murder. It would appear that women are now closer to an equal legal status in relation to men.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the various lines of thought show an increased recognition of women in relation to men. The general situation appears to have improved and to include more opportunities for women, for example for education and employment. This, in turn, provides better opportunities for economic independence, and, thereby, for women to influence their life choices. Women have greater freedom of expression and freedom of movement today. They are less afraid to move in the public sphere. Their influence in politics and public institutions has increased now that one third of members of parliament must be women. The laws have also improved the legal status of women.

4.2.1.2 Misrecognition of women as equal citizens

Politics and public institutions

Regarding politics and the public institutions as causes of the misrecognition, there are a number of aspects which hold women back. I8, for example, is critical of which women are allowed into politics and on what grounds:

We only have one woman in the government and she's there because she's related to someone in the government. Not because she's competent. We have twenty ministers and only one is a woman. (I8).

According to the interviewee, the only woman in the government is there because she is related to another member of the government rather than because of her own competence. I interpret the interviewee as saying that the presence of the minister is a sham intended to show off a woman in the government rather than a genuine desire to increase the political participation of women and promote women's issues. I8 continues her reasoning:

The democracy process isn't a proper process without the participation of women. We don't have participation for women, especially in the political process. (--) Is the socialist party supposed to be a feminist party? (I8)

The interviewee appears to see the democracy process as being no more than lip service, since women are not so much in evidence as they should be. Further, the interviewee questions whether the parties in fact take women's issues and women's rights seriously. Women seem to be a long way from full participation in politics and public institutions and are thus not recognised as being politically equal.

Legislation and the administration of justice

Regarding this aspect of misrecognition, interviewees highlight the problems of legislation and its implementation in the administration of justice. I5, for example, points out that the legal system is not independent in relation to the political system, a fact which has consequences for the recently passed legislation which equates honour killing with murder:

But depending on the judge or police, they (the laws) aren't particularly well-implemented. The (administration of justice) isn't independent because people who kill women find a way to get out of it. They immediately join one of the political parties, who will then provide their defence, so most of them go free. (I5)

The quotation shows the way in which the various factors of power influence each other, with the result that the law is not the same for everyone. Someone who has the right political contacts can avoid punishment for killing a woman (who is a close relation). The various centres of power do not balance each other, thus shattering the notion of equality before the law. I interpret this as meaning that women's legal status has not improved noticeably. Compliance with the laws and professionalism appear to be two major obstacles in respect of the administration of justice and its practice. Furthermore, not all the laws which must be changed if women's legal status is to be raised have yet been changed:

The problem is that we have some good things in the constitution but when it comes to family laws you can't see much about women's issues. That's the problem. (I5)

Family laws, which regulate family relations including violence against women, have not been changed. The laws do not appear to support women's rights and the new regime does not appear to have made many changes in this respect. According to the interviewee, it is this problem which means that women are not fully recognised as legal entities. I10, for her part, stresses the fact that different laws are in force for different groups, based on religion:

The civil law is for Christians, and it's better than Sharia law. (I10)

According to the interviewee there are two separate legislations: a religious legislation, which applies to Muslims, and a civil legislation which applies to Christians. I interpret the latter as a legislation which is without religious overtones. It is stressed by the interviewee as being better than Sharia law, which is inspired by religion.

Culture

There are several ways in which culture is seen as a cause of misrecognition which restricts women in public life. I8 highlights the ways in which women dress, and says that there has been a change for the worse in this respect:

Earlier in our history there were many very strong Kurdish women in the Kurdish region but the political Islamic movement has changed that. (--) It happened at the beginning of the 80s. (--) In the 60s, the teacher came to our house wearing very short skirts and we didn't care. (--) In most of the schools today you see the girls wearing veils. (I8)

According to the interviewee, there has been a tradition of strong women in the region but the political Islamic movement has changed that, resulting in a retrogression since the 1980s. Previously, women appear to have had greater freedom to choose their clothing, but today the girls wear veils. I interpret the interviewee as viewing the wearing of the veil as something which women have been ordered to do and as a sign of retrogression for women's rights. I5 points out that the laws can be changed but that it will take time for the rest of society to catch up:

It hasn't changed anything. Even if the laws are changed, it will take a long time for people to understand the concept of seeing women as human beings. (--) There's a long history of putting women in a subordinate position. (I5)

The interviewee maintains that while the laws may have changed, the views of people in general have not, since there is a history in society of keeping women in a subordinate position. It will take time before women are recognised as individuals equal to men because they have been in a subordinate position for a very long time. Attitudes will not change overnight simply because the laws are changed.

Religion

A further aspect which risks restricting women and not giving them the opportunity to be fully recognised in the public context is religion, which is inevitably always a complex issue. I10 highlights the conflict that exists between democracy and religion:

For example, it's not okey according to our religion for a Christian woman to marry a Muslim, and vice versa. If democracy is to work with religion, a Muslim woman must be able to marry a Christian, and vice versa. (--) If religion is modernised, it won't come into conflict with the politics of democracy. (I10)

The quotation shows that there is strong opposition to marriage across religious boundaries. According to the interviewee, this is in conflict with the notion of democracy, since under the principles of democracy everyone is allowed to make their own life choices. The religions should be modernised so that they do not come into conflict with democracy. I6 stresses the importance of separating religion and democracy:



There have been a number of strong women throughout the history of Iraqi Kurdistan, but this has changed in the last thirty years as a result of the Islamification in the region. This picture shows women performing during a music festival in Halabja in 1970.

(Religion) is a matter between you and God. Democracy is something else. We have to separate these two things. Unfortunately, the big problem is that in Iraq they're mixed. (I6)

According to the interviewee, religion belongs to the private sphere of the individual's life while democracy is something else. They should therefore be kept separate but are sometimes mixed, which leads to problems.

In conclusion, it can be seen that honour is a recurring theme in the misrecognition of women in the public sphere. The concept of honour means that women's bodies do not belong to them but to the family. Women are not seen as individuals, which can be seen as a direct contrast to the principles of democracy which stress the value of each individual along with the opportunity to make their own choices. Culture and religion appear to play an important role in maintaining the values which support the subordinate position of women. The failure to recognise women as equal individuals is also apparent in politics and public institutions. Women are noticeably absent from political life and the few who are present appear to have been given their positions as a result of kinship rather than competence; these women are puppets rather than independent individuals. In terms of legislation and the administration of justice, there do appear to be laws which strengthen women's rights, even though some legislation is still lacking. The problem is compliance with the legislation. These four aspects are interwoven, since religion and culture influence legislation and politics, and vice versa, which leads to misrecognition of women as individuals who are equal to men.



More women are acquiring an education today than in the past, which leads to greater opportunities for economic independence and greater recognition of women as equal members of society. The picture shows two young women on their way to their studies from their home in Jerusalem's Old City.

4.2.2 Women in the Palestinian territories

4.2.2.1 Women recognised as equal citizens

Freedom of expression and freedom of movement

In this aspect, the focus is often on the fact that the possibility for women to express themselves freely has improved in recent years, for example in issues relating to honour. This is something which is evident in I16's reasoning:

When democracy is practised, women can raise their voices. In society you can listen to different points of view and different observations of what honour means from a female perspective rather than a male perspective. (I16)

Democracy means that women have greater opportunities to promote their questions, express themselves and make their voices heard. Women thus have a greater opportunity to influence the view of matters such as honour. Society is opening up for a wider range of interpretations and perspectives.

Education and employment

There has been an improvement in, and better opportunities, for both education and employment. The number of women who acquire an education and who are employed outside the home appears to have risen:

Things have changed. (--) We have women who go out to work, we have more women with an education. More women are willing to get out and travel both inside and outside the country. More women are becoming politically active in political parties and the political movement. (I16)

According to I16, the situation has changed as a result of more women being employed outside the home and having acquired an education. In addition, women have greater freedom of movement. They are willing and able to travel both inside and outside the country. Further, they have become more active in the political sphere. The change can be interpreted as greater opportunities for the women on many fronts, and a broader recognition of women as equal individuals. I12 describes what education means for women's opportunities:

Women must focus more on their education. As a woman who has a good university degree, you can earn a lot of money. You can be economically independent. No-one controls your life. (I12).

