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STUDENT'S NAME: Carla Boulos
SUPERVISORS'S NAME: Dr. Carla Ferstman
DISSERTATION TITLE The change in gender roles in the Syrian conflict and its effect on women`s rights ----- ----- ----- -----

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Supervisor:

Dr. Carla Ferstman

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(The change in gender roles in the Syrian conflict and its effect on women`s rights)

Name: Carla Boulos

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Abstract:

This paper will examine the shortcomings in covering the changing in the gender dynamics in the Syrian context and for Syrian women who are living outside Syria due to conflict. It aims to explore the effect of conflict on the gender role by taking the socio-economic perspective to analyse the data. It also aims to point out the opportunities that the conflict could create in order to push for a positive change in women`s rights with taking into consideration the negative effect of the war concerning gender-based violence. These points will be addressed by critically and carefully examining a wide range of secondary data such as international organisations reports, United Nations documents, and grassroots data, and observations with a variety of academic publications from international writers. This paper will provide a background on the Syrian context about the legal framework, and social norms concerning women`s rights, it found that the gaps in the laws and the harmful practices of customs and traditions are both discriminating against Syrian women and affecting their lifestyle. Furthermore, by analysing the data regarding the shift of gender roles, it has found that there is an individual transformation in the Achieved status for women as a result of their active participation in the workforce sector. Nevertheless, it found that the role of Syrian actors (Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society, Stakeholders, and Key figures) in collaboration with international actors is significant in order to achieve a sustainable positive change in women`s rights.

Introduction:

Syria has been in a conflict situation for more than eight years; the conflict has made many changes in Syrians lives aspects. Gender roles are one of these aspects. Syrian women have stepped out from the social stereotype traditional role to engage actively in the public sphere. Could this new situation positively affect women's rights in Syria and how? This paper aims to answer the posed question and to do that, the opening chapter will provide a brief background about the Syrian legal framework in relation to women`s rights, with pointing out on several articles in the Syrian Personal code and the Penal code. After that, it will explain the social gender norms in Syria, shedding light on the religion, customs, and traditions affect the women`s lives. Second chapter will analyze the gender term and discuss the theoretical framework on

how gender norms could change from the Marxist feminist perspective and the social perspective. It will also illustrate the factors that could be involved in making differences in gender roles, by highlighting the roles of conflict and economic changes. In addition to mentioning the relation between gender based violence and economic empowerment for women, with pointing out on different theories perspectives. Then, will mention examples of how the change in gender roles is happening for Syrian women, with covering both the negative and positive effects of these changes inside and outside Syria.

At the end of the second chapter, I will describe my analytical framework on how gender roles are changing in Syria and how positive change can be maintained, based on theories and research that I have addressed. Further, on, chapter three will discuss the changes that happened in Kosovo and Tunis in terms of women's rights, and the role of the international community, local and international Non-governmental organisations, stakeholders, and civil society in demanding and promoting women's rights. Then, in order to take a step further on the way of equality in Syria I will suggest recommendations for the Syrian actors based on the Kosovo and Tunisian experiences. I have chosen Tunis and Kosovo because of the similarity between them and Syria in terms of social norms. Moreover, women's rights have been changing in Kosovo after the armed conflict and in Tunis after the revolution. Finally, I will briefly conclude this research with my point of view which represents that changes are happening, not as a result of best circumstances, but if the Syrians know how to create opportunities from the bloody chaos in the country. That would lead the next Syrian generations of women and men to equally participate in building Syria

Methodology and limitations:

This research was completed by a comprehensive literature review. Therefore, the study took a qualitative approach and reviewed a wide spectrum of secondary data such as academic writings, non-governmental organisation (NGO), international organisation reports, news articles, as well as UN documents, institution researches on the gender roles and change. This study is based on other researchers and writers work in relation to gender and women's rights. Those writings were analysed, and combined, to establish a new analysis framework related to the change in gender roles in Syria. Moreover, this paper has considered Kosovo and Tunis experiences in women's rights as case studies, in order to finalize the recommendations for the Syrian communities regarding achieving equality. However, gaps within the methodology exist, this

paper would have been more reliable in case of finding more specific references about the topic in the Syrian context. Reaching statistics or cases about Syrian women was hard, and in some situations, not available, that is because of the Syrian conservative type in relation to these issues in addition that the Syrian government does not publish any specific details about what is happening in the Syrian courts. Moreover, field research would have reached more consistent data, unfortunately, due to a lack of time and resources, this was not possible. Finally, it should be mentioned, that many factors could play different roles in gender dynamics, and that could change from settings to settings, so it is hard to identify all these settings in one research.

Chapter One

***Background about the Syrian context**

1- The legal framework of women's rights in Syria

The patriarchal system that is built on the idea of inequality has affected the concept of citizenship and the rights and the duties of citizens. Which by time has limited the role of women in participating and building the social and political system (Aldoughli, n.d.). Sharabi argues, that state structures in Arab Societies repeat the patriarchy system that is based on the family level, where the individuals are not considered as the building block of the society, while the family is, and often ruled by a patriarch (Abu-Assab, 2012) "Between ruler and ruled, between father and child, there exist only vertical relations: in both settings the paternal will is the absolute will" (Sharabi 1988: 7). The Syrian social system is built on a family perspective, where the family composes the core of the Syrian society. The concept of the Syrian family is built on a hierarchy system, where it is the man's responsibility to protect the family and especially women's honour, along with taking the valid decisions regarding family members' lives. The state imposes its authorities on women's lives and bodies under the mask of protection, which allows the law to violate women's rights under the umbrella of protecting the nation's honour (Aldoughli, n.d.). The discrimination against women in Syria has been built on two main bases, the society on one hand, which includes discriminatory customs

and traditions, and on the other hand the patriarchal political system that allow the rule of law to violate women's rights.

The legal system in Syria has been affected by the Ottoman, French, and Islamic law (Sharia). Since 1920, until now, five constitutions have governed Syria. The current constitution has been established since February 2012, after the 1973 constitution. Article 33 from constitution 2012 states, that "Citizens shall be equal in rights and duties without discrimination among them on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or creed". (Gov.Sy, 2019) Article 23 state that "The state shall provide women with all opportunities enabling them to effectively and fully contribute to the political, economic, social and cultural life, and the state shall work on removing the restrictions that prevent their development and participation in building society". (Gov.Sy, 2019) Article 33 guarantees equality between all Syrian people, and article 23 guarantees support for Syrian women in the main sectors, such as political and economic divisions, but in fact, the Syrian law has many articles that contradict the constitution principles. The Syrian law discriminate and violate women's rights in many legislations. The Personal Status Law (PSL) or Family Law, the penal code, and the nationality law, have been discriminating against women, from more than 50 years ago. (Musawasyr.org, 2019) The Syrian penal code has been violating Syrian women's rights since 1949. Some of its discrimination regulations are:

Article 508: Before 2011, the perpetrator of seducing, kidnaping, and raping will be free of punishment if he marries the victim for a marriage that lasts at least 5 years. The victim should live with her rapist as his wife for five years living the trauma again each day (Musawasyr.org, 2019). In 2011, this law has been modified, but it still provides dilute judgment to sentence the perpetrator just for two years in case he married the victim. (Musawasyr.org, 2019)

Article 473: the law discriminates between men and women in relation to adultery, where it sentences the wife from three months to two years in jail, while it sentences the husband from one month to 1 year. Moreover, in order for the law to sentence the husband, his marriage betrayal should be committed exclusively in the marital home, whereas the punishment for the adulterer's wife is not related to this condition. (Musawasyr.org, 2019)

Article 548: this law is related to honor murder crimes. From 1949 the men are sentenced to 6 month to 2 years if they murder the wife or female relative if he saw her in an immoral status. In 2011, the punishment has been amendment to sentence the perpetrator from 5 years to 7 years. While article 530 punishes the murderer at least 15 years of jail with hardship, and could reach the capital punishment sentence. (Musawasyr.org, 2019)

Article 506: which specified under crimes against morality and public morals. The law provides that every person lewd remarks to a person above 15 years of age shall be liable to a penalty of up to 3 days in prison or 75 Syrian pounds, which is now less than 10cent (Penal Code, arts. 505-506). It is also significant to mention that the penal code does not contain any articles that protects women from the marital rape or any domestic violence, because it is considered under the taboo of private marriage life. It is noticeable from these articles that the Syrian law does not protect women from violations either in private or public spheres, but it provides dilute and discriminatory laws that could not be as a deterrent against crimes. (Musawasyr.org, 2019). In terms of reproductive health, under the article 525 the penal code sentences all the actions that are related to abortion. It states that each woman that chooses to do abortion is punished from 6 months to 3 years of jail (Dresslar, 2019). Other discrimination that Syrian women are facing is the nationality law, where women are not allowed to give their nationality to their children in case they are married to non-Syrian men, while on the other hand men have this right as per law number 276 article, 2. However while Syrian nationality is mainly granted from one's father, it is not the only rule of the Nationality Law (Syria.law, 2019). In addition to having a Syrian father, other cases allow persons to be considered as Syrian nationals. Such exclusion contain when persons are born to a Syrian mother in Syria but are unable to determine whom the father is. (Syria.law, 2019)

Another law that has many discrimination articles against women is the Syrian personal status law (SPSL) No.59 of 1953 that covers family matters, such as marriage, divorce, custody, and inheritance. The SPSL include 308 articles that has been formed mainly according to Hanafi Islamic doctrine. (Habib, 2018) Article 305 states any matters that are not covered in the law No.59 should be ruled according to Hanafi Islamic doctrine (Habib, 2018). SPSL articles apply on all Syrian people, except two articles, 307 and 308 that includes different provision in relation to marriage and polygamy, divorce, and inheritance to Druze,

Christian, and Jewish communities. For example, Christian and Druze men polygamy is prohibited while for Muslim men it is allowed. In this case, this law is submitting inequality between women themselves. (Habib, 2018) Articles 260 until 304 include the provisions of public inheritance. Regarding inheritance the Syrian law depends on the verse 4:11-12 from the Quran, that states “a male should inherit twice the portion inherited by a female; a widow either 1/4 or 1/8 from the deceased husband; and a widower 1/2 or 1/4 from the deceased wife. Parents get 1/6 each and if no children, the mother gets 1/3” (Quran 4:11-12). This law is an obvious discrimination against women’s rights, where Muslim men have the right to inherit double than what women should inherit (Anon, 2019). However, the SPSL has many more articles that do not guarantee equality between men and women, and since 1953, this law has been the same, with a few shallow amendments.

