



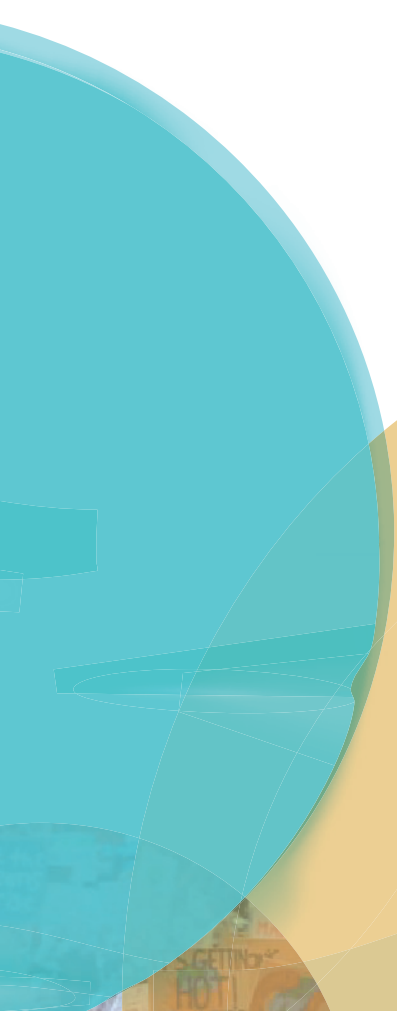
شبكة الصحفيات السوريات
Syrian Female Journalists Network

ENVIRONMENT IS A **FEMINIST** ISSUE


Unraveling the Threads

Syria Context






In a world where the forces of climate change, environmental degradation, and social injustice continue to intersect, it is of utmost importance that we amplify the voices of those who have long been marginalized and overlooked. Together, The Syrian Female Journalist Network (SFJN), with the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, driven by an unwavering commitment to feminism and social justice, I, Rula Asad, co-founder and former executive director of (SFJN), led an exploratory initiative. This collaborative effort gave birth to a transformative exploration, one that illuminated the intricate connection between environmental issues and the struggles faced by women in Syria. Under the banner of "Environment is a Feminist Issue," this endeavor, spanning from March to July 2023, not only unveiled the depth of these interconnected challenges but also provided a platform for women to share their experiences, thoughts, feelings and solutions. As the author and main researcher of this project and the moderator of the webinars, I invite you to traverse the terrain of these dialogues, where the profound link between environmental struggles and the material lives of Syrian women was explored, illuminated, and embraced.



The "Environment is a Feminist Issue" exploration became a beacon of hope in a world where the narratives of women and marginalized communities often remain unheard. Through five meticulously curated discussions, I navigated the intricate web of environmental challenges, political dynamics, and media representation with a dedicated focus on justice and equity.

As our journey unfolded, each gathering delved deeper into the fabric of interconnected challenges. In the opening session, the spotlight illuminated the intricate interplay between militarization and environmental degradation. The discussions transcended the confines of environmental concerns, underscoring the significance of intertwining environmental research with broader social issues. It was here that the façade of international platforms was unveiled, exposing their "greenwashing" tactics. The urgent call for transnational solidarity resounded, recognized as an indispensable step in dismantling barriers and fostering genuine transformation.



Our exploration continued, shedding light on the invincible spirit of local environmental initiatives. Women emerged as the driving force, pushing the boundaries of change despite confronting harsh realities. These resilient activists bore witness to dire living conditions and grappled with the scarcity of resources. The conversation underscored a profound truth – the burden of environmental justice cannot rest solely on the shoulders of women and activists. Collaboration was not merely an option; it was an imperative, extending beyond individual and local actions.



As our dialogue progressed, the concepts of "war ecology" and "political ecology" took center stage. The exploration was a fascinating journey into how political and environmental threads intricately intertwined within the Syrian context. The complexities of these challenges were laid bare, from the division within Syria to the far-reaching impacts of war. The role played by international actors came under scrutiny. The call for greater coordination and transparency in data resonated, and a deeper connection between the land and the political dynamics of the region was vigorously pursued.

With each passing chapter, the transformative power of environmental journalism emerged as a potent tool for change. The discussions peeled back the layers to reveal the enormous challenges faced by environmental journalists, including the relentless pursuit of data and elusive funding opportunities. It became unmistakably clear that a solitary path would not suffice. The resounding appeal was for international collaborations, emphasizing the need to prioritize issues affecting the Global South and embracing an intersectional approach that centered the voices of marginalized communities in the narrative.

Our exploration culminated in a discussion that dissected the intricate web of climate crises and social justice. Here, the emphasis shifted towards a comprehensive understanding of how power structures and historical injustices shaped the landscape of environmental disparities. The disproportionate impact on women could not be viewed in isolation; it was an integral part of a broader canvas, woven with threads of systemic, historical, institutional, and individual factors. The conversation was a resounding call to action, advocating for the pivotal role of women directly affected by climate change in shaping decision-making processes, guiding policy formulation, and leading the movement in ecosystem restoration.

As deeply immersed in this project, I recognize that this narrative provides but a glimpse into the profound mosaic of conversations woven throughout the "Environment is a Feminist Issue" exploration. As we reflect upon the shared insights and passion, we find ourselves on the approach of collective action, prepared to dismantle oppressive systems and forge a world where the forces of environmental justice and feminism harmonize to cultivate enduring transformation.



Rula Asad, the co-founder and former executive director of SFJN

The author, main researcher of this project and the moderator of the webinars.

This project would not have been achievable without the invaluable support of Kvinna till Kvinna, and in particular, the Beirut office, where Elissa Shamma and Yasmine Masri, from the program team, played pivotal roles.

● **Acknowledgments to:**

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Sarine Karajerjian, Mawada Bahhah, Zeina Shahla, Hivin Shexo, Angham Daiyoub, Mais Katt and Dr. Nour Abu-Assab.

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Militarization and the Environment from a Regional Perspective


During wars, data on the toll of victims is collected, we hear about deaths, migrants, displaced people. They are referred to in numbers, connected with statistics, part of documentaries, in the news, however, rarely do we hear about the environment, an often undeclared and invisible victim. Nonetheless, during wars, water is polluted, becoming undrinkable, animals are being killed, deforestation takes place, landfills increase, natural habitats are being destroyed, chemical weapons are used polluting the air with toxic gases and destroying the soil where humans used to grow plants, vegetables, and fruits while many other environmental atrocities are committed. According to the UN 65% of destruction during wars affects environmental resources and minerals. Wars are actually often happening because of natural resources, because of drought and lack of water.

Against this background, Rula introduces the audience to the topic of the webinar: "Militarization and the Environment from a Regional Perspective". In doing so, she underlines how the talk will add a feminist perspective to the topic foregrounding women's experiences and knowledge production.

