

Analytical Paper

The Physics of Power and the Challenges of the Palestinian Feminist Discourse: Between Thought and Practice

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To be born in my country, in Haifa, in a place where the Jewish state has decided there is no place for me . . . to grow up in a state that was built on silencing and invalidating me . . . to be raised in a community that dresses its wounds while living, every day and every moment, in a state of physical, intellectual and emotional dispersion . . . to defy a world that has chosen to make an actual contribution, materially and legally, to the marginalization of the historical injustice that has befallen my people . . . All this demands that I consider myself—my practices, and my feminist theorizing—firstly from my vantage point as a Palestinian woman, and then as an individual in a state that rejects my existence unless I am silent or disappear.

The Palestinian woman in the Jewish state is a woman who confronts and defies both Zionist nationalist and social-patriarchal oppression. Social oppression has proliferated and taken on various hues as a result of the economic stranglehold tightening its grip on the Palestinian community, attacks on the fabric and solidarity of Palestinian society, and the rise of masculine ideologies, which have grown, reproduced, and reconstructed themselves alongside and through the growth of Zionist policies. Taking a carrot-and-stick approach, the Zionist authorities, like colonialists in other parts of the world, sought to manipulate the patriarchal forces within the colonized society, which were still gathering their strength after the *Nakba*. They approached certain groups and convinced them that the colonialists would help restore their lost freedom and independence. However, this was to be at the expense of the futures, lives, and bodies of vulnerable groups (including women). Exploiting the trauma that had befallen the Palestinian people, and the resulting fear and confusion, the Zionist authorities picked out a number of individuals and “notables” to whom they granted a small amount of power. An official endorsement as a *Mukhtar* (chief) or *Wajih* (notable) deluded these chosen individuals into thinking they still had influence and bore responsibility for their communities (Hassan, 1999). At the same time, however, the state continued to kill, commit crimes, and enact racist laws, and attempted to colonize the Palestinian mind by controlling the educational institutions and harassing and imprisoning intellectuals, together with other draconian measures (Mazawi, 2004). The state has thereby created a reality that continues to grow more stifling with each passing day, to the point that it has become scarcely endurable; indeed, at times this suffocating reality has induced a state of sedation so deep that all sensation is lost.

I grew up in Haifa, where they changed the names of my streets to Hebrew names. I studied at a school where the educational curriculum was closely controlled by the Jewish state. In the 1980s, I enrolled in Israeli universities that required me to master the language of the colonizer and occupier (Hebrew) in order to ensure “progress” and “success.” Fear of hidden and apparent Israeli policies and tactics of abuse

compelled me to adopt strategies of survival, where I masked my daily acts and academic progress behind ostensibly objective or “academic” norms. Such strategies played a part in my transformation into what they term an “Israeli Arab,” or “Israeli citizen:” a citizen without citizenship. I grew up in a country that obliged me to carry a passport, but viewed me as a “security threat” each time I used it at the airport. I then married my life partner, who was born in the same homeland as I was, but is not considered a citizen (or a citizen without citizenship) because he resides in Jerusalem, where he is still living through the second occupation of the Palestinian territories of 1967.

I subsequently became a mother, giving birth to my three daughters in a state that considers the Palestinian woman, in terms of her power to give birth and multiply, as a threat to its Jewish identity and its very existence. Even the streets through which I walk to reach my house in the Old City of Jerusalem are flanked by military posts controlled by the occupation police, who threaten the security of my daughters and my family on a daily basis. Israeli police regularly limit my access to my house and prevent me from parking my car in the parking spot in front of my building (which predated the 1967 occupation), in order to shield the colonizer from my fear-inducing presence.

This paper attempts to shed light on the complex picture portrayed in the foregoing description, to ground the knowledge produced through my position/battle as a feminist in the Zionist state, and to set forth a feminist perspective that delves into the nature of feminism for the Palestinian woman in the Jewish state, by asking three main questions:

1. How does the context presented above reflect itself in the lives and status of Palestinian women?
2. What kind of critical feminist theorizing is needed from Palestinian feminists in Israel?
3. How can we analyze and confront the racism of the historical silence of the majority of Israeli feminists towards the historical injustice and current violence faced by Palestinian feminists?

