

Press communiqué

The Claiming Equal Citizenship Campaign: Lebanon, a country of men and for men... only...

Thursday 15 December 2011, by [Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign](#) (Date first published: 14 December 2011).

In its meeting of 12 December 2011, the current Cabinet endorsed a draft law to reinstate Lebanese nationality to emigrants of Lebanese descent. However, the draft law was endorsed after “minor modifications” according to the current Minister of Interior, Brigadier Marwan Charbel. The “minor modification” was the specification that Lebanese descent shall be limited to fathers and grandfathers only - Not mothers or grandmothers. The “minor modification” is yet again further proof of Lebanon’s persistent patriarchal mindset which clearly considers citizenship to be a male attribute.

The Claiming Equal Citizenship Campaign is deeply concerned by this latest development and by the government’s speedy endorsement of this draft law, and would like to point out to the following key issues:

1. The Cabinet members justified their endorsement of this draft law by their desire to include emigrants of Lebanese descent in the economic and political life in Lebanon. While this may be understandable, how does the Cabinet justify the fact that it has totally ignored the dire social and economic situation of Lebanese women married to non-nationals and their families who consider Lebanon to be their home and the Lebanese nationality to be their right?
2. The current Cabinet has decided that this draft law is a priority and, as a result, endorsed it in record time. We wonder, however, what happened to the law petition that the Nationality Campaign and its supporters submitted to the Prime Minister in July, 2011, and to which the Prime Minister failed to react or respond.
3. As a matter of principle, the Nationality Campaign has always supported the right of emigrants, both women and men, to reclaim their nationality after proper discussion and after ensuring that the new law does not further institutionalize and codify any form of discrimination against women. We reiterate however, that to this date, there is no sharing of information regarding the application and implication of the proposed discriminatory draft law.
4. The Campaign objects to the repeated violation of women’s human and citizenship rights by Lebanon and the outright definition of “lineage” as being solely patriarchal.
5. The Campaign notes that MP Nihmatallah AbiNasr, has finally made his dream since independence come true. The Campaign also notes that MP AbiNasr considers nationality to be a right and not a favor. At the same time, the Campaign is surprised at how MP AbiNasr insists on ignoring the citizenship rights of Lebanese women, both residents and non-residents, and the ways in which he considers Lebanese emigrants of male descent to have priority over Lebanese women.

The Campaign is asking the elected Lebanese Parliament to refrain from endorsing this draft law, and to carefully peruse all its justifications, implications and ramifications while considering equality and inclusive citizenship rights to be the guiding principles for any law. The Campaign also calls on the Parliamentary Commissions for Human Rights and for Women's Right to play an active role in paving the way for a long awaited reform of the discriminatory family law, and to contribute to making equality between women and men a reality.

The Arab Women's Right to Nationality Campaign

Beirut, 14 December 2011