Rula's first question is related to the speakers' experience and work of how conflicts affect the environment especially from the perspective of militarization. Sarine in her answer refers to ARI's annual conference that distinguished the impacts of conflict on the environment as well as on how the environment affects conflict. The aim of the conference was to bring together activists and experts to think and organize themselves collectively as unfortunately collective and interconnected actions are rarely taking place. Further, Sarine emphasizes the importance of identifying the numerous regional commonalities, to collaborate across borders and to learn from each other. She states: "If you manage to have an activist from Yemen and another one from Iraq talking to each other about the environment you will realize that in both cases conflict affects food and water, that the commonalities are plenty and that it becomes obvious that conflicts cannot only be solved from a technical perspective because they are deeply political."

In her answer, Mawada refers to a concrete example: Eastern Ghouta, which is about 10 kilometres east of central Damascus and suffered years of bombardment and starvation, destroying infrastructure, causing lack of essential services, leaving behind a non-functional sewage system, and eventually a public health crisis.

The deterioration in water quality and a water decrease of 40% are severe issues for Eastern Ghouta as Mawada explains. As a result of dirty water, Cholera cases



have erupted and people have been killed while the decrease in water causes women, usually in charge of fetching water, to walk far distances in search of it. Further, the 12 years of war in Syria have had a catastrophic impact on the country's forests with deforestation impacting the lives of its people. In other words, people's lack of access to electricity and fuel led to the cutting of trees for heating and cooking. Prior to the war, Syria had already felt the consequences of the climate crisis with the drought in 2010 that led to displacement within Syria, affecting especially women negatively. The outbreak of the revolution and the war led to additional destruction with food and water security on the rise and desertification becoming a big problem. Farmers are being displaced, have to give up their jobs while the gender roles, people's customs and traditions are changing.

Sarine mentions how she grew up with the idea of Syria and Iraq being the food baskets of the region while today's reality is characterized by people encountering a polluted soil, explosives on the ground, a decrease in the fertility of the land and a rise in Cholera cases. Further certain plants are not planted anymore, there have been cases of contaminated vegetables, plants and fruits. In other words, war and conflict have affected people's lives in numerous and intertwined ways and not all of them can be solved through conflict resolution. Sarine says: "When we speak about the environment we must understand the connections between the climate crisis, and socio-economic inequality, gender, conflict and war and other forms of diversity."

Against this background, both speakers emphasize the regional lack of data and statistics on how and to what extent conflict and war have been affecting the environment, and natural resources. Sarine suggests that Civil Society Organizations, universities and think tanks need to be able to collect and publish data from the region to present it to policy makers. To track pollution and document how the conflict in Syria has had a negative impact on the environment and it is important to listen to the people: "Here lies our role as researchers, as academics to give the voice to the people whose lives are changing due to conflict", as Mawada underlines. Rula also adds how research production on the environment and its link to political, economic, social and cultural aspects is rather modest.

Based on the above, Rula introduces the international aspect of militarization, peace agreements and how those processes can include environmental aspects. Her very own research showed her that there are guidelines related to the protection of the environment during armed conflicts, included also in the International Humanitarian Law. Thus, Rula wants to inquire whether there are examples from across the region that show that the environment was taken into consideration during peace processes and conflict resolution.

In her answer, Sarine refers to several challenges such as the local communities and conflicts among them that prevent collaborations and standing in solidarity with each other in order to solve contaminated water issues. With the absence of a solid state, and the existence of authoritarian regimes in the region those problems are only further solidified. Especially water is a regional issue that has been affecting countries ranging from Iraq to Syria as well as Turkey for a long time. The lack of accountability on the side of regional regimes, water conflicts, and the role of international institutions such as the World Bank whose development programs seem to benefit only certain privileged parties, have led to a large mistrust in both international organizations and local authorities as well as national governments.

As part of the discussion on international players, the Climate Change Conference (COP27) that was held in 2022 in Egypt, is tapped into. Sarine mentions that during those conferences, conflicts are not really high on the agenda. While discussions on public health take place, conflicts are not part of the conversation, neither is the topic of sanctions. As a result, young people from the region do not trust those spaces. While they could function as places that gather various groups of people to discuss the environment and its connection to wars and conflicts such conversations are very minimal. COPs are therefore merely perceived as spaces where the same actors meet each other, allowing countries and other actors to greenwash their image neglecting the relationship between environmental laws and actual practices on the ground.

Mawada adds the local Syrian perspective to it, making clear that even though there might be environmental laws, they are not being implemented and there is no proper supervision to make sure they are. Deforestation in Syria goes mostly unpunished even though it is illegal. Its rise leads to forest fires, posing threats to people and wildlife alike. Further, there are many legal frameworks to protect water such as the prohibition to drop oil or other harmful elements into water streams. Nonetheless, water is still getting contaminated because of oil spills and seeing black water is very common. Nevertheless, no one is held accountable except a few individuals, but no one ever on a national level. The problem is the system, the government, the state, everyone is involved but no one is assuming responsibility.

Thus, Rula wants to inquire about environmental protests and climate justice activism in the region as an attempt to face these environmental challenges. Sarine refers to examples from Iraq, and Tunisia, where people have taken the streets asking for a better life. But even though, we see protests across the region and organizations and associations that work locally on the issue of the environment and militarization there is a lack of transnational cooperation. It is crucial to strengthen coordination across countries among activists in the region.

To learn from each other's experiences, to share, to create spaces to discuss those problems, to create networking opportunities, to stand in solidarity with each other and protect one another. Working together is very important, amplifying the voices of those that are not being heard. There are some successful experiences and those should be mainstreamed and in order for this to happen environmental activism needs to be transnational and solidarity should be central in that. Environmental activists are often perceived as a threat to national security adding an additional layer to their already precarious situation due to economic crises, and militarization being a harsh reality in certain countries making activists think whether they should stay and pursue their activism or leave.

Mawada exemplifies further, adding that brain drain migration is a serious problem and many young people do not consider the environment as their number 1 priority; there are more 'important' things to worry and talk about. This again does not allow for an organized environmental activism neither national nor transnational reducing certain initiatives to 'solely' local and personal ones.

To conclude, the webinar identifies several interconnected themes such as the connection between the environment and militarization, the importance of connecting research projects on the environment with other issues and the collection of data to influence policies. The speakers further emphasize the distrust towards international players and conferences such as the COPs as places of greenwashing. To counter some of those problems it is crucial to establish transnational solidarity in the region to overcome working in silos and reducing initiatives to 'merely' local and personal ones.