The quotation stresses the importance of focusing on education, since a well-educated woman can earn money. This leads to economic independence, which in turn leads to her being independent of the people around her. A woman who earns money can make her own decisions and thereby be an independent individual. Education and employment lead to greater recognition.

Politics and public institutions

Participation by women has increased in politics and public institutions, which in itself gives women greater opportunities. I16 stresses that democracy means women can now vote, which has increased their political activity:

Women's right to vote. Women were automatically guaranteed the right to vote. This is something which hasn't happened in any other Arab country, like, for example, Kuwait. (--) Women were active voters in the election for parliament. (I16).

Having the right to vote gives women the opportunity to be more active participants in society. Being given the right to vote for their representatives in parliament means they can influence politics. I interpret this as showing that the right to vote has given women the opportunity to become more active political players, which it would be reasonable to assume has increased their influence on the political landscape. This is a benefit which has resulted in women making real advancements. According to I15, there are now more women in higher positions than previously:

In Palestinian politics, we find women in the government and as heads of authorities. (I15)

The opportunities for women not only to participate in the political sphere but also to reach higher positions appear to have increased. There appear today to be women in several aspects of the political arena. It is reasonable to assume that if more women participate in the decision-making assemblies and hold higher positions, then that will have a knock-on effect, since it will mean greater attention being paid to women's issues and also the creation of new role models. Women's opportunities have increased as they have achieved greater recognition within this area.

Legislation and the administration of justice

In this aspect, it is stressed that the administration of justice has begun to take greater and broader responsibility for women's legal status. One example of improved legislation is the following change to the law regarding pregnant and married women:

A pregnant woman, a married woman. If they get married young they can study at university. In the past, married women weren't allowed to go back and study. (I14)

According to the interviewee, women now have the opportunity to begin or resume an education after marriage or pregnancy. This means more opportunities for women to make life choices at their own pace. Marriage and children no longer mean the door to higher education is closed to women.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the various lines of thought show an increased recognition of women in relation to men. The general situation appears to be better and to include more opportunities for women regarding, for example, education and employment. This leads, in turn, to greater opportunities for economic independence and, thereby, for influencing life choices. Women have greater freedom of expression, which means they can better pursue their issues. The right to vote has given them greater influence in terms of politics and public institutions. Women have also been given high-level positions in politics and public administration. The legislation has improved women's opportunities since they can continue their education even if they marry and have children.

4.2.2.2 Misrecognition of women as equal citizens

Politics and public institutions

In considering politics and the public institutions as causes of misrecognition, a number of aspects in which they hold women back emerge. I14, for example, points out that the issue of women's rights is often raised during election campaigns, but once the election has been won they lose their importance:

During the elections they say: "We will support women. We will defend them. We want to pass, create and implement new laws. We want to improve the situation for women." It's part of their propaganda. They persuade women to vote for them and after that they don't care. (I14)

The quotation shows that women's rights are used as part of the rhetoric in order to obtain women's votes in the elections, but once in power these voters' issues are ignored. Women's issues appear to be used as propaganda and are not something that it is intended will be implemented in practice. The willingness only goes as far as winning the election. Neither is the question of women's rights given priority, according to I14:

So because of the occupation they say that women's issues aren't as much of a priority as other issues. So the occupation means the discussion of women's issues is being postponed. (I14)

The occupation is used as an excuse for postponing questions of women's rights. The peace process comes first, and only thereafter can women's problems be discussed. Women's issues are thereby put on hold and do not appear to be given any importance in the current situation.

Legislation and the administration of justice

In this aspect of misrecognition, the interviewees highlight the problem of legislation and the implementation of the laws in the administration of justice. According to I5, honour is considered to be a mitigating circumstance:

If you kill someone, then according to the law you should go to prison for 15 years, but if you kill on the grounds of honour because you saw she was in a relationship, then that will be taken into consideration by law and the sentence will be reduced from 15 years to maybe one year. (I13)

The quotation shows that killing in the name of honour is considered a mitigating circumstance. I interpret this as showing that the legal status is different for men and women, since it appears to be women who are killed in the name of honour while it is men who are the perpetrators. It is almost possible to avoid punishment by referring to the concept of honour. I14 highlights the lack of clarity and implementation of the legislation:

There is no clear law. There is no implementation of the law, so it depends on the relationship, on the family, on what class he belongs to, what family he belongs to, on the relationship he has with the judge and with the president. (I14)

The quotation shows the extent to which the legal system is not independent, which results in the law not being the same for everyone. Someone who has the right political contacts or lineage can avoid punishment or receive a reduced sentence for killing a woman (if she is a close relative). The various social centres of power do not balance each other and so the notion of equality before the law is shattered. There is a further problem in that different laws apply to the different religions:

If your religion is Catholicism and you're married to a Catholic who beats you, you can't ask for a divorce because it's forbidden. (---) In Islam they have their laws and the man is the authority and he can divorce his wife any time he wants. He can have four wives. (I13)

According to I13, women from the different religions experience different problems, but what they have in common is that they suffer from not being recognised as equal to the men. Women and men appear to have different rights under family law, which is regulated by religious affiliation. Religious affiliation is what determines the rights a woman will have, and the laws are different according to gender.



The laws in the the Palestinian territories are inspired by religion but sentences are reduced for crimes committed in the name of honour. Men who have the right political contacts or lineage can avoid punishment or have their sentence reduced if they kill a woman who is a close family member. This puts women in an extremely vulnerable position.

Culture

In considering culture as a cause of misrecognition, there are a number of aspects in the extent to which this restricts women in their public life. It appears to be predominantly men who hold positions of management:

Men always have the management positions. They don't think women are capable of having management positions. (---) Men are always responsible for women and most of the time women have to ask their husbands for permission if they want to go to certain places. (I12)

Men are favoured in the appointments to senior positions because women are not considered to be suitably qualified. Women are the dependents and men are the independents who are responsible for the women. There appears to be an attitude in society that leads to women being kept in a subordinate position in which they are, for example, restricted in their freedom of movement. Women thus appear not to be recognised as equal citizens in relation to men. In addition to the view of women as subordinate, I14 maintains that the occupation has a negative effect on the situation:

I believe there's a strong link between honour-related violence and the violence that is a result of the Israeli occupation. It's increased as a result of the Israeli occupation. (I14)

The negative elements that exist in the culture are reinforced by the occupation. According to I14, honour-related violence is already a problem in the culture, but the violence has become more widespread as a result of the occupation. It would appear that the occupation reinforces existing problems. The occupation appears to have a negative effect on the possibility for women to be recognised as equal citizens.

Religion

A further aspect which risks restricting women and not giving them the opportunity for recognition in the public context is religion, which is inevitably always a complex issue. I13 believes religion should always be kept out of the legislation:

If you are a Christian, then that's your choice, but it's better to have one law for everyone. If you have problems with your husband (as things are today) he can tell Barra (the religious leader) and then take your money (--), your children. (---) If you get married, you should have a civil contract which gives you rights in the culture regardless of whether you get married in a church or a mosque. (I13)

The interviewee would like to see legislation which is the same for everyone, regardless of religious affiliation. The state and religion should be separated. It appears that in the current situation a man can turn to the religious leaders for permission to take action against the woman, including taking her children away from her. I interpret this as meaning that the woman has fewer rights than the man and that the problem is partly due to the way in which the religion is interpreted, but also to the way it is allowed to influence the public sphere. Society is thus not free from religious influences, as the interviewee would wish. According to I16, the religious presence in society has increased:

I would say that this country has become more conservative than before and more people are becoming more religious than earlier, in both directions. (---) Palestine has never been particularly religious (---). We weren't like this 50-60 years ago but this is a consequence of the awakening of the political Islamic movement in the Arab regions and in the Middle East (Christians too, as a counter reaction). (I16)

The Palestinian territories have become more religious in recent decades as a result of the Islamification movement in the region. The distinctions between the different religions appear to have become sharper.

