

Editorial

The last two decades have seen an increase in output of Palestinian independent feminist thinking and practice in Israel. This comes after a relatively long period of association with the Jewish feminist movement and working according to its agenda with regard to women's rights and the improvement of the conditions of their lives, without taking into account the particular reality that Palestinian women in Israel live, and the relationship of the political with the feminist and the seriousness it deserves.

Following this period, signs emerged of a Palestinian feminist movement that sought to find its way based on its distinctive reality. During the period of transition to independence, the emerging feminist movement did not pay sufficient attention to the relationship between the feminist and the political, and specifically to the agenda of the Jewish feminist movement in ensuring the permanence of the Jewishness of the state and the impact of that agenda on day-to-day policies against Palestinians in Israel in general, and on the status of Palestinian women in particular.

The Israeli Jewish feminist movement was not the only party that tried to impose its "sponsorship" on Arab feminist thinking and practice. There have been numerous attempts to guide feminist thinking in the Third World and to define its concepts and terminology through the lens of Western bodies that view the West as the "optimal model" to be emulated in feminist issues as in other issues. These attempts are characterized by efforts to assert influence through "development" funding, cross-border forums, and gender-based organizations.

In the face of these challenges and the difficult political and social reality that Palestinian women, like all Palestinians in Israel, experience, various activists in the feminist movement in Israel are engrossed in important discussions on direction and practice. This may lead to the development of thought that reveals and confronts Western liberal feminist domination including Zionism, on one hand, and works on confronting and addressing social masculinity, on the other. It should be noted that the Arab feminist movements in the Arab world have long engaged in such discussions.

This issue of *Jadal* focuses on the dialectic of thought and practice in the Palestinian feminist movement in Israel. The importance of this issue arises from the role of the Palestinian feminist movement is taking, in linking the issue of Palestinian women with the impact of the Jewish State's policies towards women's status and gender relations in Palestinian society, in addition to its role in advancing the Palestinian community in general, and women in particular. The roles the feminist movement can play are especially important in the absence of independent Palestinian institutions, the hostility of the institutions of the Jewish State, and the lack of a normative social center, which helps to promote the social values that support women's societal status.

In this issue, as in previous issues of *Jadal*, there is an analytical article on the relationship between thought and practice in Palestinian feminist reality. It scrutinizes the particular situation of the Palestinian feminist movement, and theorizes about how the status of women could be advanced. The issue also includes viewpoints that

reflect the intellectual pluralism that is found in the feminist movement, on one hand, and the multiplicity of issues that concern this movement, on the other. The views address feminist work strategies in the Bedouin community, the issue of Jewish-Arab partnership, the impact of Islamic feminist thought on Palestinian feminism in Israel, and some reflections on the role women, sometimes play, in perpetuating their inferior social status. This issue also contains two informational articles on women and labor, and on feminist civil organizations.

As in previous issues, *Jadal* strives to introduce readers to topical social and political trends within our society and to generate insightful and constructive debates about them.

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 Khshuiboun, 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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Viewpoints

This issue's viewpoints relate to social phenomena experienced by Palestinian women in Israel. **Dr. Hunaida Ghanim's** viewpoint addresses the role women play in reaffirming their own inferior status, which is subject to the context of the narrow culture of consumer capitalism and the dominance of the consumer culture and its interaction with male and rural values. Ghanim calls for formulating a new feminist vision that steers away from addressing women in traditional feminist language (which would view them as "victims" of a crude male culture), but instead portrays them as active partners in engineering and accepting their own suppression by describing it as an indication of liberation.

The feminist activist and lawyer **Saidah Mohsen-Biadseh** addresses the growing strength of the Islamic Movement within Palestinian society in the broader context of feminism in Islam and the Islamic feminist thought. She discusses some of the activities of the *Nissa' wa-Aafaq* (Women and Horizons) organization to show how such feminist thought can present a challenge to both secular and to religious feminism.

Suhad Daher-Nashef raises a critical vision of the collective, contradictory, and ambiguous political practices of the Palestinians inside Israel, including feminist and women's organizations. The writer says that if Palestinian women want freedom from societal oppression and masculinity, they need to find the appropriate space and means that are consistent with their own lived reality and with their position within such a complex colonial reality. In her view, such freedom will not be achieved through adopting the platforms or means of the colonizer.

Dr. Sarab Abu Rabia-Queder's viewpoint explores patterns of collective action devised by Bedouin women in the Naqab (Negev) to empower themselves. She discusses the increased presence of NGOs in Bedouin communities in Israel and how such presence introduced the possibility of change through new models of activism empowering women within their sex-segregated societies.

Between the Kitchen and the Kitchenette: Reflections on a Perplexed Feminism!

DR. HUNEIDA GHANIM

A South African Parliament member summed up the difference between the demands of feminist movements in the West and feminist movements in the Third World, by saying that the first demands to get out of the kitchen into the public space, while women in the third world demand to have a kitchen!

Of course, the situation is not that simple, since many of the women in the third world in general, and in our homeland as well, do not only have one kitchen, but may have two or even three. It is sufficient to look at young couples' homes being built today in towns in the Triangle, the Galilee and the West Bank (I allow myself to speak about them, because I know them well). We find that these couples' homes, especially the educated and intellectual among them, have at least two kitchens whose functions and social uses reflect the complex relationship between women, space and culture. Through this intersects the need for exhibition by describing it as a rural masculine value, with redesigning and dividing the (private!) domestic space to conform to cultural changes. A part of what was normally used as a model of the private space is appropriated and transferred to an exhibitory public space, while the woman is vanquished to the dark and secluded edges of the house by describing it as a new special space.

Usually, the larger kitchen is installed in a prominent place in the home; or as they say colloquially, "in the forefront of the house", and is essentially designated for public exhibition. When installing the kitchen, the owners want to make sure that no one will ignore it. In addition, normally, the large kitchen is very clean, and made with magnificence and splendor, lacking nothing (except use!). The second kitchen, or, as the Palestinian women inside Israel have habitually called it, "kitchenette," is a very small room, situated in one of the secluded corners of the house. It is designed in a way to ensure that it is hidden from invasive strange eyes. In it, the woman carries out all the tasks related to cooking and its derivatives; she lives in it in a space of freedom and release without caring about the small details, its appearance, and organization, because it is considered her very private space and intimate place. It has been the habit to protect it shrewdly by saying; "This is where I do what I want," i.e., no one can hold me accountable for its mess. (Did not Mahmoud Darwish say, "My freedom is my chaos?!")

The Kitchen and Kitchenette live in complete and real harmony. The first does not intrude on the privacy of the second, and the second does not encroach on the splendor of the first as each serves a purpose. Of course, I do not mean to insult, and I apologize from the outset if I have incited resentment. However, the presence of two kitchens is not just a passing event; it carries many implications that I would like to examine and explore.

First, over a century ago, and since then too, women in rural Palestine would cook on a wood stove, meaning that her kitchen was the space outside of the home, which consisted of only a room or two intended for sleeping and receiving guests. This

situation began to change gradually with the improvement of the economic situation, which allowed for the development of the home and the privatization of its parts for new purposes. The bathroom, which was built outside, was recalled (it is no coincidence that we still call it the "outhouse"), and became part of the house. The wood stove was replaced by a gas or electric stove. The house was no longer a space for sleeping and storage, but became a functional structure that responded comprehensively to the family's biological and psychological needs. It must be noted here that, in the above situation, women lived in harsh economic conditions, and needed an indoor kitchen very much. However, women and the feminist movement (which came from a higher, more affluent social class, who certainly had a kitchen) raised the slogan of removing the veil and going out into the public space. These slogans (in spite of their utmost importance) passed on without leaving any repercussions for common women.

Second, the rural woman entered the kitchen, but, instead of enjoying her new status inside the comfort of the home and away from the wood fire, she found herself surrounded by four walls and barred from leaving freely. The situation was aggravated by the complexity of her national reality and the state of intense conflict, which raised fears of her vulnerability to harm, and the emphasis was on keeping her a hostage in the home. It was natural that the feminist movements called for the woman to exit the kitchen, but more important was the demand that she exit into a safe space, not into one of war where forces target, first her home, then her family and then her existence. Of course, the Zionist colonial presence in Palestine initially, and the Israeli military rule later on, were a black umbrella that overshadowed the reality of the Palestinians—women and men—and threatened their existence. It was necessary that both women and men resist this, but the problem was that the women emphasized the public space and so forgot the kitchen!

Third, after the end of the military rule, women's focus shifted from patriotic, national or class dimensions, into a mere echo in party slogans. Even though these slogans had their enthusiastic audience in a particular historical moment, women's familiarity with them led to the marginalization of their feminist voice and later its conversion to simply a "shadow" voice for a political party, which the common woman viewed as merely a partisan flank at times, or an electoral adornment at other times. At any rate, this reality is still evident today in all the national and political parties operating in Palestine of 1948. Not only did it cause forgetfulness of the kitchen, it also caused formal interactions with it and an aversion to what it represents as a symbol: male oppression and slavery. This contributed to a state of alienation between feminist activists and their surroundings, and enhanced personal, as opposed to, intellectual rivalry among women belonging to the different parties' "feminist circles". This generated an intense race between the parties, over the right to represent women's interests, since women were now viewed as having electoral power. This race forced the women to enter into a vortex of being concerned with nominal, marginal side issues, and resulted in a confusing mix between feminist action by describing it as the product of critical liberal thought, and partisan and narrow competitive thought.

In the turmoil of conflicts (those sometimes conspicuous and sometimes hidden) between the women of the various parties who speak in the name of feminism, and in the absence of a united feminist work, the women of my homeland were creative in

designing their "private" space (although we as feminists do not recognize its existence, as the private is public!). They acquired bank loans to transform their kitchens into a public space of splendor and magnificence. They have redrawn new social boundaries that separate the public from the private, boundaries not based on the traditional division between the public, as the space outside the home, and the private home as "her first institution;" but rather, the new boundaries confine the woman to the walls of her home and its corridors. Women have traded house detention for voluntary detention in a private cell that they call with gusto, kitchenette!

The kitchenette is only an expression of the crisis that has conjoined male culture to consumer capitalism. In it, the village or the city has become an alternative to the State, especially as the latter has proceeded—with premeditation—to block other methods of mobility. In this reality, women and men toil within their narrow surroundings in order to assert their distinct success by accumulating material possessions and promoting them as a sign of excellence and success. The problem doesn't arise from material accumulation itself, even if we disagree about the extent of its morality; but a problem arises from its role in reaffirming the subordinate and inferior role of women within the limited consumer capitalism culture. The kitchenette (which developed as a result of the desire to boast) is an ideal model for reproducing the woman's social role through its ability to harmonize with consumer culture, without changing the male cultural system. It confirms this system in a complex way, because women internalize it and view it as part of their voluntary choices. Ultimately, the women boast more than the men about redesigning the space with splendor in which the principle of its division takes into account the traditional roles. This fact, which is dominated by a culture of consumerism, and is intertwined with male and rural values, is a new reality to some extent, a reality that needs to be taken absolutely seriously by the feminist movements, lest they wake up, after a decade, to a completely strange reality. This reality requires the formulation of a new feminist vision that does not address women in a traditional feminist language, which views women as the "victims" of a male and crude culture, but as active partners in engineering their own suppression and accepting it by describing it as a liberal indicator as they are not overly concerned with whether this is the result of a false consciousness, or an intelligent male dominance. In the end, what does it matter to the woman that is obsessed with the notion of the kitchenette, even if all the feminist movements in the world point to her world as a repressive one, as long as she sees it as a beautiful reality?! Is not false consciousness more beautiful than real awareness, if it ultimately protects from the confusion of conflict and the throes of change?!

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Feminism in Islamic Religious Discourse: The Experience of “Women and Horizons”

SAIDA MOHSEN-BYADSI

During the last three decades of the 20th century, the religious feminist movement in Arab states provided a marginal alternative to Western-influenced, secular feminism. Doubts were raised over whether it was part of the feminist movement at all, which endured until the final decades of the 20th century. This movement was fearful of, and indeed even opposed to, the Western model, and sought a means of understanding the inferior status of women and of engendering social, cultural and religious change by proposing a local Islamic discourse.

Islamic feminist thought (if it can be described as such, and despite my reservations over the expression) engages in discussions about Islamic religious texts, Arab Muslim culture, and modern Muslim society—all of which face local and global challenges that demand change. On the one hand, feminism seeks to give strength to Muslim women by presenting a new vision of Islam, one that is critical of the prevailing religious discourse and its numerous interpretations that relate to women. On the other hand, it is characterized by a desire to be active in the cultural and social contexts of Muslim societies throughout the world, in which religion plays a decisive role in the lives of individuals and especially women.

Some researchers define Islamic feminism as a discourse and means of conduct that acts within an Islamic system. As mentioned above, feminists who support this movement affirm that it responds to the needs of women for whom abandoning religion as a binding system of belief and behavior is not an option, either out of their own deeply-held beliefs and genuine desire (because they believe the founding text to be intrinsically just and equitable), or due to oppression and social pressure. These feminists maintain that, concerning Muslim women, it is imperative to distinguish between what is actually set forth in the religious texts, and the ways in which society understands and interprets religion. In many instances the religious text grants women a margin of freedom that patriarchal society denies them on the basis of its own understanding and interpretation of religion (and men have undertaken the tasks of understanding and interpretation since the dawn of Islamic history, and continue to do so). Margot Badran argues that we also must make a distinction between “Islamic feminism” as an official project and analytical term, and “Muslim feminists” as a term that articulates identity. Some Muslim feminists define their activities that aim at achieving gender and social justice, and for which the point of departure is the *Qur’an*, as “Islamic feminism.” Others, meanwhile, do not even describe such activities as feminism, but rather as a project of *Qur’anic* reinterpretation from a feminist perspective. Furthermore, the term has been expanded to include religious Muslim women who strive to raise the status of women in their societies based on their belief that there is a space in which to achieve this change within the framework of religion. It also includes secular women (some of whom are non-Muslims) who live in an Islamic environment, and who decide to engage in religious thought and attempt to bring about change by setting forth their understanding of religious text as it pertains to women. These women do not use

Islamic feminism as an identity, but as an effective strategy for achieving social change.

