

NEW MEDIA TO SUPPORT ARAB WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

We were invited by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to attend the launching of the electronic Arabic information network for Arab women activists on October 26, 2009 in Jordan. The network is dedicated to women activists operating in the field of politics to help them communicate with the women of the world.

Founded in the United States in 1983, NDI has now 60 branches round the world, Egypt included, to support civil society and encourage women on political participation. NDI selects cultured young Arab women, who are dedicated to public work, especially supporting women. Moreover, NDI selects young Arab women, who are dedicated to public work, especially supporting women, from political parties and universities. These young women are trained on networking, communication, and adapting to current developments in the field of women's effective participation in the community.

One of its prime goals is enabling citizens to gain access to the network from Arab towns and villages. This conference was held to launch the Arabic interface of the electronic information network for women activists working in politics. The network was originally launched in English, French, and Spanish, and today it is available in Arabic to give citizens immediate and effective access to information for the sake of empowering women in the coming elections.

Fortunately, modern communication technologies, if applied democratically, would allow for participation and communication between the people without permission. Everyone would be able to acquire information or blog data, ideas, and trends at reasonable prices. Such technologies are amazingly developing every year.

However, this new media is scattered and lacks clear goals with the exception of official websites that present accurate information. Despite its few disadvantages, new media resembles the good coin that chases away the bad one.

The purpose of this network is democratic education in politics, and establishment of good citizenship, good governance, and volunteerism among youth.

I am glad that this conference was keen on communication between generations. The young generation spoke to the older generation, benefiting from their experience and advice. I was impressed by the profoundness of the questions raised by young party members and university students. In addition to their enthusiasm to gain experience, they need to communicate with the older generation to grow wiser and be pioneers for the generations to come.

In our 2010 elections, this network could be used for free in rural areas through internet cafes in villages to support electoral campaigns of women. It can be used for sending

information about a given candidate, fundraising, and the different messages needed by a woman candidate in her electoral campaign.

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