In conclusion, it can be said that honour is a theme which is present in misrecognition of women as equal in the public sphere. The concept of honour implies that women do not own their bodies but that they belong to the family. Women are not seen as individuals; this can be seen as being in direct contrast to the principles of democracy, which emphasises the value of each individual and the opportunities to make personal choices. Culture and religion play an important role in holding fast to the values which force women into subordinate positions. This is expressed in, among other things, the legislation and administration of justice, where family laws are inspired by religion. Different laws governing such matters as divorce and polygamy apply depending on the religious affiliation of the person in question. There is neither clear legislation nor a clear implementation of the legislation. The failure to recognise women as equal individuals is also seen in politics and public institutions. Women are noticeably absent from the political life and women's issues are ignored on the grounds of the occupation. The four aspects are partially interwoven, since religion and culture influence the legislation and politics, and vice versa, which leads to misrecognition of women as equal individuals in relation to men. The subordination of women is reinforced by the occupation under which the Palestinians live. It appears to have a negative impact on the situation of women in general.

4.2.3 A comparison between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories

There appear to be relatively few differences between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. Both areas demonstrate similar patterns not only regarding the situation of women in the public context but also what is expected of them there. The civil rights and responsibilities are for the most part closely linked with men. This results in women having difficulty breaking through in the public context and thus being in a subordinate (dependent) relation to the men (independent). Women have more of a symbolic role in the form of supporting men rather than being independent citizens in relation to the state. Certain lines of thought maintain that women are recognised as equal citizens in society. This is stressed in both the notions of "freedom of expression and freedom of movement" and "education and employment" which show that it is easier for women to express themselves and to move freely. They also have greater opportunities for education and employment. The aspects of "politics and public institutions" and "legislation and administration of justice" show an increased presence in the political sphere and that legislation appears to have been strengthened in favour of women. In this aspect, there is a difference between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. In Iraqi Kurdistan, legislation has been passed which recognises women as being equal to men, and in addition, women have entered parliament under a quota system. The interviewees appear to feel fully or partially recognised in the public context. In the case of Palestine, women appear to experience greater reecognition to some extent but there is not the same support in the legislation or in the political sphere as in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Among those who claim that men and women are not equal and that there is thus misrecognition, the problem is considered to derive from the notions of politics/public institutions, legislation/administration of justice, culture and religion, and in general. The responses from both areas regarding "politics and public institutions" are similar. The politics appear to be merely paying lip service to women's rights and to be an arena in which the women are conspicuous by their absence. The responses of the interviewees regarding "legislation and administration of justice" depend on the area. In Iraqi Kurdistan, new legislation is in place which strengthens women's rights. The problem lies in the implementation of the legislation, even though it is not complete. In the Palestinian territories, there are greater deficiencies in the legislation where they do not have laws like those that have been passed in Iraqi Kurdistan. There are also problems with the implementation of the laws which have been passed. Religion plays a greater role in the legislation since family law is based on religious legislation, which favours the men.

The aspects of "culture" and "religion" show that it takes time to change attitudes towards the subordination of women but that religion has a major influence in the public context. The interviewees from both areas stress the religious radicalisation in each area and a desire for democracy and religion to be separated. Further, the religious tensions appear to be greater in the Palestinian territories than in Iraqi Kurdistan. This might be because more Christians were interviewed in the Palestinian territories or because it is not such a widespread problem in the Iraqi-Kurdish areas. Another difference between the areas is the occupation of the Palestinian territories. The occupation appears to cause problems for women's participation in the public context by reinforcing existing problems, but also through lower priority being given to women's issues, with the occupation being cited as the reason.



Religion plays a bigger role in the legislation regarding family law in the Palestinian territories than in Iraqi Kurdistan. This means the law is not equal for all, but the possibility for divorce, for example, depends on religious affiliation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The outcome of the report suggests that democratisation brings a greater recognition of women as equal to men. On the whole, women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories experience that they have had greater opportunities both in the socio-cultural context and in the public context since the beginning of democratisation. A number of main points can be summarised based on the various perceptions expressed by the interviewees in Chapter 5.

Regardless of whether they are positive or critical, the interviewees appear to agree that *democratisation* has resulted in greater opportunities to influence their role in society, due to, among other things, women being given the right to vote. Even though the political parties do not always listen to or take on board the women's demands, they are, in the end, potential voters who must be taken seriously. The changes in legislation which have been implemented in both areas can be seen as a concession to the pressure brought by women. No-one is safe in their post as long as there are regular elections, and a hand must be extended to the different groups of voters. The right to vote and greater opportunities to participate in the public sphere appear to have given women greater self-confidence to begin taking an active part, and voicing their demands, in the public sphere. The women have begun to stress their rights and to speak up in the political debate. There are obstacles to be overcome but they see the potential of the democratic tools and are using them to gain ground.

Identities have begun to change in conjunction with democratisation. Women have been given better opportunities to acquire education and employment, which in turn gives them better opportunities for economic independence in relation to the family, and they have greater freedom to act independently in society. Having a job, or studying, means having to leave the home for part of the day, which in turn means greater freedom of movement for the women. The view that a woman's identity and value are based on her sexuality, and must be controlled by the family, has begun to change as they have also become the breadwinners. The person who brings money into the family has a stronger bargaining position. Women are going from being dependent and being reduced to (and controlled according to) their reproductive capability, to becoming independent and having more than just a reproductive function. The dichotomies regarding what is male (independent) and female (dependent) are being challenged and new identities are being formed. The first steps in this direction have been taken even though there is still some way to go. The process of going from dependence to independence is more difficult in the socio-cultural context than in the public context. Women are still strongly perceived in both contexts as having less value, but the more women play an active role the more these positions and definitions will be renegotiated.

One of the obstacles to recognition is *honour*. The concept of honour is strongly linked to the control of women's sexuality, which places a value on both the woman and the family according to whether her behaviour complies or conflicts with the norm of honour. This is something which affects women's behaviour both in the socio-cultural context and in the public context, since crimes against the codes of honour can lead to both physical and psychological punishment and, in the worst case, death. Honour is a key concept and places the emphasis on women as a collective identity where they belong to the men and the family (the clan), unlike the democratic tradition in which the independent individual's own value is in the centre. The problem of honour is the antithesis of democratic values. Democratisation has led to a slight shift in the concept of honour, and given greater attention to the values which are based on the individual's independence and human rights. A shift in the balance of power has begun, in which the control of women's bodies has had to take a step backwards. Women's increased freedom of movement is an example of this. It is, however, a trend and an ongoing process, rather than an accomplished fact.

Religion is another obstacle which influences the socio-cultural context and the public context, both through informal rules and decrees, and also through the religious-based legislation which exists in varying degrees in both areas. It is not religion itself which is a cause for concern but the way in which it is interpreted and those who interpret it, that is to say the religious leaders, regardless of religious affiliation. There is a feeling that religion is laying a strong claim to power and that its representatives often apply interpretations which disadvantage women. It is stressed what is wanted is a state free from religious influences and a secular legislation where everyone is equal before the law regardless of religious affiliation or gender. Religion should be kept separate from democracy and should be a private matter. The role of religion presents difficulties but it appears to have greater potential to adapt to the times than the concept of honour, since it has a greater scope for interpretation. It is easier to interpret religion in relation to the times than it is to interpret honour.

The *family* appears to be either an obstacle or an opportunity depending on the specific family in question. There are indications of tendencies towards a clan mentality in society in which family relations and the family's status determine the legal justice received in the courts. Relations between families, but also their relations with those in power, appear to be one of the hubs in both the socio-cultural and the public contexts. The problem with this is that one of the basic principles of democracy, that everyone is equal before the law, is in danger of being undermined as a result of nepotism. There is thus a risk that women will have quite different opportunities depending on the ideas and tastes of the family.