The research methods employed in the field of Islamic feminism are essentially traditional Islamic methods, such as *ijtihad* (literally, the 'struggle' to apply Islamic law in concrete cases) and *tafsir* (interpretation or exegesis of the *Qur'an*), which are supplemented with tools from the fields of linguistics, history, literary criticism, anthropology, etc. Women who enter the field of *Qur'anic* interpretation draw on their own life experiences and raise issues that they view as pivotal to them as women. They underline the fact that the traditional interpretation and most modern interpretations use the experiences of men as a basis for *tafsir* and *fatwa* (Islamic religious ruling), and privilege men over women.

The growing strength of the Islamic Movement within Palestinian society is an important reason for attempting to explicate the local experience of feminism in Islam. Local society rejects what are considered to be foreign or Western values that do not derive from its own cultural and religious heritage, and do not speak in local terms. Therefore, Palestinian feminists place great importance on working for change from within the context of religion, which has a powerful influence within society. However, this is not the only factor: Islamic feminism in general does not—necessarily—view Islam and universal principles as being mutually incompatible in a way that would prevent reconciliation between them within a single system of rights, or that would rule out religious foundations for rights demanded by women in the East, as well as in the West, on the basis of international human rights covenants.

In my view, a long path that lies ahead of Palestinian feminists inside Israel, and it is not yet possible to claim that a feminist consciousness has developed among a majority of Palestinian women and empowered them as a force for social change. Thus while the feminist movement is influential to varying degrees in various Arab and Muslim countries (and in most cases exercises a powerful influence), it is difficult to claim that the same is true in the local context. "Women and Horizons" aspires to bring about social change in the status of women—in particular (but not exclusively) of Muslim women—by proposing a feminist vision as an alternative to the traditional vision propagated by religion. The organization works within the context of religion, mainly striving to raise awareness among women (and within society in general) about the oppression of women. However, in terms of certain specific issues the struggle is still in its infancy, and a distant observer may get the impression that feminist groups—including Women and Horizons—remain far removed from the silent majority of women and from recruiting them to the struggle. Since its foundation, Women and Horizons has called for change from within the cultural and social context of Palestinian society, at the center of which lies religion. However, like all civil society organizations, it has faced accusations of being part of a Western agenda that aims to misrepresent and destroy Islam. Such accusations have lost the organization some of the public support it should have enjoyed as a pioneering feminist organization active in the field of religion. Of course, this loss has played a part in curbing its activities and narrowing the space in which it has and continues to operate. In addition, there has been an attempt to marginalize feminist action in general, given the "real national challenges" that face the Palestinian people inside Israel, and the rejection of the organization by secular feminists, or some of them,

who continue to state that feminism and religion are irreconcilable opposites. Consequently the organization is left attempting to establish its legitimacy before both religion and secularism.

Over two years ago, Women and Horizons raised the issue of the exclusion of Arab women from inheritance by launching a media and public campaign to raise the level of awareness of the issue. The organization succeeded to generate a debate on the subject, and its implications for women's dependency on men and for limiting their activity within the private sphere. And perhaps the organization even managed to bring about a certain degree of change, albeit modest. However, the same cannot be said of other issues: the issue of killing women on the basis of so-called "family honor", for example, has not been broached, along with other burning issues. This reluctance stems from a fear of attacks from conservative actors, and perhaps from other reasons related to the fact that the organization is still in the early stages of its intellectual development and at the start of its struggle. Thus, as started above, the path of the struggle ahead is long, although I believe that it will be key and effective in the long run in bringing about the desired change. Evidence for this belief can be found in the support and encouragement that women, as well as some men, have given to feminist thought and its power to change fixed norms and deeply-rooted beliefs held by the general public.

In any case, the organization Women and Horizons and the feminist thought it propounds present a challenge to both secularism and to religion, a challenge that should be given a space within which it can be dealt with, and in which to consolidate intellectual pluralism and a plurality of struggles within our society. I anticipate that its activity will develop and evolve, and that the organization's popular base will expand, particularly given that it has now begun work on drafting a new Muslim personal status bill to replace the current Ottoman-era law, in response to the aspirations of women and current social changes. Women and Horizons is developing working methods that will make it more active in the field, and there can be no doubt that change is coming, though the path ahead may be paved with challenges.

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The Activism of Bedouin Women

SARAB ABU-RABIA-QUEDER

Since the early 1990s, the increased presence of NGOs in many marginalized Bedouin communities in Israel has introduced the possibility of change to many underserved groups. Models for activism empower women within their sex-segregated societies through the formation of women's collectives, networking, and the revival of traditional female skills.

These models fall within the spectrum of organizational activism (NGOs) and social activism carried out by individuals, who may function through organizations and/or on an individual level.

Reviving tradition

One form of activism involves the revival of female traditions. Bedouin women traditionally lived a nomadic existence in the desert. Their productivity derived from performing the elementary tasks of daily life, such as harvesting agricultural produce, collecting firewood, drawing well water, milking goats, preparing food, and collectively being responsible for domestic duties and child rearing. These roles positioned them in the heart of decisionmaking. When Israel compelled them to settle in recognized villages that lacked employment services for men and women alike, these women lost many of their productive roles and could find no alternatives. Thus, they became unemployed in their own domestic sphere.

The young generation is reviving these traditional roles through indigenous local NGOs (SIDREH and the Association for Promoting Women's Status, both of which are located in, and function out of, the Bedouin village of Laqia). These projects often include hundreds of women from a single village who serve as coordinators, comptrollers, production managers, and marketing managers. These women make rugs, handbags and traditional jewelry, marketing them through internet sites and direct sales at various events. In return, they receive some monetary compensation. Through such means, these pioneering women both revive tradition and once again assume productive roles through the additional income they bring to their families. Thus, the women's individual empowerment serves to empower their families and as well as their communities.

The example delineated above is merely one of numerous feminist activities ongoing in the Middle East, North Africa, and other developing countries. The participating women do not deny their tradition, but rather embrace it to enhance their status and advance. This model of feminism avoids the overt public sphere, thus evading a blatant clash with the traditional expectations of Bedouin women. The activities do not violate the traditional prohibition against public appearance or impinge on the traditional values of *ai'b* (shame) and honor. Instead, these women's actions encourage a continuity of female tradition and simultaneously challenge the status of Bedouin men, the traditional societal breadwinners, by allowing women to be breadwinners in their own right.

Another promising project, initiated by the Arab-Jewish Center for Equality, Empowerment, and Cooperation (AJEEC), trains Bedouin women to be photographers and disc jockeys in the women's sections of weddings. The training is held in the nearby city of Beersheva. Since Bedouin society is sex-segregated and forbids any public contact between men and women, both public and private spaces are created for women at weddings.

The benefits of single-sex projects that can be practiced only in sex-segregated societies are similar to those found in other tribal societies where sex segregation is a source of power and not of oppression, contrary to prevailing assumptions in the West. Creating a women-dominated (in this case, women teachers) space proves to be an effective tool in this situation, since it fits the sex-segregated values and norms that prevail in the community.

Bedouin women activists maintain their cultural female identity as a crucial part of their activism by emphasizing the roles that will guarantee the most respected status: their mother-feminine-family role.

Re-Islamizing patriarchy

Bedouin women also use Islamic religious texts to challenge patriarchy at both the organizational and individual social activist levels. Although the Bedouin community is a Muslim one, some of their social practices are in opposition to the dictates of Islam, especially in regard to issues involving women's rights, such as marriage. Bedouin women use Islamic texts and the *Qur'an* to challenge taboos that are not discussed publicly or academically in Bedouin circles—most notably the tribal structure of Bedouin society, which largely prohibits marriages between individuals from different tribes.

For the purpose of self-defense, nomadic Bedouin created alliances with other tribes occupying the same space and married only within these allied tribes. These tribal alliances protected the individual and the collective. Although times have changed and many Bedouin have moved to permanent villages, the tribal structure has not disappeared, and marriages must still remain within the old tribal alliances affiliated with desert life. This behavioral code adversely affects mainly women (especially educated women), who are forbidden to marry men outside the tribal limits.

This taboo was challenged only recently by the women themselves, through women's organizations and the work of individual activists. Because the women could not overtly challenge the taboo, they broke the silence around it through societally acceptable ways of resistance, such as citing legitimate Islamic texts that give (Muslim) women the right to marry outside tribal limits. The following examples demonstrate both the organizational struggle and the efforts of individual activists.

In November 2001, the women's organization Ma'an—the Forum for Bedouin Women's Organizations, together with Ben Gurion University of the Negev, organized a conference entitled, "Arab-Bedouin Society in the Negev: Between Tribalism and Modernity," to bring the tribal issue into the public light. Though all the organizers were women, they invited men from other organizations for two reasons:

First, because change has to occur not only among the women, but also in collaboration with the men; and second, to involve men and challenge their worldview in the discourse of tribalism. For these purposes, they carefully selected preeminent representatives of Bedouin society to assume the roles of keynote speakers: a religious judge (of religious Islamic courts), a religious *shaykh* of the Islamic Movement party, and a female social worker who spoke about the psychological effects of tribalism. In other words, instead of speaking against tribalism themselves, and thus challenging the structure of Bedouin society, these women invited two men of religion to speak and provide the religious justification for prohibiting tribalism. In this way, the Bedouin women avoided being branded as rebels and safeguarded their organizations. This is also an illustration of how the modern element of free choice regarding the right to select a spouse is activated in Bedouin tribal society. Integration between elements of science (the social worker) and Islamic traditional elements (the two *shaykhs*) legitimized open discussion of this taboo.

The above is an example of the negotiation between the local and the global; between modernity and tradition. Rather than one coming at the expense of the other, they are two complementary elements of changing norms surrounding taboos and the creation of a space for agency.

These cases point to two main strategies used by Bedouin women striving to make changes: the use of male figures to gain legitimacy, and the use of religious texts in the feminist struggle or what I refer to as “re-Islamizing patriarchy.”

Conclusion

The struggle of Bedouin women shares the same traditional characteristics as the struggles of women in other Arab countries in the Middle East, where women also utilize strategies that have been characterized as “Interism,” which reflects the belief that Arab women should cooperate with tradition and the community as a tactic to work from within the social order in order to change it. However, in contrast to other Middle Eastern cultures, there are a number of differences in the struggle of Palestinian women in Israel in general, and Bedouin women in particular. First, they live under Israeli rule and are defined as an ethnic minority in a country that is not defined as theirs. Thus, one of their foci is acting against ethnic exclusion and demanding equality with the other citizens in Israel. Although this remains one of the goals of Palestinian community organizations in Israel, it is not the direct struggle of Bedouin women's organizations. Because Bedouin women are subject to a number of oppressive agents, both patriarchal and political, they first function on the local level, with regard to the acute problems that they experience. In addition, the struggles regarding land are by and large managed by male-dominated organizations that tend to exclude women.

An additional characteristic of Bedouin society in Israel that is not present in other Middle Eastern countries lies in the struggle to alter Muslim law. In other Middle Eastern countries, Muslim law reflects national law. In Israel, these laws are part of the *shari'a* court system and women have no access to them or authority to fight for change. This presents an additional challenge, because it is difficult to enforce either

Israeli national law or Muslim law on a society that does not function according to such laws, particularly when women's and marriage-related issues are involved.

The social activism of Bedouin women, as expressed in this paper, can be seen as part of what Amalia Sa'ar calls "liberal bargaining." Such bargaining takes place when:

. . . some members of marginalized groups internalize liberal epistemology to maximize security and optimize their life options. They strategize to materialize whatever limited benefits they may extract from their disadvantaged position in the liberal order.

In this sense, Bedouin women have internalized modern tools by using democratic rules in the community arena. Through their agency, Bedouin women hybridize internal and external elements without having to fear a loss of belonging to the community. Instead, they encourage reflexive invention of activism on their own terms.

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Criticizing Us: Are We a Fanonian Variation?

SUHAD DAHER-NASHEF

Whenever I browse through Frantz Fanon's book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, I see our situation as Palestinians (I will not say, "inside Israel", because we are also outside; I will not say of 1948, because we are of 1967 too and because our occupation began before 1948 and continues until this day and moment) as wretched on earth. However, we are in a place in which we have transformed and/or been transformed into tormentors of ourselves, into offenders against ourselves. Most of us weep for our situation and wail against our occupation and the theft of our lands and our homes, and at the same time, we actively participate in strengthening the Israeli institutions that have caused, and continue to cause, the demolition of our homes and the extortion of our lands. We live in a state of duplicity, but it is not the duplicity of James Scott, which drives at resistance. Rather, our duplicity derives from the fact that with our own hands, we maintain and strengthen—both by working within, and also by establishing organizations and centers to connect with (and work for our release through)—the very same institutions that oppress us and from which we would like to be free!

In order to clarify, I will analyze how I view the political and social action of Palestinian organizations as clearly embodying our taking the role that Fanon has characterized as "comprador" and as expressing our schizophrenic reality. An illustrative example of this, is the so-called legal centers that defend the rights of the "Arab minority in Israel." I believe that the approach of these centers to actualizing Palestinians' rights, through the Israeli courts, is one step out of thousands that we, as occupied Palestinians, have taken that strengthen those institutions and promote their domination over us. Approaching them, using the Israeli judicial system and "negotiating" with it, is only recognition of the sovereignty and dominance of this institution and domination of its laws. We should not forget that this institution is the one that enacted all the unjust laws against the Palestinians, therefore, what we are doing is trying to free ourselves from an unjust law through the unjust law itself. Is this possible? Do we have other options? Yes and no, and I will elaborate below.