1. How does the context presented above reflect itself in the lives and status of Palestinian women?

The status of Palestinian women in the Jewish state is influenced by the context of Israeli colonialism and the Zionist ideology. The specific violence of settler colonialism unique to the Jewish state (with its policies of dispersion, displacement, massacres, and ongoing historical injustice) has led to the marginalization of Palestinians, men and women alike, in historic Palestine, and their confinement in isolated bantustans. The Jewish state translated its colonial policies of uprooting and dividing the Palestinian space into geographical areas of restricted movement, which stagnated under the military rule and regime that was enforced until 1966.

Dominance over the individual (initially through imposition of military rule and thereafter via various systems of control based on the geopolitical and biopolitical Zionist ideology) contained the Palestinian within geographical areas controlled by the Israeli “security” regime in the north (the Galilee), the center (the Triangle area), and the south (the Naqab). The act of geopolitical separation was achieved through

planning and engineering mechanisms of control and continuous surveillance of the space, which led to the domination of Palestinian movement and the Judaization of the place. This contraction of Palestinian space was accomplished through a plethora of legal, cultural, and political procedures. (Yiftachel, 2006; Rouhana, 1997; Kretchmer, 1990)

These colonial policies, and the policies of displacement, dispersion, and violence against Palestinian women, have had an impact on two levels: firstly, they sowed intense fear and confusion within Palestinian society, which reacted by redoubling its efforts to protect itself, including by safeguarding the family from displacement, poverty, hardship, and the interference of the Jewish state in its life and privacy. Systematic violence, reflected in part in the specific suffering a woman experiences upon losing her home, security, privacy, and access to educational institutions, etc., has obstructed the progress of women's lives. The Palestinian woman is prone to become a victim following the loss of social support from her family that can result from displacement and dispersion, and the loss of her psychological, physical, and sexual security in the absence of indigenous systems of social control. She lacks confidence in the state's criminal justice system when she is subjected to violence, and finds official institutions reluctant to provide her with support or to criminalize violence committed against her. All these factors have adversely affected her capabilities and decisions and changed the course of her life. Systematic violence by the state has altered the very fabric of Palestinian society and shifted power relations within the community, including gender relations. The violence and colonialist policies of the Jewish state have restricted the Palestinian woman's freedom of movement, and frequently resulted in the loss of land and home ownership, as well as her very ability to build a home. They have also distanced her geographically from services, as the state has sought to "Israelize" her towns and villages and her social, economic, educational, and political development, obstructing her progress and stunting her growth.

The merging of political and social systems with structures that underscore the Jewish nature of the state has further entrenched the marginalized status of Palestinians. For instance, unless a person is proficient in Hebrew, he or she will be unable to obtain employment in government offices and ministries, to study at Israeli universities and other educational institutions, or to access health and social services from the employment or income tax offices, for example, which provide documentation in Hebrew only.

All the above has significantly hindered and restricted the lives of Palestinians in general and Palestinian women in particular. Attempts at Israelization, aimed at obliterating the Palestinian identity and constructing a new Israelized, Hebrew context, have sought to erase and neutralize the trauma inflicted by the *Nakba* on Palestinian society. These attempts alarmed the afflicted society and generated a more powerful sense of adherence to the family and internal social systems. One of the effects of this response was to reaffirm the traditional status of women and restrict their emancipation from male economic and social control. Moreover, women's attempts to enter the labor market placed them under the control of Jewish employers and required them to adapt to the Israeli context, at the same time as they negotiated Palestinian patriarchal control. This complex reality reduced the options

available to many Palestinian women, especially those facing particular obstacles, such as the poor and those living in geographically remote areas.