The differences between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories which have become apparent are relatively minor, despite both areas having quite different experiences and backgrounds. The differences are found mainly in the public context. Iraqi Kurdistan has strengthened the position of women in the legislation and introduced a quota system to ensure that women enter parliament. The Palestinian women have not been given the same support in either the legislation or in politics. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. Iraqi Kurdistan is ruled by two democratic parties, KDP and PUK, and the religious parties are relatively small, with only a few seats in parliament. The area has also taken several steps towards secularisation (UI, Iraq/Kurdistan 2013). In the Palestinian territories things have moved in the opposite direction. The religious party, Hamas, has gained ground at the expense of the socialist Fatah. The political situation is difficult as it is at times paralysed by the conflicts between the two parties. The occupation is also a recurring element which has an effect on the political landscape in the Palestinian territories (UI Palestinska självstyret 2013). The legislation is inspired by religion to a greater extent in the Palestinian territories. The relationship between the state and religion in these two areas is different. It appears that stability, regular elections and the absence of large religious parties increase women's opportunities for recognition in the public sphere. The attempts to empower women in the public sphere may have rubbed off on the socio-cultural sphere, since the Iraqi women have a greater feeling of recognition than the Palestinian women. It might also be the other way round; that the democratisation has led to women having more self-confidence to participate in the public sphere.

The results support *previous research*, in the form of Sideris' study, showing that recognition is more difficult in a socio-cultural context than in a public context (Sideris 2007:248ff). Recognition should be viewed from more than one sphere in order to make an analytical clarification of the opportunities, or lack of opportunities, experienced by women. The division is clearly necessary since the two spheres are different. Fraser's status model appears to be an important component for understanding recognition since the model highlights the marginalisation and exclusion of women from public life as well as the violence and harassment of women in the home and in all aspects of daily life (Fraser 2003:190f). Women suffer from status subordination in all spheres of society, a fact confirmed by the interviewees when they say they do not have the same opportunities or status as men in either sphere. The interviewees who claim to have the same opportunities say they have the same status as men; that women can do everything men can do. The result of this report thereby supports both the previous study by Sideris and Fraser's status model, as well as the general gender research on women's role as citizens and members of society.



Women in the Middle East are working actively to achieve recognition as equal members in all aspects of society. Over the years, for example, several conferences have been organised which have gathered women from all around the world to discuss how women's rights and living conditions in the Middle East can be improved. The picture is taken from the "Women and the 21 Century – Feminist Alternatives" conference which was arranged by, among others, the European Feminist Initiative Network (IFE-EFI) and the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), in Cairo in December 2010.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The socio-cultural context

This report has only been concerned with a holistic view and each aspect could be the subject of further study. There are, however, a number of points which should be highlighted for investigation in future research and also suggestions for how gender equality can be strengthened and improved in the context of the Middle East:

Security

According to Sideris' South African study, increased recognition of women in the public sphere has triggered an identity crisis for men in the private sphere, which has resulted in a rise in violence against women (Sideris 2007:248ff). It would be of interest to investigate whether this has also been the case in Iraqi Kurdistan or the Palestinian territories in respect of honour-related violence. Has this type of violence become more or less common since the beginning of the democratisation process? The security perspective was something which Maria Hagberg and I investigated in the reports we wrote for Kvinnor för Fred in 2010. In our reports on risks and safety in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories we found that women have a particularly vulnerable role in societies where the social safety net consists primarily of the family. A woman who behaves in a way which defies the wishes of the family risks being totally outcast since the state safety net is all but non-existent. There are women's organisations which work actively to try to help and support vulnerable women but the majority of their work is undertaken on a voluntary basis. In addition, these organisations often have limited financial resources (Hagberg & Jonegård, January 2010; Hagberg & Jonegård, February 2010).

The issue of women's security in relation to the democratisation process and shifts in the gender roles should therefore be studied further in these two areas. In addition, the organisations which work with violence against women from a preventive perspective, an emergency perspective and a follow-up perspective, should receive economic support from both international and national sources. They must be given better opportunities to offer not just psychologists but also employment and living accommodation to vulnerable women in acute situations of violence. There are few places where women can live when they leave a women's shelter. There is a risk that women who live under a severe threat will either go underground or end up in prostitution (*ibid*). Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories are small, delineated areas, which means it is easy to find someone who has fled a violent situation, and the risk of being killed is ever present. Women who cannot remain in either of these areas as a result of honour-related violence should be granted asylum in other countries; in other words, an ever present risk of honour-related violence must be regarded as a strong case for asylum.



The male role must be changed at an early stage. It is essential to work with young boys even before they start school, in order to change the male role, which often has elements of violence, in the long term. Young girls must also learn not to accept a male role which is associated with violence.

The male role

In times of uncertainty, which democratisation can cause in its search for identity, there is a risk that the politics of identity will grow in strength. There is a desire to return to a long-lasting past which often means a subordination of women. (Kaldor 2002:90ff; Yuval-Davis 1997). The male role must be redefined from one of controlling women to respecting women. The extent to which democratisation can offer new male roles, and what they will be, is of interest. In this case, too, research and evaluation are needed, as is financial support from international and national sources for those organisations which work today to change negative, violent, male roles. One of the interviewees declared that where women suffer, so do the men. Society, women, men – none of them has anything to gain from a male role which is violent.

Honour

In a culture of honour, it is often men who carry out the punishment for the “crime” against codes of honour, while women play an important role in contributing to the control and maintaining the structures (Yuval-Davis 1997:37f; AbelGani 2007:28f). The Swedish National Youth Board’s report “Can I marry who I choose?” (Swedish National Youth Board 2009,) shows that boys living in a culture of honour, in a Swedish context, are forced into taking the role of policing their sisters but are themselves limited in their choice of partner. They become both perpetrators and victims. It is important to study the role of men and the role of women in a culture of honour in order to change them. The organisations which work actively to change them need to be supported in their work, but their experiences should also be taken into account in expert exchanges between different countries, since the problem of honour also exists in countries to which many people from the affected areas have fled. Some, although far from all, take their view of honour to the new country to which they have fled or moved. That is why expert exchanges are important; they are the best way to gain the knowledge and tools necessary to deal with the problem of honour that exists in different countries.

The public context

In this context there are other gaps which have appeared during the course of the study and which need to be filled. There are a number of points which should be highlighted for future research, as well as suggestions for ways in which gender equality can be strengthened and improved in the Middle East context:

The women’s movement

Georgina Waylen’s studies of democratisation processes in Eastern Europe and Latin America show the importance of women’s activism, since alliances between activists within and outside the government and state led to the best results for women’s rights (Waylen 2007). It would be interesting to study the role played by the women’s movement as a pressure group in strengthening women’s rights in respect of legislation and politics in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories. The lessons which can be learned are important for the creation of effective and meaningful strategies for the women’s movements in countries in the Middle East which are attempting to begin democratisation processes. An evaluation of what worked and what was less successful has great significance for how the Arab Spring should be built on from a gender equality perspective. In addition, the contributions made by women to the democratisation process have a tendency to disappear when the history of the new state is written, since the writing process often means that the role and participation of women is reduced. It is of central importance that the contributions made by the women’s movement are included in the documented history of the democratisation process and that the women are given the role in that history to which they are entitled. The women’s movement must be given both international and national support in their work for women’s rights. This is essential for the creation of equal and stable democracies.



One of the women who has inspired generations of women activists in the Middle East is the Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi, who has worked to put an end to female genital mutilation and to give women the right to control their own reproductive health. Here El Saadawi is taking part in a debate during a women's conference in Cairo in December 2010 which was dedicated to her.

Economy

This is something which has only been touched upon in the report but which plays an important role. According to Fraser, recognition is not possible without redistribution, and redistribution is not possible without recognition (Fraser 2003:232ff). A woman who is economically independent has greater opportunities to act in an independent manner towards the family and society, which ultimately creates better conditions for recognition. How these economic conditions are created is

a central question, as is the link between redistribution and recognition. According to the UN Women's report *In Pursuit of Justice, Progress of the World's Women 2011-2012*, only 14 per cent of the women who make up the workforce¹⁵ are active on the labour market in Iraq compared with 69 per cent of the men who make up the workforce. In the Palestinian territories, the figure for the number of women who are active on the labour market is 17 per cent compared with 68 per cent of the men (UN Women 2012:130). The majority of the women who make up the workforce in both areas are outside the labour market and are dependent on the income of others (usually men). The end result, when the full potential of a large section of the population in employment is not being realised, is that the economic conditions for the countries as a whole will be weakened. This also means that the possibilities for recognition of women as equal and independent individuals are reduced.