Israel's acceptance and recognition of these centers is a sign of its assurance that these centers promote and strengthen the existence of the judicial institution in Israel; they promote and strengthen the domination and supremacy of Israeli law in our lives. In my opinion, those who work in these centers and wander the hallways of the Israeli courts are very similar to the "Arab members" who roam the Knesset aisles. We also must not forget that we (females) have become members, joyful at this "great achievement." This is only one of destiny's ironies. What is more ironic is that some of the feminist activists regarded the entry of a Palestinian woman into the Israeli Knesset as "an achievement of the national and feminist movement." This elation is a chapter in a system of conscious or unconscious self-flagellation, which practiced by some Palestinian feminists. However, the entry of a Palestinian woman (and/or Palestinian man) into the Knesset is, I believe, an act that helps this institution to survive and to continue to do what it does to us, which is to repress and exclude.

How can we separate the national from the feminist? I believe that those who accept the occupier's authority by integrating themselves into its institutions will never be free from any kind of oppression, even from self-suppression. What shocks me is that with all that has happened and is still happening with ongoing massacres in Gaza, there are Palestinian parties here (which define themselves as Arab) who become angry and rebel because the Knesset refuses their entry. I expected that these parties would rejoice and say, "Our rejection is our national achievement; if we are rejected, then this shows our national integrity." But I was surprised to see the Arab Members of the Knesset (MK) veins bulging with fury in fighting the rejection. The depth of our tragedy is demonstrated by the fact that one Arab MK raised an image of a bloodied Palestinian father in Gaza crying for his daughter, who had been martyred while in his arms, in order to enter the institution responsible for what happened—to enter and enhance an institution that has permitted and endorsed the slaughter in Gaza. Is leaving the Knesset Hall following the singing of *Hatikva* (as some of these Arab MKs did) an act of liberation? To the contrary: In my view, the act of liberation comes from *not* entering this institution in the first place—from the joy of rejecting it, and from not participating in its elections.

There is another sign of our participation in our exclusion, in the rise of our suppression, and in the strengthening of those who suppress us, which is manifested in the action of some feminist organizations. I often ask myself, despite the development and increase in Palestinian feminist action, why is there an increase in cases of repression (and even killing) of Palestinian women here? The answer is very complicated and includes several aspects. In addition to the Israeli colonial dismantling of Palestinian society (and this, in itself, is a broad topic that is beyond the scope of this piece), some active feminist organizations and centers have not succeeded in advancing their own goals. This may be due to their inability or unwillingness to free themselves from the dominance of Israeli institutions that work to advance the dismantling and destruction of our Palestinian society in order to weaken it. These organizations expect that the Israeli institutions, such as the police, for example, will solve our societal dilemmas. These are unrealistic and counterproductive expectations. In a meeting held in the Knesset (the Knesset—again!), female and male representatives of various institutions that "address" issues related to the killing of women (in the occupied Palestinian society, which is under full Israeli hegemony) gathered, and were joined by an Israeli police officer, a representative of an organization that combats violence against women, a Palestinian MK from the Zionist Labor Party (a tragic contradiction), a social worker, and others. The organization representative said, "I think that those working in education, social welfare, and in the police and the law, should collaborate. We as representatives of the women, and as women activists in our society, are ready for anything—to help in counseling, and even to be at the forefront and try to change the situation . . ." This sentence would have been logical if uttered in a different context from ours. Is it rational that the colonized ask those who colonize them for help in solving community problems and challenges? Of course, we all agree that the answer is NO.

Do the colonized have other choices? Here, we will differ in our answers, but I believe that we can search for an answer and find it eventually, and there are Palestinian activists who are already trying to do so. Here, I would like to bring up the

case of the January 2007 murder of Hamda Abu Ghanem in Ramle. Abu Ghanem, 18, was killed, presumably by a family member. The primary witness, a female relative of Hamda (in Ramle), disappeared after testifying in the case. The investigative officer had promised the witness that he would issue an order prohibiting the publication of her statement for fear that she would pay with her life. We were therefore shocked to find her testimony published in full on the website of the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*. It is almost certain that she was killed for her testimony. This incident underscores the patronizing, Orientalist, and exploitive way the Israeli police deal with Palestinian girls who turn to them for help and protection. In this way, Palestinian girls are used by the police to provide the appearance of doing their public duty when in fact the girls are not being protected at all—to the contrary. These are the police, this is the law, and this is the Knesset, which many of us rejoice to enter, and this is the government whose laws we turn to – the same laws that impoverished Hamda Abu Ghanem’s Arab neighborhood of Jawarish in Ramle; the same institutions that built the wall that divides the Jawarish neighborhood from that of its Jewish neighbors. These are the institutions that prevent public transportation from entering this neighborhood (unlike every other city neighborhood). They are those who decide that the man who killed his sister is only an accomplice to a crime and not a criminal, even when his mother screamingly reveals that her daughter was killed by this man, her own son. The demand of these feminist organizations to partner with the Israeli institute to protect and save women from violence and killing at the hands of men is only another expression of the ideology of the white man who will save the woman from her black man. This is purely a colonial relationship. There may be awareness of what is happening, but the inability to break away from these institutions reminds me of what Albert Memmi wrote in his book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1991: 5); “The colonial relationship which I had tried to define chained the colonizer and the colonized into an implacable dependence. . . .”

Part of the assistance provided by organizations that work to combat violence against women is the establishment of shelters for battered women and girls. In the Jawarish neighborhood in the city of Ramle in particular, and elsewhere in the country, these women have been marginalized by the males in their society, and at the same time excluded by the Israeli institutions as part of the neighborhood that has been segregated from the rest of Ramle city. Besides, these females are excluded because they are part of the occupied Palestinian minority. On top of this, the feminist organization excluded them a fourth time. Each act of exclusion increases the vulnerability of these girls in meeting their fate (Agamben, 1998). According to Agamben, the included exclusion (the shelter excludes them from their neighborhood, but the Israeli law and formal institutes contains them) is the most dangerous area. Hence it is not surprising that the majority of girls, eventually, prefer to leave the shelter and return home. This partnership between the feminist organizations and the Israeli institutions and ideology augments the exclusion of women and girls, who are victims of violence, and increases the dominance of the colonizer white man on Palestinian men and women. This is our situation; we are an occupied Palestinian minority that is being excluded (through continuous racial discrimination against us) and included (through involving us in the colonizing institution and subjecting us to its law and domination) at the same time.

This is the most dangerous area (i.e., contained exclusion); if we had been completely excluded without being contained, it might have been much better. My question is: Why can we not exclude ourselves by releasing ourselves from the institutional mechanisms that are used to exclude us? This can be achieved, for example, by choosing not to participate in the Israeli elections and enter the Knesset in the first place. We may not be able to completely liberate ourselves; however, there are possibilities and spaces in which we can begin to do it.

The conclusion that I would like to reach is the one that Albert Memmi reached, that these who are considered to be representatives of the colonized, and who recruited from among the colonized by the colonizer, are chosen to be participants and collaborators with the colonizer, to implement instruction that were taken elsewhere. Consequently, and this is what is referred to in feminist literature and theory, if we want freedom from oppression and male domination in our society, it is certain that we will not achieve it through the colonizer's platforms, tools or institutions. Rather, we must seek out the appropriate spaces and means that are consistent with our reality and with our position in this complex colonialist reality.

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Resisting Subjugation: Palestinian Women's and Feminist Organizations Within the 1948 Green Line

JANAN ABDU

While non-governmental organizations (NGOs) constitute one of the most important civil society institutions and forms of non-governmental community organizing, Palestinian NGOs located within the 1948 green line are an exception to this rule. These organizations are active within and for the benefit of their communities. They sometimes enter into conflicts with other forces within these communities, but have complementary and interdependent relationships with them. However, their interests do not necessarily overlap with those of Israeli civil society or of the state, and indeed contradict them in many areas. And while Israel defines itself as a democratic state, since its establishment many of its laws and practices have discriminated against Palestinians (community, individuals, and institutions alike). Furthermore, statements made by Israel's leaders, as well as its self-definition as a Jewish state, all refute the state's claims to democracy, freedom, and equality.

These issues, and the ongoing history of colonialism, comprise the context in which these organizations operate. This context has left a direct imprint on the objectives, agendas, and activities of women's and feminist NGOs as well as on concepts, terminology, work methods and research in this field.

These organizations were established at various stages, and each has its own characteristics and agenda. Despite the diverse reasons and motives behind their establishment, they have much in common. This article provides an overview of the emergence and evolution in the activities of these organizations within the 1948 Green Line since the 1948 *Nakba*. It addresses the impact of the *Nakba* and the establishment of the State of Israel on their development, focusing on the period from the late 1980s to the present day, which was characterized by an upsurge in their work, a diversification of their agendas, and the adoption of new strategies. The article also sheds light on two key issues that directly impact the work of these organizations: donor agendas and state policies. Further, it shows how the organizations have dealt with these issues and discusses the challenges and obstacles they face.

Early Years

With Palestine under the British Mandate, women's organizations (committees) shifted from voluntary charitable work on social, cultural, and health issues to political action. They all adopted a nationalist position and took land and the homeland as their principal issue. Thereafter, women's organizations spread throughout Palestine and intensified their activities, up until 1948.

Immediately after the *Nakba*, women's NGOs halted their work temporarily and, for the first time, were split between groups located "inside" and "outside" the Green

Line, as the “new” border imposed by Israel precluded any contact between members of Palestinian people on either side.

Outside the homeland, particularly in Lebanon, the leadership of the national movement and the women’s movement were able to come together, renew their activities, and increase their capacity, in collaboration with various bodies and committees in Lebanon. They took part in a series of local, regional, and international conferences to mobilize Arab and international public opinion in support of the Palestinian cause and the return of the displaced to their lands.

Inside the homeland, those Palestinians who remained on their land and the internally displaced attempted to organize themselves while still absorbing the consequences of the *Nakba*. They resisted displacement and the new military rule that was imposed on them, which severed contact between Palestinians and deprived them of basic freedoms. The period between the *Nakba* and the 1970s, which included the end of military rule in 1966, saw the beginnings of reorganization, and some organized women’s work was accomplished, guided by clear thinking and vision. In 1948, directly after the *Nakba*, women members of the Communist Party and the National Liberation League, together with other women of similar intellectual leanings, established the **Women’s Renaissance Movement** in Nazareth, which opened branches in both Haifa and Acre. It functioned as a women’s organization with a political agenda focused on class, labor, and women’s education. After 1952, the movement united with progressive Jewish women’s groups, and together they formed a new organization that took the name the **Movement of Democratic Women** in 1973. The movement opened dozens of branches and is still active today. In the 1960s, women joined the *al-Ard* (The Land) Movement (1962) and the *Abna’a al-Balad* (Sons of the Land) movement, which set up a core group of women in Um al-Fahm in 1977. In 1976, the **Acre Arab Women’s Association** was established as a professional organization in the field of childhood development and women’s empowerment in science, labor, and economics. This association was later to establish the educational center ***Dar al-Tifl (Home of the Child)***.

Until the late 1970s, given the restrictions of military rule, the role of organized and collective action by Palestinian women was essentially confined to or associated with existing political organizations. Young women were only then beginning to join the student movement. The participation of women in events such as Land Day in 1976 and their membership of the working classes were not accompanied by radical structural changes within the community, and at that stage did not lead to the establishment of other women’s organizations. Moreover, spontaneous acts undertaken by women that were related to the struggle (such as the strike by factory female workers) and stemmed from the exigencies of the time or from local needs, did not develop into institutionalized action; however, the situation underwent a marked change in the 1980s.

The 1980s

The 1980s were the starting point for local civil society activity in general, including women’s action and women’s associations. Particularly towards the end of the

decade, civil society activity underwent a qualitative improvement and quantitative increase. This upsurge was reflected in the following developments:

- A rise in the number of professional and specialized women's organizations working in the field of women and children—They included **the Nazareth Nursery** (1984), which linked early childhood education to the ability of women to work and take their place in society. In 1989, the nursery set up a project that was to become the base of its activities: **al-Tufula (Childhood) Center**. In 1988, a similar local organization, **al-Sindiyanah**, was established in Acre. Both organizations were set up at the initiative of activists from the Movement of Democratic Women.
- An increase in the number of registered charitable organizations such as **al-Wafa (Faithfulness)** and **al-Amal (Hope)**, which was established in 1983 in Baqa al-Gharbiyah and continues to operate today
- Growth in projects to support and empower women within existing general organizations
- Institutionalization and pluralism in women's political activity, for example the emergence of the **Progressive Arab Women's Committee** alongside the *Abna'a al-Balad* movement—This committee focused the bulk of its activities within the universities and colleges and was active in the Galilee and the Triangle. The committee's work gradually ground to a halt some years later.
- The beginnings of the organized Palestinian students' movement in Israeli universities, which included activities initiated by female students
- The emergence of a feminist discourse and the beginnings of the Palestinian feminist movement within Israeli organizations, at the initiative of female academic activists, most of whom were studying in universities in the major cities, such as Haifa and Jerusalem—some were also active in the students' movement. Most specialized in therapeutic and educational disciplines. They opened the first emergency help lines for Palestinian women and girls, victims of violence and abuse: **the Arab hotline at the Center for the Assistance of Victims of Sexual Assault in Jerusalem** (1988); **the Arab hotline at the Center for the Assistance of Victims of Sexual Assault in Haifa** (1989); and **an emergency helpline for battered women in Haifa** (1990), as part of the national emergency helpline for victims of physical assault. These organizations enabled Palestinian women to begin organizing themselves and working within the Palestinian community, and constituted, for them and for the Palestinian women who approached them for support and assistance, a professional and moral hothouse. The location of these organizations in the major mixed cities was the reason for their success and guarantee of their continuity, at least in their formative stages. Their urban location allowed the victims' addresses to be kept secret, and permitted the victims to seek help without fear. This would not have been possible in an Arab village, where social relations and interactions do not allow for the confidentiality and privacy the women needed. This privacy also helped protect the volunteers from harassment.