This Israelized context was also reflected in spatial policies that separated Palestinian from Jew, and in the enactment of special laws to govern land use and ownership (or loss). These policies and laws heightened fears within society and placed an additional burden on women, who strove to preserve both the Palestinian home, with all its warmth and support, and the limited space that remained following sustained attacks on the Palestinian public space. Israeli policies of geographical separation, which have driven Palestinians into crowded living spaces, together with the violent transformation of the space from an Arab space into a space where language, policies, and laws serve the Zionist ideology and negate the Palestinian and the Arab, have generated a new type of gender context. This violent transformation is reflected in control over natural resources, the confiscation of land and displacement, the "Zionization" of policies (by enacting laws that facilitate the life of the Jew while obstructing that of the Palestinian), budgetary allocations, etc. Indeed, it is mirrored in the domination of all areas of life, from the route of roads and transportation systems, the Judaization of the land and space, the denial of Palestinian requests for licenses to construct homes on their own land, the introduction of a legal framework that sustains Zionist ideology and the Jewish nature of the state, to the strict controls placed on the Arab education system and the dictated contents of its curricula. (Abu Sa'ad, 2004a,b; Mazzawi, 2004; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009) All these measures have exacerbated the marginalization of the Palestinian woman within the Jewish state and exposed her to tighter control. The Zionist state has even resorted to policies of "divide and rule," for example in the case of violence against women, where it employed Orientalist cultural and culturalizing analyses to avoid dealing with the issue. Similarly, when new workplaces opened up and employed Palestinian women in dressmaking, farming, or education, they were turned into a source of cheap labor, denied the protection of the state and its institutions. In some cases, these measures have galvanized Palestinian women to resist institutionalized oppression and strengthened their resolve to protect their own rights, and the rights of their families and their people. In certain cases they have also increased their economic independence. However, at other times the aforementioned measures have contributed to the reproduction and reconstruction of a patriarchal power that has persecuted the Palestinian woman, inflicted violence on her, and impeded her growth and social, political, and economic development.

Concerning the status of Palestinian women in the Israeli economy, for instance, most of the women who live in abject poverty are Palestinian. According to official Israeli statistics, the state's investment in a Jewish child's education is several times higher than its investment in the education of a Palestinian child. (Abu-Saad, 2004a) There is a gap of close to 20 years between Palestinian and Jewish education in Israel (in terms of budgetary allowances, availability of classrooms, equipment, etc.), and Palestinian girls are the most adversely affected. (Abu Rabia-Queder, 2004) According to a report issued by Physicians for Human Rights in April 2009, the Palestinian community in the Naqab has the highest mortality rate among mothers and children during childbirth, and rates of illness among Palestinian women are the highest in the state, while their access to health services is the lowest. (Daoud, 2008) Another study conducted into the Israeli police's handling of cases of violence

against women found that the police and the Israeli judiciary system not only take an Orientalist approach to battered Palestinian women, but also manipulate their pain: They are slow to provide them with support, thereby promoting violence against them, and empowering, reproducing, and reconstructing the prevailing patriarchal structure. (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2004; Haj Yehia, 2003)

Significantly, there are important differences between the methods of repression employed against the Arab woman in the Jewish state, and the impact of repression on women differs between the various groups that comprise Palestinian society. Thus the hardships suffered by Palestinian women living in what are referred to as the “mixed cities,” or what I term “contested cities” (cities whose Arab and Palestinian characteristics the Jewish state is doing its utmost to erase, including Haifa, Acre, Ramle, and Jaffa), differs from those experienced by Palestinian women living in the south (the Naqab). And in the south, the hardships faced by women in the unrecognized villages differ from those that women encounter in other areas. For example, Arab women in the south (of whom over 65% are young women (The Galilee Society, 2008) receive an average of just seven years of schooling (The Galilee Society, 2008), compared with an average rate in Israel of 12.7 years (CBS, 2009). Their rate of labor force participation stands at just 10% (The Galilee Society, 2008), while the average rate is 56.3% (Labor Force Survey, 2007). Furthermore, the percentage of overall poverty among Arab families in the south is 75%. While Palestinian women, especially in the south, once played an important role in farming and agriculture and in various processes of production, the arrival of British colonialism and subsequently the Israeli economy upset the socio-economic balance. Land confiscations and the designation of entire areas in the south as unrecognized villages has reduced the work opportunities available to Palestinian women and had a negative effect on their land ownership in general, in addition to restricting their freedom of movement.