Recently on February 5, 2019, the People’s Assembly of Syria approved adjustments to more than 60 articles of the Personal Status Law (Musawasyr.org, 2019) .These amendments have barely changed anything in the law for example, Hussain a Syrian lawyer said, in terms of article 20 that is related to the right of the woman to approve her marriage was totally in the guard ship hands (Musawasyr.org, 2019) . Even though after the amendments the female still does not have the right to take a decision for her marriage, although if she is over 18 years old. The law states that the guardian should approve the marriage, and in case of not approving, the female could raise the case to the court were the judge takes the decision depending on his opinion. (Musawasyr.org, 2019) He continues saying that this law does not assure any freedom for females. Moreover, civil marriage is still forbidden and early marriage is still allowed under some articles and that not all the amendments should violate the Sharia (Islamic law) (Musawasyr.org, 2019). Some Syrian civil society organizations declare that while some of the amendments are positive they are still an inadequate step toward a modern civil family law that brings equality to all citizens. (Musawasyr.org, 2019).

Even though we cannot deny that the Syrian domestic law has ruled equality in some levels, for example, in terms of the right to work, the Syrian women have the right to work in any domain and career that they want, economical, industrial, etc. They also have the right to ask for a loan and sign contracts. It is significant to mention that the Syrian law prohibit the discriminations between men and women regarding the work

payment (Musawasyr.org, 2019). Moreover, in terms of the political rights, the Syrian women have the right to vote since 1949, and the right to be an active member in the political life, and take part of the political system and participate in parliament. (AL'ama 2019). However, in reality, the participation of women in political power and decision making, as in paid employment, not worth to mention where only around 9% of judgeships in Syria and 12.5% of the parliament seats are woman. (Naciri and Nusair, 2003; Karma, 2011)

The Syrian reservations on the CEDAW

Gender based violence has been recognized at the international level as a violation of human rights. Syria has ratified several human rights conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and regarding the women's right they ratified in 2003 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Claiminghumanrights.org, 2019). However, this ratification has many reservations on several core articles on the CEDAW. The articles that are subjected to reservations are, article 2; article 9, paragraph 2, regarding the right of women to pass the nationality to her children; article 15, paragraph 4, regarding freedom of movement and residence; article 16, paragraph 1 (c), (d), (f), and (g), regarding equal rights in the family matters and responsibilities and at its dissolution concerning to the guardianship, the right to elect a family name, and adoption; article 16, paragraph 2, regarding the legal effect of child marriage (Bayefsky.com, 2019). The Syrian government has excused these ratifications under the mask of Sharia law, customs, and traditions. (Bayefsky.com, 2019). Many countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom have objected these reservations by saying that applying them would expose women to discrimination, and that completely is against the core of the CEDAW. From a local perspective, these reservations legally support the discrimination against women, and give men the power to manipulate women and marginalising them. (Bayefsky.com, 2019).

In 2003 the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs has been established, it is responsible as a government body to promote and protect women's rights in Syria. In addition, to prepare the initial State party CEDAW report (UNICEF, 2011). However, Syria until now does not have a law that prohibits gender based discrimination, or any mechanism to receive individual complaints of rights violations. (UNICEF, 2011)

2- Social norms in the Syrian context

Like many other subjects that were affected by customs and traditions, a woman's life has not been exceptional. In fact, customs, traditions, and religion have more effects on women than the law sometimes. As I mentioned before that the Syrian family is the heart of the society. In Syria, the family controls the individual, and the community controls the family. What I mean is that people lose their individuality in order to satisfy the family and the community demands. For example, the main goal for men and women is to get married in order to create a family and fit in the system. The customs and traditions divide the roles in the family depending on the gender (Habib, 2018). It limits the capabilities of women into the box of housewife duties, cleaning, cooking, taking care of children, satisfy their men sexual desires and obey their husbands. This is the ideal Syrian wife in the eyes of the society, while the role of men is to work outside the home and support the family financially. Religion plays a vital role in shaping the stereotype around gender, the majority of the Syrian society are Muslim, and the rest are from other minorities such as Christianity (Habib, 2018). The Scholar Shah relates this type of gender roles traditions to the interpretations of some Quran quotes. For example, we can find a clear gender inequality issue between men and women when regarding the Qawwamun verse.

The problem starts from Sura 4:32 that says: "Men are the [qawwamun] protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means." (Sura 4:32 Quran). The common explanation for that verse actually sustained the social concept of women being less physically and mentally qualified than men. (Shah, 2006). There are many different explanations for the meaning of "Qawwamun"; For instance, Barbara Stowasser presented the conservative scholars' opinions on the verse. They see that each men and women have a certain task; as men have the qualifications and skills that God gave them as a privilege to conserve and protect women. While women are responsible for the private sphere tasks, giving birth and raising children, not worrying about business and work as they are protected under men's guardians. (Shah, 2006). On the other hand, Tabari has a more liberal vision. He believes that the verse is basically related to the domestic relations between men and women in the society, as men lead the relationship, and women obey them for their mindfulness. Moreover, Abdullah Yusuf Ali illustrates Qawwamun from an economical side, because in that

era, men were mainly responsible for the financial issues of their families. From this perspective, they are "Qawwamun" on the women, but regarding Ismail Ragi al-Faruqi's argument, the socioeconomic circumstances in this era are widely different from it used to be back then, as women work nowadays, and they no longer depend financially on their men. (Shah, 2006)

However, these quotes have been rooted in the Syrian society and used from a patriarchal perspective as an excuse for discrimination against women. Moreover, many men in the Syrian community think that they have the right to physically and emotionally violate women, as they are the leader and the guardian, and women are sub-standard compared to them (DW. 2019). They support their argument with the Verse 4:34 from the Quran, which is another problematic verse in relation to gender-based violence. The verse declares that "As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them, refuse to share their beds and beat them". (Verse 4:34 Quran) The term nashiz (disobedient) is a humiliating adjective used to describe women many questions and discussions revolve this verse; like why is the term "nashiz" only specified to women? (Shah, 2006 p20; Ali, 2000).

The consequences of that verse as it is applied in the community is the spreading of the patriarchy power and controlling women in the societies. Others also point out to several other verses contradicts with this verse, for instance "O Mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)." (Shah, 2006 p20; Ali, 2000).The problem that society picks what works for its own interest from the Quran only to maintain the patriarchal system. To properly understand the Quran's concept of gender equality, it is significant to look holistically at all the verses of the Quran that handle women's rights and explain them in the suitable historical and social context (Shah, 2006). From a liberal prospect, contextualising Islamic law is not only conceivable but also vital for modern Muslims.

The patriarchal society has raised women to be ashamed if they have been violated. It blames wives that they have neglected their duties or did not obey their husbands (DW. 2019). Moreover, they even blame her if she was raped excusing the crime with the way she dresses or the way she walks. Many Syrian women have been exposed to domestic violence and they remained silent for many reasons. First, many women used to be financially dependent on the husband, so they fear losing their financial support and be

homeless. A woman of these would go back to her family asking for protection, but as an alternative, her family's advice would be for her to stay with the husband as he is the father of her children and that he has the right to do so(Dalati et al., 2019;Manshoor, 2019). This reaction is based on the family fear from the society perspective on their daughters that if she gets divorced she might not be able to marry another man in the future. Second, the lack of public protection in terms of law and safe shelters, that is also a reason of the women remain silent. (Chinkin and Rees, 2018; Dalati et al., 2019)

The society enforce different types of pressure in relation to women marriage, it interfere in women's personal life and choices. The image of women is related to the concept of honour, for example, some families force their daughters to get married early under protection perspective principles, even if they are 14 or 15 years old (Dalati et al., 2019). This way of thinking leads the society to commit honour crimes against women. Any man could commit such a crime if he sees or thinks that one of his female relatives is having a relationship with a man. He may kill the woman and feels proud that he protected the family's name. 'Ghasalna al A'ar' (Dalati et al., 2019). The Syrian women's rights activist Rima Flehan commented on the concept of honour crime by saying: "We as women's rights activists have always been against the idea of linking crime to honour."(Dalati et al., 2019)The danger of attaching words such as "shame", "scandal", and "honour" to crime, is that the structure and culture of society is reflected by its language, which in one way or another is affecting the formation of collective thought. Its essence pushes to deal with it differently, such as in honour crimes. (Dalati et al., 2019)

In my perspective, calling this murder as an "Honour" crime mitigates the impact of the incident and give the perpetrators a defense and an excuse for his crime, while the term 'Murder' divests the action from any justification. When people raised through culture use the honour crime expression by the time that would lead to removing the moral barrier of committing this crime. I mean, we are dealing with two harmful cultural victims the Killer and the killed. Moreover, other types of society pressure, the customs and traditions puts women in a position to get married at a certain age between 20 and 25 and once the women reach 30 years old, they started calling her 'Anes' as an insult to her for not being married. That puts pressure on women and in some cases force her to get married even if she is not convinced. (Manshoor, 2019).The Syrian community is affected by the social norms more than the rule of law, many Syrians are not aware of their

rights and of the Syrian constitutions, but they have been raised in a way that customs and traditions frame their lifestyle. Therefore, equal rights are not just a matter of legislation, but even when women sometimes have the right in law, they would not ask for it following their traditions principle. Thus, in order to create a change in the Syrian society, actors should work on both, new legislation, and society awareness.

Chapter Two

***The change in gender roles due to the Syrian conflict**

1. The change in gender roles for Syrian women inside and outside Syria.

A- Explanation of gender dynamics in general and what are the factors that could affect this dynamic (the theoretical framework):

Every society is structured around relatively constant patterns that establish how social interaction will be performed. Status is one of the vital structures that organize social interaction; it is a position and a category that describes how the person who occupies the status should be addressed and defined. Obtaining status is a voluntary act that each individual achieves through their own effort it called Achieved status, while people born with Ascribed status or they have been categorized with involuntary ones through life. (Lindsey, 2005) For example, sex is an Ascribed status; people are born with it, while gender is an Achieved status, it must be learned. Ascribed Status comparing to Achieved status is the one that is directly affecting almost every aspect of people's lives. Father, lawyer, and patient are a status example that could describe the same individual, and people could be categorized with a different number of statuses together. (Lindsey, 2005).