As well as offering moral, legal, and health support to battered women and abuse victims, these feminist initiatives have proven successful in several areas. They arguably played a pioneering role in raising feminist awareness, and sought to

change the legal status of women and their position within the community. They also raised “sensitive issues” that the women’s networks and political movements that preceded them had avoided, and accused the state of failing to address the phenomenon of violence against women, and of being directly responsible for its continuation.

However, these initiatives, in the form described above, disintegrated at a later stage for various reasons particularly the Arab women’s emphasis on their desire to achieve full liberation from the dominance of men and the political parties, as well as the domination and hegemony of Jewish feminism. In addition, the experience of working with Jewish feminists had spawned disagreements resulting from internal power conflicts and tensions between the two groups on the basis of their national belonging.

Thus, during this period, the students’ movement took shape and expanded to all the universities, and female political activists took on prominent roles within it. In addition, general civil society organizations grew in number and feminist thought entered into the discourse of some of them. Women’s organizations also proliferated and broadened the scope of their activities. All of these developments had a profound effect in terms of providing women with the opportunity to play a broader, deeper, and more active role in public issues and to raise private, more sensitive issues, such as the issue of violence against women.

The 1990s

In the 1990s, Palestinian civil society faced increased calls to consolidate as an independent, alternative sector, and a collective vision began to take shape and be converted into an effective force. The tendency was increasingly towards greater institutionalization, international advocacy, and focusing on issues of collective rights and institution building. Human rights and nationalist organizations, established to work on land and identity issues, began to think about creating and developing their own resources and supporting the trend towards networking and building partnerships. In 1995, ***Ittijah—The Union of Arab Community-Based Organizations***, was established, as the embodiment of this trend. For women and women’s and feminist action, the 1990s witnessed:

- Expansion and institutionalization of the work, projects and thought that had begun in the preceding decade. It was also the period in which strategies and discourses were developed and expanded, and when feminist thought began to form a prominent part of organizations’ work and thought processes.
- Significant growth in the number of local and regional service organizations and in the areas in which they worked expanded. New women’s organizations working on women’s issues appeared, including: ***al-Zahra*** in Sakhnin (1997); ***Sidra*** in the Naqab (Negev) (1998); and ***Thuraya*** in Nahaf (1999). Some of them did not define themselves, at least in their early stages, as feminist organizations.
- The integration of feminist approaches in organizations on two levels:
 - **Autonomous feminism:** Independent Palestinian feminist associations and committees were established, while some of the core

organizations of the Palestinian feminist movement that emerged in the late 1980s continued to operate within Israeli feminist organizations;

- **Integrative feminism:** Women took an active, leading role in general organizations, including human rights associations, and put women's issues on their agendas by adopting a gender-mainstreaming approach in some cases. They also began joint action and collaboration with feminist organizations on women's issues, especially those that had not yet been addressed or been given sufficient attention. This work took three forms: a) coalitions; b) working committees; and c) women's projects within human rights associations.

In this way, the organizations moved from a stage in which they adopted existing models to one in which they attempted to build local, specific models based primarily on the particular nature of Palestinian society and the needs of women within it, especially once the heads of these organizations had gained the professional experience, knowledge, and power to independently manage their institutions and organizations successfully.

The feminist approach and activism of women in organizations brought about an upsurge in institutionalized feminist activism in this decade. Some of the main characteristics of this institutionalization are:

1. **The founding of new organizations and independent Palestinian feminist committees, as well as the continued work of some of the members of the early Palestinian feminist movement.** The 1990s witnessed a clear breakthrough for institutionalized feminist action with the arrival of a number of new feminist organizations, namely:

Jafra—The Palestinian Feminist Movement in Israel (1990): *Jafra* was founded at the initiative of a group of female university students who decided to establish a feminist organization that combined social revolution and nationalist feminist action. They gave lectures and organized demonstrations, particularly in Taybeh and Acre, in cooperation with other organizations, and held debates on certain issues (such as family honor and sex education). They called for national mobilization, but closed down after less than three years.

Al-Fanar—The Palestinian Feminist Organization (1991): A group of feminists founded *al-Fanar*, which focused on combating "honor killings" and addressing the issues of early and consanguineous marriages. They organized demonstrations condemning the killing of women. They emphasized the nationalist dimension of their work and took part in national events such as the commemoration of Land Day and the *Nakba*. *Al-Fanar* ceased its activity after several years.

Women Against Violence (1992): Women Against Violence was established at the initiative of a group of women, mainly professionals. They strove to

raise the social and legal status of Arab women, eliminate all forms of violence against them, and address the shortage of support services for Arab women victims of violence. Based in Nazareth, the organization began its activities by opening an emergency hotline for victims of assault and sexual and physical abuse. It later established shelters and halfway houses for Arab women and girls, the first of their kind in the country.

Assiwar—The Feminist Arab Movement in Support of Victims of Sexual Abuse (1997): Based in Haifa, this organization was established as a splitoff from the joint Israeli center. It runs a variety of projects, the most important of which is an emergency hotline, in addition to an awareness-raising educational project in schools and a media project. It also issues a journal.

Kayan—Feminist Organization (1998): Also based in Haifa, *Kayan* was established by a group of feminist activists and other women who had split off from a center to assist victims of sexual abuse in Haifa. It aims to generate social change in order to raise the status of women and increase their active participation in society. It adopted strategies of personal and collective empowerment, the achievement of equal rights for women, economic independence, and the enhancement of the public and political roles of women. It supports women's organizations and helps them structure themselves and become independent. Some of the projects it has sponsored have developed into independent organizations.

The aforementioned organizations were characterized by their radicalism and the modernization of their discourse and work strategies. Their discourse spoke of the multiple dimensions of domination and exploitation practiced by the state and society against Palestinian women. *Jafra* and *al-Fanar* ceased working after just a few years; however, *Assiwar*, *Kayan*, and Women Against Violence and their founders, along with female and male activists in other organizations and independent activists, all played a central and dynamic role in establishing work committees and coalitions to tackle violations of women's rights from a joint perspective.

2. **Placing women's issues, from a feminist perspective, on the agenda of general organizations**, as reflected in three main models: a) **Coalitions: The Alternative Coalition to Combat "Family Honor" Crimes** (1994); b) **Working groups with a legal focus: The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues** (1995), and **The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel** (1996-1997); and c) **The establishment of projects for women within existing human rights organizations: The Women's Rights Project (The Arab Association for Human Rights, 1997), and The Women and Law Project (Adalah).**

Each of these models is briefly explored below.

a. Coalitions

The Alternative Coalition to Combat “Family Honor” Crimes (1994) represents the beginnings of organized collective action on women’s issues, not only among feminist organizations but also other organizations, particularly those with a legal focus. The objective of the coalition was to put an end to the crime of killing Palestinian women on the basis of what was until then referred to as “family honor.” It sought to combat the prevailing silence about these killings, exert pressure on the criminals, and ostracize them and those who encourage them. It hoped to change prevalent understandings and attitudes towards “family honor” and shape a new awareness, together with more progressive social conduct based on an enlightened humanitarianism. They sought to achieve these goals by lobbying the legal system and the legislature to amend laws that degrade women and close any legal loopholes that benefit criminals. The coalition brought pressure to bear on governmental institutions and exposed the way in which some of them (like the police) had frequently been neglectful in their handling of the issue. In 2000, the Alternative Coalition (due to difficulties associated with coalition work) became a project within one of its member organizations: *Assiwar*.

These efforts to combat the killing of women were preceded by a campaign launched by a group of men and women in 1989 to confront the phenomenon, those who remained silent about it, and those who defended the killers. This campaign led to the creation of “a petition against the defense of the killers of women on the pretext of ‘honor’ (1989-1990)” that was distributed to the public. The petition had a major impact on mobilizing public opinion and revealing the need to address the problem from a moral starting point and one of collective responsibility. It rejected attempts by some public representatives to commandeer the petition to advance their own reactionary ideas, and went on to carry out a number of additional public activities. The petition also paved the way for the establishment of the **Committee for a Healthy Society** (1994), whose members included a number of feminist organizations that were established at this stage, in addition to other groups and independent activists. The committee later transformed into the Alternative Coalition as the culmination of a period of cooperation among activists in confronting the issue of honor killings, and their conviction of the need to pool all their energies within a common framework.

b. Working groups with legal agendas and a legal focus

1. **The Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues** (1995). This group consisted of feminist organizations, legal organizations, professionals (women and men) and activists in the field of human rights in general and women’s rights in particular. It also included members of Israeli legal and feminist organizations. However, other Arab human rights associations and well-known feminist organizations active in the field were absent. The working group strove to advance the values of gender equality with regard to personal status laws and the rights of litigants before the *Shari’a* courts and family courts in the Arab sector, using legal and social tools in equal measure. It also worked to combat the phenomenon of polygamy, and drew attention to

the state's failure to apply the existing penal code, which had the power to limit or bring an end to polygamy altogether. The committee also fought against the phenomenon of early marriage and orchestrated a campaign for the amendment of the Marriage Age Law. It contributed to the submission of an NGO shadow report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

2. **The Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women in Israel** (1996-1997). This working group was a national network that included representatives of the largest feminist organizations active in the field, human rights organizations, and individual human rights activists. It was established when some of its members heard of Israel's submission of its initial report to CEDAW, which the committee was scheduled to review in January 1997. After examining the state's report, the Working Committee decided to prepare a shadow NGO report in response to the omission in the state's report of any mention of the status and conditions of the Palestinian women in Israel and discrimination against them, in order to expose state policies that discriminate against Palestinian women in all spheres.

c. Projects for women within human rights organizations

1. **The Association for Human Rights' (HRA) Women's Rights Project** (1997). The project's objectives were to provide education on women's rights from a human rights perspective and to monitor violations of women's rights. The project offered supplementary courses for teachers and women on a number of related issues. It issued pamphlets and other publications on the rights of working women, violations of Palestinian women's rights, the representation of women in parents' committees, violence against women, and early marriages. The project also conducted research into women working in the private sector in Nazareth, held a number of seminars and panel discussions, and provided training in volunteering in human rights for university students with a focus on women's rights. In addition to representing the HRA in the Alternative Coalition and the Working Group for Equality in Personal Status Issues, the project also issued publications. In 2006, the project was integrated within the HRA's existing education project in order to increase its outreach.
2. **Adalah's Women and Law Project** (1999-2000). This project, which was run in cooperation with the Arab Association for Human Rights, sought to promote positive change within the Arab religious courts. It conducted a comprehensive study of the religious discourse and examined the possibilities of using it to bring about the desired change. The project included a series of workshops for women's groups on family law issues. It also provided training for project participants and other women activists on issues related to the discourse of Islamic jurisprudence, family law, and women. As part of this project, an internal report on the status of women in the *Shari'a* courts in the country was filed, and a series of articles published on the subject. The idea of establishing the organization **Nisaa wa-Afaq (Women and Horizons)** was

influenced by this project, a fact that underscores the importance of organizations' exchanging experiences and ideas and networking.

The work of these groups and coalitions is an indication of their diversity, professionalism, and high capacity for organization, institutionalization, and applied working strategies. They did not merely deal with the issues within the community, but rather held the state responsible and strove to expose it and its policies before the international community. However, collaborative work within some of these groups and coalitions remained limited and there was a lack of consensus over a number of "sensitive" issues.

The Current Decade: 2000 Onwards

Shifts in the international arena had an effect on women's organizations, feminist organizations, and women's projects within other organizations, as they did on other Palestinian NGOs. These shifts left their mark on the policies of donor organizations, as well as on the way in which organizations dealt with funders and with themselves.

The most important features of feminist and women's action in the current decade are as follows:

- **The establishment of new coalitions and unions**

Ma'an—The Union of Arab Bedouin Women's Organizations in the Naqab (2000). Ma'an was officially registered in Bir Saba' (Beersheba), and consisted of representatives from Arab women's organizations in the Naqab. It was initiated by members of leading Arab women's organizations working in the Naqab area.

Palestinian Women Against the Occupation (2000). This working group included independent feminist and political activists and representatives of feminist and women's organizations and political parties. It was established after the second *Intifada* in reaction to authoritarian violence against Arab citizens. Women activists also felt the need to express their views and take steps to resist the authorities' violence from a feminist perspective in order to highlight the importance of the role and voice of women. The group successfully organized a number of demonstrations at major road intersections and in major cities (Haifa, for example). However it discontinued its activities due to political differences and disagreements over working methods and its major slogans. In addition, some members attempted to allow political parties to dominate the working group, which led to its breakup shortly afterward. The experience of this working group was a unique one, since it constituted a first attempt at joint, collective women's action not only on women's issues but also on national issues, and as it sought to integrate feminist positions with political positions.

The Arab Women's Council (2001). The formation of the council as a national women's union was declared at the conclusion of a preliminary conference held in Nazareth. Approximately 130 women attended the

conference, at the end of which a consensus was reached that there was “no place in this organization for women affiliated to Zionist parties.” With the exception of this point, however, all issues remained undecided/open. The council searched for a common denominator among all the women to allow for pluralism, but instead this approach prevented it from developing a distinctive character and clear identity. Furthermore, it also did not take a clear position towards the issue of a woman’s right to control her own conduct and her body or personal status issues, which appeared on the agendas of feminist and human rights organizations. Following numerous disagreements, including political disputes, between its members and the lack of consensus over its identity and approach, the council disbanded.

The Coalition of Organizations for the Representation of Women and their Issues in the High Follow-up Committee (2005). This coalition comprised a number of feminist and human rights organizations with political agendas. Women Against Violence initiated a petition that was submitted to the High Follow-up Committee for the Arab Citizens in Israel entitled, “No to the Exclusion of Women.” Several organizations signed the petition, some of which were coalition members. The coalition works to advance the representation of women on the High Follow-up Committee.

