

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

MULTINATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT POLICY
DIALOGUE

THEOFANIS ZARKOS
ELISABETH SANDFUCHS
January 2013

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Art Exhibition: "Tell me the story about your shoes"- The life of Women in Palestine

The vernissage of the exhibition took place on January 23rd and was organized by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Ulrika Eller-Rüter and Dr. Lydia Thorn-Wickert. The event was an opportunity gain an insight view into the lives of Palestinian women.

The opening of the Art Exhibition: "Tell me the story about your shoes" was accompanied by MEP Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, Chairman of KAS and former President of the European Parliament. Dr. Pöttering emphasized the importance of this exhibition with regard to the current situation in Palestine pointing out that this initiative is a perfect opportunity to connect art and politics and to support the women in this region.

In her speech Mrs Thorn-Wickert of thorn-concept, underlined courage as one of the basic preconditions of happiness and freedom in our society and reflected these two essential parts on Palestine considering the fact that freedom in this region is an important task of the international state community which is not yet fulfilled. Furthermore, Mrs Thorn-Wickert emphasized that art and politics belong together and demonstrate the capacity of historical reflexion. Palestine as a country with a long history is an example of the non-linearity of historical development.

Subsequently, the artist Mrs Eller-Rüter presented two stories of two Palestinian women which were part of this exhibition. Emphasizing the difficulties the two women were challenged with in their lives, such as teenage pregnancy, poverty or their life as a refugee she gave the guests a vivid idea of the life of Palestinian women. Shoes are like hard-disks – they take on the form of the feet that wear them after a while. In this

sense, shoes from the women in Palestine which participated in the project are little pieces of art. The shoes touched the soil, and in Palestine every inch of soil carries history. Whereas the original shoe-wearers are absent, the spectator only sees the photos and shadows which are represented in the exhibition and these tell their stories. Beside the shoes, iron boards have been itched with acid into iron plates in the form of the back profile of the respective shoe-wearer. They will change over time and like that they will deteriorate and become part of their own history.

The UNRWA-representative, Mr Matthias Burchard, documented the current situation in Palestine where in a situation of intermittent violence and interruption of infrastructures the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's work focuses on the improvement of living conditions and the increase of self-reliance of refugees. Nevertheless, it is still a long way to go especially with regard to health programmes and refugee camps. However, the current accomplishments of UNRWA in Palestine are persuasive, for example in the area of education.

Mrs Ghada Arafat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Palestine gave an introduction on the role of Palestinian women in politics and society. She emphasized that women in Palestine work in all spheres of life and that Palestine is one of the most advanced countries as concerns women rights and liberty.

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