A needlework course at a school in Amez in Halabja led to the women starting their own businesses and making, among other things, school-leaving outfits. This is an example of how women have been given the opportunity for economic empowerment, which can lead to a stronger position in society in the future.

According to *The World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, published by the World Bank, gender equality is smart economics. Gender equality can strengthen productivity, improve the development result for future generations and make institutions more representative. The report emphasises the importance of reducing the number of early deaths (often related to pregnancy) among women and of promoting education for women and girls, improving women's economic opportunities, increasing women's opportunities to be heard and respected in both the private sphere and society, and curtailing the transfer of gender inequality across generations (World Bank 2012). Gender inequality in the long term also leads to a weaker economy while gender equality contributes to a strong economy. The systematic discrimination of women has grave social, economic and development consequences for society as a whole. It is therefore vital to create employment opportunities for women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories (Palestine), to support their opportunities and capabilities to operate their own businesses, to encourage them to enter the labour market and to provide women with the financial services they need in the formal and informal sectors (UN Women 2013)¹⁶. A country in which everyone has equal opportunities and which makes use of its entire workforce is in a much stronger position to achieve economic success.

¹⁵ Individuals who are considered to be covered by the term workforce are those who are of working age and making an active effort to participate in the labour market either by working or by seeking employment. This is estimated by calculating the number of people who comprise the workforce as a percentage of the working population. The workforce is a sum of the number of people who are in work and the number out of work (UN Women 2012:131).

¹⁶ One example of an organisation which supports women in their efforts to become economically independent is the Amez organisation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Kvinnor för Fred has supported this organisation for many years with funding from Forum Syd. Amez' activities consist of arranging courses for women in subjects such as needlework, English and IT. The underlying idea is to give women the opportunity to further educate themselves and then to enter the labour market. Some of the women who took part in a needlework course later formed their own company and now make special outfits for students who leave upper secondary school (at the foreign schools) in Iraqi Kurdistan (Hagberg & Jonegård 2010). This is one example of how simple activities contribute to women's economic independence.

Legislation and politics

It is important to evaluate the institutional work in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories in order to learn which strategies have been successful and which have not in strengthening women's protection of the law and in encouraging more women into politics. It should be pointed out that much remains to be done regarding legislation in both areas, particular in relation to family law, which is often inspired by religion. The legislation should be made secular, with all individuals equal before the law regardless of gender, or religious or ethnic affiliation. Today, legal protection against violence against women in the home and rape within marriage is essentially non-existent in both areas (UN Women 2012:138,142). The state of Iraq¹⁷ may have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but it has registered reservations against all or parts of a number of articles. It has registered a reservation against Article¹⁸ 16, which states that men and women shall have equal rights to enter into marriage of their own free will, equal rights and responsibilities within the marriage and in the event of divorce, that women and men have equal rights in decisions regarding family planning, ownership and the administration of property. Iraq has further registered a reservation against parts of Article 2, the obligation to eliminate discrimination of women, and sections of Article 9, that women shall be given the same civil rights (United Nations Treaty Collections; CEDAW). Palestine, which is an observer state in the UN, has not ratified CEDAW (*ibid*). If women are to be able to become equal citizens, all reservations in respect of the ratification of CEDAW should be removed in the case of Iraq, while Palestine should unreservedly ratify CEDAW. Further, CEDAW must be directly applicable in law in order to guarantee women's rights. The international community plays a central influential role in putting pressure on each area to make CEDAW law, and also in supporting the women's organisations which work actively towards more women participating in politics. Women must be given the opportunity to have their rights legally strengthened but must also have the opportunity to participate in public life where the political decisions are taken. Resolution 1325¹⁹, as adopted by the UN Security Council, plays an important role in this work. Among other things, the resolution encourages member states to ensure an increase in the number of women participating at all levels of decision making in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts (Operation 1325). This is a key factor in two areas which have been, and still are, characterised by conflict. Moreover, aid must be conditional and only given to organisations/government agencies in which at least 40 per cent of the leading positions are held by women. The glass ceiling must be shattered. Women must be given half the power and all the salary.

Finally, I would like to add something which one of the interviewees said before I turned off the tape recorder: *the women are suffering but they are strong, and fighting for what they believe in, to reclaim their rights. I hope that will happen soon.* The women I have interviewed are true fighters. They have the most amazing knowledge but they need support from the outside world in the form of international pressure to strengthen women's rights. It is important to share knowledge between different women's organisations and women all over the world. Women have so much to teach and give each other, which is why international exchanges on equal and respectful terms are essential, a corner stone of all forms of solidarity. To take one example, the women in the Middle East have a much better understanding of the problem of honour than we who live in a Swedish environment, so we can learn so much from each other. It is important to allow these women to define their world themselves – not to buy or accept the version others (often men) have defined for them.

¹⁷ It should be pointed out that Iraqi Kurdistan has moved much further in its efforts towards strengthening women's rights than the rest of Iraq. In recent years, killing in the name of honour has been equated with murder (Amnesty 2003:1f). Major obstacles still remain, however, and it is essential that CEDAW becomes directly effective in the region.

¹⁸ The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women can be found in full in Appendix 4

²⁰ The Resolution can be found in full on Operation 1325's website: <http://operation1325.se/en>

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APPENDIX

1. COUNTRY INFORMATION

1.1 Iraqi Kurdistan²⁰

Iraqi Kurdistan is situated in northern Iraq and consists of three provinces: Duhok, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. It has a total land area of approximately 50,000 sq. kms and a population of at least four million. There are also Kurds living in neighbouring provinces, including Niveva (capital Mosul) but many fled or were driven out during the recurring wars and uprisings of the 20th century. The Kurds have been fighting for their independence for a long time and since 1932, when Iraq became an independent state, have striven unceasingly for autonomy within Iraq's borders even though the ultimate goal has been a separate state. The Kurds' separatism was met with violence by Baghdad and hundreds of thousands of Kurds lost their lives during countless uprisings. During the 1970s, a "politics of Arabisation" was begun by the neighbouring oil-rich provinces such as Kirkuk (Ta'mim). Under this policy, Kurds were forced to register as Arabs in order to receive basic economic and social rights. If they chose not to do so they were forced into exile. The Kurds' armed struggle was recommenced during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, when parts of the movement allied themselves with Iran. Baghdad responded with violent counter-attacks and massacres of the civilian population. Several thousand villages were destroyed in the government's offensives and it is estimated that 182,000 Kurds were killed in 1988. The most notorious attack was the massacre in Halabja. The Kurdish population lives in a clan society and has been deeply divided, which has led to many Kurds being forced to flee both within and outside the country as a result of internal fighting.



In March 1988, around 5,500 people were killed by war gas in the Kurdish town of Halabja as part of the Saddam regime's efforts to crush the Kurdish armed struggle for independence. The picture shows the memorial raised to commemorate the dead, which includes a museum dedicated to the attack.

Since the 1991 uprising Kurdistan has, in practice, had a certain degree of autonomy, since it has had security guarantees from the UN and the protection of NATO aircraft, which has resulted in the Ba'athist regime withdrawing its military and civil administrations. The two major parties in Iraqi Kurdistan consider themselves to be social democratic, but the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) is more conservative than the left-leaning Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). To start with, these parties jointly administered the Kurdish autonomous area after the 1992 election. The first years in an autonomous Kurdistan were difficult, due in part to Iraqi troops entering the area on a number of occasions to arrest Kurds and members of other minorities, and to the economic problems resulting from UN sanctions. In 1994, this led to civil war between the two biggest parties, a war which dominated the region for many years. The two sides agreed to a cease-fire and Kurdistan was, in effect, divided into an eastern PUK region, whose capital was Sulaymaniyah, while KDP in the west was based in Erbil. In 2002, when the US was preparing to go to war against Saddam Hussein's regime, the Kurdish region was seen as a natural base for the US military, furthered by the fact that KDP and PUK had military forces comprising up to 50,000 peshmerga in place as support. Since the American invasion in 2003, Kurdistan has maintained a strong autonomous position in relation to the central government in Baghdad, and has its own regional parliament and government. Today Iraqi Kurdistan is numbered among the more peaceful parts of Iraq and its politics are no longer characterised by internal conflict.