The Union of Palestinian Working Women’s Committees (2008). The union was established at the initiative of a group of female workers, unemployed women, and activists in the **Sawt el-Amel (The Laborer’s Voice)** organization in Nazareth, which provides legal defense to Arab workers. It represents a starting point for the organization of Palestinian working women and the defense of their union and national rights. It comes at a time when women’s rights are being trampled on by exploitative employers, and textile factories in Arab towns and villages are being closed and relocated to neighboring Jewish towns. The union stresses the importance of working women’s taking on a role in the struggle and engaging in societal issues and the struggle for collective rights.

- **The emergence of other women’s organizations with political and partisan agendas**

The Progressive Women’s Union (2004). This union was established by members and activists associated with the National Democratic Assembly party. It did not seek to become an association and took no steps in that direction. It adopted the model of political action, in the sense that it established main offices and branches and strove to become a broadbased, mass organization. Its objectives included: to support and empower Arab women; to develop an active role for women as equal partners in the political life of Palestinians inside the 1948 Green Line; to raise the social and economic status of women; to influence the nationalist discourse in order to put women’s and social issues at its center and formulate associated action programs; to connect to and interact with feminist movements in the Arab world; and foster cooperation with Jewish feminist movements. It carried out

several activities and initiated a petition of signatures opposing national service entitled “Mothers and Women Against National Service.”

- **Further expansion and development of existing organizations’ work, methods and scope**

Many of the service-providing organizations established in the previous decade that specialized in issues of violence against women shifted their focus towards raising issues from a collective perspective. Two clear currents emerged within women’s and feminist organizations, mirroring similar trends in general organizations. One adopted the discourse of citizenship rights and stressed equality in budget allocation, while the other emphasized the nationalist discourse and the collective rights of the Palestinians. The organizations also began to make more use of advocacy, networking, and the media.

- **The emergence of new feminist organizations, projects, and relative plurality in the feminist discourse**

Nisaa wa-Afaq (Women and Horizons) (2002). *Nisaa wa-Afaq* was established as a women’s organization that advances religious feminist thought. It created a new distinction between feminist organizations and generated a feminist intellectual pluralism that differentiates between a secular feminist stream that operates outside the sphere of religion—and indeed opposes its principles as an institution dominated by masculine thought—and another stream, of which *Nisaa wa-Afaq* is a member, for which religion and religious texts constitute the basic point of reference.

Arab Forum for the Gender of the Individual and the Family in Haifa. The forum is a local professional and intellectual reference for gender issues in general. Its objectives include raising gender awareness in society in general and the youth sector in particular; building advisory frameworks on gender for various age groups; creating a professional scientific framework for the development of professional capacities among reproductive health workers within Palestinian society and the Arab world; and strengthening the status of women in society by challenging misguided beliefs and prevailing perceptions that entrench the inferiority of women and create an environment conducive to the infringement of their human and gender rights.

Aswat (Voices)—Palestinian Gay Women (2002). *Aswat* was established as an independent project within the *Kayan* feminist organization and grew out of an email-based discussion group. The group is the only secure place of its kind for Palestinian lesbians. In 2003, it became an independent project within *Kayan* with the aim of generating a culture and climate in which lesbians are able to express themselves and discuss related issues and their identity. The group organizes empowerment courses and undertakes other initiatives aimed at creating change within the community.

The Gender Studies Program at Mada al-Carmel—Arab Center for Applied Social Research (2005). This program was the culmination of two major projects run by Mada al-Carmel, namely the Women Researchers' Project (2003) and the Gender and Status of Women in Palestinian Society Seminar (2005). The Gender Studies Program promotes scholarship on and among Palestinian women, develops tools and theories for critical research on the experience of Palestinian women in Israel, and encourages gender mainstreaming in analysis of social relations and political issues. The GSP enables action research that addresses the rights and needs of the female Palestinian population in general, both present and future generations. It is the first centralized effort to take stock of existing scholarship on various issues, conduct and produce consistent, high-quality research that alters the discourse, and propose policy change based on that research.

- **The emergence of new local women's organizations, including:**

Al Jana—The Center for Culture and Social Development (2001). Based in the village of Nahaf, this organization works to raise the status of Palestinian women as both an end and a means to a better life and society. It recently began to work at a regional level.

Tala—Women at the Forefront (2006). *Tala* strives to support and empower Arab women in general and in the town of Taybeh in particular in numerous fields, including promoting women to decisionmaking positions, and capacity-building among young women.

Albeer (2006). This organization's objectives include capacity-building for women and in the service of society; broadening the scope of women's action and increasing its impact on the social fabric; and creating a common social space for meeting and holding dialogues between individuals, groups and cultures.

From the papers published by the organizations discussed above, one can conclude that there is diversity in local women's issues. These organizations face many challenges in their work and in clearly defining their identities and their participants' affiliations, as well as in opening the door to certain activities and to wider participation in their administration. *Al-Jana* and *Tala* both have male members and men on their boards, while an Israeli female activist sits on the board of *Albeer*.

Issues of Concern for the Organizations

Funding policies and their impact on the organizations and their agendas: As a result of the Israeli government's control over most of the country's economic resources, production, and employment, Palestinian NGOs have looked to external nongovernmental funding to support their activities. They obtained this funding in the early 1980s from European institutions (mostly church-based), which led to a marked increase in the number of organizations.

Women's organizations, feminist organizations, and women's projects within larger associations were affected by shifts in the global and local arenas, as were other Palestinian NGOs. These shifts left their mark on the policies and agendas of donor agencies, and on how the organizations dealt with the funders and with themselves.

Political developments in the local and international arenas (such as the failure of the Oslo Accords, the *Intifada* of September 2000 in the West Bank, and the events of September 11, 2001) affected funding policies, and consequently all NGOs, including women's NGOs. The most significant of these effects was a contraction of European sources of funding, which was offset by a steady increase in interest and funding from Jewish-American funding sources, which conditioned their financial support upon political support for the peace process. These groups began to fund and encourage coexistence projects and joint Arab-Jewish projects. At times, combining the issue of feminism with other subjects, such as coexistence, increased the chances of obtaining funding. Furthermore, some local government sources of funding changed their approach towards these organizations following the events of October 2000, by making cuts and imposing conditions on coexistence projects. After September 11, 2001 in particular, some American donors reexamined the identities of women's and feminist organizations, scrutinizing their affiliations and even their names. They also imposed external controls on the expenditure and receipt of funds. Funders also imposed their own political agendas on the organizations. For example, following the 2001 Durban Conference, one American-Israeli donor demanded that the organizations it was funding remove their signatures from a memorandum defining Israel as a racist state.

Given the limited sources of funding available, organizations who depended on these funders as their main (or only) source of funds found themselves in a difficult predicament, since dispensing with this funding could threaten the future of the organization's work. Nevertheless, many organizations, and particularly nationalist organizations, rejected these conditions and some have even refused to approach such donors, especially American organizations, and have sought alternative sources or focused on self-financing. However, to date, they have not succeeded to identify local sources of funding, due to the weak Palestinian economic infrastructure, its dependence on the state, and the economic constraints imposed by the state.

In general, one can argue that these organizations are still restricted and their sources of funding limited (particularly those that do not acquiesce to the concessions demanded of them).

The relationship of the organizations with the Jewish state and its institutions: Relations between Palestinian organizations, including women's organizations, and the Jewish state is not one of harmony. Indeed, some organizations stand in a constant state of conflict and tension with the state. The work done by a number of feminist organizations filled a gap in the provision of services to women in several areas created by the state's failure to provide them due to ongoing, deliberate policies of discrimination. The organizations have exposed these policies by submitting shadow reports to international bodies, such as the CEDAW report.

The failure of the state is highlighted by the way in which it has dealt with issues of violence against Arab women, such as the police's handling of honor killings (as indicated by a number of reliable reports); turning a blind eye to underage marriages; the lack of initiative in establishing institutions to protect and treat Palestinian women; and the failure to open emergency hotlines staffed by Arabic speakers until after the Palestinian feminist organizations had done so. These failures confirm the connection between the state's policies and the traditional social structure, and the state's support thereof. The state's failure is also in evidence in other areas, such as the lack of health services for women and children in unrecognized villages and the lack of gainful employment opportunities in Arab towns and villages. In these instances, the state becomes a part of the system that oppresses Arab women and entrenches their inferior status, regardless of its claims to play an active role in their advancement, claims that are completely contradicted by reality.

Their dealings with the police reflect one of the main complexities in the relationship between women's organizations and the state. For while women must address complaints to the police, as in the cases of violence against women, the police are a part of the apparatus that puts down our demonstrations and makes political arrests, including of women activists. This contradiction shows itself clearly in the aftermath of political events, not only in the way in which Palestinian women are treated by institutions, but also in their own awareness. As the aforementioned report submitted to CEDAW indicates, there was a significant decline in the number of complaints filed to the police by Arab women after the Second *Intifada* in 2000.

State institutions, such as the Registrar of Associations, interfere politically in the work of Palestinian organizations, including women's associations, including the registrar's refusal to register one organization under its Palestinian name, or its attempts to sow conflict between feminist organizations. Similarly, the *Shabak* (the Israel Security Agency) regularly attempts to influence the identity of Palestinian organizations and impede their activities.

The heads of feminist organizations are aware of the attempts made by the various state institutions to manipulate them, and in some cases to exploit their donor relations to alter their policies and agendas, and even to use them to influence public opinion. These organizations therefore strive to maintain a balance in their dealings with the state.

As is evident from the above, the work and development of Palestinian women's and feminist organizations is the fruit of a lengthy and rich process that is replete with successes. However, certain issues require deeper examination or reconsideration. Some issues and projects remain subject to disagreements and lack consensus within a single conceptual framework. The disagreements and debates stem from the special site where these organizations have to propose alternatives to prevailing harmful practices, concepts and beliefs, and develop practical ways to dealing with them and at the same time be accountable. This is inevitably a context for both differences and agreements.

For further information on the organizations discussed above and their activities, please refer to their websites and publications, and/or the website of [Ittijah—The Union of Arab Community-Based Organizations](#).

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Author's Note: The information contained in this article is based on my own experience of helping to found some of the organizations discussed herein, as well as two comprehensive field studies with an historical dimension that I undertook. The first study was conducted in 2004-2006 for the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University, and included 25 interviews with heads of organizations. A summary of the study appeared in the *Journal of Women's Studies* published by the Institute in 2007, in an article entitled, "Characteristics and attributes of women's and feminist work in the 1948 occupied territories" (Vol. 17, pp. 4-54). The second study was conducted as part of the Women's Studies Program at Mada al-Carmel in 2006-2008, which included interviews, conversations, and a survey of the heads of most of the organizations. This research will soon be published in a book, titled *Palestinian Women's and Feminist Organizations within the 1948 Green Line*.

Palestinian Women in the Israeli Labor Market

HIMMAT ZU'BI

Women's employment is a subject of great interest around the world, due to the important influence of work on the status of women as individuals, and on women as a segment of society. Furthermore, many regard salaried work not only as providing personal benefit to each working woman, by raising her social status, developing her human capacities, and contributing to her personal and economic independence, but also as a lever for the advancement of the status of women as a marginalized group that faces discrimination in the enjoyment of social, economic and political rights.

Many researchers, male and female, as well as local and international women's organizations, have engaged in the subject of women's employment, and an extensive body of research has been produced on the various aspects of the issue. Feminist research in this field has been characterized by three main aspects, through which criticism has been leveled at the masculine research tools and hypotheses employed. The first aspect has concentrated on the appeal by feminists against the term "labor," arguing that the official statistics systematically disregard household tasks and the upbringing and care of children, which are tasks that women continue to carry out according to the traditional division of functions by gender, thereby undervaluing the contribution made by women to the general economy. They also point to the consequences of this marginalization, in terms of the entrenchment of the "inferior" status of women in society. (Kuttab, 2007) Adherents of the second aspect concentrate their critique on the fact that the official statistics do not include work in the informal sector, such as agriculture, family businesses, etc. The evidence indicates that women are over-represented in this sector in most regions of the world, and particularly in developing countries. (Sethuraman, 2000) As a result, a large percentage of working women are omitted from the official statistics. (Kuttab, 2008) The third aspect is associated more with research on women and poverty, i.e. the effect of using the unit of the family—rather than the individual—to measure poverty rates in societies on obscuring the true number of vulnerable women. (Abdo, 2006: 8)

The subject of women and labor has also received a great deal of attention from policy-makers, due to the fact that it yields additional indications about society as a whole: the rate of women's participation in the labor force is an indicator of progress in society and its capacity to exploit its human resources in pursuit of economic progress. Thus governments around the world first strive to shed light on the factors that may impede the entry of women into the labor force, and then draw up policies, enacting laws and developing programs, in an attempt to overcome these obstacles and ensure equality between women and men in employment opportunities, labor rights, and eliminate gender-based discrimination against them.

Palestinian women in Israel and participation in the labor market

In recent years the subject of labor and Palestinian women has generated special interest; there is a growing attention to the subject among researchers and academics, as well as activists in civil society organizations working on women's and feminist issues, and among Arab politicians. It has also been addressed on occasion by policy makers.