Moreover, a role is a concept that is related to status. It is derived from expected action and behavior, and it is performed according to social norms, which are common rules that lead people's action depending on the type of the situation (Lindsey, 2005). Females, males, mothers, fathers, and many more are types of

status with different normative roles criteria related to them. Social structure, statuses, roles, and established social norms, prescribe and predict people's behavior and interaction with other people who occupy different social status. Sometimes normative role behavior becomes so strict and could limit people's behavior to a certain form; when this happens, it is developed into a stereotype. Although stereotypes could contain positive traits, they typically hold negative traits that could be used as an explanation for discrimination against members of a given group (Lindsey, 2005). For example, one of the traditional gender stereotype roles is that males are the ones who are supposed to be educated and the head of their family, who engage and occupy the public sphere. While, the female's responsibility is to cook, clean, and take care of her husband and children, somehow her role is limited to the private sphere domain. (Sherifat et al., 2014) The previous example could fit under the sexual division of labor term that has been used from Marxist-feminist literature. This term is used to refer to conceptual and material ordering that has been based on sexual differences between men and women, and how it forms the roles, norms, and the rights in the family, work sectors, and communities with important consideration to women's reproductive capacity. Feminist Marxists argue that the patriarchal system has been rooted in the production structure which affects women's status in the labor sector. Marxism feminism concept reflects two types of analysis, the macro sociology, and the micro sociology. Macro sociology perspective on gender roles drives attention on the data that is collected on large measure phenomena, such as labor force, and educational and political matters, that have differences according to gender roles. While Micro sociological perspective points out the data that is collected in small groups and on the details of gender interaction that is happening in that groups. For example, the relationship between couples, relatives' groups, and in the family. (Lindsey, 2005). Rae Blumberg and Janet Chafetz found that the most significant cause for gender inequalities is the shortage of economic power, that cause different types of discriminations which include marriage, parenthood, and sexuality. "The division of labor by gender at the macro (societal) level reinforces that of the household. This dynamic is an important source of women's disadvantaged position and the stability of the gender system" (Moghadam, 2003, p15). Moreover, Marxism feminism scholars, in general, believe that economic security and emotional dependence are related, the husband domination could enhance as a result of the women's fear of losing her economic security. (Lindsey, 2005)

The term 'gender' in sociological perspective is used to point out the given meaning for feminine and masculine and the unequal power relations and different social perspective between them. Judith Lorber defines gender as "a process of social construction, a system of social stratification, and an institution that structures every aspect of our lives because of its embeddedness in the family, the workplace, and the state, as well as in sexuality, language, and culture." (Lorber, 1994, p. 5). Lorber and other feminists see gender as a solid tool for social discrimination, taking into consideration that class, ethnicity, and race are elaborated as part of gender differences. The combination between the sociological perspective and Marxist- feminist perspective, leads to consider the sex/gender system as a cultural concept, constructed itself from the social structure. Therefore, the gender system is not stable, where it changes depending on the setting, such as industrial, developing, and agricultural settings. The political type and state system have an important effect on the gender scheme, for example, the Liberal, Marxist, Social democratic, or non-patriarchal all have had different legislation regarding women and different policies regarding family. So, gender roles do not function in one stable way across time and places, they are dynamic, and they change depending on different elements. (Moghadam 2003, Abu-Assab2012). The academic research for Overseas Development Institute that has been conducted by professional gender experts such as Caroline Harper mentioned that the change in gender norms could happen for different reasons such as economic changes, new laws and politics, conflict, and displacement that lead to a change in gender roles. (Marcus,Harper et al., 2015)

How gender norms change?

Societies change through time, so do the gender norms, the change could happen quickly or slowly that most people barely notice it. From figure 1, we can see that many factors could trigger this change to happen. These factors are mainly categorized under two types, individual factors, and broad drivers. Conflict and displacement, economic change, demographic change such as immigration and urbanization, new legislation and education all could drive changes in gender norms. New legislation or changes in law and policies could create the top-down approach transformation in norms starting from the system changes and ending with the individual changes. Moreover, individual drivers, such as socio-economic circumstances, individual agency, groups, families, and communities could also create a positive or

negative change in gender norms, for example, individuals could mobilize themselves as a group and start demanding to create a change in particular norm attitude (Marcus et al., 2015). This type of activism associated with bottom-up approach when changes start with individuals, family, and then communities. It is important to mention as well that several different drivers could combine and create changes, but that is difficult somehow to identify. (Marcus et al., 2015)

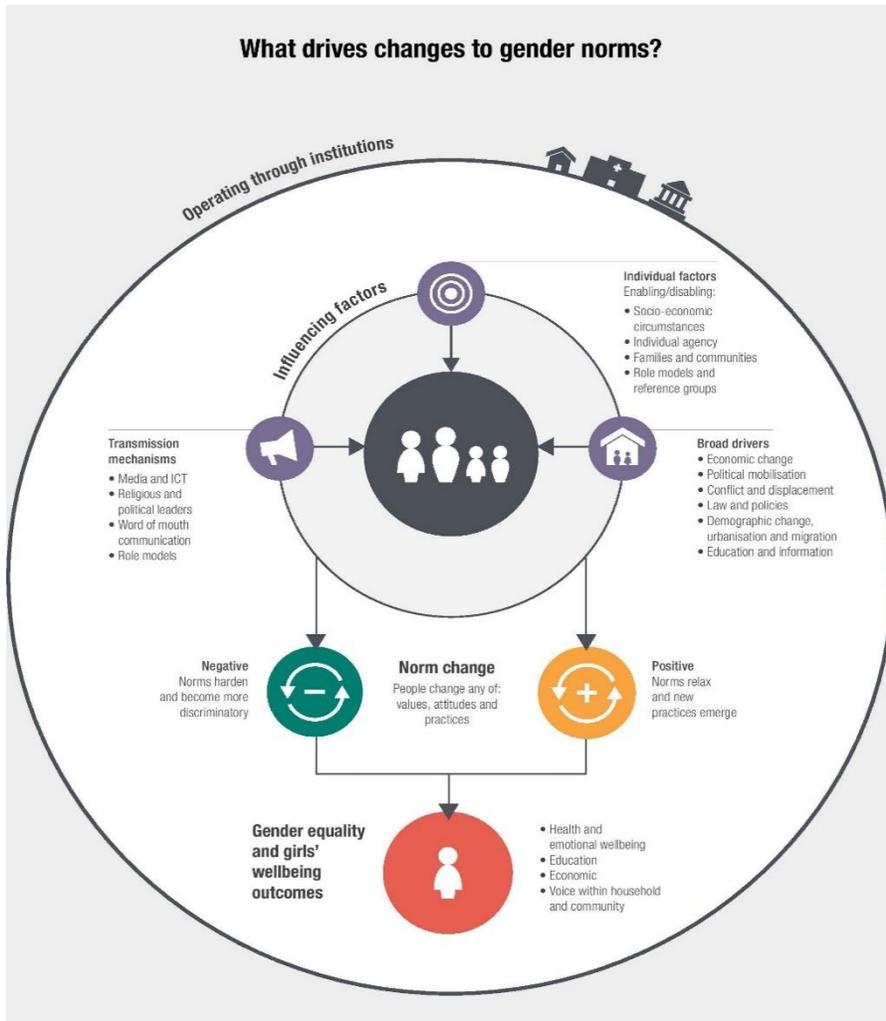


Figure 1 (Marcus et al., 2015, p4)

As it has been mentioned before, conflict, economic changes, law, and other factors, which are stated in figure 1 could challenge the traditional gender norms. I will focus more on how conflict creates this change especially that the conflict itself create shifts in economic gender matters, with mentioning, in general, the effect of other factors such as economic change, changes in law and policies, and individual factors. It has been argued that conflict or vital change in politics could change the stereotype around masculinity and femininity, or let people work in jobs that do not fit the society gender traditional perspective in order to fulfill their basic needs (Byrne, 1996). During the conflict, gender identities used to be challenging. Therefore, by the end of the conflict, it usually inflates further questions around what type of gender identities will remain. Oftentimes, the circumstances of war require women to go beyond their culturally appointed roles, despite the increased workloads, women may benefit from constraining the sources and from changes in the gender division of labour. These types of changes might have a liberating impact on women and result in changes in gender ideologies. Notably, these changes could likewise have social costs such as reintegrating into the society. (Byrne, 1996)

Feminist have argued that conflict challenges the assumptions about 'normal' gender roles. It exposes the change in traditional roles, needs, and characteristics for men and women, which are reproduced in the family structure change and household and the increase in the economic role of women. (Baksh-Soodeen, R., et al, 2005). Moreover, political conflict or war could create social changes that the political and economic status of women is part of, which came with an increase in political activities and gender awareness for women. The famous example of gender studies analysis in the war is World War II; war conditions have had a significant transformation regarding women's position in the labor system. Ruth Milkman argues that what suddenly happened in the United States from economic mobilizations has made changes that empowered women to advocate for equality, but that was somehow not the situation after the war for the USA, because the women returned to their own traditional roles, as it is known now by feminine mystique status. (Milkman, 1987) That does not deny at all the increase in women's labor force after World War II in the western counties that were involved. Some authors like Dr. Mary Chamie started discovering the complicated relationship between gender, awareness, and social change that strongly refers to the link between the war and the beginning of the second wave of feminism after two decades. (Moghadam, 2003)

Furthermore, the Middle East has faced numerous wars and political conflicts since the 1950 with different circumstances on women and society in general. The unpredictable result of the economic crisis that happened due to war is the increase in the girl education proportion and the work opportunities for women in the Middle East. For example, a research about the effect of war on University education that has been conducted by Aisha Harb Zureik in Lebanon, presented that Fathers feel more empowered when their daughters obtain higher education because higher education means financial resources, better husband qualification, and job opportunities. The higher education certificate is like a safe boat for women in case her marriage is unsuccessful or remained single. (Zureik, 1991). After the 1986 Iranian revolution, a study about women's engagement in the workforce surprisingly showed that women are still a part of the labor force even after the radical Islamic ideologies movements that were against women's labor empowerment. While in Iraq, a study by Maryam Poya illustrated that women were increasingly involved in education and health sectors as teachers and nurses while Iraq was at war with Iran and men were mobilized in conflict (Poya, 1991; Moghadam, 2003). One of the obvious cases of political conflict impact is the Palestinian case, the forced displacement movement to the Palestinians by the Israeli occupation from their villages to other villages has made changes in the Palestinian rural areas and the family's structure. The prolonged uprising that has mobilized and organized numerous Palestinians had a positive effect on women's role; women were able to participate as political activists. The political participation of Palestinian women activists has expanded in the 1970s either in Palestine or in the refugee's camps in Lebanon. Moreover, in 1987, Palestinian women organized themselves in political independent impressive groups who have had political voices in the Palestinians cases. This change has also contributed to empowering the feminism ideologies, that Palestinian writers such as Samira Azzam and Fadwa Tuqan to criticize the patriarchal system in their published work. (Moghadam, 2003)