2. What kind of critical feminist theorizing is needed from Palestinian feminists in Israel?

In examining the status of Palestinian women in the Jewish state, and based on the specific context of historical, geopolitical, and biopolitical colonial racism, we must, as Palestinian feminists, use the *Nakba* as a central event and epistemological point of departure. In order to develop a critical analysis that takes into account the suffering of the Palestinian, I believe we must explore the nature and impact of the *Nakba* and its attendant violence, which Israel used in its initial stages and continues to use, as evidenced of late by the war on the Gaza Strip in 2008-2009. The feminist analysis I propose also calls for an examination of American, European and global support for the Zionist entity in its various stages. Such an examination must consider not only how this support condoned and reinforced the inhuman Zionist discourse of Palestinian suffering, but also how the ongoing denial by the international community of the justice of the Palestinian cause created frustration and inflicted repeated traumas. The proposed feminist theorization also requires the exposure of the strategies and tactics used to silence and invalidate the Palestinian in the Jewish state, which has striven and continues to strive to develop visible and invisible policies, strategies and methods of domination, including controlling the Palestinian's place of residence, income, fields of study, and even marriage decisions. It should conclude by analyzing the series of racist bills tabled in 2009 that demand that

Palestinians in Israel refrain from expressing their sense of loss for their people and homeland, and provide for the criminalization of anyone who commemorates the *Nakba*.

The establishment of the Jewish state on the ruins of the uprooted Palestinian homeland through ethnic cleansing, strategies of repression (such as military rule, and the enactment of discriminatory laws designed to preserve the Jewish character of the state), the ideological nullification of the Palestinian entity, and its reflection in the reproduction and reconstruction of Palestinian patriarchal thought and practice, have all shaped the nature of the challenges that face Palestinian women.

What is meant by viewing the *Nakba* as a galvanizing event and analytical point of departure? And why should one use the concept of the “physics of power” to analyze feminist thought and practice?

To deconstruct the repercussions of the *Nakba* over the past 60 years—which include the silencing of voices advocating the Right of Return, denial of the Right of Return to the Diaspora, the gagging of the indigenous population, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the relentless onslaught of state violence—we must first comprehend the effect of recurrent traumas on the collective vision of the self, and on gender roles and policies. The perception of the Palestinian even those individuals who are full citizens, as a permanent security threat to Israel, which in turn requires that he/she be dominated and “caged” (an example is the confinement of Palestinians to specified areas of the Galilee, Triangle, and Naqab) has lent additional urgency to the need to find ways to empower the self and the community, and give it space to breathe. However, the colonial settler ideology and the reluctance of the international community to extend assistance to the Palestinians has strengthened the hand of the colonial power and helped build the Jewish state, while at the same time increasing the burden shouldered by the Palestinians. Trumpeting the state as a democratic one and publicly promoting the notion that the Israeli Jewish woman enjoys absolute equality with men, while contrasting this starkly against an image of the Palestinian woman who is relentlessly repressed by the “backward” patriarchal Palestinian societal structure—all these typify classic strategies of colonial regimes, which deliberately set out to break the unity and solidarity of colonized communities. To this end, cultural explanations were deployed to obfuscate Israel’s political injustices, while calls were made for “the salvation of the Palestinian woman from the oppression of the Palestinian man.” The status of Palestinian women was manipulated, and they were seen and presented as emblematic of the “backwardness” of their society. In parallel to such policies of demoralization and demonization, the Zionist entity has demonstrated its “willingness,” as a “democratic state,” to provide services to “liberate” the Palestinian woman from the oppression of the Palestinian man and patriarchy. At the same time, it has pursued the painful processes of confiscating Palestinian land and demolishing homes, in fulfillment of the state’s plans to Judaize the space. The smothering of the internal Palestinian economy by the state, its refusal to grant work or building permits or provide transportation services to the Palestinians, and their subjugation to a distinctly inferior legal reality, have all stunted the ability of Palestinian society to develop in the present, or plan for the future. Its limitations are compounded by the obliviousness of the international community to the suffering of the Palestinian people