Speakers:

Sarine Karajerjian worked for 15 years at the AUB's Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs since the Institute's inception. She holds a master's degree in Environmental Policy Planning and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health from AUB.

Mawada Bahah graduated from the Faculty of Media and worked with several Syrian and Arab media outlets and participated in the Right to Safety Fellowship with ARIJ Network for Investigative Journalism. Mawada was also part of a fellowship with both Awan Media Network and Deutsche Welle under the supervision of Egab Network on Solutions Journalism. She published regularly about environmental issues on Raseef22.

To watch the full discussion (in Arabic):

<https://youtu.be/igEOvWmiC7Q?si=XrVqDPg6MQvPd5A2>

Women's Environmental Initiatives in Syria and Lessons Learned

Women in Syria have been actively involved in environmental initiatives; however, they are rarely talked about: "Today we have created a space where we can shed light on women's role as active participants in environmental projects in Syria", explains Rula and through that introduces the topic of today's webinar "Women's Environmental Initiatives in Syria and Lessons Learned". Rula addresses her first question to Zeina asking about her assessment of the current environmental situation in the governorates of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, and the Syrian coast.

In her answer Zeina emphasizes how difficult it is to assess the environmental reality in Syria which has experienced crisis after crisis, conflicts, war, environmental and climate changes, lack of resources. A real evaluation of the situation is further exacerbated by a lack of data which makes it even more difficult to evaluate the situation while the environmental situation cannot be analyzed on its own as what is happening on the ground is related to multiple interconnected issues such as the war, climate change and conflict.

What can be said with certainty though is that the situation in Syria is highly concerning. There is a lack of resources, fuel, water, and oil. Large amounts of land aren't being cultivated anymore, there are wildfires, overhunting. However, the humanitarian condition stands in the foreground with 'the environment not being a top priority' and not being seen as intertwined with what is happening which only aggravates things further.

When Hivin is being asked by Rula about the environmental situation in north-eastern Syria, and a comparison of the pre- and post-war reality she stresses how complex of an issue this is. Already before the war, people in Syria had been suffering from environmental problems such as land degradation and landfills, which have been posing serious problems for the local communities, causing health problems, forcing people to move. Also, in north-eastern Syria specifically, a region that has always been characterized by a lack of greenery, the Syrian government had never showed any interest in creating any green zones.

However, the war, the siege, the economic siege have exacerbated things further causing a lack of fuel and oil with people looking for alternatives. They are cutting trees in arbitrary ways, trees that had been part of the natural habitat for decades. Landfills keep growing with local communities living next to them, in some cases they have covered the water, contaminating it, and causing serious health problems to the population. Even though environmental activists have been working on

sorting and recycling waste, moving some landfills to faraway regions, they cannot do their work properly as they need equipment which is not accessible due to the siege. Against this background, Hivin underlines how many issues are intertwined and that despite certain efforts the north-eastern part of Syria is in a crisis with an increase in cancer rates being seen, deteriorating agricultural conditions, that are in return affecting food security and water cuts from Euphrates river which is in danger of drying up due to climate change, but also used as a weapon by Turkey and thus an example of using natural resources in war situations.

In this context, Rula, emphasizes how important it is to talk about the problems that the various regions in Syria face and how people in the local communities are living under harsh conditions. Unfortunately, it was not possible though to find an expert from the north-western region and therefore it will not be possible to analyze the situation in detail in that part of Syria. She further recaps how this webinar is focused on women initiatives and therefore she would like to ask Zeina about the environmental initiatives that have been founded by women and hear about their economic and environmental reasons for establishing those.

As an activist and as a journalist, Zeina has a keen interest in searching for initiatives that focus on the environment. What she came across was that the majority of those initiatives have been launched by women because women – as many studies have shown - are usually the first to be impacted by environmental deteriorations. Women work in agriculture, they are often in charge of their families, of securing water and thus environmental deteriorations have a negative impact on their economic situation as well as on their sexual and reproductive health and pregnancies. Hence, they are at the forefront, of what are mostly small-scale projects such as planting trees, cleaning campaigns, initiatives that promote working with organic textiles. Additionally, they are highly interested in learning more about the climate, the environment so as to raise awareness about it to others. Zeina gives the specific example of Nadia, who lives in Damascus and has launched an initiative that connects women from rural areas with women in urban ones to raise awareness about the former ones living conditions, about local producers, products, and agriculture.

Against this background, she reiterates how everything is interconnected, that environmental topics do not stand on their own because in Syria “we do not have the luxury to talk only about the environment or the climate”. Women know that and thus they act practically and not theoretically, they form networks and link environmental topics with other issues such as the economy, and the political realm.

With her next question: “Can you tell us more about the Green Braids initiative, how and why it was founded and what have you done today” Rula addresses Hivin. In her response, Hivin firstly highlights how everything she shares about the north-east

of Syria is something that concerns the entirety of Syria. Regarding her work on the ground, she and her colleagues had high hopes and wishes of cross-regional collaborations, but due to the internal issues Syria is facing this has not been possible. Nonetheless, they have worked relentlessly as a group of agricultural and environmental specialists, identifying the various environmental issues and their causes while most of the individuals who expressed an interest in collaborating are women. The initiatives they established ranged from tree planting, holding sessions and webinars on the environment, activities for children who received a small plant and a tree which they had to plant, name, and take care of in order for them to internalize an environmental culture. They further organized cleaning campaigns, looked for solutions regarding the landfills and their content disposal.

However, in 2018 the situation deteriorated further, and an additional problem emerged due to Turkey's invasion of Afrin, Syria. Precisely, the army completely destroyed areas that were known for their ancient trees; an example of how nature is being attacked during wars and conflict and used as a weapon to harm local communities. As a result the 'Green Braids' campaign was launched in 2020 foregrounding local community actions under the idea that those communities can achieve so much more than any administration or government ever will. At the beginning though there was a lack of materials and everything was done based on the group's own efforts. But there were huge successes such as the 4 million trees initiative whose long-term vision is creating strong trees, which can be replanted in the future, focusing on a variety of seeds and taking care of them rigorously once planted. The project increased green areas, raised awareness on environmental issues, and strengthened collective work among various groups such as Kurds and Arabs working on one cause.

Collaborations with educational institutions in the region such as the University of Rojava have also been taking place. Introducing the topic of the environment into the educational system and familiarizing children and students with it is a means towards creating change for Syria's future. It is an initiative that is being expanded through guest lectures, booklets on tree planting and other projects.

Leading the discussion further Rula reiterates how environmental issues are not a luxury but rather an economic and collective issue and even a personal need. Giving the floor back to Zeina, Rula wants to inquire about the added value that women bring to environmental initiatives.