Economic changes in general, such as opening or ending some opportunities could lead to transformation in gender roles that could make changes in the gender norms and gender stereotypes. In practice, the change in the norms takes time and could happen after the change in gender roles. For instance, the change in the work type for women happen before the change of labor equality norm. In India and Bangladesh, the change in gender norms that occurred after women started engaging in the workforce, has been driven from the acknowledgment of the economic benefits of their work. (Marcus et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the research found that 'urbanising' is most likely to carry more democratic gender norms that reflect on the education and employment opportunities for women that in turn decreases exposure to harm tradition structure. (Marcus et al. 2015) Migrants to urban areas have a high chance to get introduced to new cultures, meet people from different ethnicities, and get exposed to new style and perspectives of life. Migration whether inside the country or outside could have a similar effect, and open the door for new gender roles opportunities for both women and men that it would have been beyond their origin communities traditional limit of gender roles. Vis versa migration could impose harming and discriminating gender norms, for example, when conservative communities stick to their traditions as a part of keeping their origin identity in the new environment. (World Bank 2012, Marcus et al. 2015). Laws and policies could also make differences in gender norms, by presenting and formulating new customs, or legalise the norms that has been changing. They could lead to a change in people's behaviour that by itself could reflect on their way of thinking. (World Bank 2012, Marcus et al. 2015) The change that has happened among the Hmong communities in northern Vietnam is an example of how the combination between the schools new fee reductions policy, and the government awareness campaign about the importance of education for girls up to grade nine has become a norm (Marcus et al. 2015). Another example, when governments give equal inheritance rights for both men and women that not only weakens the norm that give men more than women but by the time, it will change the inheritance tradition in the society. This type of legislation made changes on the assets ownership, by including and empowering women to take productive decisions related to their properties. (World Bank 2012, Marcus et al. 2015)

Individual drivers, what effect individuals to espouse to new norms and when?

Socioeconomic circumstances: The capability and wellness of people to adapt new gender norms and practice it, is affected by their economic situation. That is more often mean people with high economic statuses are more likely to push gender norms limitation and ask for a change, with society social respect and support. However, this is not always the case; for example, one of the strongest supporters for change could be people who are just above the poverty line. People usually adapt new concepts and practices that could fit with their personal beliefs (Marcus et al., 2015). The personal beliefs could be old rooted ideas that reflect the family setting or could be newly adopted. Moreover, people also change and adapt new norms,

because of their fear from the negative society reaction if they did not adapt the new wave of ideas, so they change in order to avoid being insulted or sometimes violated. Furthermore, while some new practices expanded through a simple process of imitation from other people's actions, aware people think about the bad effects and circumstances of the old norms with considering the value of change, could make the changing process faster and easier. These opportunities increase when people are not socially isolated but exposed to awareness session, trainings, education and campaign. (Marcus et al., 2015)

Individual Agency and Resilience: adopting new gender norms or challenging traditional gender roles could expose people to criticism and gossip. People who want to change should be resilience and believe strongly with the need of change in order to be able to create it. For that, most girl's empowerment programmes include self- confidence support (World Bank 2012, Marcus et al. 2015). Many factors affect the individual agency such as personal characterize, family support, and social status. For example, in terms of the family, individuals sometimes struggles to convince their family in their decisions in case of continuing education, or engaging in labour force, they spent a long time trying to fight the patriarchal family role in order to have what they want individually (Marcus et al., 2015). Autonomy and agency are significant conditions for any action. Individual autonomy allows people to question the norm, costumes, and traditions that they practice which affect their choices and their lives, and trigger them to take action when change is required. People believe in their capacities that mobilise material or social resources, in order to make their selections of the reality world. The autonomy is an essential element for agency, autonomy without the ability to reach the resources is somehow "passive capacity". As van Staveren (2011, 1) denoted; "agency without resources is rather meaningless when being able to make one's own choices and having the self-confidence to do so are not matched by any real opportunities to choose from. (Alkire ,2002; Robeyns, 2003)". (World Bank,2012, P21). In my perspective, Non-Governmental organizations, civil society, and governmental institutions, could play a vital role to enhance the agency through providing people with the right resources in order to empower their way of living.

Figure one points out on the dynamic transmission mechanism into society in creating the change. Everything new, such as concepts, ideas and practices, are spread through everyday communication and relations, and what people say to each other and how they deliver what they saw in the society. (Marcus et

al., 2015). Moreover, religion, politics, media, and stakeholders play a significant role in the social norm and gender roles changes. It can be said, the norm and the role change when a sufficient number of people believe and adopt the new norm. (Marcus et al., 2015)

B- How the armed conflict in Syria affects the gender roles and what are the positive and the negative impact of that

In February 2011, the war started in Syria as a part of the Arab spring movements. Many parties took part in the conflict, such as the Syrian government, rebel groups, terrorist foundations, international authorities, and religious groups. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of Syrian refugees all around the world is around 5.6 million and the number of the internal displacement people is around 6.6 million (Human Rights Watch, 2019)

The war affected the Syrian social fabric, culture, economy and gender roles. For example, there is a transformation in the Syrian workforce; women are currently working in fields and opportunities that were previously just associated to men. While the Syrian men got involved in the armed conflict, which led to many of them to be away from their families, therefore women became the household heads and held the responsibility of the family. (Abu-Assab, 2012) Mariah Saadeh, a Syrian women's rights activist and former independent member of the Syrian parliament said, "The traditional role of women is changing because of the war, women's responsibility is in the family, and they dominate the majority of the work in the place of men". (Syria, 2019). Syrian women have not been historically an effective part of the workforce, for example, according to United Nations (UN) in 2013, 13.5% of the women were involved in the Syrian labour force, while men involved are 72.7%. There is a slight increase in unemployability comparison between 2005 and 2013 statistics is around 1.5% difference, 9.2% in 2005 and 10.8% in 2013. (Hudock, Sherman and Williamson, 2016). According to the World Bank data, Syria is ranked behind other MENA countries regarding the percentage of women labour force, it is ranked as the lowest country. (Hudock, Sherman and Williamson, 2016). Moreover, according to Global Gender Gap reports in Syria, the participation of women in economic dropped from 22% in 2010 to 14% in 2015, that does not mean that the participation of women disappeared, but it is more likely women, have taken the lead on informal and smaller-scale types of jobs, such as healthcare provision and informal education sector. Further on, women's contribution in

entrepreneurship programs has improved from 4.4% in 2009 to 22.4% in 2017. (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2017)

As we mentioned before the main reason behind this low percentage of women in the labor force is the Syrian social norms that stereotyped the role of women in houses serving their husbands and occupying the private sphere. Moreover, several surveys conducted in Syria illustrate that Syrians consider women should only get engaged in workforce if the husband is not able to economically support the family (Hudock, Sherman and Williamson, 2016). A survey that was conducted in May 2017 by the Jordan-based organization Bareeq Education and Development targeted Syrian women over the age of 18 inside and outside the country, showed that 81% among 1,006 participants said that, the social norms in Syria actually stand against women's success (Worldcrunch.com, 2019). However, since 2011 humanitarian organisations began reporting about the increase in women's participation in several sectors such as civil society organisations (CSOs), and local governing council. The percentage of women participating is different from one city to another (Hudock, Sherman and Williamson, 2016). According to Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy report; in 2015, Syrian females were the head households of 12% up to 17% of the Syrian households (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2017). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), for example, empowers female-headed households through providing vocational trainings and emergency employment opportunities given women's skills. The UNDP in 2016 provided 6,103 job opportunities. The number increased to reach 22,263 in 2017. (UNDP, 2016; UNDP, 2017). Additionally, Syrian women has formed 65% of the economically active population in agriculture, with a growth of six percent compared to 2009, at the agricultural manufacture in 2015. (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016). However, many local and international organisations engaged women in traditional gender vocational trainings, such as hairdressers, embroidery, and tailoring instead of focusing on empowering the women in other careers to support their agency and other dialogue skills. Therefore, the relationship between engaging in economic activity and the change in gender roles is not always the case. From my perspective, it is the role of organisations to implement programs in other dimensions and not to underestimate women's capabilities by labeling their workshops and training under feminine concept. (Abu-Assab, 2012)

Furthermore, women are being the significant majority in some work sectors. The families need has forced many women to engage in roles that were unlikely possible before the war. Mariah Saadeh said that in Damascus there are many factories that are almost run by women only. She also said that, "They work in restaurants, in services. They go to factories. They do agriculture. They make the handmade things. They are the base today for the future." (Worldcrunch.com, 2019) (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016)

Syrian women have many stories to tell about the changes in their roles. The fifty years old Oum Mohammad started to sell vegetables on a wooden wheelbarrow in Latakia street's souq, and took her son Mohamad spot after he joined the army and died in the war. Oum Mohammad described the people's reaction to her situation by saying that she had noticed how people looked shocked and surprised, and how they showed sympathy on her situation (Syria Direct, 2019). Abu Alaa, the proprietor of a block-making production line, had offered jobs to two women. One of them as a truck driver and the other as a truck block loader. Abu Alaa knows these women and their situation well, and he felt miserable about these women and how they need to work under tough conditions in order to fulfil their basic family's needs (Syria Direct, 2019). Tahani, the 50 years old woman who lives in Beirut, Lebanon, is working in a cafeteria after she took a training on food hygiene and catering run by Caritas. She is spending her day at her job with her Syrian colleges finding solace in preparing and serving food. Tahani said that by going to work every day, she is doing something she loves as well as considering this job a way to support her family. (UNHCR,2014)

The Syrian government has started to open new types of jobs for women, for example, Samer Haddad the director of the Public Transportation Company in Damascus, has announced that the company is accepting women as bus drivers. The hiring procedure began after the agreement with the Local Ministry of Transportation; this decision was a result of the lack in manpower. (Syria Direct, 2019). Basically, women have been engaged in different types of work from vegetable sellers to vehicle drivers. Nour a young Syrian student, commented on this change by saying that she is not surprised anymore when she sees a woman driving a taxi, in contrast she feel more secure even if that was not common in Syrian society before. (Syria Direct, 2019). As we noticed, the changes have had different effects on women's lives, some of them have been facing difficult situations and worked in terrible conditions, while on the other hand it was a positive opportunity for women to be independent. However, the question is, would this change remain in the post

conflict context? Some Syrians think that by the end of the conflict when the Syrians return, they will try to rebuild the past familiar situation in society in order to feel normal (Worldcrunch.com, 2019). That could lead to a conservative movement in the society, whereas the Syrian women's rights defenders believe that women's participation in building Syria will increase and become sustainable and that requires hard work in order to achieve it to all. The activist Saadeh said "I think if there's a percentage of men who do not accept women working but if they do not accept women working, they will pay the price, because women today do everything If they stop working that will create a lot of trouble". (Worldcrunch.com, 2019). In my perspective, in order to keep these changes in the post conflict era, organisations with civil society groups could play a vital role, depending on the projects and programmes that will be implemented, and how will they deal with this change in a way to make it sustainable. For example, to include gender mainstreaming perspective as a basic tool in their programme procedure planning.