In the new Iraq, the Kurds have been working for the Iraqi state to become a federation with a weak central control, and elections to the regional parliament and provincial councils were held at the beginning of 2005, at the same time as the first general elections were held after the fall of Saddam. In the same year, Massoud Barzani was elected president of the region and Jalal Talabani was appointed president of Iraq. The work to unite the parallel administrations which ruled a divided Kurdistan did not produce a result until the beginning of 2006, when KDP and PUK agreed to form a joint regional government. There is long-standing disagreement over where the border between Kurdistan and Iraq should be drawn in the oil-rich area in the north. The dispute relates primarily to the province of Kirkuk, where the population is mixed. In the 2009 elections to the regional parliament in Iraqi Kurdistan, the old KDP and PUK parties retained power thanks to their joint list, which received 57 per cent of the votes, giving 59 seats in parliament, but lost ground as a result of a new reformist opposition movement, Change (Gorran). The new opposition movement, which is led by a young businessman, took 23 per cent of the votes and 25 seats. The left-wing Islamic party, the Service and Reform List, took 13 seats while 14 seats were allocated to Christian, Islamic, communist, Armenian and Turkmenian parties. Massoud Barzani was re-elected as

²⁰ This is a summary of Kurdistan's history from the Swedish Institute of International Affairs Country guide <http://www.landguiden.se.ezproxy.ub.gu.se/Lander/Asien/Irak/Kurdistan> 2013-11-16 samt <http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2013/10/state7369.htm> 2013-11-16, <http://rudaw.net/sorani/kurdistan/2809201326> 2013-11-16.

the region's president with almost 70 per cent of the votes and Barham Ahmad Salih became the region's prime minister. Barzani's mandate was due to expire in the summer of 2013 but at the beginning of the summer, parliament voted to give him a two-year extension. His party, KDP, claimed this was made possible by uncertainties in the legislation while the opposition maintained that the decision was illegal and that democracy in Iraqi Kurdistan had been ignored. The preliminary election results for the regional elections in the autumn of 2013 showed a clear victory for the ruling KDP, who had chosen not to run with PUK. KDP made gains, receiving 38 per cent of the votes and 38 seats while PUK suffered losses, taking 18 per cent of the votes and 18 seats, and losing 11 seats. Gorran lost one seat and picked up 24 seats/24 per cent of the votes while the Islamic parties advanced and gained six seats. Eleven seats were allocated among Armenian, Christian and Turkmenian lists.

1.2 The Palestinian territories²¹

The current Palestinian and Israeli areas were included in the British Mandate for Palestine, which in 1917 was taken by the British from the Ottoman Turks. In the same year, in the Balfour Declaration, Great Britain promised to assist the Zionist movement in establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. The Declaration aroused strong reactions among the Palestinian Arabs. In 1922 Palestine became a British Mandate area under the League of Nations, and Jewish immigration continued, increasing rapidly at the time of the persecutions of the Jews in Hitler's Germany in the 1930s. This led to growing tension between Jews and Arabs and, in time, two economies were established in Palestine: a Jewish and an Arab. In 1947, Great Britain handed the question of Palestine over to the United Nations²², whose General Assembly adopted a resolution (No. 181) declaring that Palestine would be divided into a Jewish and an Arab state. The Jewish state would consist of 55 per cent of the land in Palestine and the Arab state of 45 per cent, with Jerusalem being placed under UN administration. The Jews accepted the proposal but the Palestinians and the Arab states did not, proposing instead a "unitary democratic state".

When the Jewish state of Israel was established in 1948, the first of several wars broke out between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states. The first war ended in 1949, when Israel occupied 77 per cent of the former Palestinian mandate and 750,000 Palestinians fled or were driven out of the Israeli area to surrounding Arab countries. This came to be known as al-nakba – the Catastrophe. After the 1948-1949 war, the Palestinian territories, in the form of Gaza and the West Bank came under the control of Egypt and Jordan respectively. Until the Six-Day War in 1967, the West Bank was a part of Jordan, but it was later formally placed under Jordanian rule until 1988 when Jordan renounced all claims to it.

The Six-Day War between Israel and its neighbours broke out in 1967 and ended with Israel taking Gaza and Sinai from Egypt. The West Bank and eastern Jerusalem were seized from Jordan. These areas were placed under Israeli military rule. In the same year, the UN adopted Resolution 242 which demands, among other things, withdrawal from all occupied areas. As a consequence of the Six-Day War, the Palestinian guerilla movement PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) spear-headed by al-Fatah and led by Yassir Arafat, took over. The movement's goal was to eliminate the Jewish state and thereby prepare the way for Palestinian refugees seeking to return home.

In October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched an unexpected attack against Israel, who managed to call off the war. In 1974, the Arab states recognised PLO as the sole legal representative for the Palestinian people. Victory for the right-wing block's Likud party led to the establishment of new settlements on occupied land. In 1978, the first Camp David agreement was signed to create a framework for peace, resulting in, among other things, a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt under which Sinai was handed back to the latter. Israel controlled large land areas on the West Bank through its policy of settlements. This led to a mounting frustration on the part of the Palestinians, and a Palestinian uprising, the first Intifada, was initiated in 1987. Israel responded with collective punishments such as deportations, the blowing-up of buildings and curfews. Israel no longer allowed the Palestinians to move freely between Gaza and the West Bank.

Under the Oslo Accords in 1993, an agreement was signed which in principle gave limited Palestinian self-government on the West Bank and Gaza in the wait for the establishment of a Palestinian state. For the first time, Israel recognised the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and the PLO officially recognised Israel's right to exist within secure borders. The PLO leader, Yassir Arafat, set up a national Palestinian Authority with its own police force. Opponents on both sides attempted to sabotage the peace process through suicide bombings and massacres, but despite this, the peace process moved forward until the Israeli Prime Minister, Rabin, was shot dead in 1995 by a religious-nationalist Jew. The following year, the right won the election in Israel and the settlements continued to expand. The 1999 elections were won by the Labour Party and Ehud Barak. New peace talks took place in 1999 at Camp David with Barak, Arafat and the US President, Bill Clinton, but the negotiations came to nothing. Barak lost the election in 2000, which was won by the leader of the right-wing party (Likud), Ariel Sharon, who earlier the same year had triggered the second Intifada by visiting the Temple

²¹ This is a summary of the Palestinian autonomy taken from the Swedish Institute of Foreign Affairs' country guide <http://www.land-guiden.se.ezproxy.lib.gu.se/Lander/Asien/PalestinskaSjlvstyret/Aktuell-Politik> 2013-11-16

²² The United Nations, the international organisation for peace and security, with its headquarters in New York, USA. The UN was established at the end of World War II and replaced the League of Nations. The objectives of the UN are to maintain peace and security, promote international cooperation and economic and social development, and to work for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The UN constitution came into force on 24 October 1945 (Source: Nationalencyklopedin www.ne.se).

Mount in Jerusalem. After Sharon's election victory in Israel, major military attacks against the Palestinian territories took place in 2002 as a consequence of a series of Palestinian suicide attacks. Israel occupied the West Bank and demanded that Arafat denounce terrorism.

Several fruitless attempts at peace were made including "The Roadmap for peace" in which Sharon and the newly-elected Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas took part. The suicide bombings continued from the Palestinian side through two Palestinian-Islamic movements, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which led to Israel commencing the building of a "security barrier" against the West Bank. Most of the barrier was built on Palestinian land. The Jewish settlements on Palestinian land continued to expand. The Palestinian powers were facing problems of corruption, lawlessness and anarchy. President Yassir Arafat died in 2004 and Mahmoud Abbas assumed leadership of the PLO. Abbas won the autonomy's presidential election in January 2005. Hamas and Islamic Jihad did not participate.

In August and September 2005, Israel evacuated Gaza and over 8,000 Jewish settlers were moved out. In the beginning of 2006, tensions in Israeli-Palestinian relations rose when the Islamic resistance movement Hamas defeated the ruling al-Fatah. The Palestinians were dissatisfied with the corruption within al-Fatah and their inability to maintain law and order. After Israel withdrew from Gaza the situation became even more complicated in June 2007, when Hamas revolted against Fatah/PLO and took control over Gaza. The political conflict led to a weakened government, in addition to which one third of the members of parliament, Hamas' members on the West Bank, were in Israeli prisons. Missiles were fired from Gaza into Israel and Israeli ground forces were sent into Gaza in 2008. Israel withdrew and in the same year a six-month cease-fire between Israel and Hamas came into effect in Gaza. The firing of missiles from Gaza, which had never completely ceased, increased towards the end of the cease-fire. Israel again increased the blockade but released around 200 Palestinian prisoners.