Zeina, in her analysis, refers to women and children being the two groups who are demographically prevalent; men went to war, and many of them were killed. As a result of the various overlapping crises Syria has been facing for more than a decade, women are living in dire conditions: They are suffering from the drought,

walking for miles to find water and must work the land. Thus, whenever Zeina is collaborating with women they can see a much larger motivation and initiative from their side, they are coming up with new ideas such as the development of environmental tourism.

In view of this, Rula addresses a similar question to Hivin asking about different networking initiatives in north-eastern Syria but also wonders at the same time about any obstacles that women face to participate in environmental initiatives. Hivin explains that there are various organizations in the region that are focusing for instance on growing vegetables or reforestation projects. Those projects are leading to an improvement in the region and as a result women's social and economic status is being enhanced. What is very special in this context is that these are local initiatives, i.e. disconnected from any capitalist ventures and that is precisely where the added value can be found. Further, women from different socio-economic backgrounds are coming closer to each other, identifying commonalities, forming collectives, meeting in various offline and online spaces to work together but also to share opinions and experiences in difficult moments.

Hivin says: "We didn't have the right opportunities to meet and work together as women. But now that we are meeting even if we are meeting online and not physically, we are sharing these experiences and ideas. And we are working on an issue, on a cause. And maybe it's going to be an introduction to meeting physically but anyway we are speaking about broadening our perspectives. And it is going to be an introduction to an improvement of the social and economic situation of women."

Of course there are also obstacles: It is difficult to incentivize people to join voluntary activities in times of extreme hardships and economic difficulties, especially when it means they need to pay for transportation fees. Also renting vehicles for planting activities across locations in times of fuel shortages is a challenge. Further, there is a large group of people who do not consider environmental initiatives a priority. In other words, there is a lack of awareness and interest, and people wonder why they should care about recycling, planting trees and not using plastic bags while they have to struggle daily to make ends meet. So, approaching people, showing them how the environment is inextricably linked to multiple issues they face daily and doing so by using simple terms is crucial.

To conclude, the webinar shows that women are largely involved in environmental initiatives in Syria. They are at the forefront of local projects, of creating awareness and coming up with new ideas. However, it would be deceptive to solely foreground this image as there is another reality that is harsh, characterized by dire living conditions, complex governmental structures, scarcity of resources and lack of awareness around the environment. Creating more apprehension within communities as well as on a more

systemic level through collaborations with educational institutions, research centers and transnational initiatives that foster solidarity and strengthen funding mechanism is crucial. The burden of environmental justice cannot fall solely on women's and activists' shoulders. In changing the narrative around the environment, it is further crucial to highlight that the environment is not an issue that is standing on its own but one that is inextricably linked to socio-economic improvements, belonging, peace, and justice that concerns everyone. If communities stand in solidarity with each other, they can envision futures that go against destructive, extractive, and harmful practices.

Speakers:

Zeina Shahla is a Syrian journalist and researcher interested in social, cultural, and environmental issues, based in Damascus. Since 2017, she works in the field of written journalism and research, especially social and cultural topics. She also works in journalistic analysis with the Raseef22 website. In 2022, she founded the (Environment and Climate) section and is responsible for its content and policy. Zeina holds a degree in media from the University of Damascus and a diploma in international affairs and diplomacy from the Syrian International Academy in Damascus as well, in addition to a degree in information engineering from Damascus.

Hivin Heixo, a feminist activist and environmental expert from Qamishli, who holds a BA in Biology, majoring in Environmental Science

To watch the full discussion (in Arabic):

<https://youtu.be/PUoPk-MQlok?si=FxdEEUFXTDqVcPEQ>

Environment in Politics

Rula introduces the audience to the topic of the Webinar "The Environment and Politics" by asking: What do we mean by environmental policies and is there an opportunity to create such policies in Syria? Can we discuss how the environment is incorporated into politics in order to comprehend the relationship between political regimes and environmental justice? Accordingly, she explains that with today's experts: Angham and Hivin, they reached the conclusion that it is crucial to discuss the intersection between the environment and political agreements. In doing so, Angham will focus on providing a detailed analysis on the topic and Hivin will share examples from her work in the self-administered region of northern and eastern Syria.

While in previous sessions, the discussion would start with a problem, today's starts with Rula inquiring about Syria's nature and its environment to establish a foundation for the webinar's discussion. The question is directed to Angham who emphasizes from the beginning that there are large misunderstandings when it comes to Syria's natural habitat especially from a Global North point of view. Syria is not just a desert. However, also among Syrians there is a lack of knowledge when it comes to Syria's natural diversification.

Precisely, Syria is located in the Eastern Mediterranean, and displays a wide topographic diversity, i.e. mountain regions, deserts, coastal areas. The Syrian desert, or the Badiya, is dry and has little precipitation. It has been historically inhabited by Bedouin tribes. Further, more than 3,000 types of plants can be found in Syria with some of them being unique to the country and through that they carry a significant environmental importance globally. Wheat is Syria's most well-known agricultural asset.

Besides that, Syria is also an ancient country which historically has experienced deforestation with the Syrian war deteriorating things further. Precisely a recent PAX study on "How Conflict-caused Deforestation Impacts Environmental, Socio-economic and Climate Resilience in Syria" has reported that a quarter of Syria's forest has been lost due to the war. Deforestation adds an additional element to Syria's long-lasting water scarcity. Syrians rely on rainfall which due to climate change is scarce, as well as on the Euphrates River, which is controlled by Turkey which has built several dams and restricts Syria's access to water.

While the country has always had environmental problems, the war has exacerbated them further with pollution being another big problem. Angham gives several examples across the country such as the issue of oil refineries dumping oil waste into the water.

As the discussion is turning more into the environmental problems in Syria vis-à-vis a description of its natural habitat, Rula wants to inquire about the role of the Syrian

government and how institutions have failed the country when it comes to environmental justice.

Angham explains that wars are very costly, making the environment no longer a priority which causes a multiplicity of issues - as touched upon in her introduction - to Syria's natural habitat. The problem of waste represents the epitome of institutional failures with uncovered and unsanitary landfills growing exponentially during times of war and crisis. Displacement of communities causes overpopulation in certain areas and in return an uncontrollable growth in waste. Poor or non-existent waste management lead to air pollution, attraction of insects, water and soil contaminations causing infections, respiratory problems, and transmittable diseases. It further leads to deteriorating housing conditions and economic problems as houses in areas with non-existing waste collection systems and/or ineffective waste management lose their value. As a result of the above, people leave as they cannot live and work in those polluted places anymore.