Interest in the subject has grown alongside the increase in research into the socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians in Israel, which can be divided—according to Palestinian researcher Raja Khalidi (2008)—into two broad categories. The first category represents “liberal neo-Zionism,” the starting point of which is the fairness of the political regime in the State of Israel and the presupposition that the rights of non-Jews in the Jewish State are equal rights. Researchers in this category believe that market management and a flexible and timely labor policy, sponsored by the state, can in some way correct the multiple distortions created by forces unrelated to the market. The second category, which is referred to as “non-Zionist political economy,” was developed in the 1980s. It is based on different ideologies that share a comprehensive perspective on the role of Jewish State-building policies before and after 1948. These policies included, among other things, the confiscation of land, separation and marginalization of the Palestinian minority, which placed obstacles in the way of its development. (Khalidi, 2008: 29)

Some researchers close ideologically to the first category use the low rate of labor force participation among Palestinian women as one explanation for the inferior socioeconomic status of Palestinians. This group attributes the low rate of participation among Palestinian women to cultural reasons related to the nature of Palestinian society and of relations between the genders within it. (Semyonov, Lewin-Epstein Brahm, 1999) The second category views the economic situation of Palestinians in Israel as deriving from its political reality, and argues that the economic reality of the Palestinians accurately mirrors governmental policies towards the Palestinian minority. (Shihadeh, 2006) Thus researchers close to this category ideologically regard the low rate of labor market participation among Palestinian women as a product of the relations of the Jewish State to the Palestinian minority and its policies toward it. As a feminist concerned with this issue, I believe that the study and analysis of the economic activity of Palestinian women in Israel in general, and their participation in the labor market in particular may, in addition to being a reflection of the relationship of the Jewish State to the Palestinian minority, contribute to deepening our understanding of the connection between the policies of the Jewish State and the evolving gender relations and the perpetuation of the “inferior” status of women within Palestinian society.

This paper attempts to supply the reader with information on the subject of the employment of Palestinian women in Israel, relying on the available data. It further seeks to investigate the various explanations that have been offered for the low rate at which Palestinian women in Israel participate in the labor market. It should be noted that the following discussion does not address the employment of women in the informal sector, due to the lack of the relevant statistics in Israel.

Information concerning the participation of Palestinian women in the labor market (and additional relevant characteristics, such as age group, occupation, full/part-time work, years of schooling, and cultural background) has primarily been drawn from the database of the Central Bureau of Statistics. (CBS) In addition, in recent years, more precisely in 2004 and 2007, the Rikaz Databank—supported by the Galilee Society: The Arab National Society for Health Research and Services, in cooperation with other organizations (Mada al-Carmel in 2004 and Ahali in 2007)—conducted a

socioeconomic survey of Palestinian citizens of Israel. The survey was the first of its kind in terms of the comprehensiveness of its data, and for the first time, it included data from the unrecognized villages in the Naqab (Negev). In addition, the Galilee Society's survey provides gender-based labor force characteristics. This approach contrasts with that provided by the CBS, which presents data on Palestinians in general, referring to the percentages that Palestinian men make up of the total labor force, without indicating the percentage of women in its data.

The rate of labor force participation among Palestinian women citizens of the State of Israel is considered to be extremely low. The data indicates that over the past 10 years, this rate has not risen above 23%—the rate in 2004 (The Galilee Society, 2005)—while the rate among Jewish women stood at over 57% in 2007. (Labor Force Survey, 2007)

The rate of labor force participation among Palestinian women citizens of the State of Israel is considered low even in comparison with the Arab world, where it stands at an average of 33.3%, climbing as high as 63.1% in some states (such as Mauritania), and reaching 41.9% in Morocco. It is even lower than the rate of women's labor force participation in Saudi Arabia and Oman, where the rates are 29% and 27% respectively, two states that are regarded as most unprogressive in the field of women's labor. (UNDP, 2005)

Employment characteristics among Palestinian women in Israel

This section examines the main characteristics of salaried work done by women in terms of participation in the labor market,¹ age group, and years of schooling.

According to the survey conducted by the Galilee Society in 2007, the proportion of Palestinian women citizens in the State of Israel who are outside the labor force² stands at close to 81%, while the percentage engaged in the labor force reaches 18.9% (The Galilee Society, 2008), but varies with age group, education, place of residence and other characteristics.

The rate of participation is lowest in the south, where it stands at just 11.4%, rising to 19% in the north, and 23% in the center. Approximately 58% of working Palestinian women are engaged in full-time employment. The survey reveals that 73% of women pursue part-time work³ due to external factors such as the lack of full-time positions, because the total number of hours involved in their position is fewer than 35 hours per week, or due to the unavailability of additional employment. (The Galilee Society, 2008)

¹ The labor force includes all individuals in the 15 to 64 age group, to whom the concepts of employment and unemployment apply. (The Galilee Society, 2008)

² "Outside the labor force" means all individuals who are of working age but do not work and are not seeking employment, whether because they do not wish to work—because they are not in need of the financial returns it brings—or for other reasons. (The Galilee Society, 2008)

³ Part-time workers includes all individuals to whom the concept of employment applies, and who work irregularly, or who work fewer than full hours—for one reason or another—but who wish to raise this number.

Over 50% of working Palestinian women fall within the 25 to 44 age group (31.3% are aged between the ages of 25 and 34; 21.9% are aged between 35 and 44). There is a sharp decline in the rate of employment among women in the 55+ age group, which stands at just 1.3%. Distance to the workplace for a majority of women, with slight regional variations, ranges between 0 km and 9 km. The percentage of married women in the labor force is not much lower than the rate among single women (at 18.7% and 21.1% respectively). However, only 18.6% of working women are married and have children. (Manna, 2008)

The number of years of schooling is a lever for entry into the labor market, and there is a positive correlation between the number of years spent in schooling by Palestinian women and their participation in the labor force. Hence in 2007, 68.8% of Palestinian women with academic degree (who have completed 16+ years of schooling) were engaged in the labor force. However, this figure was still lower than the figure for Arab men academics (84.7%) and Jewish women academics (79.2%). (Balikov, 2007) Similarly, the relatively low rate of participation of Palestinian women who have completed between 13 and 15 years of schooling is striking when compared to Jewish women: in 2007, 37.3% of Palestinian women from this group were engaged in the labor market, while the percentage among Jewish women stood at 65.9%. (Balikov, 2007)

Awad (2007) attributes unemployment among Palestinian women academics to several causes, including: systematic discrimination and exclusion by the government; failed policies that fall short of exploiting the human resources and energies of this group; the absence of employment offices⁴ competent in providing workplaces to Arab academics, men and women; the unsuitability of the vocational training subjects to the demands of the labor market; and the inadequate infrastructure, which lacks a regular transportation network. In addition, there is an acute shortage of care facilities and nurseries for children in Palestinian communities in Israel. (Awad, 2007)

Government is a major employer of women, in particular women academics, with women accounting for 65% of employees in the various governmental offices and ministries. However, the same does not hold true for Palestinian women, who represent just 3% of employees of government institutions, most of whom live in the north and Haifa. The Ministry of Health is the chief employer of Palestinian women, with close to 82% of those employed in government institutions working for the ministry. However, some ministries (such as the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of National infrastructures, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Construction and Housing) do not employ a single Palestinian woman. (Haidar, 2003)

Discrimination against Palestinian women is not confined to public employment, but also applies to wages. A survey conducted by the Adva Center on the 50 towns and villages with the lowest wage levels among women, reveals that 48 of these 50 towns

⁴ The main function of an employment office is to give consultation regarding work, provide information and advice about vocational training courses, and offer adult education, under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor.

and villages are Palestinian villages. (Etkin, 2004) Statistics published by the CBS further demonstrate that in 2007 there was a clear disparity between the wages earned by Palestinian women and Jewish women: the average monthly wages of Palestinian women stood at NIS 4350, compared with NIS 6112 among Jewish women. Palestinian women also work fewer hours per week than Jewish women, at less than 32.4 hours versus 35.7 hours, and Jewish women receive a higher hourly wage than Palestinians women, at NIS 41.5 per hour compared with NIS 32.3. (Wage Survey, 2007)

In 2007, while the general rate of unemployment was 7.3%, and the rate among Jewish women 7.9%, 13.5% of Palestinian women in Israel were unemployed. The percentage was significantly higher in the south, where it rose to 23.1%. A survey carried out by the Galilee Society indicates that over 50% of unemployed women cease working as a result of external factors, such as the seasonal nature of their work, dismissal for various reasons, or the expiration of an employment contract. Approximately only 10% stopped working for personal reasons, such as marriage, or in order to devote their time to household duties. (The Galilee Society, 2008) All of the above indicates that structural, political factors (more than social factors) are impeding the employment of Palestinian women. This conclusion has been confirmed by research conducted by Dr. Yousef Jabareen at the Technion, in which he suggests that 43% of unemployed Arab women would be willing to enter the labor market were the opportunity available to them. (*Haaretz*, June 8, 2009)

As stated above, a multitude of reasons and explanations have been offered concerning this subject. However, the majority of Israeli research, published by researchers working in Israeli academic institutions (e.g., Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov, 1992; Semyonov et al., 1999), and issued periodically by official Israeli institutions (such as the Bank of Israel, and various relevant government departments),⁵ ascribes the low rate of participation among Palestinian women in Israel in the labor market to cultural reasons and to the traditional structure of Palestinian society. Studies carried out by Arab and Palestinian researchers—as well as reports issued by Palestinian feminist organizations (Kuttab, 2002; Awad, 2006; Shihadeh, 2006; Hazzan, 2005; *Kayan*, 2007)—specify that, in addition to social obstacles, there are also political and structural obstacles related to state racism that contribute to this phenomenon.

The culturally essentialist factors used to explain the phenomenon of the low rate of labor force participation among Palestinian women in Israel can be summarized by asserting that Palestinian society in Israel is a traditional, patriarchal society in which social functions are divided according to gender along traditional lines. Thus men take responsibility for providing for the family, while women undertake domestic tasks, and bear and care for children. These factors do play a role in explaining this phenomenon; however, many Palestinian and Arab researchers (as well as feminist activist interested in the subject) believe that there are other reasons pertaining to state racism (racism that is embodied, *inter alia*, in policies of discrimination towards

⁵ See item “The Labor Market” in the report issued by the Bank of Israel for the year 2008. Available at <http://www.bankisrael.gov.il/deptdata/mekhar/doch/08/heb/doch08h.thm>.

the Palestinian minority) that underpin the phenomenon, and sometimes constitute an obstacle to change in the status of Palestinian women, and reinforce their “inferior” status.

For example, while the aforementioned findings suggest that marriage does not present an obstacle to the entry of Palestinian women into the labor market, 75% of respondents surveyed by Hunaida Ghanem (2005) for the association Women Against Violence confirmed that the existence of childcare facilities strongly affected the entry of mothers into the labor market. These findings demonstrate that the lack of daily childcare facilities can prove a real obstacle to the engagement of women in the labor market. Data published by the Ministry of Social Affairs reveals that of the 1,600 nurseries that provide daily care to children under three years of age that operate in Israel with financial support from the public sector, just 25 operate in Palestinian communities. (Boulus, 2006) Thus, parallel to the shift in attitudes towards women’s employment being witnessed within Palestinian society (the findings of the Democracy Index of 2009, to be published by the Israeli Institute of Democracy suggest that only 24% of Arab respondents are opposed to women going out to work), state racism and the state’s policies of discrimination against Palestinian citizens create real obstacles to the entry of Palestinian mothers into the labor market.

The inadequate nature of the transportation system both to and from Arab communities acts as an additional hurdle to women. According to the results of research conducted in 2007 by *Kayan* on the public transport system in Arab communities, the poor state of the public transport system in Palestinian communities, both in terms of its availability and frequency, contributes to the exclusion of Palestinian society in general, and Palestinian women in particular. It further infringes on the basic social and economic rights of Palestinian women, acting as a real barrier to their entry into the labor market (*Kayan*, 2007).

The 2005 NGO Alternative Pre-Sessional Report on Israel’s Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which brought together the Working Group on the Status of Palestinian Women Citizens of Israel, offers other reasons for the low rate of participation in the labor market among Palestinian women.

The drafters of the report regard the shortage of training programs appropriate for Palestinian women citizens of Israel as another stumbling block to their entry into the labor market. According to the report, most vocational schools that operate in Palestinian villages provide traditional vocational training to women instead of training in technological fields. Furthermore, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor runs vocational training programs for the unemployed; however, it does not offer sufficient training courses for Palestinian women, who accounted for 6% of the participants of the ministry’s training courses in 2001 and 2002. Moreover, the women who took part in these programs received traditional vocational training, even when technological training programs were available. As a result, Palestinian women are concentrated in “feminine” professions, where there is no scope for professional development, no requirements for special skills, and low wages. (CEDAW, 2005: 35) From this data, it can be inferred that the orientalist policies pursued by Israel

towards Palestinian women play a role in reinforcing the “inferior” status of Palestinian women and thwarting their development.

The same report adds that the shortage of industrial areas in Palestinian communities—only 3.2% of industrial areas supported by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor are located in Palestinian areas (CEDAW, 2005)—contributes to the scarcity of workplaces in the Palestinian community in general, and for Palestinian women in particular.

The same report corroborates Awad's (2006) conclusion that the absence of “employment services” offices has a negative impact on employment rates among Palestinian women in general, and not only women academics. The report further states that of 120 offices, only 14 operate in Palestinian communities. (CEDAW, 2005) Consequently they are of limited accessibility for women living in these communities, and extremely difficult to access for women living outside them, given the poor state of public transportation, as discussed above.

In addition to these institutional obstacles, studies indicate that racism within Israeli society and among Jewish employers plays a role in the non-involvement of Palestinian women in the labor market. For instance, research conducted by Jabareen, mentioned above, indicates that in addition to the scarcity of employment opportunities, a major reason for the non-engagement of Palestinian women in the labor market is racism on the part of Jewish employers. He goes on to argue that the research findings affirm that many Jewish employers refuse to employ Arabs, and in particular Arab women. (*Haaretz*, June 8th, 2009)

This claim bears out an argument put forward by Umaima Diab (2009) in an article on the experiences of Palestinian women working in Haifa. Diab states that the conditioning of employment on the criteria of military service and knowledge of Russian, together with the racism and discrimination faced by women who wear the headscarf when applying to Israeli employers for work, all add to the obstacles to the entry of Palestinian women into the Israeli labor market. (Diab, 2009: 141)

There is a multitude of reasons for the low level of engagement in the labor market among Palestinian women, and Palestinian society bears some of the responsibility for it. However, as the foregoing discussion reveals, state racism and state policies of marginalization and discrimination practiced towards the Palestinian minority in Israel in general, constitutes the main barrier to the advancement of the socio-economic status of Palestinian society as a whole. These policies, by using the cover of culturally essentialist justifications as one mechanism, contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of the “inferior” status of Palestinian women, thereby impeding their social progress.