On 27 December 2008, Israel launched massive bomb attacks against Hamas targets in Gaza. The aim was reported to be to bring an end to the firing of missiles against Israel and to force Hamas into a new, better cease-fire. Israel immediately declared the area closest to Gaza "a closed military zone". Certain relief consignments were allowed in, but no journalists. The UN's headquarters in Gaza were set on fire by Israeli missiles. Israel declared a unilateral cease-fire in January after the rest of the world promised to counteract the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. By this time, over 1,300 Palestinians, of whom at least 700 were civilians, had been killed and tens of thousands were homeless. The material damage was immense. On the Israeli side, 13 people had been killed in connection with the war. In the election after the conflict in Gaza, the right-wing Likud formed the government and Benjamin Netanyahu became the Prime Minister of Israel in March 2009.

The internal political conflicts between Fatah and Hams continued and negotiations between them failed. In May 2009, Salam Fayyad formed a new Fatah-dominated government in Ramallah, which Hamas condemned as illegal. In October,



The wall which surrounds the West Bank forms part of the "security barrier" which Israel started to build in response to the Palestinian suicide bombings. The barrier is controlled by the Israeli military and is built for the most part on Palestinian land.

Abbas announced presidential and parliamentary elections would be held in January 2010, but the announcement was pronounced illegal by Hamas. The elections never took place. In December of the same year, the PLO extended the mandates of both President Abbas and the parliament "until new elections are held", a decision condemned by Hamas. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem claimed in July 2010 that 42 per cent of the land on the West Bank was controlled by Jewish settlers and their organisations, even though only one per cent of the land was occupied by settlers. In the middle of March 2011, Israel carried out powerful bombing attacks on Gaza after extensive shelling attacks against southern Israel from Gaza. In April, Hamas declared a unilateral cease-fire after negotiations with militant groups.

At the beginning of November, the Palestinians were granted full membership of the cultural organisation UNESCO; this was a historic event as it was the first time the Palestinians had been recognised as members of a UN organisation. At the beginning of 2012, it was reported that Hamas and Fatah had agreed that Mahmoud Abbas would head a joint transition government and thereby take charge of the preparations for the planned elections, although these were postponed indefinitely. In May, a new government took office on the West Bank, with Salam Fayyad remaining as prime minister. The decision by President Abbas and Fatah to form a new government was criticised by Hamas. The dissatisfaction with Fatah and Abbas was reflected in the local elections which were held on the West Bank in October and were the first Palestinian elections for six years. As a result of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah, no elections were held in Gaza and Hamas did not stand for election with any candidates on the West Bank. Fatah received a total of 440 of the 1,051 municipal seats. Fatah defectors defeated Fatah in four of the eleven larger cities, including Ramallah, Jenin and Nablus. In Bethlehem, the independent candidates and left-wing politicians took most of the seats and the turnout was lower than expected, at 55 per cent. One possible explanation for this was that Hamas supporters stayed at home. Hamas continued to fire missiles at Israeli areas on several occasions and the Israelis responded with counter attacks. In November, the UN General Assembly decided, at Abbas' request, to upgrade the status of the Palestinian Authority from observer to non-member observer state. At the beginning of 2012 Abbas issued a decree under which the Palestinian Authority officially changed its name to the State of Palestine. Palestine was punished by Israel, who for several months retained the revenues which Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.

During both 2012 and 2013, several initiatives for peace between Fatah and Hamas have been taken. Some of these initiatives have been successful while others have failed. Internal tensions between political groups continue to dominate the political climate. In addition, during this period missiles have been fired from Gaza into Israel, who has countered with air raids. At the beginning of April 2013, the prime minister, Salam Fayyad, resigned as a result of a long-drawn conflict with President Abbas. Fayyad was succeeded in June by Rami Hamdallah, who was asked by President Abbas to remain as leader for a transition ministry until a new head of government could be appointed. At the end of September, Israel lifted some of the restrictions on the West Bank and Gaza, making it easier for Palestinians to work in Israel, and also easier to import construction materials into Gaza.

A number of attempts at peace between Israel and the Palestinian Authority have been initiated but broken down. In November 2013, the Palestinian delegates left the ongoing peace negotiations in protest at Israel's continued building of new homes in the Jewish settlements on occupied land. The Israeli peace movement Peace Now reported that the building of new homes in Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian land had increased "drastically" in the first half of 2013. Over 1,700 new homes were under construction compared with 995 during the same period in 2012. The Gaza Strip is currently so heavily restricted and guarded by Israel that it is difficult to even talk about a democratisation process; it is in effect a state of war.

A part of this identification process which has followed in the wake of democratisation has meant that religious powers which have been held at bay (Yassir Arafat's PLO placed the emphasis on national rather than religious liberation) have come to play a growing role in the elections held recently in the Palestinian territories, 2006. In the Palestinian elections, the Islamic party, Hamas, lost ground after the election in 2012, largely because the election only took place on the West Bank and not on the Gaza Strip as a result of the conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. Hamas also boycotted the election.



The security barrier which surrounds the West Bank makes it more difficult for the Palestinians to cross into Israel. It can take several hours for Palestinians to travel from Ramallah to Jerusalem as they have to form a queue and pass through security controls.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Women engaged in women's issues																		
Iraqi-Kurd									Palestinian									
Higher education				Not higher education					Higher education				Not higher education					
M	C	O	M	C	O	M	C	O	M	C	O	M	C	O	M	C	O	
-30	30-	-30	30-	-30	30-	-30	30-	-30	-30	30-	-30	-30	30-	-30	30-	-30	30-	
1	3		1		2		2			1		2	3	2			1	
Total number: 10									Total number: 8									

M =Muslim, C =Christian, O= other/other religion

-30= aged under 30, 30- =aged over 30

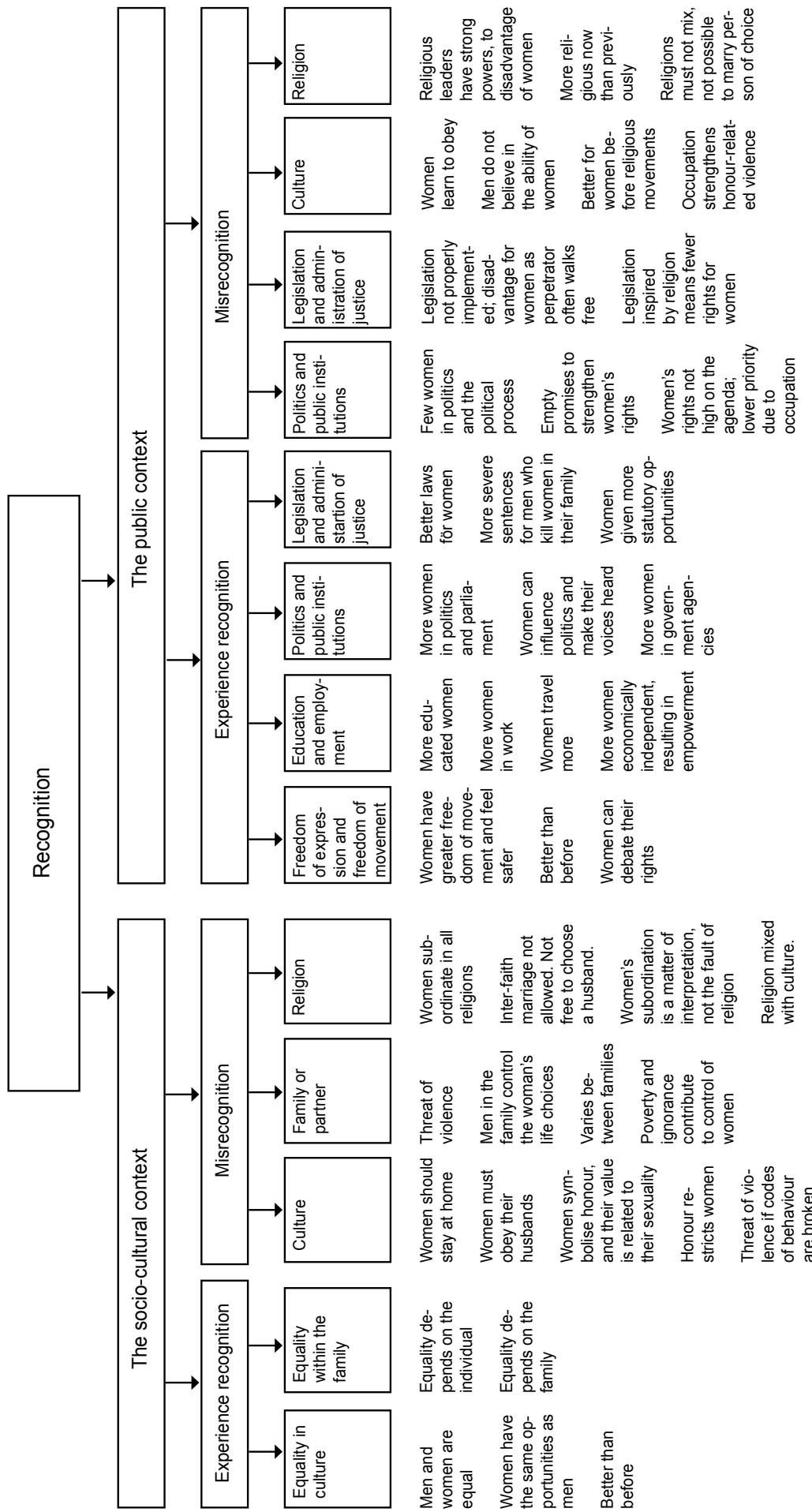
Comments:

