لجنـة الانتخابات المركـزية - فلسطين

Press Release - Jerusalem
09 March 2016

The Central Elections Commission and the European Union support Palestinian civil society organizations in promoting democratic practices

Thirty Palestinian civil society organizations signed today individual grants agreements with the Palestinian Central Elections Commission. The grants are funded by the European Union and will promote the engagement and participation of Palestinian public in future national elections. The activities will be implemented across the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

Civil society organizations and the Central Elections Commission are collaborating to enhance and increase Palestinian's participation in electoral and democratic processes. The project will also ensure Palestinian women and men, young people, and children are better informed as regards democratic electoral processes. A special attention will be paid to the most vulnerable and marginalized. These initiatives ultimately aim to support free, fair, and transparent national elections and promote a culture of participation.

The Chairman of Central Elections Commission, **Dr. Hanna Nasir** said in his remarks at the ceremony: *'This project aims to activate the role of civil society institutions in enhancing political participation among the Palestinian public and strengthen relations with them, since they are one of the main partners of the commission.*'' Dr. Nasir thanked the European Union for funding the projects and the civil society organizations for their creative initiatives.

"*Strong political institutions are institutions empowered by people and accountable to people. This is why democratic processes are important, leading to representative and accountable governments*,'' said the **EU Representative Ralph Tarraf** at the ceremony. ''*Through this project, we want to ensure that Palestinians are confident that their voices are important, that they will be heard, and that they can make a difference. We believe that it will contribute to preparing a generation of Palestinians who truly believe in the values of participation and democracy*.''

During the ceremony that was organized simultaneously in Gaza and Ramallah, the Head of Al-Mizan Center for Human Rights Isam Younis talked on behalf of the civil society institutions in Gaza. In his speech Mr. Younis stated that'' *the launch of the project supports the big and important role the Elections Commission has always assumed in promoting the values of democracy and political participation in partnership with civil society institutions*''. Mr. Younis has also praised ''*the EU's continuous commitment towards enhancing the values*

of democracy and political participation and supporting the existing partnership between the Elections Commission and civil society institutions''.

While Ms. Naela Jweiles, Director General of the Arab Thought Forum, representing the participating institutions from the West Bank thanked in her speech the Elections Commission for its commitment towards the existing strategic partnership with civil society institutions. Jweiles commended the EU's continued support to promoting democracy in the Palestinian society and its civil institutions.

Hisham Kuhail, the CEO of the Commission, gave a briefing on the funded projects that target multiple sectors within the Palestinian society: youth, women, journalists and school students. The projects propose innovative initiatives to reach for the Palestinian public. The initiatives vary between theatre, workshops, art productions, and training sessions, among other activities. Mr. Kuhail shared the selection criteria of the 30 winning organizations that were selected among almost 200 draft proposals presented to the Commission.

The projects are expected to start in two phases, with each phase lasting six months. The first phase shall start in March 2016, while the second phase shall start in May 2016. All projects are expected to be completed before the end of 2016.

Background

The Central Elections Commission established a Fund for Electoral Awareness in 2012. The fund supports electoral activities to be implemented by civil society organizations. These activities address democratic practices, good governance, and political participation. The Commission announces on a regular basis calls for proposals. This round is funded by the European Union.

The EU has recently provided around 2 million Euros for the purpose of maintaining CEC's readiness for upcoming elections, strengthening its institutional capacities and enhancing its civic engagement with election stakeholders. The EU has also contributed 4.5 Million Euros for the construction of permanent CEC headquarters back in the year 2014.

Contact information:

Central Election Commission
Fareed Taamallah, Spokesperson for the Central Election Commission, Mob: 0599 673 005

The Office of the European Union Representative, West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA
Shadi Othman, Tel: +972 (0) 2 541 5867, Mob: +972 (0) 599 673 958,
Inas Abu Shirbi, Tel: +972 (0) 2 541 5867, Mob: +972 (0) 599 673 957
http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/westbank/