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Political Monitoring

Israel and the Palestinian Minority: Mada's Bi-monthly Report

MTANES SHIHADAH

The March issue of this *Political Monitoring Report*, published earlier this year, raised the concern that, in the wake of the Israeli elections, subsequent *Political Monitoring Reports* would be largely focused on discriminatory legislation against Palestinian citizens. This concern has now been realized.

The Palestinian minority in Israel was a major issue in the elections campaign rhetoric of certain Zionist parties, in particular Avigdor Lieberman's *Israel Beiteinu* party. Many Israeli politicians called for limiting Palestinian ethnic identity and for statutory changes to force Palestinians in Israel to act in an "acceptable" political manner. The election results signaled that most Zionist parties were in agreement with adopting Lieberman's demand to link citizenship to a declaration of loyalty to the state. Therefore, the current government and Knesset will likely not settle for maintaining the current status of the state's Palestinian citizens, but will directly threaten it and negotiate over the nature of minority citizenship itself. Israel will demand Palestinian citizens to decide whether to accept Israel's conditions, among them the requirement that they forego their national identity, collective identity, and demand for ethnic-minority collective rights, and settle for partial and flawed individual rights. The government and the Knesset will attempt to extort from Palestinian citizens acceptance of the principle that Israel is a Jewish state. These demands are reflected in proposed bills that were placed on the new Knesset's table in its first month of business. These bills, some of which have been adopted by the government, will be described below.

Naturally, Knesset activity takes up a substantial portion of this report. The opening of the initial session of the 18th Knesset found many parties initiating legislation that discriminates against Palestinian citizens, a trend which was not emphasized in previous *Political Monitoring Reports* due to the election recess and the subsequent transition period.

Proposed Bills That Would Revoke Citizenship

Denial of the Jewish character of the state as grounds for revocation of citizenship

In early June, the Interior Minister, Eli Yishai, stated that he wanted to amend the Citizenship Law to re-empower the Interior Minister to revoke an individual's citizenship without first obtaining the approval of the Attorney General and the court.¹ The Interior Minister used to have this power—on the grounds that the individual in

¹ Sharon Rofe-Ophir, "Arab MKs against Yishai initiative: this is a sick proposal." *Ynet*, June 4, 2009.

question had provided false particulars about his or her identity or past. However, during the tenure of Ophir Pines (Labor) as Interior Minister (2005-2006), this power was made conditional upon approval of the Attorney General and the court. Under existing law, the Interior Minister cannot initiate this procedure without the prior approval of the Attorney General.

According to the proposed bill, the Interior Minister would be permitted to revoke an individual's citizenship also for "political" reasons or on the grounds of that citizen's "ideology," especially in cases where the minister is convinced that the person actively opposes the State of Israel as a Jewish state or acts against the Jewish people.

The Proposed Citizenship (Amendment – Nullification of Citizenship) Law, 5769 – 2009² reads as follows:

In section 11(a) of the Citizenship Law, 5712 – 1952, following the words "on the basis of false particulars" shall come "or if the Minister of the Interior is convinced that the person acted against the Jewish people, or against the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, or against the State of Israel being a Jewish, Zionist, and democratic state."

From the perspective of Palestinian citizens, the proposal was clearly another attempt to restrict their political action and freedom of expression. Reacting to the proposed bill, MK Jamal Zahalka (NDA Party), said:

This is a racist and anti-democratic initiative. Its aim is to revoke only the citizenship of Arabs, and not of Jews. Yishai wants to nullify judicial rulings and empower himself to take political vengeance. Revocation of citizenship is forbidden under international law—our citizenship is not a benevolence, but arises from our being natives.³

Yishai replied:

There are Arab citizens in Israel, such as Azmi Bishara, who spy against the country or act against it in the framework of terrorist organizations. It is forbidden that these people be Israeli citizens, but now it is very hard to revoke citizenship. At the existing bureaucratic pace, it is impossible to do anything in the matter. The right way to handle it is for a person whose citizenship is revoked by the Minister of the Interior to turn to the court afterwards, not the reverse.⁴

In his statement, the minister did not deny the claims that the proposed amendment is aimed primarily against Palestinian citizens, but rather bolstered these claims.

Alongside with attempt to make it easier to revoke citizenship by expanding the Interior Minister's discretion, efforts continued to make it harder or impossible to obtain citizenship, especially for Palestinians from the areas occupied in 1967 and from Arab countries, most of which are classified as "enemy states." These efforts revolved, for the most part, around the amendments made in 2003 to the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, which prevent unification of Palestinian families. So far, these amendments have been temporary provisions, limited in time. It appears that

² The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MKs David Rotem and Robert Ilatov.

³ *Ynet*, June 4, 2009.

⁴ *Ibid*.

the current Knesset will make a major effort to turn the temporary provision into a permanent law.

The first omen was the **Proposed Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Provision) (Amendment – Restrictions on Citizenship, License to Inhabit Israel and Permit to Stay in Israel) Law, 5769 – 2009**.⁵ This bill prohibits, by permanent statute, the granting of citizenship to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or citizens of “enemy countries” who are married to Israelis. The text of the bill states:

1. In the Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Provision) Law, 5763 – 2003 (hereafter—the Principal Law), the name of the Law, “(Temporary Provision)” shall be replaced by “Restrictions on Citizenship, License to Inhabit Israel and Permit to Stay in Israel”).
2. In section 2 of the Principal Law, the words “for the period this Law is in force” shall be deleted.

The Explanatory Notes attached to the bill clearly reveal the bill’s objective and its underlying conception, namely that all Arabs are enemies who threaten the State of Israel, and Palestinian citizens who marry a loved one are engaged in a conspiracy against the Jewish character of Israel. Given the gravity of the matter, we quote at length from the Explanatory Notes of MK Levin.

The **Citizenship and Entry into Israel (Temporary Provision) Law, 5763 – 2003**, specifies various restrictions on granting citizenship and approvals to inhabit and stay in Israel, which were established to meet security needs and to prevent the entry and stay in Israel of persons who are liable to take part in terrorist actions. However, the security objective of the principal law is only one reason for the need for these provisions. In practice, the provisions of the principal law serve an additional supreme objective—preventing mass immigration of a hostile Arab population into the territory of Israel, which is liable to bring about an extensive change in the demographics of the state and challenge the Jewish majority in the state.

. . . . The State of Israel is first and foremost the state of the Jewish people. The Jewish nature and character of the state are a supreme value. They must, therefore, be enshrined in legislation; if this is not done, the very existence of the state as a Jewish state will be in real danger.

The provisions of the principal law are a last obstacle to actual realization, through the back door, of the imaginary right of return demanded by various Arab populations. Therefore, it is not proper to make a connection between these provisions and temporary and changing security needs. These provisions should be established as permanent statutory provisions, which stand on their own, without dependence on one temporary security situation or another.

For this reason, it is proposed to enshrine the provisions of the principal law, which is a temporary provision, as permanent provisions that intertwine with existing citizenship and immigration laws, and amend them in a way that is consistent with the right and obligation to preserve the Jewish nature and character of the State of Israel.

⁵ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on May 4, 2009 by MK Yariv Levin.

Another relevant bill is the **Proposed Citizenship (Amendment – Declaration of Allegiance) Law, 5769 – 2009**.⁶ This bill adds a condition to obtaining citizenship: Applicants must declare their allegiance in the following phraseology:

I pledge allegiance to the State of Israel as a Jewish, Zionist, and democratic state, to its symbols and values, and to serve the state, as I shall be so demanded, in military service, within the meaning of the expression in the **Defense Service Law [Consolidation Version], 5746 – 1986**, or in alternative service, as shall be specified by statute.

The Explanatory Notes state:

In recent years, it has been found that citizens in the State of Israel are not loyal to the state, its symbols and values, and evade military service or national service. This proposed bill comes to link loyalty to the state, its symbols and values, and military or national service to Israeli citizenship. It is proposed that, to obtain Israeli citizenship, the applicant must declare allegiance to the state, and also promise to perform military service or alternative service, as required.

In proposing the bill, the initiators seek to forcibly compel acceptance of the symbols and character of the state.

The bill, referred to as the “Loyalty Law”, has effectively implemented the political platform of *Israel Beitenu*, whereby citizenship is made dependent on a declaration of loyalty to Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. *Israel Beitenu* wanted the bill to be submitted to the Knesset as a government-sponsored bill. On May 31, the Ministerial Committee for Legislation rejected the proposed bill. Only ministers of *Israel Beitenu* voted in favor of the bill. As a result of the vote, the bill could not be submitted as a government-proposed bill, but the initiators of the bill still had the right to submit it as a private bill.

Another bill dealing with allegiance is the **Proposed Population Register (Amendment – Declaration of Allegiance to the State, the Flag, and the Hymn) Law, 5769 – 2009**.⁷

This bill requires every resident who is entitled to an identity card, as specified in Section 24, to sign, prior to receiving the identity card, a declaration of allegiance that states:

I declare my allegiance to the State of Israel as a Jewish and Zionist state, to the principles of the declaration made upon establishment of the State of Israel, to the state's flag and its hymn. I promise to perform compulsory service or alternative service as specified by statute.

Under the terms of this bill, residents who refuse to sign the declaration would not receive an identity card.

⁶ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MKs David Rotem, Robert Ilatov, among others.

⁷ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on May 4, 2009 by MKs David Rotem, Alex Miller, and others.

The State Combats Palestinian Collective Memory

The state and the Jewish majority in Israel seek more than statutory enshrinement of the inferior political and legal status of Palestinians in Israel. They also want to control Palestinian citizens' thoughts, memories, and emotions. In an attempt to limit Palestinian memory, the state attacks one of the founding components of the collective memory of Palestinians in Israel: commemoration of *Nakba* Day as a day of mourning. On *Nakba* Day, Palestinians mark the destruction, in 1948, of hundreds of Arab villages and the expulsion of most of the Palestinian population. In 1998, Palestinians in Israel began to commemorate *Nakba* Day on the same day that that the State of Israel celebrates Independence Day, with mass processions to the sites of destroyed villages and to remaining villages whose residents were expelled. This custom, which made *Nakba* Day a central event in Palestinian consciousness, is forbidden according to the thinking of right-wing MKs. On April 1, MK Alex Miller (*Israel Beitenu*) and others placed before the Knesset a bill that was subsequently referred to as the "*Nakba* Law," which would prohibit marking Israel's Independence Day as a day of mourning.

The Proposed Independence Day (Amendment – Prohibition on Marking Independence Day or the Establishment of the State of Israel as a Day of Mourning) Law, 5769 – 2009,⁸ forbids marking Independence Day or the establishment of the State of Israel as a day of mourning. The bill provides as follows:

Amendment of section 1 of the Independence Day Law, 5809 – 1949

After section 1 shall come:

A person shall not organize an activity or event that marks Independence Day, or relates to the establishment of the State of Israel, as a day of mourning or a day of sorrow. A person who contravenes any provision of a section of the law is liable to imprisonment for a term of three years.

The Explanatory Notes to the bill state:

The amendment proposes to prohibit by statute actions that mark Independence Day or the establishment of the State of Israel as a day of mourning, and imposes harsh punishment on persons who exploit the democratic and enlightened character of the State of Israel to destroy it from within.⁹

On May 9, the Ministerial Committee on Legislation approved the bill. In doing so, the Cabinet adopted the bill, which means it will be submitted to the Knesset in the name of the government, ensuring a majority for its passage into law.¹⁰ Approval of the bill by the Ministerial Committee enraged Arab and other parties that seek Jewish-Arab cooperation. *Hadash* chairman Muhammad Barakeh derided the bill's initiator, MK Miller, saying: "The fact that the Cabinet verified delusions of a lone Knesset member ignorant of history and facts indicates the gutter that government discourse has

⁸ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on 1 April 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jacky Khoury and Yuval Azulai, "Ministerial committee approves *Nakba* Day bill," *Ha'aretz*, May 9, 2009.

reached, in a manner that was expected.” Barakeh emphasized that, “Commemoration of the *Nakba*, which will continue with or without this law, is not intended to raise a sword against the existence of Israel, but to rectify the historical injustice caused to the Palestinian people.”¹¹ MK Jamal Zahalka (NDA) contended:

Enacting a law that prohibits mourning and grief and sorrow is a worldwide precedent, an Israeli invention, testifying to the state’s bankruptcy. We shall find the way to commemorate *Nakba* Day against the will of the insane Lieberman-Netanyahu government; they expelled our people and destroyed 500 villages, and now they even want to deny us a cry of pain.¹²

MK Miller, who submitted the bill, replied, “This is a first step in ceasing the organized incitement by the Islamic Movement and the Higher Follow up Committee for Arabs in Israel. Every properly run democracy has the right to protect itself, and this is exactly what the government of Israel decided to do today.”¹³

Yitzhak Lior, writing in *Ha’aretz*, responded to the bill as follows:

Only someone who does not recognize the hardship suffered by the Arab minority in Israel, the growing poverty, and the spreading racism, the banning of “popular” goods, quotas in mixed towns, religious and yuppie settlement in Jaffa with the municipality’s encouragement, against the will of the poor who were not provided infrastructure, does not understand that a patriotic law like the “*Nakba* Law,” even if it is not enforced, is a pretext for further incitement against Arabs and additional invasion into their political and cultural life.¹⁴

An editorial that appeared in *Ha’aretz* on May 9 sharply condemned the Ministerial Committee’s approval:

Approval of the bill is a hasty and dangerous act. In doing so, the Committee in effect accepted the racist and anti-democratic worldview of the *Israel Beitenu* faction. Especially grave is the support of the Justice Minister, Ya’akov Ne’eman . . . Rather than civil equality, freedom of thought and speech, and recognition of the minority’s rights, the Netanyahu-Lieberman government now proposes denying freedom of speech and brutal punishment.