in its homeland, except when this suffering stems from within the community itself, as in the case of male violence against women. On each occasion that the Palestinian individual has attempted to resist (such as on Land Day, or in October 2000, when Israeli police killed 13 Palestinian “citizens of the state” who stood up against state violence), the powerful have sought to create a physics of local and global power that excludes this Palestinian individual as a permanent “security threat” to the “democratic, peace-seeking” state. The designation of the Palestinian as a “security threat” and someone to be feared—as I elaborate in my research on education and on housing demolitions (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2008; Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Khsheiboun, 2009)—is a racist fabrication employed by proponents of the colonial ideology. It has been used to justify the expropriation of Palestinian land, hinder the Palestinian economy, and Judaize the Galilee and the Naqab. It has also served as a pretext for reducing and controlling the Palestinian space, imprisoning the Palestinians inside geographical cages patrolled by the Jewish state, and establishing dominion over the physics and movement of power.

The word “physics” (derived from the Greek word, *physis*) means the knowledge or science of matter and its motion through space and time. The “physics of power,” as I present it in this paper, refers to the study and analysis of the visible and hidden characteristics (an analysis of the history and present) of the sources of motion, influence, and power. It should be accompanied by an analysis of the emerging and shifting realities that shape the Palestinian reality, including that of Palestinian women, in thought and practice. Thus the application of the term “physics of power” in the Palestinian feminist analysis, as proposed in this paper, requires the adoption of the cognitive, analytical, and empirical approach (in history, economics, political geography, and gender) based on the day-to-day life experiences of men and women in Palestinian society. Such an approach will enable us to gain insights into and interpret the Palestinian struggle through the challenges, obstacles, dilemmas, and laws that dominate and/or influence Palestinian feminist thought and action in the Zionist state, on the basis of daily events in the lives of women. It also entails understanding the historical facts imposed by successive but different waves of repression and their consequences for women, i.e., whether they have undermined or consolidated the position of Palestinian women and feminists at the local level.

Employing the concept of the physics of power can help Palestinian feminists gain a thorough understanding of the laws and the driving forces behind Palestinian feminist action at the level of daily life. Such an understanding allows feminists to interpret occurrences in daily life within the home, family, educational institutions, the workplace, and the political space. These occurrences can then be connected to the public context by deconstructing and analyzing alliances built on common identities and interests, to reveal concentration or distribution in the various forms of Palestinian feminist resistance. Thus, in order to understand the low rate of women’s participation in the Israeli labor market, we must deconstruct the structural factors that hamper or limit their employment or opportunities to develop products, or open a company or a workplace. Similarly, to understand the rate of women’s enrollment in education, we must probe the factors that facilitate or provide incentives for education, in terms of budget allocations, the development of disciplines that promote the entry of women into the labor market, etc. However, we must also identify those

factors that coopt and mute women's voices and block their indigenously oriented development.

Again, if we are to analyze the prevalence of marriage among young girls, we should look not only at the impediments imposed by the patriarchal society, but also examine the wider circumstances of the community, such as whether girls feel physically secure when traveling, and the presence or absence of economic security to enable girls to enroll in educational institutions as an alternative to early marriage. The ability to protect the self from a threat, to provide for the entire family, and to pay tuition fees all strengthen the ability to develop and stand against the strategies of obstruction practiced daily by the colonial power. In this context, the label "dropping out of school" as applied to the low rate of enrollment in education among girls in the unrecognized villages, is a non-feminist, non-critical designation that lacks understanding of the physics of power that acts to deprive girls of education.

The feminist reading I propose considers the issue of land, the militarization of Palestinian space and time, and the Israeli geography of repression as feminist issues of the first order. Therefore the critical discourse of Palestinian feminism that emanates from that physics requires that we adopt a genealogical strategy of deconstructing and analyzing the structures of oppression and their functioning. It also requires the development of a critical theorization of the physics of power at work at various levels. Reading the map of this physics, its strategies and techniques, also demands deeper consideration if we are to gain a broader understanding of the movement of global power and of the forces that are latent and influential in matters such as the occupation of land, ownership of capital, colonial and other interests, and power relations and global alliances and their impact on Palestinian men and women. This understanding must also extend to an awareness of the stage at which the community and its members internalize oppression, or accept and/or deny its existence.