The negative effect of change in gender roles

On the other hand, the change in gender roles also has negative circumstances on different levels, such as physiological, education, and protection. There are many examples about Syrian women who started working outside their houses, but that does not mean that all of them are happy about this change. Some women prefer the traditional gender roles that they are used to, they said that now they should handle two types of responsibilities and that it is hard to manage, while before they were just responsible on certain household tasks. (Abu-Assab2012; Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016) The change in gender roles has affected Syrian adolescent girls' lives who had to drop from their schools in order to support their families' economical. (Abu-Assab2012; Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016). For some of them the war forced them to beg for money or provide survival sex, which is sex for basics needs like food, and health supplier (BBC News, 2019). In the south of the country, Syrian women have been sexually exploited by men that distributed aid delivery items on behalf of international organisations such as United Nations. Women were even afraid to go to distribution points, because the society will assume that they will offer sex to get the aid. Ms. Spencer from care international organisation commented on that exploitation by saying:

"Sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls has been ignored, it has been known about and ignored for seven years, the UN and the system as it currently stands have chosen for women's bodies to be sacrificed". (BBC News, 2019).

Ms. Spencer claimed that international agencies were aware about this exploitation but they have chosen to provide the aid anyway. (BBC News, 2019). Moreover, a gender based violence assessment that has been conducted by The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) shows that humanitarian aid was being exchanged for sex in several cities in Syria. (BBC News, 2019). Further on, in some cases violence against women and children has increased because of self-esteem feeling and frustration among men refugees to use their masculinity negatively (Oxfam) (El-Masri, Harvey and Garwood, 2013). Besides, there are many examples about gender-based violence against refugee women especially when they go outside their houses such as sexual harassment, physical violence, and rape. Women and girls are seen as vulnerable groups, especially widowed or women without any male protection, some women at camps pretend talking with their husbands on the phone in order to protect themselves from the violence (to be seen protected somehow). In addition, early marriage has been increasing either as a coping mechanism or as a result of the financial pressure. (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016). That lead us to talk about the change in gender roles in the refugee context. As we mentioned before that around 5 million Syrians are refugees in other countries, about 2.5 million of them are refugees hosted by the Syrian border countries, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. (Amnesty.org, 2019)

The Syrian families in these countries have faced several issues related to residency and the right to work, these problems established opportunities and challenges in terms of gender roles. (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016). For example, men were not able to move from one place to another in order to work or to buy supplies, because of the check points that would ask for their residency papers and many of them do not have them. Therefore, in many cases, the household head transferred to the women, because they have been able to work and cross the checkpoint, usually the checkpoint do not ask women and children for their paper and the women's movement are much easier than men who are afraid of being deported or detent (Buecher and Aniyamuzaala, 2016). According to Tahrir report, Female headed household formed 30 percent of Syrian refugee families in Lebanon, and 40% in Jordan (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East

Policy, 2017). Many Syrian women have started working in small-scale income activities such as home based work in food or knotting. This type of income is not stable and depends on customer's goodwill. Men perspective was divided between those who are not satisfied and those who are happy with this new role for their wives and feeling grateful for the women effort (El-Masri, Harvey and Garwood, 2013). On the other hand, women themselves have different opinions about their new roles; some of them are feeling that they have lost their femininity by these new tasks from going to the supermarket, and to work outside the house. On the other hand, many Syrians are feeling that these changes brought a good opportunity to change the traditional role of women, and have supported and empowered them. (El-Masri, Harvey and Garwood, 2013). However, Syrian women have had different experiences in European countries as well. For example, in Berlin, Germany, some of them said that they felt that they are separated from their husbands, and they have been treated as an independent person in terms of working on their asylum and integration procedures. While back in Syria, men used to handle the work on the official papers. A young Syrian married woman called Samira Said, "Here I felt for the first time that my husband and I are two separate persons, not one". (Habib, 2018, p15) Moreover, in terms of cultural differences especially for conservative women, the European social norms and lifestyle is totally new for them, some of these new norms has empowered them as they said that women in Europe are independent and have the same rights as men. This gave them the opportunity to reform their life, by studying, working, empower their marriage, or even ask for divorce because the law in Germany protects women's rights and that they do not need to worry about financial support or child custody which are a problem in Syria. (Habib, 2018)

On the other hand, Syrian women who are living in the United Kingdom, share different perspectives. Some felt physically tired because of the external responsibilities outside the household, and socially they felt isolated by losing the daily relations with their relatives back home, and the support that the close community provides them with, also difficulties in building that type of networks in The UK. (Nasser-Eddin, 2017)

An elderly woman said, "Nothing has changed in the UK in terms of our roles as women; we do the exact same things, we take care of the kids, cook, and clean. The main thing that has changed is that we do not

have our extended families here. Back home in Syria, or even when we were in Lebanon, I used to see my sisters and I had a great social life". (Nasser-Eddin, 2017)

On the one hand, at the end of the conflict, problems of repatriation and rehabilitation start to rise. It is difficult for many of these returnees, especially those who came back from refugee camps that the future ahead is vague and extremely uncertain. Notably, many of these refugees come back with no official support or even legal papers, sometimes to finish some business or because their current situation is much worse than being in their conflicted country. Women who have no male protection encounter new dangerous situations than the ones they used to at the time they escaped. Female-headed households in particular, will be able to uphold their claims on resources. (Byrne, 1996) On the other hand, when refugees return, they could bring new perspectives on gender roles that are depending on the experiences, which they have lived in different countries abroad. (Byrne, 1996)

2- Could the change in term of economic power decrease gender-based violence?

As it has been mentioned before, research and statistics highlighted that there is a change in gender roles in Syria, especially in terms of work exchange roles and women economic empowerment. The question here is could that type of changes support women to be free from gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive problem globally. GBV is defined as "an umbrella concept that describes any form of violence used to establish, enforce, or perpetuate gender inequalities and keep in place unequal gender-power relations." (UNHCR, 2019). This includes intimate partner physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence, non-partner physical or sexual violence, child marriage, and female genital cutting. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual in nature, and can take the form of a denial of resources or access to services. It inflicts harm on women, girls, men and boys. (UNHCR, 2019). Economic empowerment is one of the key factors that has been considered as an important intervention in order to reduce (GBV) among women and girls. Some theories have showed that empowering women

economically would support women's position and decrease their weakness towards violence. Other theories have showed that GBV increased when women get more access to income and workforce domain. The society context and culture in addition to the empowerment programs and strategies have a valid effect on the relation between GBV and economic empowerment for women. (Mejia et al., 2014)

Family stress theory is one of the theories that support the statement of women economic empowerment (WEE) decrease the violence towards them. It states that low income and the pressure of unemployment contributes to the physical, sexual and psychological violence by a current or former partner (IPV). Therefore, if the violence has been a result of financial problems, the economic input from the women should decrease that stress and by its turn decrease the violence. (Mejia et al., 2014). Moreover, the followers of the Dependence theory and the Marital theory support as well that the decrease of violence could happen through WEE. From their point of view, economic empowerment gives women independence and empower them to take decisions, and control over their lives. As a result, the women could leave their abusive husbands if that was the case. While women who are financially supported by men, might not be able to leave or negotiate with the partner regarding family issues or sexual matters. The relation between women's economic empowerment and the violence in previous years has been documented in more than 20 different sites in the world, and showed different results. What is important to point out is the Egypt context which is a similar to the Syrian has showed a significant decrease in violence against women who are engaged in the workforce and have an income. (Kishor and Johnson, 2004). Nevertheless, on the other hand, the supporters of the Resource theory mentioned that one of the family dynamic powers include a resource system that could lose its balance if women took control of the income. Which could increase the tendency of violence from men, in order to lead again and control the women. (Mejia et al., 2014) Likewise the supporter of the Relative theory suppose that violence towards women could increase if men feel threatened to lose their household positions because of the women's economic empowerment. Moreover, the cultural perspective and the traditional gender norms that only see men as the controller of the economical income increase that threat. (Mejia et al., 2014)

However, Resource and Relatives theories, have been criticized by gendered resource theorist, they point out that the Relatives theory generalise gender norms stereotype by assuming that all men wants to be

household heads and the main source of income, disregarding the cultural and gender ideologies changes. Moreover, they also suggest that if the partner have more equal perspectives of gender ideologies that would not increase the violence towards empowered women (Atkinson and Greenstein, 2005). Besides, researchers have highlighted that women's risk towards violence is linked to men employment status Macmillan and Gartner found that women's risk toward violence increases if their male partners are unemployed, while decreases if their partners are employed. (Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2003; Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004; Roushdy, 2004 ; Vyas and Watts, 2009) .Further on, The socio-ecological model suggests that women and girls' risk of exploitation to GBV is affected by different and multiconnected factors, and that happens among Society, Community, Family/Partner Relationships, and Individual levels. Moreover, socio-ecological model could be used as a concept for responding and preventing GBV. For instance, the factors that could increase the risk of exposing women and girls to violence are mainly the shortage in education and the shortage in socio-economic status (SES). Likewise, similar factors could drive men to practicing violation, such as drugs and alcohol use; low SES, child abuse and violence receive. Furthermore, at the society and community level, many factors also play a major role in enhancing the GBV, such as social norms that support connecting masculinity with the role of sole household protector, and the norms that normalise violence against women from men by stating it as a part of discipline and control on women's behavior. Moreover, weak legal systems against gender-based violence, and low community income are affecting the risk of exploiting to violence. Therefore, the intervention of women's economic empowerment by using the Socioecological model, can target individual factors like women`s shortage to financial support, education and loan, and it also empowers economical skills and challenges the harmful and traditional gender roles by enhancing and spreading more equal gender social norms in society. (Vyas and Watts, 2009 ; Mejia et al., 2014)

I am not suggesting that the economic empowerment could decrease the gender based violence for sure, but my aim from this discussion is to highlight the positive possibilities from this relation. In particular, as I mentioned before, the Syrian women have been economically independent in many situations because of the conflict.

