

A memo from the Human Rights Defender's, Prof. Irena Lipowicz visit to Jordan on 2-7 December 2011

Prof. Irena Lipowicz, the Human Rights Defender, visited Jordan on 2-7 December 2011. During the stay Prof. Lipowicz met with Mr Abdelilah AL-Kurdi, the Jordanian Ombudsman, participated in a scientific conference: *“The constitutional reforms in Jordan: A successful way for implementation, the Jordanian and EU perspective”* organized by Delegation of the European Union to Jordan in Amman (with a cooperation of Polish Embassy), visited a primary school at Irbid refugee camp for the Palestinians, where Polish Embassy had established a computer lab, and met with Prof. Saad Abudayeh, famous political scientist from the Jordan University in Amman.

The meeting with Mr Abdelilah AL-Kurdi was an opportunity to discuss current activities of both Ombudsman offices, their tasks and capacities. Prof. Lipowicz emphasized the fact, that she was the first Polish Human Rights Defender to visit Jordan and commented on Polish experiences of the Ombudsman office activity and human rights protection. She also congratulated the President of the Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau on becoming a member of the I.O.I. Later on, Mr AL-Kurdi and Prof. Lipowicz talked about a possibility of short-term study visits in order to enhance a skill-exchange and signed an “Agreement on cooperation in the field of human rights between The Jordanian Ombudsman Bureau and Human Rights Defender”.

One of the main subjects during a meeting with NGO's and media representatives was NGO's chances for further activity growth in the human rights protection area. Answering questions about the meaning of the Arab Spring for human rights in the region, Prof. Lipowicz informed about her meeting with democratic movements activists from Egypt and Tunisia, who visited Poland in a search for new experiences in the field of democracy. Prof. Lipowicz expressed her recognition of the effects of Jordanian NGO's work, encouraged them to continue their high standard of activities for the benefit of the society and offered a support in establishing relations with Polish NGO's.

Prof. Lipowicz, along with the Jordanian political Establishment and local media representatives, political analysts and heads of diplomatic posts took part in the conference: *“The constitutional reforms in Jordan: A successful way for implementation, the Jordanian and EU perspective”* at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy and delivered a lecture on Polish experiences connected with the enactment of the first democratic constitution after the fall of communism. She underlined the key role of local government reform in the forming of civil society.

During the visit in the Irbid refugee camp school Prof. Lipowicz donated pen drives to computer room established by Polish Embassy as well as stationery and sweets to the children. She acquainted herself with the situation of the school and its pupils, met with the school administration, the elders of the camp and the UNRWA representatives and promised to search for a school in Poland which could establish a partnership with the Irbid refugee camp school.

The Human Rights Defender visit to Jordan met with great interest of media. Prof. Lipowicz gave interviews for the biggest Arab daily *“Ad Dustur”* and the biggest daily in the English language *“The Jordan Times”*.