3. How can we analyze and confront the racism of the historical silence of the majority of Israeli feminists towards the historical injustice and current violence faced by Palestinian feminists?

To understand the physics of power means to understand the maneuverings of power, in order to highlight the protection provided to the ideologies and strategies of domination and control possessed by the powerful. To comprehend this physics, one must first understand its workings, and its strategies of protecting and ensuring the survival of a certain power. Understanding this physics also entails a deep, wideranging understanding of the immoral position taken by the greater part of Israeli feminist analysis, which does not address Zionist colonialism prior to the *Nakba*, despite its role in violating the rights of the Palestinian woman in the Jewish state and dispersing her people throughout the world. On the contrary, in many cases Israeli feminists have supported these violations, or at most remained silent about them. Instead, they produced a feminist knowledge and embarked on a course of feminist action that contemplates Palestinian suffering (if it does so at all) only from the second occupation of 1967, i.e. the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For most Israeli feminists, the *Nakba*, the displacement and dispersion, and the state's crimes against the Palestinians, are treated as if they simply did not occur.

The physics of power also requires an examination of policies of universalism, colonialism, and globalization, the war on terror, the return of American and Western colonialism in the garb of “human rights and equality,” and denial of the fundamental issue insisted on in the Palestinian feminist analysis presented in this paper: namely, the historical grievances, injustice, and violations of Palestinian human rights that were committed with the support of the “enlightened,” “democratic,” and “feminist” world, and within its view and earshot.

Constructing Palestinian feminist thought with a new awareness of the physics of power entails understanding the nature and significance of solidarity with the powerless, something that global feminism, international law, and Israeli feminism have so far failed to do. Deep analysis of the daily price that is paid by the Palestinian, and deconstruction of the concept of justice or the absence thereof, the politics of power, and the role of war and/or the condoning of war crimes (from the massacres in Deir Yassin, Kafr Qassem, Tantura, and others to the siege and invasion of Gaza in 2009) serve to destabilize the physics of global and local power and their impact on social structures and patriarchal power. Such an analysis, therefore, constitutes the core of our critical inquiry. For without understanding the dominant global empire and the main issues at stake—globalization, capitalism, and neo-imperialism—and unless we carefully scrutinize their consequences for the complex Palestinian and Arab social and political structure, critical feminist thought and action cannot be constructed.

Understanding the present moment, in terms of the justice of the Palestinian cause and the duty and right of resistance, requires a close examination of the daily lives of Palestinian women living under the Zionist ideology and regime imposed by the state of Israel. It also calls for the deconstruction of cultural ideologies that are marketed and sold globally at exorbitantly high prices at the expense of the Palestinians. Israeli feminists live a life of relative ease at the expense of Palestinian suffering, which they look through without making any concrete political moves. They do not see (or perhaps they pretend not to notice) the repercussions of the events of the *Nakba* as a central issue for feminist action and theorizing. Their refusal to acknowledge the effects of incessant violence/oppression and the daily practices of resistance employed by the Palestinian woman, on whom the global and local (including the feminist) physics of power has imposed itself, is immoral and, crucially, not feminist.

In the midst of this racial discrimination and the impetuses, ideas and practices associated with the economics of life and death—or “necropolitics,” which work, *inter alia*, through Zionist economics that dominate the equations of life and death—it is imperative that all variations of Israeli “feminism” (if such variations indeed exist) acknowledge the fact that Palestinian women and men are victims of this necropolitics, notwithstanding their steadfastness before it. In the midst of this necropolitics, the Palestinian woman stands—in her mind, body, nationality, and gender—at the checkpoint and the border point. However, she also experiences death and loss, as a giver of life and incubator of the drive to resist and remain steadfast. Faced with this physics, Palestinian feminism, as presented herein, has positioned itself at a difficult crossing point. It begins not only by rejecting the colonialism that embraced the Zionist movement, but also certain defeatist positions