Analysis Framework:

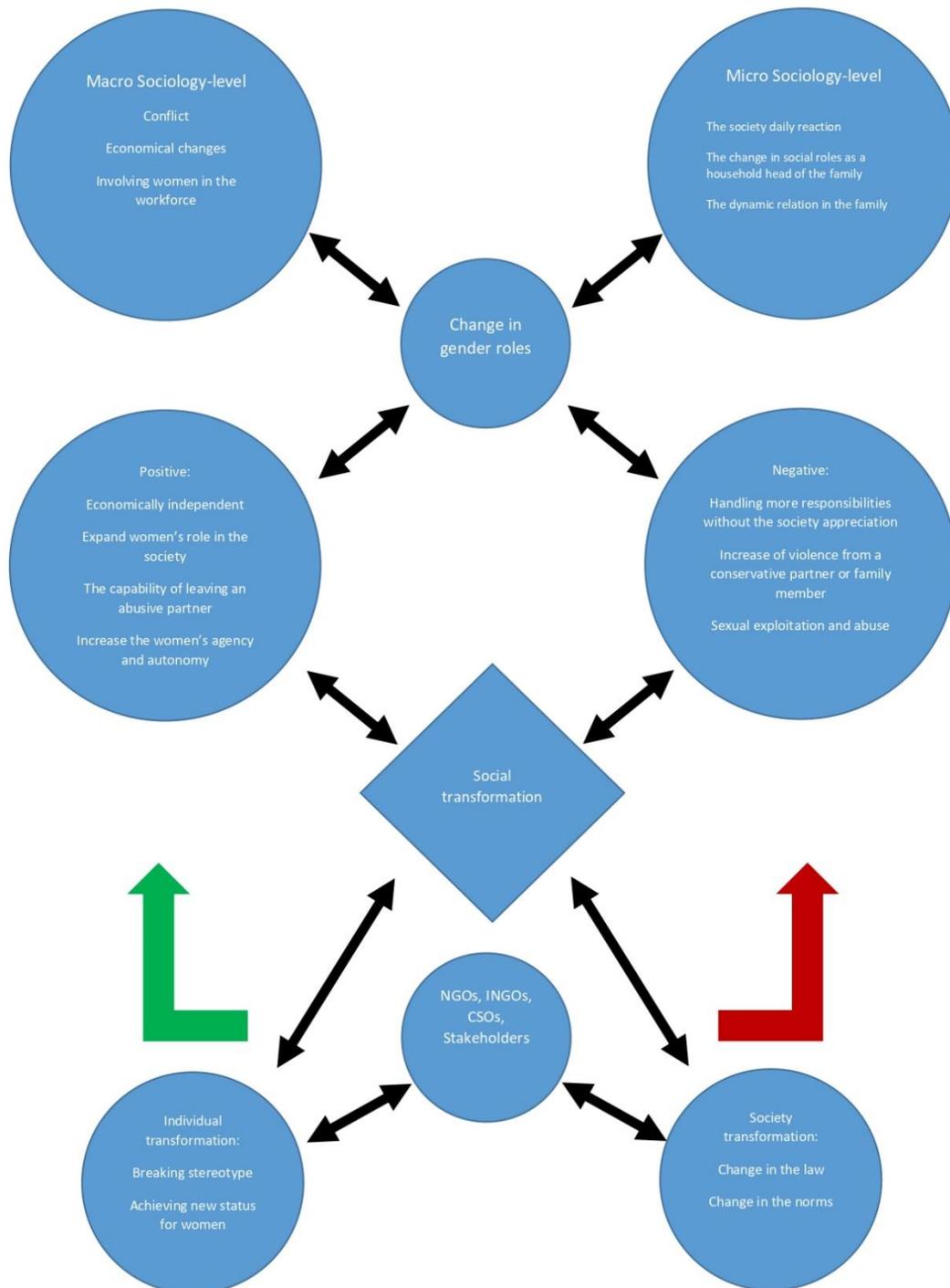


Figure 2 -The change in gender roles in Syria

Figure 2 displays my analysis of the gender roles changes that are happening in Syria, from the Marxist feminism concept that includes two types of analysis; the Macro Sociology-level and the Micro Sociology-level, in addition to the Overseas Development Institute, figure 1 “ what drives change to gender norms”. The change in gender roles in Syria that has been happening on Macro Sociology-level includes the broad drivers of change which are; conflict, and what did the conflict do from economic changes, and involving women in the workforce, while the Micro Sociology Level includes the individual factors which are; the societies daily reaction between each other during conflict, the change in the social roles for women as a head of household of the family, and the relationship dynamics in the family. These Macro and Micro changes produced positive and negative changes in the Syrian society in relation to gender roles. The positive changes mainly are affected by the economic changes that have happened in Syria, which is leading women to be economically independent and expanding their role in the society from being just occupying the private sphere to effectively engage in the public sphere. Moreover, they have the power to choose and make decisions that have influenced not only on them, but on the society as well. Reforming their lives, includes the capability of saying no to the abuser, as I mentioned before, many examples that declare these changes in the Syrian context, such as the UNDP statistics, provided 6,103 job opportunities in 2016 and 22,263 in 2017 to females as head of household. Also, depending on Care international report that 65% of the economically active population in agriculture in 2015 were women. However, the negative effect from these changes cannot be ignored; for instance, the increase in the gender-based violence against women either from their partner, family, or the society. Moreover, the new roles have made women handle many responsibilities and face physical and psychological challenges. Further on, as I mentioned before, depending on the UNFPA report that sexual exploitation has been happening towards vulnerable women in several Syrian cities.

These elements are creating changes in the Syrian social interaction concept and that in turn, is affecting the Achieved status of women gender roles as Lindsey argues, that the status is part of the social interaction structure and gender categorised under the Achieved status. Achieved status could be earned or selected and it reflects an individual's skills, efforts, and abilities. Syrian women due to their new roles, their skills, abilities and efforts are changing as well, that in turn is giving them a new Achieved status depending on their situations. Previously, we mentioned many examples where women were saying that they can see

themselves after this change as an independent individual. This individual transformation is breaking the gender stereotype around the typical image of the Syrian women, from being passive to active actors in the society by engaging in the socio-economic life. These changes in the women's status are still happening until now on an individual level, in order to sustain the positive transformation and expand it to reach a society transformation, Non-governmental organisations, civil society and stakeholders should interfere. These actors could play two roles in parallel, on the one hand, enhance the positive factors and decrease the negative factors that we have mentioned before through special organised programmes and activities. On the other hand, working on several strategies to drive new laws in the Syrian legal framework that could protect women's rights and sustain the positive change that is happening in gender roles. As it has been mentioned, in the Overseas Development Institute research, new policies and laws could make many differences in gender norms by presenting and formulating new customs or legalise the norms that have been changing. That may change people's behaviour, and by the time, change their way of thinking.

Reaching this positive change, needs hard work from the Syrian actors along with Syrian women agencies, believing together that they deserve equality and that they can achieve it. How should Syrian actors work in order to reach that? I will discuss that in the next chapter by taking Kosovo and Tunisia contexts as case studies.

Chapter 3:

***Kosovo and Tunis Case Studies**

1- Kosovo Case Study

A- Kosovo war and international intervention

In February 1998, an armed conflict started in Kosovo between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, and Montenegro) which governed Kosovo before the war, and the Albanian rebel group Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) interfered in this war on the late March 1999 supporting the KLA against the Republic of Yugoslavia. In June 1999, NATO and Yugoslavia signed a peace agreement to end the Kosovo War. By 2008, Kosovo declared itself as an independent country, yet Serbia and numerous of other countries do not recognise Kosovo as an independent nation. (Hehir,2010)

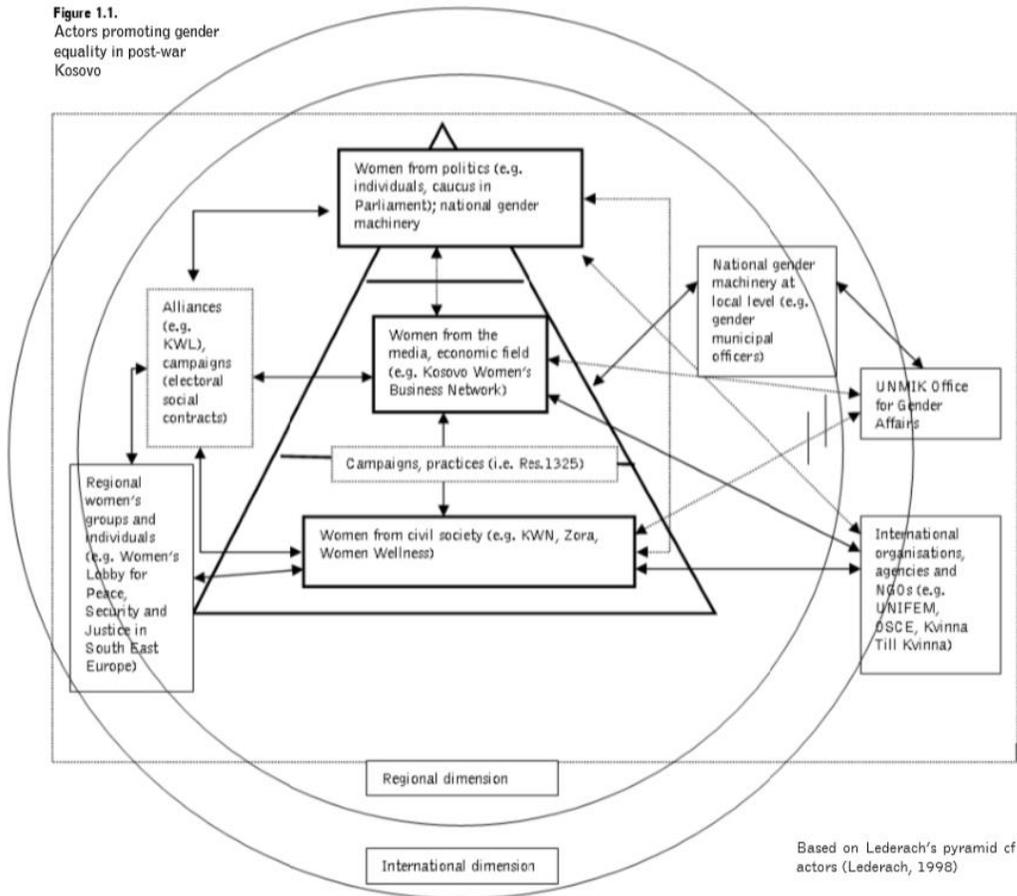
The international intervention was not limited to military intervention. In 1999, the United Nations Security Council has established resolution No. 1244, which declares the need of an international civil presence in Kosovo to sustain the peace, security, and ensure a normal life for people who live in Kosovo. The international appearance has been manifested through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) that works through international human rights standards without political interference to support the local Kosovar law institutions towards best practices and sustainability. (Hehir,2010)

