

## **Democracy forum calls for independence of judiciary**

---

**The Peninsula** - 29 May, 2007

Rapporteurs yesterday painted in their reports a grim picture of the prevailing situation in the Arab World, slamming ineffective constitutions, lack of rule of law and weak judiciary, among other failings.

Their reports summarized the views of participants in the first working session on Sunday on the prevailing situation in the Arab World at the ongoing 2nd Forum on Democracy and Political Reform.

The Forum entered its second day yesterday with participants listening to summaries about constitutions that are rather imposed on people although formulated to reflect a democratic essence and lack of rule of law in the Arab World.

Amendments that have been made in constitutions are typically aimed in a way or another to serve the rulers rather than the people and society, note the reports.

Participants were also unanimous in calling for the independence of the judicial system which as a constitution based on human rights is among the most important tools for establishing democracy and reforms.

Regarding the political participation of women, participants noted serious weakness in the Arab world even though there has been participation of women in municipal elections in many countries.

They pointed out that this is to be attributed to the absence of democracy in Arab countries, lack of democratic civil societies and most importantly the lack of political will in general.

The existing legislations and election laws have limited the representation of women in parliaments which also contributed in keeping women away from political participation, the reports show.

They noted that the youth in many Arab countries are suffering from unemployment, leaving in frustration and feeling of insecurity which get in the way of their potentialities.

Government control and laws that suppress freedoms have put considerable obstacle to the media, the reports said.

Participants stressed the importance of NGOs, good governance, transparency and independent media without which there can be no reforms, they said and also pointed to the importance of reforms of educational institutions and spreading the democratic culture.

With regards to human rights, participants noted that Arab countries that witnessed the worst human rights violations have yet to develop strategies that include basic human rights as stipulated by international charter in this regard.

They noted that some Arab countries have not ratified the Rome convention on human rights

to bring justice or correct some of the past mistakes and heal the psychological and political wounds.