adopted by Arabs in deference to new colonial strategies (such as the principle of “land for peace”). It then moves on to the hegemonic, anti-Palestinian academic industries and their one-sided analyses, which study violence against women out of its context and distort and falsify history. These processes of falsification—among their other effects—have hampered feminist thought and practice and distorted the soul. They have also marginalized the refugee issue, including the Right of Return, and exploited other strategies of silencing to control the economics of life and death. The issue of Palestine and Palestinian feminism lies at the core of the fundamental pillars of feminist thought. To understand the proposed physics of power, one must instigate action that is consistent with feminist thought and principles and which produces knowledge of resistance that furthers the just Palestinian struggle.

Conclusion

Palestinian feminism as set forth in this paper underlines the importance of widening the critical feminist lens to take in the physics of power, which involves understanding the geopolitical and economic context that has turned humans into commodities in the hands of the dominant power. This same context has also turned the principles of “Western and Israeli democracy” into a commodity that is marketed for the purposes of invasion, ethnic cleansing, controlling and splitting families, and for attacking the Palestinian social and psychological fabric. New markets are then opened up for new organizations to spin Palestinian women tales of freedom, equality, and the need to reject violence. In so doing, they expropriate and invalidate the pain of the Palestinian individual, transforming his/her living and dead body into a commodity to be marketed in the interests of the dominant power.

An understanding of the physics of feminist power calls for (a) the deconstruction of the institutionalization of the moral, structural global defeat of feminism and (b) defiance in the face of global, regional, and local amnesia towards the Palestinian right to life.

The function of feminism is to resist repression and violence. Hence, the right of Palestinian feminism to resist is non-negotiable. The status quo, in which violence, discrimination, and racism are accepted as part of the everyday lives of Palestinian men and women in Israel compels us to study and confront injustice and crime by grounding feminist knowledge and deconstructing the economics of language and speech, and the processes of the dominant power. It also requires the production of knowledge and counter-action and the construction of feminist strategies of resistance, in a global and local reality that operates in a state of institutionalized amnesia generated and preserved by the physics of power.

Understanding the physics of power, as proposed in the Palestinian critical feminist analysis, requires an acknowledgment that the Jewish state could not have been established and could not continue to exist as a Jewish state other than through force, coercion, and ethnic cleansing, based on an economics that decides who has the right to live and how. The Jewish state is not content with what it has achieved thus far; it has not yet completed its project of militarized colonialism, and its survival depends on its ability to crush all opposition. However, the Palestinian people aspires, dreams, and strives for the right to return to its homeland, as would any

other people in history. Palestinian feminist theorizing and practice cannot move forward without an acknowledgment that a crime has been committed against the Palestinian woman and man, and that this crime has limited their chances in life and altered the course of their lives and deaths. It has attacked the Palestinian home and homeland and profoundly affected their health, their family relationships, their intellectual capacity, and the human potential of previous, present, and future generations. (Taraki, 2007; Sayigh, 2005; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009) To overlook this crime is to open the door to other crimes, and to encourage crime from inside and outside the community, and against it.

Employing the physics of power in my analysis clearly reveals the urgent need to deconstruct the racism of the dominant power and the economics of life and death it practices. Thus the questions that arise are:

- How can feminist analysts use a racist analogy associated with those who control the economies of the life and death of the Palestinian as a source of production of local and global knowledge?
- How are we to shape a Palestinian feminist discourse to resist those who control the power and processes of knowledge production?
- How can one use anti-racist feminist action and activism to fight racism, including feminist racism?

The challenge before us as feminists is how we are to accomplish all these tasks. Or does our particular case (as feminists advocating a cause that all the powerful parties wish to annihilate) require the development of counter-discourses and discourses of resistance, as I claim elsewhere? Most importantly, how can Palestinian feminism survive within the Zionist entity, given the role that many powerful actors, including Israeli feminists, have played in silencing us? And in order to overcome the obstacles of historical injustice and produce counter-hegemonic knowledge and action, how are Palestinian feminists to challenge the local and global physics of power and defy the necropolitics it sustains?

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