Further, Angham explains that laws, that are in place to protect the nature, are not being implemented due to Syria's fragmentation with a lack of control from all sides. She exemplifies it through the non-implementation of the hunting ban, and the uncontrolled cutting of trees. Institutional failures such as these give the impression that the Ministry of Environment is merely a prestige that 'outsources' environmental issues to civil society – something that also during pre-war times was already a reality. Moreover, it seems that the existence of sanctions is often used by the Syrian government as an excuse for not implementing certain laws and taking initiatives when it comes to environmental topics.

Against this background, Angham introduces the terms 'war ecology' and 'political ecology'. The first refers to the direct and indirect results of war on the environment such as explosions, militarization, the destruction of forests, and the failure of institutions. It also takes into consideration the deliberate destruction of the environment as a war strategy. 'Political ecology' on the other hand focuses on the political, and socio-economic dimension and the relationship with environmental topics by centering its analysis around environmental justice. In doing so, it politicizes environmental issues revealing for instance the connection between racism and the environment affecting marginalized communities disproportionately by climate change.

After Angham's introduction and analysis of the topic, Rula addresses her next question to Hivin, a former employee of the General Department of Environment within the Autonomous Administration of Northeast Syria, inquiring about its creation and the rationale behind it.

Hivin explains how much the region of northeastern Syria suffered economically and politically due to the war, the sanctions, the siege. The environmental situation was catastrophic as a result of the war. However, in the midst of all these crises the environmental agency was established and through that the autonomous administration of Northeast Syria placed the ecological aspect as one of its main pillars to focus on. Women engineers and experts were appointed outweighing the number of men employees. Despite facing one of the harshest situations between 2013-2015 and the fear of being threatened by the Syrian regime, agricultural engineers and environmental activists pushed through pinpointing and analyzing environmental problems and coming up with solutions and initiatives.

Slowly and gradually, they started creating green spaces, planting trees and in parallel launched awareness campaigns to educate people about the environment by offering age-appropriate and community-driven initiatives. From 2016 onwards there was also an increase in the agency's budget. As a result, the region became more stable, allowing the agency to come up with more strategic projects focusing for instance on the problem of landfills with the majority of them being adjacent to residential areas.

However, in 2018 the invasion of Afrin by the Turkish Armed Forces took place with the Euphrates River turning into a political pressure card for the Turkish Government. The Afrin area is characterized by a rich biodiversity with trees that are more than 100 years old. Since 2018, Turkey has been exploiting the area cutting down trees, selling their wood or replanting them; they have been burning down forests and destroying a large amount of areas. Turkey further has created settlements by replacing the Kurdish population with its own people, pushing Afrin's original inhabitants out of their homes with the Syrian government not doing anything about it.

Thus, Afrin serves as a clear example of the interplay between 'war ecology' and 'political ecology' showing on the one hand the direct and indirect results of war and invasion on the environment and how the environment's destruction is used as a strategy during conflict. On the other hand, it shows the connection between racism and the environment where a marginalized community is exposed to resource extraction, the destruction of its natural habitat and its expulsion from the region.

In view of this, Rula wants to know how governmental failure can be prevented from happening and if development programs can play a role in that. Angham in her response focuses on the post-war phase by referring to developmental programs that unfortunately solely focus on emergency responses instead of providing in depth analyses that could contribute to long-lasting solutions and genuine policies to protect the environment. It is crucial for instance to see why people are cutting trees and what kind of sustainable alternatives can be offered to prevent

such uncontrollable behavior. Inextricably linked to that is the necessity of funding because environmental development is quite costly. Angham explains:

“I always say that reconstructing buildings in Syria is much easier than reconstructing the environment because the environment in Syria will take a long time if you want to reform and replant the forest. We would need at least 20 years for the forest to be as it once was before, to have the biodiversity it has before.”

Since the environment is a transnational issue, Rula wants to know from Angham if the Syrian government can outsource these activities to international players or is even relying on agencies such as the UN, to take care of certain issues such as water scarcity, the clearance of mines and the cleaning of the soil of residues.

Angham refers to inefficient environmental policies, such as the ambivalent anti-hunting law in Syria which is neither implemented nor supervised and the Syrian government's stance of not taking responsibilities and outsourcing environmental issues to agencies such as the UN. Inextricably linked to that is the issue of corruption: a major problem within Syria but also within the UN that exacerbates things further. She emphasizes that if the Syrian government is serious about collaborating with international players it must fight corruption from within because otherwise any environmental initiative will always be exposed to the misuse of funds.

Additionally, Syria is largely behind when it comes to technological developments and scientific research with the latter either being too old and obsolete or non-existent. The lack of data also means that what has been lost during the war is unknown and therefore it is difficult to come up with certain initiatives, while many projects that have been implemented after the war have mostly been obstructed. To do research in Syria and embrace transnational collaborations, security clearances are crucial as they can allow foreigners to come into the country to support. However, Angham is realistic here stating that security issues can only be solved and environmental solutions offered once political issues are solved characterizing the situation as highly complicated and complex.

Against this background, Hivin who has worked in both the formal and non-formal sector emphasizes the importance of coordination among multiple entities. On the one hand community interactions, the creation of collaborations among activists and the population are crucial but also receiving the support from official entities is key as otherwise organizational work remains inactive. In fact, there are certain steps and decisions that local organizations cannot take and where it requires official entities to come up with solutions. She mentions the control of Turkey over the Euphrates and its use as a political card as an example. Nonetheless, she also states that when international organizations are involved, by for instance funding civil entities, project implementations are easier.

Hence, Rula wants to inquire how Syria can establish an environmental policy that takes into account Syrian geography and people's relationship with the land vis-à-vis foreign governments and/or organizations that are less knowledgeable about the country's environmental realities. She is aware that the fact that Syria is divided into various entities makes the question of course even more challenging.

The speakers agree that foreign organizations usually do not understand how Syrians are connected to the land, to its forests. In order to establish an environmental policy in Syria, laws need to be drafted that incorporate Syria's geographical and historical specificity in its entity as well as people's connection to the land. However, in order for this to happen, agency needs to be given to the local populations, to local entities with the government taking a responsible and supportive role that recognizes the environment as a key issue that can neither be outsourced to international players, nor passed around among different ministries and downgraded as nothing important. Thus, coordination among various actors is crucial as well as the possibility to allow certain entities to work independently on environmental initiatives. In this view, Hivin mentions that a week ago the legislative council of the autonomous administration took the decision of giving the environmental commission full autonomy and independence. In doing so, the commission will be able to work in a better and more sustainable way without any interference or obstruction from other authorities and parties.