Since the UN administrative mission has started in Kosovo, the domestic law of the country has been influenced by international human rights standards (Morina, Korenica and Doli, 2011). For example, the UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/24 state that all individuals who are responsible of public tasks or occupy public positions in Kosovo should internationally commit to the international human rights standards during the course of the legal regulatory functions of the UN Mission, especially, The Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 10 December 1948; (b) The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the other conventions such as the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (Morina, Korenica and Doli, 2011) The international standards have challenged the dominant norms in Kosovo and have been an example of new expendable trends in international relations (Morina, Korenica and Doli, 2011). That has appeared when the Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance in Kosovo used the same international logic in drafting the domestic laws. Even that the UN did not apply clear parameters regarding the relationship between international law and national law. It appeared that both domestic and international frames have roots to a legal culture of reflecting the accepted global values. (Morina,KorenicaandDoli,2011)

B- Kosovo and women's rights

Kosovar society is known as a patriarchal society, where Kosovar men are the main leaders and decision-makers. That has been reflected in their domestic law in terms of discrimination against women's rights, especially, in family law such as the right of inheritance. As well as, in the criminal law regarding the absence of specific law against gender-based violence, which is similar to the Syrian legal framework situation towards women (Crawford et al., 2019). However, this discrimination against women in law started to change gradually after the creating of the Kosovar convention in 2008. For example, in 2010, the Kosovar government adopted a Law and a National Strategy against domestic violence. (openDemocracy, 2019). These types of changes did not come from anything, Kosovar women, civil society, and the national and international organisations have played a vital role. Kosovar women have been activists in both, during and post-conflict. After their husbands got involved in the war, Kosovar women were able to handle both the positive and negative conflict obstacles impacts of the change in their gender roles through working inside and outside the house, engaging in civil society, organising feminist movements, and advocating for their rights. (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008) The traditional marginalising of women's role from being a decision-maker during and after the war in Kosovo cannot hide the truth of their vital role in peacebuilding and promoting gender equality that is important to build an inclusive society. In parallel with the international community that joined Kosovo under the 1244 resolution, along with the local actors, aimed to promote comprehensive peace that is required to take gender under consideration to be truly inclusive. Moreover, to resolve the conflict from several axes, post-war Kosovo should drive beyond those, which led to the armed conflict and embraced other problems such as gender-hierarchies (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008). Furthermore, the position of Kosovo as the international administrative status has created an opportunity to benefit from the international pro-gender equality commitments, as compiled in the UN resolution number 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008). Therefore, national and international factors have been playing a vital role in equal legislation. In order to have a deeper scoop about how international and national actors have been promoting gender equality in the post-war period, figure number (3) shows the dynamics based on Literacy's pyramid.

Figure 1.1.
Actors promoting gender
equality in post-war
Kosovo



5.1. International and local actors: potential and challenges of a complex relation

(Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008, p16)

In the three-level pyramid, we can identify the active pro gender equality local actors and the regional and international contexts that surround or infuse the local context. The first level mobilizes the political, religious and military decision-making. This level contains only a few numbers of pro gender activists, because of the traditions of the patriarchal community that has limited the capability of the political and military decision-making process to men. These political women activists work on the transformation of gender relations in the procedure of post-war rehabilitation as well as working on building relations and horizontal networks with the political parties (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008). However, they lack coordination with the men and the political parties who come from different ethnicities. The second level of the pyramid contains the social sector leaders, who can push for social change. Who are individuals and groups of women who

for example work in media or economic sector. They have a vision about the capacity and skills that Kosovar women have (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008). The third level of the pyramid includes the community-based level, which contains; civil society and local organisations who support women's rights and gender equality. At that level, several NGOs were established just for the financial benefits, which have generated an untrustworthy situation between the organisation and the people even though the real feminist organisations who are working to sustain equality, along with the existing local organisations that have already built trust with the people. The pyramid is surrounded by active international actors who played a vital role in terms of gender equality and affecting the local actors. Despite the international actors in Kosovo being in an external circle, they played a national and international role at the same time by addressing local actors with a top-down approach from outside and horizontal relations with the different levels of local actors (Villemas, Gema and de la Morena, 2008). However, the Kosovo case shows how the international human rights law could affect and combine with the national law, but that does not exclude the role of grassroots groups, organisation, and local stakeholders. The law needs the support of the local community to have the trust of the people. For example, after the changes that happened regarding the inheritance law that gave women equality on the law paper (World Bank, 2019). Women in 2014 owned only 15% of the property in Kosovo with an 8% increase from 2012, but still so far from the rate in other Balkan countries and worldwide. The law indeed offers equal rights in terms of inheritance but, when the issue comes up in courts, women often waive their rights of family property shares to their male relatives. (World Bank, 2019). UN Women in 2015 has started awareness programmes about women's legal rights in Kosovo in order to give them the knowledge and empowerment to demand their rights. (Unmikonline.org, 2019). When we are talking about gender issues in Kosovo, it is worth mentioning conflict-related sexual violence against women. Depending on statistics from the Centre for Disease Control of Atlanta in 1999, around 20,000 women and girls were raped in the war (UN Women, 2016). After a few years of the war, reports started to spread, people started to talk and activists began to ask for women's rights. Talking was not an easy thing for these victims, rape in the Kosovar community seen as a shame for the family honour, besides, many victims have been exposed to physical violence from their family.

Numerous actors have put a significant effort to support the survivors' rights. The innovative structure of the National Council on the Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War in Kosovo, intended to address

the recognised imminent needs of survivors, in parallel with the dedicated work of civil society and members of parliament to reach legislative recognition of survivors (UN Women, 2016). Dr. Rushiti, a feminist activist, has opened the Kosovo Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT) centre in the worst affected area in Kosovo. The center is to provide treatment to the Kosovo war survivors as a door to build trust and help treat their psychological wounds. Kosovar women have gradually started talking to Dr. Rushiti about their massive and terrifying rape stories that they suffered from, as well as talking about their vulnerable current situations. (McVeigh, 2019). Dr. Rushiti worked hard to raise their voices with other actors to encourage a reaction from the government side. (McVeigh, 2019) In February 2018, the Kosovar government recognised the sexual violence war survivors and it established a legislative framework to provide reparations for sexual violence conflict survivors. (McVeigh, 2019). Activists, civil society, and actors have succeeded in delivering survived Kosovar women's voices, in this case, to reach one step closer to justice and rights. The Kosovar case, in my opinion, gives hope and many lessons learned to Syrian activist. With taking into consideration, that the two cases are different in terms of the international administrative that has played a significant role in advancing women's rights in Kosovo, but that was not the only trigger for change.

2- Tunis Case Study:

A- Background about Tunisian Context in relation to women's rights:

Tunis and Syria before the Tunisian revolution have had some similarities in several law articles related to women's rights, in terms of the family sphere. This similarity is because both countries depend on the Sharia law in their Personal Status Code, and to the close culture and traditions that are based on Islam. However, Tunis is a famous country in the MENA region with its modernity regarding women's rights. (El Said, Meari and Pratt, 2015) After Tunis independence from the French colonialism, Habib Bourguiba had ruled Tunis from 1957 to 1987. Bourguiba followed a modernist, secular and socialist model of governance. He made a brave fundamental reforming of the Code of Personal Status (CPS) that included abandoning polygamy and creating amendment in relation to marriage and divorce laws, such like the judicial procedure for

divorce, the equal approval of men and women in marriage, and guarantee equal education and participation in workforce rights (El Said, Meari and Pratt, 2015). Bourguiba's amendment in the CPS has built an important base of the legal framework for gender equality in Tunisia. These changes had oppositions from some Islamic scholars, but the government proposed a liberal interpretation to Sharia without changing the core values. That means that Bourguiba kept the Shariah frame. Moreover, he kept some of the legislations that are based on Sharia such as the discrimination in inheritance law (El Said, Meari and Pratt, 2015). Even though Bourguiba has boosted the law in favour of equality that does not neglect his patriarchal based system and the marginalisation of civil societies and the local feminism movement. After Bourguiba, Zine El Abidine Ben-Ali followed the same leading models of Bourguiba, he kept the modernise image of Tunisia trying to separate the culture and religion from the law, he also legalised women's rights in abortion in 1973. The amendment that has been made in CPS has created changes in women's life. For example, official statistics on 2011 showed that women's participation in the labour force increased to reach 27% and in terms of women's engaging in senior professional positions, where 40% of teachers, 30% of judges, 70% of pharmacists, and 40% of doctors were women. However, even with that modernised approach regarding women's rights in Bourguiba and Ben-Ali's governments, women's engagement in national political structure levels stayed limited. (El Said, Meari and Pratt, 2015). It has been argued that Ben-Ali used the gender equality discourse as a tool to legitimise nationally and internationally his patriarchal way of leading. Hence, any women's movement that does not support Ben-Ali's agenda, was often targeted by the authorities or was enforced to include several activities under larger state-sponsored feminism who were used to promote his masculine politics. (El Said, Meari and Pratt, 2015) Nevertheless, some feminist organisations such like the Association of Tunisian Democratic Women (ATFD) and the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development (AFTURD) were able to raise their voices and push the government for more equal rights, for example; equality in inheritance, and asking for more women protection like penalising rape in marriage and rape in general, as well as asking for removing all the reservation on the CEDAW (Honwana, 2013). These demands of change that Ben Ali was hesitating to implement as he was trying to avoid the social conflict, particularly with Islamists. However, in 1998 these organisations succeeded to let the government issuing the right of custody for a single mother

of her child from the biological father. Also, in 2004 the government legalised a law to punish sexual harassment. (Honwana, 2013).