Religion has been classified as follows: Muslim (including both Sunni and Shia), Christian (including the Orthodox Church, Catholic Church and Lutheran Church) and other (including atheists and Yazidi).

Education has been classified as follows: higher education (college) means graduation from a university or college. The degree can be a bachelor's or master's.

Age has been classified as follows: those under 30 and those over 30. The reason is that the democratisation processes began during the 1990s, which means those who are under 30 have grown up during the processes while those over 30 were adults when the democratisation processes began.

3. MAPPING TREE



4. THE UN CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)²³

In 1979, the UN adopted a convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Sweden was the first of 95 countries to ratify the convention, under which all countries guarantee women the same rights as men, including the right not to be assaulted, raped or harassed with impunity. CEDAW is a blueprint to promote women's rights to education, citizenship, their own bodies and their health..

Article 1: Definition of discrimination

The article defines discrimination against women as each distinction, exception or restriction on the basis of gender the consequence or purpose of which is to limit or thwart the recognition, enjoyment or exercising of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 2: Duty to eliminate discrimination of women

Countries which have signed up to the Convention must eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and adopt appropriate measures to promote gender equality. The principle of gender equality shall be introduced into the national legal framework.

Article 3: Equality

Countries shall take all necessary measures in all areas to ensure the full development and advancement of women. Women and men shall have the same opportunities to have and to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Article 4: Temporary special measures

Countries may implement temporary special measures such as quotas and positive discrimination to accelerate women's equality until such time as equal opportunities and equal justice have been achieved.

Article 5: Prejudice

Countries shall agree to eliminate prejudices and practices based on assumptions about the inferiority or superiority of either sex. Family education shall recognise that women and men have joint responsibility for parenting.

Article 6: Prostitution and trafficking

Countries shall agree to take all necessary measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of trafficking in women and exploitation of female prostitution.

Article 7: Political and public life

Women have an equal right to participate in the country's political system and civil society, which includes the right to vote and to be eligible for election to public office.

Article 8: International work

Women have the right to represent their governments at the international level without discrimination and to participate in the work of international organisations.

Article 9: Citizenship

Women have equal rights with men to acquire, change, or retain their citizenship and that of their children.

Article 10: Education

Women have equal rights with men in education, including access to equal education and to scholarships and grants. Curricula and educational materials shall not include stereotyped gender roles. stelnade könsroller.

²³ This summary of CEDAW is taken from the UN Women National Committee Sweden website. UN Women works globally for gender equality and women's human rights. For more information see www.unwomen.org

Article 11: Employment

Women shall have equal rights in employment, in particular regarding recruitment, salary setting, conditions of service, benefits and occupational safety. The discrimination of women on the grounds of marital status, pregnancy or maternity is forbidden. Countries shall also promote childcare to make it possible for parents to combine family life with professional duties.

Article 12: Health care

Countries shall ensure that women and men have equal rights to health care services, including family planning. Countries shall also guarantee women appropriate care during pregnancy, labour and nursing.

Article 13: Social and economic life

Women shall have equal rights with men in the social and economic life. This applies in particular to family benefits, bank loans and other forms of financial credit, and participation in all forms of recreational, sporting and cultural activities.

Article 14: Rural women

Countries shall take every step to ensure that the stipulations in the Convention also apply to women living in rural areas and that they have the opportunity to take part in and benefit from rural development. It is important to ensure that these women also have access to health care, vocational and theoretical education, employment, credit and adequate living conditions.

Article 15: Equality before the law

Women and men are equal before the law. Women and men shall have the same legal right to enter contracts, own property and travel.

Article 16: Marriage and family

Women and men shall have the same rights to enter into marriage of their own free will, and equal rights and responsibilities during the marriage, in the event of divorce and as parents. Countries shall further guarantee that women and men have equal rights to decide family planning and in matters relating to the ownership and administration of property.

Articles 17-22

These articles establish the Committee on CEDAW, whose task is to monitor compliance with the Convention. Countries must report to the committee regarding the implementation of the Convention's stipulations.

Articles 23-30: Administration of the Convention

The articles describe procedures for association to the Convention, rules for reservations and procedures for resolving disputes regarding its interpretation and application.

5. LINKS

Kvinnor för Fred (reports available on website)

www.kvinnorforfred.se/rapporter/

UN Women (for CEDAW):

<http://unwomen.se/womens-rattigheter/fns-kvinnokonvention/>

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/convention.htm>

Network against honour related violence

<http://minheder.nu/en/>

Ungdomsstyrelsen:

www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se

Riksförbundet för sexuell upplysning (Rapporten "Slidkransen. Frågor och svar om myter kring mödom och oskuld")

www.rfsu.se/sv/Sex-relationer/Kropp-och-kon/Slidkransen/

www.rfsu.se/Bildbank/Dokument/Praktikor/praktika-Vaginal_corona2009.pdf?epslanguage=sv

Operation 1325 (resolution 1325):

<http://operation1325.se/hela-resolutionen>

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Few studies have been made of how the women in the Middle East experience their situation in terms of the democratisation process. Others often speak about or for them, and it is rare to hear the women's own voices in the discussions on their situation. This report aims to fill at least some of those knowledge gaps. The point of departure for the report is to examine whether or not women in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories feel they have achieved greater gender equality since the beginning of the democratisation process. The study builds on a master's thesis in political science and takes its starting point in Nancy Fraser's theories of recognition and a study by Tina Sideris of the extent to which women in each of these two areas feel they are, or are not, recognised both in the socio-cultural (private sphere) and in the public sphere.

The result that emerges is that recognition is more difficult in the socio-cultural sphere than in the public sphere. This result is, on the whole, the same for both areas, with the difference that Iraqi Kurdistan has, to date, made greater progress in the question of public recognition than the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, religion plays a greater role in the public sphere in the Palestinian territories than in Iraqi Kurdistan. The study is based on a total of 18 interviews which were conducted with women activists in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Palestinian territories at the beginning of 2010.

The report has been realised through Kvinnor för Fred, a non-political, non-religious organisation which works to promote peace on women's terms and has since been engaged in projects in both areas. The report is thus relevant both within and outwith the scientific field since while it is an academic report, it aims to visualise the thoughts and ideas of women which it is hoped can be put to practical use in supporting women's movements in the democratisation process.

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