To conclude, the webinar makes clear how complex and complicated the environment and politics in Syria are and how various elements are intertwined with each other. The discussion attempts to examine the way environmental issues are dealt or not dealt with within Syria taking into consideration the country's fragmentation, the effects of the war and the role of international players. It further touched upon issues such as the lack of data, the problem of corruption and the importance of coordination and collaboration among various local and international authorities and organizations, requiring a multi-layered approach towards effective environmental improvements. Last but not least, it invites the audience to rethink their relation with the land and to acknowledge the environment as an important aspect for Syria's wellbeing and therefore a key element in the country's politics.

Speakers:

Angham Daiyoub, is a pre-doctoral researcher at CREAM (Ecological and Forestry Applications Centre), the topic of her thesis is the impacts of the armed conflict in Syria on biodiversity conservation from a different social, economic and gender perspective. She is also a collaborating researcher at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology ICTA of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She specializes in biodiversity conservation and environmental justice, specifically in Syria. She holds a double master's degree in Mediterranean forests and natural resource management from the University of Nida in Spain and Kara Deniz University in Turkey, and her bachelor's degree is in agricultural engineering from Tishreen University in Syria.

Hivin Heixo, a feminist activist and environmental expert from Qamishli, who holds a BA in Biology, majoring in Environmental Science.

To watch the full discussion (in Arabic):

https://youtu.be/kYf0H_1iRLw?si=wFsUoJUV_YnS4fod

Environment and the Media

What characterizes our path in becoming journalists who report on the environment, who investigate environmental issues and eventually refer to themselves as environmental journalists? Environmental journalism as a tool that aims at raising awareness about the environment, climate change and climate justice; that strives towards influencing the discourse and actions around the environmental crisis we have been experiencing and aims at mobilizing people to be actively engaged in fighting climate change.

Against this background, Rula introduces the audience to the topic of the webinar: "Environment and the Media". Thus, her first question to both Mais and Zeina is about their personal journeys towards becoming environmental journalists.

Mais remembers her summers that she used to spend with her grandparents in the Golan Heights, Syria, where she is originally from. She remembers her grandmother's garden, watching ants and recalls the feeling of being connected to the soil, to nature, a sensation so vastly present. However, during her university studies to become a journalist she did not see the connection between journalism and the environment. After the war, a change was initiated though: Mais saw pictures of her native town, emptied of its forests, its green spaces, lacking its biodiversity making it unrecognizable to her. The sensation she used to feel disappeared and was replaced by sadness. Then came ISIS' retreat, and the burning of oil wells that caused clouds of toxic smoke to linger over various towns. Those two events initiated a shift in her professional life and in 2021 together with other colleagues she started working on an investigative piece related to the environment. And suddenly everything fell into place.

Zeina also connects her professional journey towards becoming an environmental journalist with a personal memory: She remembers her visits to Al Ghouta, Syria, driving with her father on different roads and through various towns, seeing landscapes full of trees and feeling truly connected to the nature. Years later, after the end of the war, she could visit Al Ghouta again, taking the same roads she used to take with her father: a shocking moment because the Al-Ghouta she knew was now a desert. This event and Syria's water scarcity influenced her journalism immensely. Zeina started reading newspapers from the 50s and 60s about the nature and the environment in Syria, about how at one point in time instead of planting trees more and more buildings were built. She realized that not many people were interested in the topic, so she began meeting with experts, talking about the importance of the environment and the role of the media in reporting about the issue. In her work at Raseef22, she initiated a change and now the media network has an entire section dedicated to the environment.

Rula's media experience intersects with the speakers in terms of her interest in environmental media. In 2008, a drought appeared in the Syrian Jazira region, northern Syria, forcing the region's farmers to flee with their families to the outskirts of Damascus, the capital. At that time, Rula not only learned about the extent of the environmental damage in the region, but also the impact of the government's regional discrimination, which caused environmental damage to the people.

Accordingly, Rula wants to know how editorial policies influence Mais and Zeina's work as environmental journalists, especially in contexts of war, and under oppressive regimes and what characterizes each of their specific approaches.

Mais' focus is on investigative journalism. She covers topics related to environmental injustices and their relationship with wars, conflict, and corruption. With her work she attempts to track and trace down cooperations and institutions that commit environmental crimes. She further strives towards engaging people to become active in the struggle for climate justice and wants to create more awareness on the magnitude of the issue and its repercussions on multiple spheres.

Zaina's work at Raseef22 is more solution oriented, tackles topics from a social viewpoint, that are related to every-day life issues such as the maintenance of solar panels and their future disposal that requires the development of certain standards. It is important to her to work on topics that are easy to read and widely accessible. Investigative journalism is not something she is focusing on as it requires a large amount of resources and not many journalists in Syria have chosen that path of reporting. She further explains how multifaceted environmental topics are and how Syria has become her focus. She visits its various regions, sits with its people, learns about initiatives to manage available resources, talks to the country's farmers, and writes about all of it.

In line with one of the webinar series' central themes, Rula wants to inquire how the gender perspective is included in such coverage. Mais explains that research has shown that women are more impacted by climate change than any other group. Inextricably linked to that is that women are less empowered than men, they hold (ownership and rights) the least natural resources, and are rarely in charge of decision making processes. The latter has large repercussions on their position within society and on their exposure towards climate change. Obviously, there are women journalists who include a gender related lens in their reporting and writings, however, Mais is not very optimistic as on a structural level the editors-in-chief are generally men, mostly not aware of the importance of the connection between gender and the environment and thus putting the burden on individual journalists to write and advocate about it.

Zeina reiterates how important it is to initiate change on a systemic level, having editors-in-chief embracing gender sensitive reporting. However, she also adds that there is a lack of specialized editors and journalists in the field as environmental journalism is not a common direction yet and gender mainstreaming is not really internalized in journalists' reporting. Thus, all of this adds to the challenges environmental journalists encounter regularly requiring them to lobby on multiple levels for those views and approaches to be considered and included.

Thus, Rula inquires about how much we actually hear women's voices in investigations, articles, news reports that focus on the environment. Mais explains how hard it is to get access to women (especially in Syria and in certain communities), how journalists need to make a targeted effort to interview women and that many do not go the extra mile and thus focus on speaking with men only – using tight deadlines often as a pretext. Obviously, this has large consequences on the content that is being produced while pushing women further into disadvantaged positions. Zeina emphasizes how as a journalist you have a responsibility to be inclusive, to amplify marginalized voices and to be self-reflective and aware of your own positionality. Of course, reflecting on power relationships and what kind of knowledge you will produce when only addressing a certain population while excluding other(s) should go hand in hand with structural changes.

What complicates things further though is that there are only a few newsrooms and editors that are interested in environmental issues. Raseef22, as mentioned above, is one of those platforms and some platforms in Tunisia also stands out as there is a lot of interest among activists and journalists to produce knowledge on the climate crisis. However, one of the biggest challenges is funding: Environmental journalism requires thorough investigations, which can further include the production of satellite images and geo data which are costly to create.