B- Women's rights after the revolution:

On the 17th of December 2011, the revolution started in Tunisia after a young man burned himself publicly in the street, as a reaction on the bad economic circumstances and unemployment suffering. On the same day, many people started protesting about unemployment and hardship, the movement expanded and protesters demanded Ben-Ali to resign from his responsibilities at January 14, 2011. (Honwana, 2013)

After the revolution, the Ennahda; Islamic democratic political party took the lead in the country, Ennahda stated that they would commit to defend women's rights and they vowed not to impose the Sharia in the state law. Since then, the conflict about the role of religion in legislation and society has started. The extremist Islamic groups who are led by Salafists are mobilised to support framing the law on Islamic Sharia basics, they organized marches and they tried to limit women's rights that have been stated in the CPS in 1956. All that has put pressure on Ennahda and prevented them from keeping their promises to retain the modernise leading (Honwana, 2013). In July 2012, while considering the new constitution, the parliamentary committee of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) suggested article 27 that guarantee women's rights protection under the rule of complementarity to men in the family and as an associate for men in the country's development (Honwana, 2013). The previous article gained a significant amount of criticism from the Tunisians, as many consider it as a banner between the freedom of women and human rights and has limited the status of women in the society to her relationship with men. The Tunisian activists raised their voices defending women's rights, in August 13, 2012, thousands of men and women participated in a protest march on Tunisian women's day against article 27 demanding women's rights. Civil society, human rights organisation, local NGO`s and Tunisian citizens, gathered demanding equality, and change, and exposing the failure of Ennahda in leading the country. This march has been marked with its diversity, women wearing veils beside unveiled women demanding the same rights and men marching beside women shouting and promoting together for women's rights. Ben Ayad, a young man came with his family saying that he brought his children to let them know that it is possible to have a balance between democracy,

equality, and development from one side and Islam from the other side. The NCA removed article 27 under civil society pressure to then publish the new constitution draft in December 2012. (Honwana, 2013)

However, in 2014 the Tunisian government has ratified the new Tunisian constitution, which led Ennahda to leave the governance and leave the leadership to Al Sebsi, the first democratically elected president in Tunisian history. It is important to mention that Al Sebsi is no longer a president as he died in July 2019. (euronews, 2019). During the Al Sebsi presidential leading period, Tunisia had a revolution in terms of women's rights law, Moreover, on August 13, 2017, Al Sebsi established the commission for Individual Freedoms and Equality, and he mandated it with recommending reforms. (Human Right Watch,2019a)

“Relating to individual freedoms and equality, which stem from the provisions of the constitution of January 27, 2014, international human rights standards, and current trends in the area of freedoms and equality”. (Human Rights Watch, 2019a). On July 24, 2018, around 90 civil society groups and organisations in Tunisia issued a pact for equality and individual freedom, pointing out the essential rights that the Tunisian individuals should have (Human Rights Watch, 2019a). The commission for Individual Freedom and Equality report includes several recommendations such as securing equal inheritance rights for women and men, the elimination of the gender-based violence and respect sexual freedom and gender orientation which means decriminalising Sodomy as well. Al Sebsi approved to legalise a law that guarantees equal inheritance rights, he also referred it to the Tunisian parliament to negotiate and ratify it (Human Rights Watch, 2019a). However, the Tunisian parliament on July 2017 has passed the law of elimination of all forms of violence against women after many hearing sessions with the civil society groups, and women's organizations that demanded action from the government to respond to the inequality and violence against Tunisian women (Human Rights Watch, 2019b). The law went into effect in February 2018. Violence against women is defined in the law as; “any physical, moral, sexual or economic aggression against women based on discrimination between the two sexes and resulting in damage or physical, sexual, psychological or economic suffering to the woman, including threats of such aggression, pressure or deprivation of rights and freedoms, both in public and private life” (Human Rights Watch, 2019b).

The definition covers four significant types of violence; economic, physical, moral, and sexual, as well as including the public and the private spheres. It includes the critical elements of the international definition from the United Nations Handbook about violence against women as well. (Human Rights Watch, 2019b)

The new law targets the violence against women by working on various levels; the punishment and penalties, awareness, and helping the survival victims. The law criminalises the sexual harassment in public spaces, rises the punishment for domestic violence, establishes a new criminal provision, and tries to decrease the pay gap between men and women by imposing the employers with fines who committed it on purpose. (Human Rights Watch, 2019b) Moreover, it contains training programs for doctors and medical staff to identify cases and evaluate the situation. Furthermore, the law allows the educational staff to receive training on how to raise awareness of how to react to violence in schools. (Human Rights Watch, 2019) It continues to assist GBV survivors, safe shelter, physical and psychological treatment, as well as legal aid. It also allows women to ask for restraining orders against their abusers without opening a criminal or divorce cases. The law demands the creation of units within Tunisia's Internal Security Forces that can respond to the violence complaints and assign a public prosecutor in each governorate to deal with such cases (Human Rights Watch, 2019b). It is worth mentioning that the law punishes any agent in the unit in case they put pressure on any women to abandon her case. However, the government did not specify how they are going to support this law financially. For example, the law indeed contains referring the survivor victims to safe shelter, but there is no specific budget has been allocated for that. (Human Rights Watch, 2019b)

Civil society groups and local organisations argue that the law is lack of applying mechanisms. Other feminists argue that the Tunisian's organisations and civil society should spread the word of the new law to make it more familiar in the Tunisian women context. (Al-Arab, 2019)

3- Recommendation for the Syrian organisations and civil society depending on Kosovar and Tunisian women's rights context

The Kosovar and Tunisian context went through similar obstacles that now the Syrian context face in terms of women's rights. However, they succeeded to overcome several of those difficulties and made a positive change in the equality way. The conflict in Kosovo opened new opportunities that led women to expand in their roles and allowed them to advocate for their rights, with the support of both the local and international

organisations. In Tunisia, the situation is a bit different, where they already had the based gender equality law framework before the revolution that allowed women to participate in the Tunisian society. Nevertheless, the change in the political system in Tunisia drove to a significant transformation in achieving women's rights.

From my perspective, the Kosovar context shows how international human rights influenced domestic law, and highlighted the work between local and international organisations, in both horizontal and up-down structures. Moreover, Kosovar experience demonstrates how dealing with the wounds of war in terms of sexual gender-based violence, and the recognition of sexual violence survivors is a step towards the inclusive peace in a post-conflict context. While the Tunisian context illustrates how the based in gender equality law, helped to boost the women's involvement in the Tunisian system, along with bottom-up advocacy from different Tunisian actors, who showed that democracy and rights do not contradict with religious principles. The active actors in Syria could benefit from recommendations depending on the Kosovar and Tunisian experiences, to open opportunities for women's rights from the changes that are happening in gender roles due to conflict. The recommendations from my perspective are:

- 1- No one should be left behind after war; all actors should work together to help the Syrian women who suffered from this war to step up again and support the women who have taken new responsibilities to sustain their new situations;
- 2- NGO`s, Civil Society along with the international community, should collaborate in order to spread awareness about the Syrian law in terms of women's rights, and pointing out its gaps and violations;
- 3- Work with key figures, stakeholders, and religious leaders to let them engage in awareness and advocacy procedure, distinguishing between cultural and traditional harmful practices and between the religion;
- 4- Unify and work on new law draft that includes legislation to protect, prevent, and support women against gender-based violence in both the public and private sphere. Negotiate the draft with the government in order to include it in the Syrian legal framework;
- 5- Demands to remove the reservations on CEDAW, along with establishing an internal mechanism to receive individual complaints about gender-based violence;

- 6- Include the gender mainstreaming lens in organisations and civil society, programs and activities;
- 7- Design programs to work with both women and men in order to empower them economically, and take in consideration doing no harm or spreading gender stereotype;
- 8- Provide training for doctors, nurses, teachers, judges, and police units on how to react with sexual gender-based violence survivors;
- 9- Build an internal referral system between organisations, civil society, and government institutions, regarding the services provided to women.

I am totally aware that these recommendations are not easy to apply under the patriarchal political system and society, but I believe that the results of the conflict in relation to gender roles have already started challenging the patriarchal concept.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the materials that have been discussed in this paper show that the problem in gender inequality in Syria was affected mainly from the discriminatory legal framework, and social norms, that violate Syrian women's rights. The Penal Code and the Personal Status law are not only unprotecting Syrian women from gender discrimination and violence, but they are also defending the criminals by decreasing their sentences. The discriminating and harmful social norms in Syria have made social support for the unequal law, and in some cases, it goes further than law by forcing certain practices on women, dealing with her as a subordinate and a weak person, assigning her capacity under only the private sphere.

The conflict has created new circumstances that have challenged the traditional stereotypes towards women gender roles, and opened new opportunities for them to participate in the workforce either inside or outside Syria. The sociological perspective on gender roles combined with the Marxist feminism perspective showed that the gender system as a cultural concept, which constructs from social structures. Therefore, gender norms could change depending on several factors. Abroad drivers, such as conflict, economic changes, and urbanization and immigration, in addition to the individual factors, such as agency, autonomy and socio-economic circumstances are examples of these factors. The changes in gender roles in Syria have been driven from several factors that have mainly been caused by the conflict. However, an obvious

increase in women engaging in public sectors, as Care International indicates that, Syrian women formed in 2015 where 65% are as an active agriculture population, also, women's contribution in entrepreneurship programs to reach 22.4 % in 2017. Moreover, Syrian women in 2015 shaped around 17% of household heads in Syria. However, these new responsibilities have created challenges and many situations led to gender-based violence against women. Nevertheless, the research that we discussed regarding the relationship between economic empowerment for women and gender based violence has shown different results, some of it indicated that when economic empowerment is provided for both men and women, that could lead to a decrease in gender based violence percentage.

All of these changes are creating a transformation on the individual level, women are obtaining new Achieved status related to their new roles, being financially independent, and have the agency to choose and take decisions, and lead her own life. In order to keep this shift in gender identity, Syrian actors along with external actors should take supportive steps towards these women, and work with them and with all Syrians in order to sustain the positive impact and deliver it to other women. This is not something impossible, as we saw from the Kosovo and Tunis case studies, that they maintain the change in gender roles, and have pushed for more rights to women. Kosovar and Tunisian national and international organisations, civil society, key figures have played a significant role in the route of equality that led to legalising and establishing several laws that aim to protect and support women from violation and guarantee their equal rights. Syrian actors have to pay attention on how the push in women's rights has happened in Kosovo and Tunis, and try to benefit from their lessons learned to make a positive change. All Syrian actors should stand together, targeting both the harmful social norms and discriminatory law. The change from my perspective should happen from both levels in parallel, the society now is more open to accepting changes, for that Syrians should try to benefit positively from the conflict chaos in order to sustain equality that by itself could be a part of the sustainable peace for Syria. I am not pretending that conflict brings flowers for Syrians, but I believe that crying and being pessimistic will not lead the country to a better place.

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