In addition to the government’s adoption of the “*Nakba* Law” bill, at its meeting on May 9, the Ministerial Committee on Legislation approved the private bill of MK Zevulun Orlev (“*Habayet Hayehudi*”—The Jewish Home), which prohibits publication of incitement that denies the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. The bill states:

A person who calls for denial of the existence of the state, in a publication whose contents entail a reasonable possibility that it will lead to commission of an act of hatred, contempt, or disloyalty to the state or to the governmental or judicial authorities, is liable to imprisonment for a term of one year.”¹⁵

The Explanatory Notes to the bill state:

The Penal Law does not contain a criminal offense with regard to a person who publishes a call to deny the existence of the State of Israel. . . . The purpose of the bill is to establish in the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Yitzhak Lior, “Beat Arabs, Lieberman in Danger,” *Ha’aretz*, May 9, 2009.

¹⁵ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MK Zevulun Orlev.

Penal Law that publication of a call to deny the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, where, based on the contents of the publication, there is a reasonable likelihood that it will lead to hatred, contempt, or disloyalty to the state or to its duly instituted governmental or judicial authorities, is a criminal offense . . . The Jewish and democratic character of the State of Israel must be preserved, lest it be denied by any person.

With this bill, MK Orlev seeks to expand the protection given to the Jewish character of the state, even at the cost of impinging upon freedom of speech and democratic values. Until now, recognition of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state was grounds for disqualifying a candidates' list or a candidate from running for the Knesset. Now, intellectuals and academics who suggest alternatives to the state's existing regime, even in a scientific publication, will be subject to arrest.

In addition to the desire to enforce recognition and acceptance of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, the current Knesset wants to change the existing Knesset Member's declaration of allegiance and add a provision specifying the state's Jewish character, thus making it possible to terminate the tenure of an elected MK for denying the Jewish and democratic character of Israel. This requirement restricts freedom of speech and impairs the Knesset members' ability to perform their duties, also with regard to democratic and legitimate activity. In addition, the Knesset seeks to compel military service or national service and to instill in Palestinian citizens Zionist values in the educational curricula, as will be depicted in the following group of proposed bills.

Effort to Establish Jewish Supremacy by Statute

The **Proposed Basic Law: The Knesset (Amendment – Declaration of Allegiance of Knesset Member), 5769 – 2009**,¹⁶ reads as follows:

Amendment of section 15 of Basic Law: The Knesset

In section 15(a), after "State of Israel" shall come "as a Jewish, Zionist and democratic state, to its values, to its symbols."

The Explanatory Notes to the bill state:

Section 15 of the Basic Law: The Knesset presents the text of the declaration of allegiance of Knesset members, in which the Knesset member pledges his allegiance to the State of Israel. A Knesset member, pursuant to his function as a representative of the public and pursuant to the status of the Knesset as sovereign, should declare allegiance to the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence, in the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, and in the Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation.

The aim of the **Proposed Basic Law: The Knesset (Amendment – Termination of Tenure of Knesset Member), 5769 – 2009**¹⁷ is to enable the termination of the tenure of a Knesset member on grounds of denial of the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. The bill provides that:

¹⁶ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MKs David Rotem, Robert Ilatov, Moshe Matalon, and Alex Miller.

¹⁷ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MK Zevulun Orlev.

A Knesset member who is found to have acted in contravention of section 7A(a)(1) shall cease to serve as a member of the Knesset from the day of such determination.

The decision in the matter of termination is made by the Knesset House Committee and requires the Supreme Court's approval.

The Explanatory Notes state:

Section 7A of the Basic Law: The Knesset prevents a candidates' list or a candidate to be elected to the Knesset if their objectives or acts, explicitly or implicitly, deny the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, incite to racism, or support the armed struggle of an enemy state or a terrorist organization against the State of Israel. These restrictions apply only prior to Knesset elections and not afterwards Under existing law, there is no legal sanction of any kind against a Knesset member whose acts deny the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Therefore, to prevent this absurd situation, which ultimately creates a real threat to the State of Israel and its citizens—when, from within the Knesset there are challenges to the founding principles of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state—it is necessary to amend the law so as to prevent Knesset members—also following their election to the Knesset—from contravening the provisions of section 7A(a)(1) of the Basic Law, that is, denial of the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

Also relevant is the **Proposed Defense Service (Amendment – Tax Payment Obligation of Persons Who do not Perform Military or Civilian Service) Law, 5769 – 2009**.¹⁸ This bill provides that:

A male who has not performed compulsory military service and has not performed national service, except for a person who is found unfit for service under section 5, shall be obligated to pay an additional tax, in the amount of one percent of his annual income until age 41.

The objective of the bill, as appears from the Explanatory Notes, is to obligate, by means of a tax, persons who evade military service or civilian service to pay their share of the burden. The bill proposes to obligate them to make a tax payment of one percent of their annual income until they reach the age of 41, the age at which exemption from reserve duty is given. The bill further provides that state revenue from the said tax is to be earmarked solely for the welfare of persons serving in the IDF and in civilian service.

Clearly, the bill deliberately aims at Palestinian civilians, who do not perform military service and upon whom the state has not been successful at imposing civilian service, despite the positive incentives offered. Now, the Knesset seeks to impose negative incentives to compel Palestinian citizens to perform civilian-national service.

The **Proposed State Education (Amendment – Compulsory Study of the Land of Israel and Zionism) Law, 5769 – 2009**,¹⁹ requires compulsory study of the Land of Israel and Zionism in all state schools, including Arab state schools. The proposed amendment states:

¹⁸ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MKs Avigdor Lieberman, David Rotem, Alex Miller, and others.

¹⁹ The bill was placed on the Knesset table on April 1, 2009 by MK Avigdor Lieberman and others.

The curriculum established by the Minister shall include compulsory study of at least three hours a week, in each school year, of the history of the Land of Israel, the history of the State of Israel, and Zionism.

The initiators of the bill, who are from *Israel Beitenu*, seek, by means of the bill, to shape the conceptual understanding of Palestinian pupils in Israel and to force them to undergo a process of Israelization by means of the educational system, a mission that brings to mind sinister, outdated regimes. To a certain extent, this bill closes the circle of the proposed bills described above, and complements the bill prohibiting commemoration of *Nakba* Day. These bills seek, each in its particular matter and manner, to shape, by compulsion, a new consciousness among Palestinian citizens, one that conforms, and is agreeable, with that of the Jewish majority.

Limiting the Scope of Political Protest

The flood of proposed bills that discriminate against and harm Palestinian citizens was the distinguishing feature of the period surveyed in this report. But there were other disturbing features of the past two months. The effort to narrow the scope of activity and political protest of Palestinian citizens and their representatives was also aided by Israeli legal authorities, among them Attorney General Menachem Mazuz. On April 28, Mazuz announced that he intended to indict the chairman of Hadash, MK Muhammad Barakeh, subject to giving him a right to be heard, for assaulting and obstructing policemen in performance of their duties during a demonstration in Nazareth in July of 2007,²⁰ when Ehud Barak was visiting the city.

According to media reports and the indictment itself, the draft indictment charges Barakeh with a number of cases of obstructing and assaulting police officers. The first allegation is that he assaulted an Israel Security Agency [*Shabak*] agent during the demonstration that took place in the village of Bil'in at the end of April 2005, when he led one of the detainees to a police van. Another allegation involved an incident that took place during a demonstration near the Carmel *souk*, in Tel Aviv, in August 2006. According to the allegation, Barakeh swore at and threatened an officer in the police department and slapped him in the face a few times.

In response to the Attorney General's decision to file an indictment, Barakeh said,

The decision is consistent with the prevailing policy, which is based on racism against the Palestinian population and its leaders. The Attorney General is an institution that views as freedom of speech a public call to murder Arab Knesset members, while, on the other hand, it closes investigation files in the matter of the thirteen young men who were murdered in October 2000.²¹

The *Hadash* faction in the Knesset responded that Mazuz's decision is part of the establishment's endeavor to redraw the boundaries of legitimate political protest, of what is permissible and forbidden in the political activity of representatives of the Arab population in Israel.²²

²⁰ *Nrg, Ma'ariv Online*, 28 April 2009.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Hadash* website, April 29, 2009.

The effort to limit the scope of legitimate political activity and protest of Palestinian citizens against government policy has also been reflected in army activity in recent months. The report of the Or Commission, it will be recalled, sharply criticized the police, which had developed a culture that views Arab citizens as enemies.²³ This culture, apparently, is also found in Israel's military-security establishment. Israeli policy regarding Palestinian citizens is set, for the most part, by the *Shabak* and the army, a kind of informal return to the military regime that prevailed in the country until 1966.

In May 2009, the Home Command carried out a major exercise simulating possible war scenarios. On May 5, *Ma'ariv* reported that one of the possible scenarios envisioned was an uprising of Palestinians in Israel during a hypothetical war in the North (with Hezbollah and Syria). The military authorities' main concern, under this scenario, is the blocking of the Wadi Ara' road by Palestinian demonstrators protesting against the war.

According to the newspaper's report, "In the case of war in the North, residents of Um al-Fahm would revolt and block the Wadi Ara' route. To thwart this, the IDF decided to allocate an infantry battalion."²⁴ The military establishment kept this scenario a secret for a long time, along with the solution—the assignment of an infantry battalion to the Home Front to prevent residents of Um al-Fahm from blocking the Wadi Ara' road.

Also, as reported by *Ma'ariv*:

The plan involves infantry units that carry out ongoing security operations in the Judea and Samaria sector and conduct routine training, and would be annexed to the Home Front Command only in the event a northern front is opened. For this purpose, the units underwent training in built-up areas and became acquainted with combat procedures for the sensitive mission. According to the operational plan, in the case of war on the northern border, reserve infantry battalions would be annexed to the Home Front Command and positioned in Wadi Ara' to ensure that the road remains open to military vehicles. In addition to physical blocking, there is the threat regarding the control of intelligence along the road, resulting in the transfer of information to the enemy on troop arrangements and military deployment, and enormous damage to the combat forces.

Security deployment on roads inside the State of Israel was formulated by the military establishment following the events of October 2000. During these events, traffic routes in the North were completely blocked by Palestinian citizens. The deployment increased, based on the *Shabak*'s assessment and recommendations, according to the newspaper report.

In this way, the army and the military establishment informally have declared that Palestinian citizens will be part of a future military campaign, and that the army will be charged with handling them, treating them as enemies and not citizens.

²³ State Commission of Inquiry into the Clashes between Security Forces and Israeli Civilians in October 2000 *Ma'ariv*, May 5, 2009.

“Yes to peace” is incitement against the State of Israel

In April, inspectors from the municipal Education Administration went to an Arab high school in Ramle, photographed pictures and texts that were hanging on the walls, and rushed to complain to the police that the objects constituted incitement against Israel. Yuval Lavie, mayor of Ramle, said, “This is public criticism of Israel.” The Ramle Municipality filed a complaint against the high school for incitement against the State of Israel, alleging, among other things, that officials from the Education Administration took pictures in the *Ateed* [Future] Technology Education Center that showed the Palestinian flag and alongside them nationalistic texts and student drawings and poems that ostensibly incited against Israel. However, according to Eli Senyor, the journalist who exposed the incident, closer examination of the photographed material turned up a completely different reality.²⁵ For example, according to Senyor, one of the student drawings photographed by officials showed combatants with rifles, but above the painting was written, “No to Violence,” with the word “No” blotted out by a felt-tip pen. On the walls were paintings of several flags, including the Palestinian flag and another flag, which municipal officials asserted was a Hamas flag. In fact, the latter was actually a black-and-white painting of the Saudi Arabian flag (the two flags are quite similar; both have, in slightly different texts, the phrase “There is no God other than Allah”). Another painting of a Palestinian flag, which the municipality officials had classified as incitement, contained the words “We want peace, not war.” Another painting, which called for opening the Rafah Crossing on the Gaza-Egyptian border “for the sake of Gaza’s children,” bore the inscription “Yes to Peace, no to War.”

As for the other texts, they were primarily religious in nature, at the most Islamic (“religious education,” “the whole sky above them and all the earth below are Hell,” and the like). None of these texts make a direct reference to Israel or the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In addition, the municipality officials were greatly displeased with a placard that featured the image, life story, and titles of works by the Palestinian poet Samih al-Qassem, or that his poems were included in the Arab literature program approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education.

Conclusion

The last item in this report, about the Ramle Municipality’s false claims that it uncovered evidence of incitement to violence and public criticism of the State at a local Arab high school, conveys the general public’s attitude toward their fellow Palestinian citizens and reflects the broad public perception that Palestinians in Israel pose a threat or, at least, a potential threat. Sometimes, the potential threat is given military-security significance, as in the case of the army’s exercise described above. At other times, the potential threat is viewed in demographic terms, as a challenge to the Jewish character of the state, which led to submission of the proposed bills described above. The perception that Palestinian citizens pose an existential threat

²⁵ Eli Senyor, *Ynet*, 21 April 2009.

defines government policy toward Palestinian citizens and, in turn, determines the measures taken to combat the perceived “threat.”

This perception apparently permeates the thinking of much of Israel's Jewish population, and has intensified as a result of the messages transmitted by Zionist political parties and the Knesset. Therefore, the danger inherent in the bills discussed in this report does not result solely from the possibility that they will be enacted, further impairing the political and legal status of Palestinian citizens and contributing to the erasure of their collective memory and national identity. Regardless of whether all, or some, are not ultimately enacted into law, these bills are dangerous because they transmit a message to the entire Israeli public that Arab citizens pose a grave threat or a potential threat, and they legitimize the connection between citizenship and loyalty and between civil rights and loyalty. Lending further justification to this connection will further entrench in the public's perception the belief that Palestinian citizens have an inferior political, legal, and economic status. Even more dangerously, these bills and the perception they nurture might legitimize physically harming Palestinian citizens.

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