Throughout the conversation Zeina reiterates how important it is for environmental journalists to educate themselves, to learn, to acquaint themselves with certain concepts and to be able to fully comprehend certain incidents when they occur. In addition to thorough desk research that requires a lot of reading, environmental journalists need to be present on the ground, doing fieldwork, finding samples, processing data, and contextualizing it. They need to develop trust with their sources, listen to people they interview and be able to truly hear what people are telling them.

In the WANA (West Asia and North Africa) region though there are very few possibilities to take courses in environmental journalism, to access content in Arabic and have access to data while reporting on certain themes can be dangerous and put journalists' life in danger. In particular, reporting on the

environment is complex and risky in multiple ways as it is often connected to other issues such as violations against rivers and private property and uncovering such things goes against the interests of governments which prefer to blame climate change on global warming and droughts 'only'. In other words, corruption is a key factor of the environmental crisis with governments and organizations being often involved in greenwashing campaigns giving the impression that something is being done for the environment.

Against this background, transnational solidarity and collaborations are of high importance. Both speakers emphasize that collaborating on data collection and supporting each other on accessing certain information instead of becoming disillusioned are viable alternatives. Networking and coordinating within borders as well as across allow environmental journalists to broaden their scope, widen their still very limited presence in the field and get access to investigations that might not be known if the focus is only within one national context. Transnational collaborations can further foster joint investigations that assess how certain groups are more affected by climate change than others. In other words, targeted studies that for instance research how women's sexual and reproductive health is endangered due to water scarcity or how women's pregnancies are affected by changes in temperatures, air pollution and lack of water could be potential research projects. Their work should transcend borders because what is happening in Syria is often intertwined to what is happening in Iraq, Lebanon, Ukraine ...etc.

To conclude, becoming an environmental journalist is often connected to a memory, to witnessing an injustice that becomes deeply ingrained in someone's consciousness and influences their professional path emphasizing one more time how the personal is political. As a rather new approach within the field of journalism, environmental journalists encounter various challenges such as access to data, funding opportunities and structural support. Therefore, working across borders and regions is crucial by undertaking joint investigations, that emphasize commonalities and allow journalists to share knowledge among each other. In doing so, environmental journalism can be strengthened, solidarity achieved and knowledge production diversified. Unfortunately, environmental topics that concern the Global South, that occur as a result of war, that have a detrimental effect on women's sexual and reproductive health are often not foregrounded. Analyzing what happens in Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria and identifying common ground is therefore significant. In doing, an intersectional approach needs to be taken; an approach that takes into account the voices of marginalized communities, that does not only have experts report on such issues but gives people on the ground a voice to speak for themselves.

Speakers:

Zeina Shahla is a Syrian journalist and researcher interested in social, cultural, and environmental issues, based in Damascus. Since 2017, she works in the field of written journalism and research, especially social and cultural topics. She also works in journalistic analysis with the Raseef22 website. In 2022, she founded the (Environment and Climate) section and is responsible for its content and policy. Zeina holds a degree in media from the University of Damascus and a diploma in international affairs and diplomacy from the Syrian International Academy in Damascus as well, in addition to a degree in information engineering from Damascus.

Mais Katt is an investigative journalist from Syria, her cross-border investigations are published in prestigious European newspapers such as The Guardian, Der Spiegel and Trouw. She is the Middle East and North Africa editor of the International Forum for Environmental Investigative Journalism (EIF). Mais trained hundreds of journalists and media institutions in the Arabic-speaking region, in the specializations of digital media, investigative journalism, and media institution management. She is an AFP-certified expert and an independent trainer working with Deutsche Welle, Radio Netherlands Worldwide, the International Center for Journalists and Internews. Mais received the Jim Hogg Legacy Award from Washington, an award designated for journalists who lead new trends in the world of journalism, and last year she was shortlisted for the IRIJ Awards for Investigative Journalism for her co-investigation "The Toxic Land of Syria."

To watch the full discussion (in Arabic):

<https://youtu.be/gZOMCiTYxRc?si=D9Q4BbtsJYBPJXx4>



The Environment is Feminist Issue

Environmental issues and climate change intersect with various forms of diversity such as gender, social class, race, location, and ethnicity and thus affect people differently, creating various forms of disadvantages for certain groups within societies. This also means that women from certain backgrounds are impacted by the climate crisis disproportionately compared to other groups. Therefore, their experiences and opinions need to be recognized when developing comprehensive and effective solutions towards positive change.

Against this background, Rula introduces the audience to the topic of the webinar: The Environment as a Feminist Issue; the last one in the 5-part webinar series and at the same time the overall topic of the series. Rula explains that the gathering serves both as a summary and a conclusion to what has been previously discussed and reminds the audience that the role of women, their viewpoints, experiences around the environment and environmental justice have been centered throughout all discussions that were held online. Thus, her first question, which addresses Nour asks how the feminist movement as a social justice movement intersects with climate justice.

In her response, Nour emphasizes firstly that there is no such thing as one feminist movement but several ones that differ in ideology, in principles and even in the media used to spread their messages. Nonetheless, she identifies two sides of the feminist movement that intersect with the environment. The first one focuses on the impact of climate change and on the lack of environmental justice on marginalized communities and non-normative groups. It highlights the various areas in which climate change can affect women differently and disproportionately compared to men. The agricultural sector is an example as historically speaking, women used to be the ones working in this field and therefore climate crisis impact has affected them in a more serious way than men. Many women have lost their jobs due to the drought, forcing them to look for alternatives which shifts gender dynamics as suddenly women work in sectors where they were not present before. Their struggle to look for daily income needs to be combined with household chores, while the lack of water only adds an additional burden to them and their families.

The second side Nour identifies, and which needs more analysis pertains to the philosophical dimension of the feminist movement and how it focuses on social justice. She explains that when she thinks about the relationship between the feminist movement and the environment from a philosophical perspective, she thinks about the sense of agency we have as people and our very own impact on the world in a material and emotional manner. We cannot remove ourselves from the social structures we are a part of, i.e. patriarchy, capitalism regardless of how ethical we are.

In other words, the systems we live in does not allow us to be fully ethical with one another. Thus, our relationship with the environment is personal, it is emotional and every simple choice we make from food to clothing affects the environment and everyone who is part of the ecosystem we are living in. We might not like to hear about our agency, our environmental responsibility to recycle, to use a fabric bag instead of a plastic one or to refrain from participating in fast fashion with the textile industry highly contributing to the pollution of the earth while employing workers oftentimes under dire conditions. However, in addition to structural and institutional responsibilities we need to identify our very own ones and recognize our agency in all of it.

