

Resourcing Feminist Resistance in the MENA Region

Expression of Interest



Background

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, feminist actors of different forms (initiatives, organisations, groups, movements, individuals) have consistently been fighting for the rights of women and other marginalised communities across various spheres, from legal, cultural, educational, and economic standpoints. These actors have faced a myriad of challenges that hindered their ability to grow or even sustain their work, from global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war to regional events to humanitarian disasters, like the 2023 Syria-Turkey earthquake, to various social and political backlashes, including crackdowns on civil society and defamation campaigns against women human rights defenders. Internally, these actors also grapple with challenges ranging from maintaining their agendas in the context of limited, restricted and politicised funding, burnout and stress leading to high turnover, and capacity gaps.

Such challenges not only limit the grassroots efforts of these actors but also cast a shadow on their very existence, as they tend to have to reshape their goals and visions into an institutional model that fits donor requirements and trends in order to sustain their day-to-day functions, deterring them from identifying and addressing the priorities of their own communities. Apart from that, the political climate of the region causes feminist actors to have limited access to spaces where they can connect, learn, strategise, campaign, exchange knowledge and build strong coalitions. This in turn isolates these actors, weakening their resistance against the ongoing and rising suppressions, backlashes, and hostilities, as they operate in fragmented silos.

Despite this, feminist actors in the region are continuing to emerge with goals that address their local and contextual needs, challenging distant and uniform international, regional and national priorities that abide by (neo)-colonial structures, and pushing for more inclusive approaches to voice their demands that protect and reflect the experiences and needs of their own communities.

About Us

WILPF is a global feminist peace movement with a vision for a world of permanent peace built on foundations of human rights, justice, nonviolence, and equality where people and the planet flourish in harmony. WILPF's mission is to advance feminist peace and demilitarised security by addressing the root causes of violence with a feminist lens and mobilising for nonviolent action.

Within the region, WILPF has been standing firm with women's rights organisations, feminist grassroots groups, and other women-led initiatives in their efforts of building and sustaining vibrant feminist movements and advancing a future of peace, justice, and equality for all.

Our Support

Here at WILPF, we are seeking to support new, emerging and long-standing feminist organisations in the MENA region as they develop their own feminist solutions to address conflicts, injustice and (structural) violence and achieve feminist peace. By doing so, we hope to contribute to an inclusive, intersectional

and powerful peace movement(s) in the region that uplifts its own community. Our support will take shape in three main tracks:

- **Flexible funding:** to be allocated where the actors see fit. This approach was developed to break away from the project-based top-down funding policies that are often driven by donor needs and agendas and allow feminist actors the time and resources to think and act strategically and according to their own needs and agendas. **The funding requested can be up to 40,000 CHF for a period of two years.** *Examples of previous costs covered include administrative costs, salaries, IT support and equipment, office space, legal fees, training spaces and course development, hard-to-fund activities, and community-based initiatives.
- **Safe and emergent spaces for peer exchange, networking and movement building:** to maintain and develop networks and collaboration and foster feminist movement-building locally, nationally, and regionally. These spaces will take place virtually and in person and will adopt a participatory approach to their design that incorporates the input of everyone who is included.
- **Tailored technical support and principled accompaniment:** to identify the key priority areas according to actors' own needs, contexts, and capacities in a participatory approach. This support will be provided through internal expertise, partner organisations, and feminist consultant experts from the region. *Examples of previous support provided include psychological support, gender mainstreaming, financial management, safeguarding from a feminist perspective, gender-sensitive media and communications, crowdfunding, and more.

Where do we come from?

This project builds on the successful implementation of **WILPF's Holistic Feminist Resourcing Approach** under the Feminist Movement for Change in Syria (FMCS) project, in which WILPF's three-pillared approach of flexible funding, tailored technical support, and strengthened networking, coordination and collaboration opportunities was found to have "changed the predominant funding landscape by adhering to an intersectional approach that puts collaborating with Syrian feminist organisations into the foreground".

Through this model, WILPF believes that expanding its approach to wider and more diverse communities will further strengthen the regional feminist peace movement while supporting grassroots efforts that focus on countering and resisting systems of oppression through context-specific peace and justice solutions.

Who are you?

We are inviting whoever fits the below criteria to visit the following link and fill out the **Expression of Interest form**. This call is open for feminist organising that takes shape in collective work (initiatives, organisations, groups, movements... etc.) and meets the below criteria.

Criteria

Demonstrates a track record of conducting feminist grassroots activism through community organising, resistance to the status quo, and patriarchal and militarised structures, aimed at furthering social justice for systematic change and feminist peace.

Be primarily governed, led, and/or directed by people from the community that the organisation seeks to serve.

Focuses on the MENA region in their operational scope and engages with local communities as their target.

Exhibits limitations in receiving funds to operate or execute certain initiatives.

Demonstrates commitment to learn and share knowledge with other organisations.

Is not a current granting partner of WILPF.

How to apply

Please submit an expression of interest by filling out the following **form** by Sunday, November 26, 2023. WILPF will be reviewing applications on a rolling basis as they are received, and organisations may be contacted prior to the deadline to proceed with the second phase of the proposal process. All applicants should expect to hear back by Friday, 22 December, 2023 on whether their application has been shortlisted or unsuccessful.

In case you have any questions or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us on the following email: feministresourcing_mena@wilpf.org and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

*Note

WILPF recognises that the current backlash on feminist and women organisations, groups, and individual activists in the region might deter some organisations from applying for this call. WILPF firmly encourages all interested applicants to apply, as it commits to ensuring that all their data will be protected and handled with the utmost confidentiality and endeavours to ensure that its approach will be sensitive to their contexts.