



## **Birzeit University's Institute of Women's Studies' 3<sup>rd</sup> annual conference**

### **Re-thinking Governance & Gender in an Age of Empire**

In recent decades, a wide range of literature has explored the various ways in which state institutions and systems of governance affect gender relations. Furthermore, feminist movements working within and outside the formal state institutions have had a growing interest in the issue of women's participation in governance, policy development, and decision making on the local, regional and international levels. Today this leads us to the question concerning the relationship between the discourses, policies and practices of formal and informal governance formations and the possibility of women's participation creating fundamental changes within this arena.

The Institute for Women Studies at Birzeit University is holding its third annual conference titled, "Re-thinking Governance & Gender in an Age of Empire". The conference aims to discuss and analyze the current formations of governance systems and institutions in the Palestinian colonial context using a gender analysis. By governance systems we mean local and national formal governance institutions as well as informal institutions in the West bank and Gaza Strip; the institutions that form the political, economic, cultural and security discourses and policies shaping the realities of its populations. We assume that governance systems are formed through the interaction of local, regional and international powers interconnecting interests of individuals and groups. The conference aims to answer the question of the form of governance needed for achieving liberation, independence and popular participation in a way that corresponds to the needs and interests of a wide range of factions in the Palestinian society, particularly women.

Through its different panels, the conference considers the interrelationship between local and national governance systems and the various factions that compose the Palestinian society, particularly feminist movements and organizations. It aims to analyze this relationship and its viable alternatives. For instance, the conference addresses the "rights approach" prevalent in human rights and women rights organizations appeal governing institutions. Additionally, it assesses the approach of integrating women in decision-making positions and the role and effectiveness of women already integrated within governing positions.