Thus, Rula wants to inquire further about the extent to which the environment is part of the philosophical aspects of the feminist movement. Angham explains that environmental feminism is a movement that first emerged in the 70s of the last century, identifying a link between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature and the environment. Environmental feminism centralizes around the idea that we are not separated from nature but that we have distanced ourselves from it due to urbanization, consumerism and so on. It is rooted in indigenous knowledge from the Americas where indigenous communities until today perceive nature as the mother, stand up for environmental justice, and see feminism and the environment as highly intertwined.

Angham further explains that feminism is no longer only about the female gender, it links humans to nature, and assumes that we are one and as people have no authority nor privilege over any creatures. It defends every human's right to live in a safe environment and have access to potable water. Against this background, she refers to the indigenous belief that goes against the idea of owning the soil. In contrast it needs to be preserved for future generations to come.

Accordingly, she introduces the concept of intersectionality as a methodology which is highly used in feminist analyses to comprehend the connection between the environment and certain societal groups such as people with disabilities, different gender identities, people who live in rural areas, come from ethnic minorities and so forth. Angham uses Northeast Syria as an example here, an area that has suffered from negligence, a lack of development connecting it to the discrimination Kurdish ethnic minorities face and who are the main inhabitants of the area.

Based on the ongoing discussion Nour explains how intersectionality as a theoretical tool has been polarized and manipulated, i.e. there has been a lot of talking around dividing people into different parts without looking at systemic factors such as oppressive structures, regimes and resistance. It is therefore crucial to identify the reasons behind the differences, to look at the same topic from various angles and

know that there are multiple factors that we need to take into account, to comprehend how oppressive regimes and systems have led to certain situations. This means that we cannot talk about women in a void as if they are a homogeneous group on their own.

To continue the conversation, Rula wants to know from Angham about the Syrian context and the role of women in the reconstruction process as not only being a political but also an environmental process. As an ecologist, Angham responds, it is far more difficult and complex to rebuild Syria environmentally than reconstructing its infrastructure. We know what we need to construct a building, but to rebuild an entire ecosystem takes years of development. It is not just about planting trees, but to understand what kind of trees need to be planted and to maintain their indigeneity instead of importing trees from abroad, as is happening nowadays with trees coming from Australia to Syria. Angham mentions several other examples from the Syrian context and concludes that rebuilding an entire ecosystem needs a commitment from everyone, a holistic approach that incorporates the government, organizations working on the ground, and above all the people who live in Syria. Specifically, women know a lot about the environment as they are used to going to the fields, working the ground, collecting herbs for cooking; they know the various species and plants, their growing patterns, and formations. Hence, when developing environmental policies women need to be included due to the large knowledge they carry, their direct connection to the land and their long-lasting presence in the agricultural sector.

Thus, people's relationship to the land as well as the connection between the environment and oppressive structures are important topics of the discussion and have been a recurring theme throughout the webinar series. With this in mind, Nour adds another example to the analysis as to why the environment is a feminist issue. She refers to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and how the Palestinian farmers' connection to the land has changed after the occupation, how Bedouins in Palestine have been expelled from their land using urbanization as a tactic to estrange them from the land, how forceful displacements of Palestinians from their lands continue until today, leaving them with less and less space to live in and destroying their physical, and emotional connection to the soil. All the above is taking place in collaboration with the Jewish National Fund (JNF) that portrays itself as an environmental charity and uses environmental policy like the planting of trees of (over destroyed Palestinian villages) as a means to greenwash Israel's settler colonialist policies. In other words, the Israeli State is displacing Palestinian people under the pretext that planting trees, and creating natural reserves on those lands is a necessity to protect the environment. To maintain those areas, large amounts of water are being used, in a region that has been troubled with an ongoing water crisis, and through that not only ungrounds Palestinians but reduces their access to crucial resources. Oppression becomes present everywhere, in every aspect of life highlighting the intersection between oppression and the land while using the environment as a cover-up to advance settler colonialism and strengthen the occupation.

Moving forward, Rula inquires of Angham whether she perceives a correlation between the upsurge in gender-based violence, conflicts, and the environmental crisis in the region. Angham indeed discerns this connection but underscores the dearth of academic research from an eco-feminist perspective to substantiate such claims with empirical data and theoretical frameworks. Alternatively, media outlets, she believes, could play a pivotal role in bridging this gap between academia, the community, and politics, provided they adhere to ethical principles. Specifically, the media can simplify complex issues, infuse a human and emotional dimension directly, thereby forging a closer connection with communities on the ground. They can mobilize people and educate them about environmental topics and their intricate interplay with other social and political issues.

To conclude, the discussion emphasizes how taking an intersectional lens can help to identify which communities are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. Even though, intersectionality is inextricably linked to feminist research practices it is not the only means to offer comprehensive analyses to challenge injustices and oppression. It is thus crucial to embed our analyses into theoretical frameworks that explore how social inequalities are shaped by power relations and the systems that surround us and the reasons for why this is happening. Accordingly, the discussion speaks about structural, historical, institutional but also the individual realm when discussing the environment as a feminist issue and the speakers emphasize the importance of everybody's own social responsibility surrounding the topic and how we cannot disregard the fact that we are part of a larger ecosystem.

Further, the speakers underline that the environment is a feminist issue because of women being disproportionately affected by climate crisis impacts but warns us not to perceive women as a homogenous group that appears in a void. We need to analyse which groups of women are impacted by looking at systemic, historical, institutional, and individual factors.

As a result, it is crucial to involve women who have been directly impacted by climate change in the reconstruction efforts of ecosystems, in the formulation of policies, in decision making processes by not only looking at them as victims but as contributors towards positive change, as knowledge providers.

Speakers:

Dr. Nour Abu-Assab is co-founder and co-director of the Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration (CTDC). Nour is a queer Palestinian feminist sociologist, who was awarded a PhD in Sociology in 2012 from the University of Warwick. Nour has a number of publications around identities, sexualities, migration, post-colonialism and methods of decolonizing and has a forthcoming book to be published by I.B. Tauris under the title of Ethnic Minorities and Nationalism in the Middle East: the Kurds of Syria and the Circassians of Jordan.

Angham Daiyoub, is a pre-doctoral researcher at CREAM (Ecological and Forestry Applications Centre), the topic of her thesis is the impacts of the armed conflict in Syria on biodiversity conservation from a different social, economic and gender perspective. She is also a collaborating researcher at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology ICTA of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She specializes in biodiversity conservation and environmental justice, specifically in Syria. She holds a double master's degree in Mediterranean forests and natural resource management from the University of Nida in Spain and Kara Deniz University in Turkey, and her bachelor's degree is in agricultural engineering from Tishreen University in Syria.

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